

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

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EXODUS:

TOWARDS A NON-IDENTITY ART

Rory Joseph Harron

The Forum for Critical Inquiry

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The Glasgow School of Art

March 2013

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THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

EXODUS:

TOWARDS A NON-IDENTITY ART

Rory Joseph Harron

Director of Studies: Dr Ken Neil

Supervisor: Melanie Jordan

Abstract



Fig. 2: *The Forest*, acrylic & pen on paper, 2008

Contemporary western societies are in a state of flux approaching crisis; elected governments appear dictated to by private interests while employment appears increasingly precarious. Crippling poverty is rife across the world while a global war over resources is perpetuated under the guise of freedom. The potential of art, the art world and the artist within this matrix may appear an entirely indulgent debate. However, humanity associates the field with some of its greatest achievements. Considering this, it must have some agency to affect consciousness and social change. I did not hold this outlook at the outset of the research. It was instigated from a perspective that saw the loci of art as limited in their agency to effect social and political change. Considering this, it set itself the task of discovering a potent artist exit from the dominant model of art and its underlying hierarchies of values and societal functions. The research is a practical and conceptual search for an alternative model of art. Taking inspiration from Paolo Virno's political strategy of exodus (Virno, 2004: 70), the research addresses and quantifies the artist exit from art, the art world and authorship. It deploys a multimethodology which consists of a theoretical/ investigative enquiry, reflexive experimental art production, participant-observation and auto-ethnographic writing. The written thesis develops a historical, cultural and geographic inquiry through a phenomenological and discursive approach. The art production includes personal, ambiguous work alongside

experimental, site-specific interventions and collaborations with a series of artist-activist and activist groups.

Like the nation state and the museum, our conception of the artist is ‘an ideological product’ of the Enlightenment (Foucault, 1984: 119). Karl Marx foresaw art as an activity that everyone did in the Communist society (Marx, 1978: 160) and Joseph Beuys argued that every human being is an artist (Beuys, 1992: 902). Seeking to develop upon such thought, the thesis argues for the artist exit from conventional authorship and simultaneous affirmation of an egalitarian mode of art production and distribution. The double movement is critical to avoid slipping into a nihilist vacuum. Following the logic of the Salon des Refusés that heralded the emergence of the avant-garde in the 19th century, the thesis should manifest in exhibitions wherein anyone can exhibit. In so doing, it seeks to problematize the hierarchy within art and the alienation and identity divisions between artists and non-artists. Though theorised, the thesis remains dormant knowledge. The motives for this thesis is to incrementally further the egalitarian drive through fostering the agency of the many in art discourse, practice and research. Inspired by Adorno’s negative dialectics, this would strive to be a non-identity art. Adorno’s non-identity thought rejects strong self-identification alongside a commitment to egalitarianism. As it demands ‘thinking against itself’ (Adorno, 1973: 365), the proposed thesis is not fixed or dogmatic; indeed it will be negated at the close. Ultimately, the theorisation of a non-identity art is more so a polemical and tentative hypothesis to engender a reconsideration of the authorship and ownership of the field of art. The application of negation, non-identity and the negative dialectical method in art research is the original contribution to knowledge. Considering this, the method of the study is as important as its content.

Keywords

Artist exodus, negative dialectics, negation, sacrifice, identity, art, the author, the art world, framing, alienation, activism, egalitarianism, non-identity art.

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As Director of Studies, Dr Ken Neil's calm demeanour and critical insights were there for me throughout the research. Conversations on art and society with Klaus Jung helped place the study within an art historical European framework. Special thanks must go to Mel Jordan who replaced Professor Jung as supervisor following his departure to the Academy of Media Arts Köln. She shook up the project and provided the artist knowledge of the field that was pivotal. This research would not have been realised without the support of my parents, siblings and friends. Mention should go to David Griffin and of course Myria Christophini who provided me with support and a deep friendship throughout. Appreciation must also go to the wider network of Glasgow artists, activists and GSA research students and staff. Notable mention must go to Dr Laura Gonzalez and Dr Nicky Bird who both welcomed me and assisted me throughout my time at the school, Dr Minhua Ma who chaired my viva and Sue Brind for being my mock examiner. My gratitude must also go to Professor Kerstin Mey of UCA and Dr Francis McKee of GSA for examining the research and viva and providing the insightful critique to finalise the project. Of course this research would not exist in its current form without all those discussed within the thesis; particular mention should perhaps go to Theodor Adorno, Pierre Bourdieu and Thierry de Duve.

Author's declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is the result of my own work, except where explicit acknowledgement is made to the contribution of others. It has not been submitted to any other institution or for any other degree, except where explicit reference is made within the text.

Rory Harron (Candidate)

Forum for Critical Inquiry

Glasgow School of Art

Signature:

Director of Studies: Dr Ken Neil

Head of Forum for Critical Inquiry

Glasgow School of Art

Signature:

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1. Chapter 1 Introduction

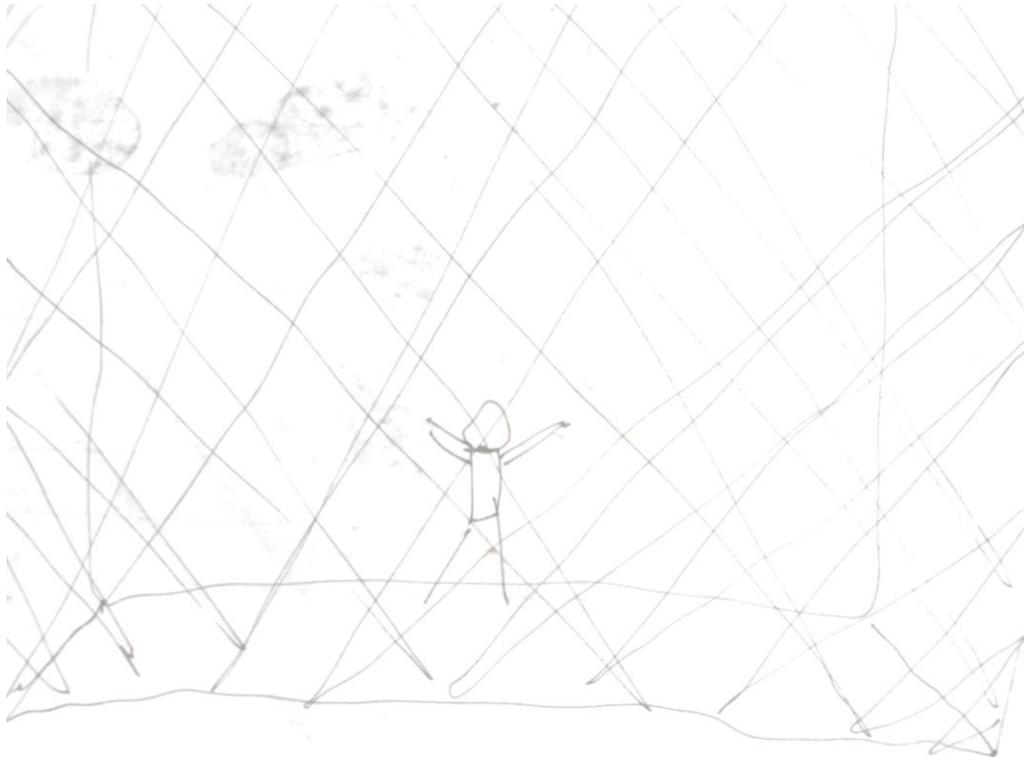


Fig. 3: *Cultural confinement*, pen on paper, 2007

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The research began from the somewhat dogmatic outlook that saw art production within the dominant model of art as lacking in agency to alter the social structure and affect political change. This research is thus a search for an alternative model of artistic practice. Considering this, the aim of the research is to find a politically effective, artist exit. Following an analysis of potential departures, the specific exits that are hopefully realised are the exit of art, the art world and the exit of the author. The primary objectives of the research are to address the causality of the exodus phenomena, to understand and convey the seminal theoretical and practical embodiments of exodus, to define and manifest the differing exits through art practice and theoretical enquiry, to

discover a novel and potent artist exit, to engender a reconsideration of the role and identity of the author in contemporary art and to elucidate upon the non-identity, negative dialectical method in art practice and research.

Definitions of art, the author, exodus, negative dialectics and non-identity art will be developed in the text. The title of the research encompasses the inquiry focus: *Exodus: Towards a non-identity art*. The concept and phenomena of exodus are taken as a catalyst and point of departure to investigate artist exits from art, the art world and the author. However, considering this is a dialectical study (wherein all significant manifestations demand analysis), the artist exit from society will also be addressed. The research is a search for a potent artist exit with a specific practical application. It is carried out from a negative dialectical perspective and method. This involves a perpetual, sequential negation of practice and thought. The research goes on to celebrate a non-identity art. Through applying and negating Theodor Adorno's method to the field of art and art research, I conceptualise a non-identity art as an art which operates against narrow self-identification or dogmatic belief while striving towards egalitarianism. The negation of Adorno is pivotal; as John Holloway has written: developing non-identity thought involves going 'against-and-beyond Adorno' (Holloway, 2006).

This research addresses the agency of artists and activist artist as they manifest strategic exits. In philosophical and sociological thought, agency relates to the ability of an actor or group to alter the social and political structure of their environment and society (Bourdieu, 1984). Differing schools of thought grant greater primacy to the actor or to the structure in affecting actor's lives. While orthodox Marxism grant primacy to the structure ('history dictates consciousness') and traditional psychoanalysis emphasises the actors agency, I follow Bourdieu's outlook that both actors and structure have significant agency; people can affect their environment but it is limited and often dependent upon external social relations. This outlook developed through the research. As stated, my early perspective was limited. Nonetheless, the search for an exit remained the central focus.

The research is sited within the field of egalitarian art. Egalitarianism involves ‘believing in or based on the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities’ (OED, 2004: 457). This focus upon egalitarianism derives from its holding to the general principle of equality while being in a relationship of non-affiliation or non-identity with any specific tendency within broader anti-capitalist or left-Hegelian politics and aesthetics. This alliance with egalitarianism is developed as I believe strict adherences to a political philosophy to be dogmatic and exclusionary. J.C. Myers defines anti-capitalism as beginning ‘with a commitment to the idea that capitalism cannot produce societies fit for all (...) and follows with a commitment to a realistic, achievable alternative’ (Myers, 2002: 33). The research is specifically opposed to the neo-liberal variant of capitalism that developed out of the economic philosophy of Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman; wherein ‘the state becomes an agent of the upward redistribution of wealth’ (Harvey, 2005: 188).

1.2 Practice based research

The selected artist exits were inspired by my art making and theoretical and artistic precedents which in turn inspired and informed further experimental art production that sought to manifest said exits. The conclusions derived from observations and reflections upon this reflexive process. While the theoretical inquiry was catalytic at times, the art production and its alteration by others ultimately drew me to the conclusions and the thesis. Considering the dialectical nature of the enquiry, the illustrations of practice within this thesis are suitably contradictory. Some images are explicitly addressed and relate to the surrounding text while others are not discussed and sit ambiguously within the text. That which is explicitly discussed is the pre-planned interventions in rural and urban environments and the experimental collaborations with the 17, Glasgow Media Group, GSA Mural Society, Active Inquiry and the Hetherington student occupation. The illustrations that are not addressed often relate to the artists, activists and theorists that are discussed. Rather than include photographic reproductions of their work, I produced artwork in response to these agents; this seeks to emphasise how integral mark-making is to my thinking process in this practice based inquiry. In other sections of the thesis, there is imagery that is

entirely ambiguous, personal and sits precariously within the text. It is almost subconscious in that there is no preconceived intention or clear understanding of its meaning. Some of this making is prefigurative in the sense that it has been catalytic to future developments. A few scribbled words or a drawing that relate to a text have lead onto collaborations that have proven pivotal. Without this ambiguous physical processing of thought, such insights may remain dormant. This imagery should retain a complimentary and contradictory relationship within the thesis. It seeks to fit between the gaps of the enquiry, invoking my subjectivity and reinforcing a non-identity that recognises the limitations of conceptualisation and embodiment in word and image. Theodor Adorno's conceptualisation of the *denkbild* (thought image) resonates with the motivations behind this production. He described such 'thought images' as:

(S)cribbled picture puzzles, parabolic evocations of something that cannot be said in words. They do not want to stop conceptual thought so much as to shock through their enigmatic form and thereby get thought moving, because thought in its traditional, conceptual form seems rigid, conventional and outmoded (Adorno in Richter, 2007: 12).



Fig. 4: *The dialectic of co-operation and conflict?* Cyprus, photograph (2009)

Perhaps I seek and often fail to achieve such an art in the ambiguous work. While such production is more concerned with the aesthetic, the explicitly discussed work is more concerned with manifesting the exit and the agency of the act. Of course the aesthetic is still important but more so in its ability to affect or alter consciousness. The fusion (and confusion) of conflicting methods of art production derives from my recurring use of negation in both art and thinking. The research seeks to hold nothing as stable or firmly believed.

The ideal form, content and locations of egalitarian art are highly contested. Today the street and the internet are often heralded as the ideal media and loci. Debates on the ideal form and function of radical aesthetics became a practical matter following the Russian Revolution. Deriving from differing interpretations of Hegelian aesthetics, Adorno rejected the critical realism that György Lukács theorised and Bertolt Brecht sought to realise to convey the contradictions in society. Adorno felt social critique in the content of a work of art was didactic and counterproductive (Adorno, 1974: 80). He believed arts autonomy was sacrosanct and its form and lack of utilitarian value was its critical power. He celebrated the ‘truth content of art’ which he claimed was manifest in the dissonant work of Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett (Adorno, 1974: 86). He claimed that this work instilled an anxiety in the viewer that draws them to consider the alienation and exploitation of modernity (Adorno, 1974: 87). In response, Lukács famously accused Adorno of obscurantism and having taken up residence in the Grand Hotel Abyss. This antagonism was of course heightened by their physical displacement across the divide in Europe. I see merit in both Adorno and Lukács outlooks on aesthetics. I both agree and disagree with Adorno’s rejection of political content in art. While this debate may seem dated, it is central to egalitarian aesthetics. In *Dialectical Passions, Negation in Postwar Art Theory*, Gail Day centralises the Lukács/ Adorno schism within contemporary aesthetic and political thought. She argues that ‘radical thought - whether in art or in aesthetic or political theory - is still haunted by the gulf between the present reality and an unrealized promise’ (Day, 2011: 238).

1.3 Methodology

In order to achieve a holistic outlook, the reflexive research deploys a multimethodology. This incorporates an overarching critical investigation of egalitarian art within its historical, theoretical and political terrain that should not be thought as a compartmentalized literature review but a sequential act of critique and negation that runs throughout the thesis. This investigation was inspired by and in turn inspired the experimental art production. Practically this consists of site-specific public interventions, ambiguous personal work and collaborative art production. Participant-observation from this work became an important method of analysis. The art production, critical investigation and the written dissertation seek to be dialectical. They should permeate each other and should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive. They are all a part of a process that should form an overall art production. Indeed I intend to transform the thesis into a film following its final submission. I see the writing as a form of practice within this research. Gestures, discourse and writing have become integral to art since the emergence of conceptualism, dematerialized, immaterial and post-studio art. In Number 6 of *JJ Charlesworth, Mark Rappolt and Skye Sherwin's 12 Steps to Artworld Power*, they humorously declared:

If you decide to be an artist, strive to get into as many group shows as you can. Don't waste too much time making work, but make sure you get your name on as many invite cards as possible. There are artists who have built their whole careers on how many shows they appear to have been in. This used to be called 'conceptualism'. Now it's called 'post-studio' (Charlesworth, Rappolt & Sherwin, 2007).

While this pronouncement is clearly tongue in cheek, it is not without serious forethought. Only four artists make the top 30 of *Art Review's* recent *Art Power List* (*Art Review*, 2012). As such, art goes well beyond an object or performance. In the development of cultural capital, what one says, wears or where one is or who they are with or what they are doing is often as important within the field as any art produced. This state is perhaps inevitable since the demise of formalism but one could argue that it has always been thus. The art never exists in a vacuum; it is an object within a

field of discourse and where one ends and the other begins is indecipherable. After reflecting upon his discussion of Kasimir Malevich's *Red Square and Black Square* with his son, WJT Mitchell claimed that the meaning of an artwork goes well beyond the picture frame to include our thoughts, conversations, social history and much more. He described how 'Malevich's image is surely dialectical and abstract, but language, narrative and discourse can never - should never - be excluded from it' (Mitchell, 1994: 225). Mitchell emphasised the necessity to see the work as being a social relationship as much as an object. From a similar outlook, Pierre Bourdieu took the esoteric interpretations of certain work of Marcel Duchamp who himself insisted were a joke or a whim to argue:

(O)ne has to be blind not to see that discourse about a work is not a mere accompaniment, intended to assist its perception and appreciation, but a stage in the production of the work, of its meaning and value (Bourdieu & Nice, 1980: 292).

While holding the belief that writing is a form of practice, I am addressing specific 'art acts' when discussing practice in this thesis. This will ease interpretation for the reader. Nonetheless, it is important to convey my apprehension of defining the art production as exclusionary to the text or other acts. The writing in the thesis will strive to be reflexive and analytical throughout. At times it will be polemical and contradictory. For example, there will be sections where specific work is celebrated or castigated before later being negated or affirmed. As such, no statements should be considered as held in perpetuity. This is pivotal within non-identity research. The negative dialectical method is applied throughout by negating both mine and others production and conceptualisation. There are no footnotes in the thesis as I can find them somewhat confusing to the reader's flow; to misappropriate Jacques Derrida's infamous declaration: 'there is nothing outside the text' (Derrida, 1998). To acknowledge and explicitly address the subjective prejudice of the research, the thesis is written from an autoethnographic perspective. Research scholars define this method as a fusion of the autobiographical with the ethnographic and the personal with the cultural (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010). However, considering it seeks to be non-identity research, it is imperative that it negates a narrow, personal outlook and resonates with a wide audience.

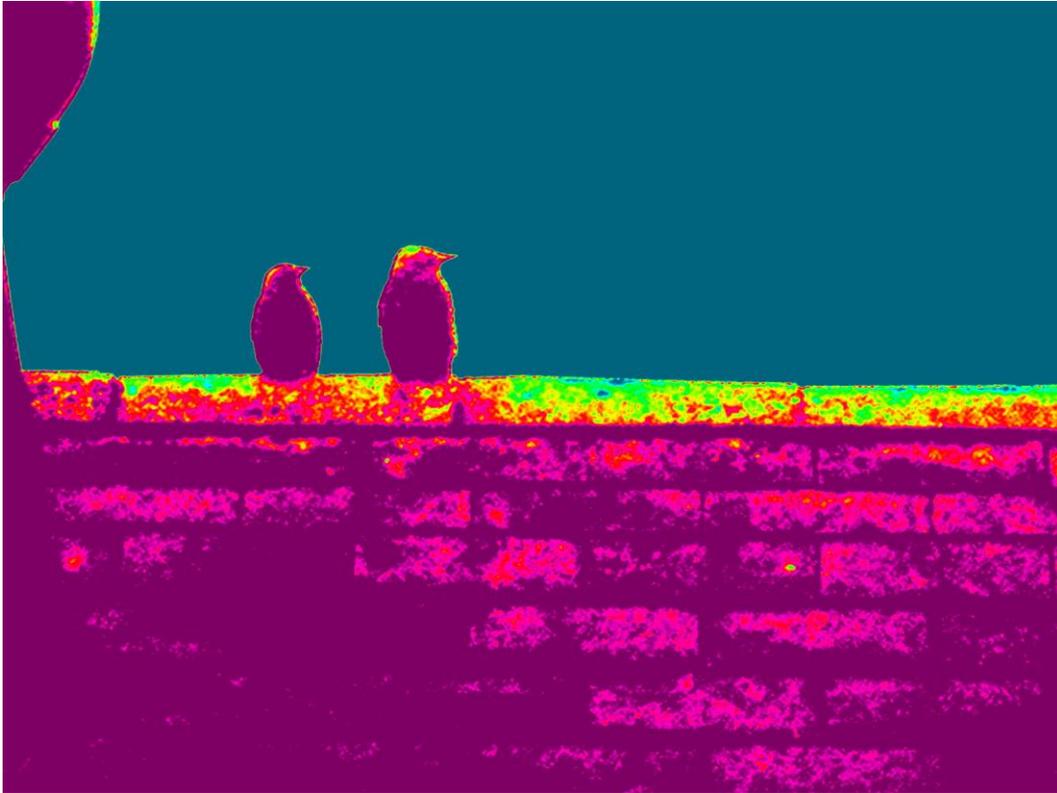


Fig. 5: *Birds on a roof*, photograph/ digitally altered, 2013

Dialectical research does not always hold a thesis but often seeks to elucidate on understanding through addressing conflicting thesis. As such, it has been interpreted as a ‘meta-theoretical framework’ (Bernicker & McNabb, 2006: 3). Despite this general tendency, the research nonetheless seeks to reveal a novel thesis which will in turn be negated. The categorisation of specific artist exits (from art, the art world and the author) crystallized as the research developed. A clear differentiation of exits was initially rejected as I wished to grasp a general understanding of the exodus phenomena and their potential manifestations in practice. However, the categories emerged as they recurred in observations on the literature and in reflections on the experimental art production. The exits could perhaps be expanded upon but those that were selected were deemed seminal as they incorporated almost all possible manifestations of potent artist exits. Though they are differentiated in the thesis, the exits are by no means rigid or mutually exclusive. For example, Cildo Miereles’ *Insertions* project (which involved anonymously altering popular

commodities with subversive messages and placing them in circulation) can be interpreted as an exit from art, the art world and the author. Considering this potential for pollination the reader should thus grant some leeway to the categorisation.

1.4 Structure of thesis

In this introductory chapter, I set out the aims and objectives of the research, extrapolated upon the practice based research and discussed the methodology. I will go on to map out the definitions and identities of art, the art world and the author. As these are the principle exits within the research, it is critical that I determine the respective identities as historical and cultural fields. For one cannot develop non-identity research without clear definitions of what these concepts entail. While acknowledging that they are contested concepts and never fixed, it is pivotal to create a firm grounding to the research from which artist exits are attempted.

The 2nd chapter shall define and contextualise the exodus concept within Italian autonomist thought and history before addressing the potential of art to operate as exodus. I will then address the causality of the exodus phenomena and the limitations of antithetical art production from within arts institutions through a critique of contemporary art and its interrelations within its social, political, historical and economic environment in Britain and Ireland. As it resonates with the egalitarian focus of the research, Mark Wallinger's recreation of Brian Haw's anti-war protest will provide the fulcrum. The early site specific practice in remote locations will be discussed within this framework. Due to its recurring nature, the artist exit from society will also be explored. This will involve an analysis of utopian flights, intentional communities, bohemianism, lifestyle anarchism, apolitical withdrawals and the lingering cult of the tragic individual artist since romanticism.

The dialectical method emerged in the research through apprehension regarding the conflicting merits of fight or flight as political or artistic strategies. Chapter 3 will describe the emergence of

the method in the artwork and research. It will elaborate on how exodus is interpreted as functioning as negation in the dialectical process before analysing the method and describing how it operates within the art of Christoph Büchel, Theatre of the Oppressed and others. I will then develop the discussion of the dialectic through emphasising the specificity of negative dialectics as the driving method within the research. Theodor Adorno developed the non-identity method within the Institute for Social Research in the late 1960s. Often discarded for linguistic obscurantism, political fatalism and holding an ‘elitist and conservative’ taste in aesthetics, his thought nonetheless lives on through its moments of brilliance and the potential within his methodological conclusions. The chapter will conclude by developing an analysis of negation and non-identity before considering how they manifest throughout the history of modernist art.

Chapter 4 will address vanguardist aesthetics and exits through initially analysing Situationist refusals of art before exploring manifestations of Virno’s exodus in carnivalesque, anonymous activist art. My street interventions and participation in the student occupation at the University of Glasgow will be analysed, affirmed and negated. Following this, I will initiate a critique of the contradictions within activism, socially engaged art and activist art. I will then take Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* as a fulcrum around which to tentatively explore non-identity before postulating an alternative interpretation of the readymade – that it signifies that everyone is an artist. Following Thierry de Duve, I will contextualise the history of aesthetic negation, sacrificial self-negation and egalitarianism in art up from romanticism and through its various manifestations in modern art.

The 5th chapter will detail the emergence of the non-identity art thesis. It will begin by addressing the social problems of alienation, division and resentment in art and society. The morphing of art from a communal activity to a reified commodity will be explored before considering the social benefits of equality and an expanded conception of art production. Negations to my practice by anonymous producers in external locations furthered my reflections upon universal creativity. I will then elaborate upon the non-identity thesis and the necessity of its realisation in a simultaneous negation of self and affirmation of a universal creativity. Following an analysis of my attempts to

realise such an art within exhibitions wherein everyone can exhibit, I will describe and reflect upon the installation in my viva. Marcel Broodthaers *The Eagle from the Oligocene* exhibition will provide a fruitful counterpoint. This analysis will involve a rigorous critique that will expand into a wider negation of the hypocrisies and contradictions within the research and thesis.

The concluding 6th chapter will begin by summarising the research before discussing the potential of the non-identity thesis, my contribution to knowledge and future directions and the wider benefits of the research for artists, educators, academics and curators. Finally, as it is integral to the method, I will negate the thesis at the close.

1.5 The identities of art and the author

In 2012, Alastair Pike and his team of archaeologists from the University of Bristol provided evidence that the earliest recorded cave paintings were produced some 40,800 years ago in the El Castillo cave in the north coast of Spain (Than, 2012). The paintings consist of red hue stencilled hands and a red disk (perhaps the sun or the moon). Opinion is divided over the purpose or meaning of such work. Is it religious, spiritual, a mode of communication or a pastime? Of course, these can only be theories but it appears apparent that this repetitive artistic depiction of animals, humans and nature from our earliest forebears conveys that art production is an innate aspect of our being. The word art derives from the Latin ‘ars’ and means ‘the expression or application of creative skill and imagination, especially through a visual medium’ (OED, 2004: 73). The modern conception of art as a specific act or practice within an autonomous field is entirely novel. Larry Shiner has described how the ancient Athenians did not go to an art event when they encountered the *Antigone* drama. He described how they witnessed the performance as part of the five day City Dionysia religious-political festival. *Antigone* was but one section of a cleansing event that included games, processions and even human sacrifices on an altar to the Gods (Shiner, 2001: 19). Shiner described how the mimetic arts of painting and sculpture were not differentiated from other crafted products in classical Greece. While acknowledging that poetry held a greater status, he emphasised that the Ancient Greeks held no special significance for the artefact or the author.



Fig. 6: *Animal*, Inch Fort underground passage, Donegal, author unknown, 2011

Etymologically an author is ‘an originator of a plan or an idea’ (OED, 2004: 88) while an artist is ‘a person who practices or performs any of the creative arts’ (OED, 2004: 74). To deem authorship is to determine ownership for what is created. The concept is closely related to authority; that being ‘the power or right to give orders and enforce obedience’ (OED, 2004: 88). In medieval Europe, artists were skilled artisans who worked anonymously in groups and produced work for rich patrons or the church – for example the Book of Kell’s or Köln cathedral. As in Ancient Greece, there was little status difference between an embroiderer and a painter (Shiner, 2003: 30). The notion of an individual author of a work first emerged during the Renaissance. Giorgio Vasari wrote of the ‘divine’ Michelangelo in 1550. The great artists who were learned in literature, mathematics and rhetoric sought and achieved a higher social status above craft during this period. Roland Barthes claimed that our modern conception of the individual and the author emerged ‘from the Middle Ages with English Empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the

Reformation' (Barthes, 1977: 142/143). Soon after, the Enlightenment period heralded the emergence of private property, salons, exhibitions, critics, nations and representative democracy.

In popular culture, the artist is often thought to possess genius or great originality. This resonates with Immanuel Kant's writings on aesthetics (that being the branch of philosophy that concerns beauty and taste). In *The Critique of Judgement*, which he wrote against the backdrop of the emerging Romantic tradition, Kant described fine art as an aesthetic idea that transmits excitement and harmony from producer to viewer. For Kant, this transmission is achieved through the innate faculty of genius; that being the talent and originality which nature provided (Kul-Want, 2010: 23). Art for Kant was paradoxical, it has a purpose in itself yet it is also purposeless; it approaches the sublime in nature but it is also deeply unnatural. Art is an intuition, a feeling of the senses and cannot easily be conceptualised or rationalised through knowledge (Kul-Want, 2010: 21). It is worth noting that the term genius has little relation to how it was initially conceived. Whereas the term is interpreted as 'exceptional intellectual or creative power' (OED, 2004: 594), the Latin 'gignere' relates to a spirit which watched over all of us. Our contemporary conception of originality is similarly misplaced; whereas we associate it with being 'inventive or novel' (OED, 2004: 1009), the word derives from the Latin 'origo' which relates to origins and 'to rise' (OED, 2004: 1009).

There is an interesting dialectic between the implementation of primitive accumulation policies (wherein people were moved from the land to the cities through land enclosures) and the emergence of the romantic individual artist striving to reconnect with nature. In a sense he (for they usually were men) became the people's representative; our lost link with nature reflected in his anguished words or brushstrokes. Jackson Pollock was one of the last authors in the heroic, romantic tradition. While he is renowned for his drip paintings, his influence on subsequent generations of artists derived in part from Hans Namuth's film of him at work. Perhaps unwittingly, this film called on artists to go beyond the canvas and representation itself. Allan Kaprow's work emerged from his conviction that Pollock's action painting heralded the logical conclusion of the medium and that life itself was art (Kaprow, 1993). Pollock's pretensions to truth

and authenticity in aesthetics were ruthlessly negated by Andy Warhol's serialisation and apathetic aloofness. Kelly Cresap described how Warhol's statement 'I want to be a machine' mercilessly deflated the Romantic pretensions of Pollock's 'I am nature' (Cresap, 2004: 71). Guy Debord emphasised that the spectacle of modern capitalist society was 'a social relationship between people that is mediated by images' (Debord, 2006: thesis 4). Warhol did not negate capitalist conditioning but wallowed within it and revelled in designing its illusions. He became the anti-hero in an age of celebrity, simulation and repetition. Though he negated Pollock's individualist macho posturing, he nonetheless realised an androgynous gesture aesthetics that retained as much heroism as that which it negated. Indeed, they are far more similar than many would initially imagine. They were both outsiders who resided within the neighbouring Long Island villages of East Hampton and Montauk. While Pollock wrestled with psychosis and breakdown within his art and life, Warhol's life and art embodied the detachment and obsessive precision thought integral to the autistic or aspergers condition.

Unreason has come to form a central aspect of the popular conception of the visionary author. In Michel Foucault's *History of Madness*, he connected the emergence of the modern artist with the mutating conception of madness in Europe (Foucault, 2006). He argued that in the late medieval period, dark visions and the otherworld were fully incorporated into the social fabric - citing Pieter Bruegel and Hieronymus Bosch as exemplary (2006: 14). He claimed that in the late Renaissance humanist period, this madness became tamed of its terrifying transcendental power and became the inverse of and yet in dialogue with reason - citing the court jester in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (2006: 37). By the 18th century Enlightenment period, unreason was banished and those deemed mad were expelled to isolation in asylums. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argued that while the anarchic spirit still persists, it is being 'hunted down by a schematic reason which compels everything to prove its significance and effect' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2008: 40). They saw standardization in culture under capitalism as reducing real individuality to an illusion (2008: 154). Despite the curbing of the irrational, Foucault argued that remnants of unreason remained 'in the lightning flash of works' of Hölderlin, Nerval, Nietzsche and Artaud (Foucault, 2006: 351). He emphasised that this works greatness was its ability to return us to a pre-rational age. However, he ambiguously cautioned that in doing so, it was no longer art. Perhaps he was suggesting that our

conception of art is a social construction and when art achieves true immanence, it is beyond our modern, rational comprehension and classification?



Fig. 7: *The artist*, pen on paper, 2012

Artists do not fit easily within the Marxist schema of the classes. Neither Marx nor Engels significantly addressed the visual arts in their writing. Historically, as artisans and skilled craftsmen, it could be argued that they formed part of what Marx termed the petit-bourgeois class. This class, which consisted of craftsmen, shopkeepers and low ranking officials, were both dependent and somewhat independent. Marx argued that they would all sink into the proletariat as modern industry renders their skills worthless (Marx, 1978: 480). In the 18th and 19th century, professional artists tended to be the offspring of wealthy families. This altered in post-war Britain and Ireland

when university education was opened up to the working class. The modern contemporary artist fluctuates between classes. Boris Groys described Damian Hirst and Jeff Koons as ‘entrepreneurs’ (Groys, 2010). Though holding a reserve of symbolic capital, the vast majority of artists arguably fit within the proletariat. However, many no longer utilise their hands and have thus renounced the skills that they were once celebrated for. This loss of aura has perhaps furthered their estrangement from the public.

The designation and identification of artists today is further problematized by their frequently mutating and oscillating roles. Artists become curators, funders, administrators, lecturers, writers and vice versa within the field of art production. The field is embedded within a wider field of cultural production which consists of drama, filmmaking, literature, music, dance, circuses and so on. These sectors make up what has been termed the culture industry. Pierre Bourdieu stated that the field of cultural production is ‘a relative autonomy’ while simultaneously sharing ‘structural and functional homologies’ with the wider social and political fields (Bourdieu, 2006: 12). A perpetual game of aesthetic, political and social exchanges operate between and within these fields. To markedly differentiate between amateur and professional is also difficult as many producers oscillate between these poles, depending upon commissions, part-time employment and funding grants. However, the essential difference between the recognised producers and culture based creativity is professionalism. But this status is highly precarious in a market economy. Artists are of course not autonomous individuals but entirely dependent. They need symbolic and financial support from galleries, funding bodies and collectors to survive. In 2010, the Irish Arts Councils commissioned a report on the ‘Living and Working Conditions of Artists’. Some 58% in the Republic found it ‘difficult to make ends meet’ (Mc Andrew & Mc Kimm, 2010: 13). Contemporary galleries and journals are also dependent on funding grants. To acquire such funds becomes their primary purpose as without them, there is no art, journal or gallery. Professional art and cultural policy emanate from this fundamental basis.

There are numerous contradictions within contemporary art. In defence of their public subsidy, artists, galleries and art councils forever describe the potential of art to enrich peoples lives while

many simultaneously believe the public to be generally ignorant about art. Pierre Bourdieu claimed that artists, writers and intellectuals hold a contradictory position in society; that they are ‘a dominated fraction of the dominant class’ (Bourdieu; 2006: 15) He described how they hold power and privileges from their acquired cultural capital but they are simultaneously dominated by those with political and economic power. He saw this domination as not personal but involving a structural relationship of dependence. He argued that artists ultimately tend to remain loyal to the bourgeois order despite their positioning against said order (Bourdieu; 2006: 15). However, he acknowledged that some cultural producers (for example Zola, Sartre, Courbet and Pissarro) have aligned themselves with the dominated classes.

To convey my wariness of classifying and defining art and the artist, I will provide some anecdotal evidence before reflecting on the framing and definitions of art, the art world and the author. In the summer of 2012, I collaborated in a collaborative artwork with the Something Special community group in Derry, Northern Ireland. As we painted, one of the members asked how long I had been an artist. I thought for a moment and said that I was not sure what an artist is – does it relate to a payment or a practice? I stated that I am not always paid for my work but have been producing it for as long as I can remember. The member confidently declared that she was an artist as she had also been painting since she was a child. Am I in a position to say that her work is not art and that she is not an artist? Or to confidently declare that my work is art and that I am an artist? I also recall an art student in Manchester who had a ‘gallery in his pocket’. In hindsight, this gesture resonates in my mind with the tale of Douglas Gordon losing Hans Ulrich Obrist’s 2 x 3 inch portable Nanomuseum in a Glasgow bar (Obrist, 2008). However, despite their similarities, the Manchester art student’s act has not entered the annals of art history.

Following a discussion on art and activism in the CCA gallery in Glasgow, I asked the performance artist Sian Robinson Davies to describe the difference between an artist’s performance and that of anyone else in their day-to-day lives. She stated that the designation of art is related to its framing which is created by the market, the art institution or some definition of creativity (Robinson Davies, 2012). While Robinson-Davies is clearly an artist, she has recently begun performing on

comedy nights in local pubs. Are these performances no longer art and is she no longer an artist within this context? To develop the thinking on the ambiguity of designating art and the artist, I will address the Glaswegian entertainer Brian Limond. Known as Limmy, he developed a cult following from posting somewhat crude, surreal podcasts online. That led on to him being commissioned by B.B.C. Scotland to create *Limmy's Show*. During a 2011 interview, Limond described his inability to define his profession. He rejected the title of writer, director or comedian. When compelled to clarify at the bank, he grudgingly described himself as a web developer (English, 2011). In one of his sketches from 2009, a young man (Limond) is dancing to Bruce Springsteen's *Dancing in the Dark* on top of a concrete road block in the middle of a dilapidated Glaswegian council estate (Limond, 2009). The dissonant, dialectical sketch appears to address joy and alienation and evokes the resilience of the human spirit. To my analysis, the work has as much, if not more aesthetic and social value than much of the contemporary art that I have observed over the past year.

Pierre Bourdieu has described art as a sensation in the sense that it can touch the sensibility and move people (Bourdieu & Haacke, 1995: 23). Could Limond be interpreted as an artist in this sense? Perhaps he could but he will most likely never perform in an art gallery and he has not attended art school. Can only critics, curators and fellow artists define art and the artist? What then of the viewer's interpretation or indeed the intentions of the protagonist? Ultimately Limond is used as an example to problematize the designation of art and the author. What if someone else recreated his performance without a camera? Would that be comedy or art or just someone messing around? This is highly speculative terrain without clear boundaries. In her description of how something becomes art, Robinson-Davies acknowledged that 'Invisible theatre' problematizes the frame. Developed by Augusto Boal, the controversial art form involves actors anonymously instigating oppressive scenarios in public to compel passers-by to intervene (Boal, 2008: 122). This rupturing of the framework is resented by many who see it as a threat to their ownership of the field. As Hans Haacke wrote of artists: 'they work within that frame, set the frame, and are being framed' (Haacke, 1999, 306).

From my experience of studying differing disciplines, art is a passion that approaches a religious calling for many. It is easy to be cynical of the multiplicity of artist's gestures and production. However, they are usually developed with a high degree of forethought and carried out with real conviction (and doubt). Following Immanuel Kant's critique of aesthetics, Thierry de Duve stressed that 'value and quality are themselves the outcome of a reflexive judgment based on a feeling' (de Duve, 2006: 446). It is a truism that sounds resonate with human emotions and imagery stimulates the mind and body. But are these sensations the result of art or creativity? How do we differentiate between an everyday creative act like whistling and a performance recognised as art when the boundaries are entirely blurred? I share Joseph Beuys claim that we are all creative animals but also acknowledge that we clearly are not all artists in modern society. And yet art now permeates and appropriates all aspects of life. Be it Piero Manzoni's canned *Artist's Shit*, Carl Andre's *Equivalent VIII* (the bricks), Martin Creed's *Work no. 227: Lights Going on and Off* or Rirkrit Tiravanija's *pad thai* (cooking for gallery goers), there are few things that have not been defined as art or appropriated by its authors and institutions. However, while it appears that anything can be art, only a select few appear to be able to signify or frame it as contemporary art.

1.6 Art world framing

The essential difference between what is considered art and wider aesthetic experiences is validation from an existing authority. To become a recognised participant in contemporary art, one must pass the gatekeepers selection policy; that of course being the opinions and patronage of lecturers, peers, curators, critics, funders, editors and collectors. Arthur Danto first developed the philosophical definition of 'the Artworld' in 1964 (Danto, 1964). In George Dickie's institutional theory of art, a work of art is 'an (original) artefact' which has been conferred as art by a 'certain social institution (the artworld)' (Dickie, 1974: 464). The institutional theory of art interprets the art world as 'an interdependent network of social-economic actors' who contentiously or unknowingly operate 'to enact and perpetuate the art world' and 'to produce the consent of the entire society in the legitimacy of the artworld's authority to do so' (Irvine, 2009). While the art world is not a monolithic entity but a diffuse body of complimentary and conflicting activity, there is nonetheless

a tendency to groupthink as in all other fields. An artist's status develops from 'emerging' through to 'established' through deification by this network. The ignored or rejected artist often withdraws from the field but not always the practice.



Fig 8: *The Opening*, pen on paper, digitally altered, 2010

While considering the heralded artists of Flash Art, Thierry de Duve proclaimed that 'the name "artist" only sanctions the success of an opportunistic strategy with nothing honorable about it' (de Duve, 1996: 419). Pierre Bourdieu argued that aesthetic choices are not personal idiosyncrasies, but class based perpetuations of social division (Bourdieu, 1984). He claimed that what is considered high art is a result of social domination. For Bourdieu, there is no essence to an

artwork outside of its position in the art world network; ‘social class values determine what gets in and what stays out, who’s inside and who’s outside of the art world’ (Irvine, 2009). While *Distinction* is over thirty years old and there is undoubtedly a greater heterogeneity in taste, Bourdieu’s analysis remains evident. What is considered ‘good art’ is entirely nebulous and is sometimes even fabricated for ulterior motives. For example, the Observer newspaper reported that ‘a number of prominent curators have complained anonymously of having to defend overrated works that happen to be worth a lot of money’ (Stallabrass, 2012). Be it through the patronage of the Goethe Institute, the British Council, Larry Gagosian or Iwan Wirth, very expensive art becomes cultural capital and a symbolic power that embodies soft power; that being what Joseph Nye defined as the ability to benevolently influence and direct people towards ones benefit (Nye, 2004). Bourdieu described the definition and rigid framing of art as a subtle mode of control:

Saying of this or that tendency in writing that ‘it just isn’t poetry’ or ‘literature’ means refusing it a legitimate existence, excluding it from the game, excommunicating it. This symbolic exclusion is merely the reverse of the effort to impose a definition of legitimate practice, to constitute, for instance, as an eternal and universal essence, a historical definition of an art or a genre corresponding to the specific interests of those who hold a certain specific capital (Bourdieu, 2006: 14).

Bourdieu insisted that this exclusionary strategy of imposing ‘a definition of legitimate practice’ had both artistic and political motives which are imposed on both producers and consumers. However, such conditions are never static; he described how this dominant model is often contested by younger or disenfranchised producers. For Bourdieu, these power struggles within the field between the dominant and dominated, conservative and avant-garde agents are maintained and transformed through conflicts of symbolic capital. He takes the opposition to the modern art of 19th century France (Manet for example) as emblematic of such frictions. Intelligent artists today circumnavigate art world framing through opening alternative spaces and self publication. Often such self driven upstarts gain acceptance or usurp the established figures and in turn become the new hegemony. For example, Gregory Sholette has recently called on the ‘dark matter,’ that being

the ignored amateur and failed producers who prop up the art world network to withdraw their support of the pyramid of elite galleries and journals (Sholette, 2011). Such negations and mutations of set identities are already occurring following the onset of globalization and the development of digital user-generated, creative technologies.

Despite his apparent cynicism, Bourdieu insisted that art has significant agency. He saw the artist field as a game wherein producers must whole heartedly play the game, reject cynicism and seek to ‘anticipate the future’ (Bourdieu, 2006: 17). Optimistically he claimed that the author is a creator that can bring about a symbolic revolution through transforming our perceptions of the world. Reflecting upon Manet’s negation of hierarchies, he described how ‘the power of naming, in particular of naming the unnameable, that which is still unnoticed or repressed, is a considerable power’ (Bourdieu, 2006: 18). Though disliking the implications of his analysis, I share George Dickie’s claim that anyone is an artist and anything is art but the art world ultimately defines this through the placement or framing of work in a relevant institution with authority. Essentially art is a specialist field of symbolic exchanges wherein those with cultural capital discuss and produce what they see as the zeitgeist. However, this condition is never totally stable. The curator Rudolf Frieling acknowledged that no one player controls the definition of art as it is now collectively defined by the artist, curator, critic and viewer; ‘each of whom must surrender a measure of authorial control’ (Frieling, 2008: 33). I would postulate that one can never exit art as it is not a specific act but a process of thought. However, one can attempt to exit the art world and conventional conceptions of the author.

From my perspective, art is both a social construct and an innate human activity; as a phenomenon, it is vexed and conflicted. However, it is nonetheless apt in defining the indefinable and seeking to evoke humanity’s greatest achievements of the spirit, mind and body. My belief in what constitutes as art is suitably conflicted; I hold to Kantian transcendence and (like Adorno) believes in the power of art yet also feel that it is stifled by the exclusive ownership of the discipline within the field. I share Bourdieu’s critique of the habitus; seeing the art world as the flawed contemporary but by no means final arbiter of art. To my analysis, the essential difference between

creativity and art is that one is granted symbolic, use and exchange value by the authorities of art while the other is perhaps of interest but nonetheless superfluous to the art world - barring its appropriation or facilitation by an artist with symbolic capital. While holding a romantic attachment to the potential of art, I also have sympathy for Thierry de Duve's claim that 'the name "art" is only a status, and has nothing honorific about it' (de Duve, 1996: 419). After much consideration of the identity, essence and origin of art, he claimed that art is a game of symbolic exchanges which has norms and criteria (often to be transgressed) yet no solid essence. Within this research, I follow his espousal of:

(A) philosophy of history for which there is no definition of art except the historical process through which art negates itself and comes to terms with its own negation. This process does not have an essence for its ground; rather it has a struggle for its motor. It never constitutes itself as a patrimony but projects the heritage of the past into the future in order to contradict it. When you call this process art, you mean that we, humans, don't need to agree about what art is. On the contrary, we need to struggle for what art should be. Some fight for one conception of art, others for another; yet we all stake a claim to what art ought to be for all of us. When you identify art with avant-garde art and with the avant-garde exclusively, you imply that conflict and contradiction are the very fabric of art. Most contradictorily indeed, you call on the idea of a reconciled humankind to claim that the history of art will end with art's disappearance, while you anticipate the end of history to justify art's premature existence (de Duve, 1996: 21).



Fig. 9: *Exodus*, crayon on cardboard/ digitally altered, 2010

2.1 Exiles

Migration, displacement and exile permeate the art and critical thought of the modern era. In the lecture *Exiles*, T.J. Demos detailed the psycho-social lineage of the departed through reflections upon Sigmund Freud's 'unheimlich', György Lukács' 'transcendental homelessness', Adorno's 'morality to not be at home' and Edward Said's 'age of the refugee' (Demos, 2009). Exodus comes

from the Greek *ex* ‘out of’ and *hodos* ‘way’ and has come to mean ‘a mass departure of people’ (OED, 2004: 500). In popular usage, it is associated with mass emigration. People in search of a better life have manifested the archetypal phenomenon from time immemorial. In the second book of the Torah/ Old Testament, the *Book of Exodus* described the Prophet Moses leading the Hebrew slaves out of oppression in Egypt in search of the Promised Land (Jacob, 1992). However, their journey proved anything but stable as many turned against each other and their faith (1992: 758). Like their journey, the exodus concept is highly ambiguous. As such, it is important to remain wary of a simplistic interpretation or glorification of the concept. Indeed, Edward Said has argued that the exodus legend can be used to support flights of oppression as much as flights from oppression (Said, 1979: 57).

2.2 Italian autonomism

Italian Autonomism (‘workerism’) emerged out of disaffection with the Italian communist PCI party in the 1960s (Wright, 2002: 14). Mario Tronti, Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, Bifo and Sergio Bologna (among others) developed autonomist Marxism in affiliation with part time workers, students and factory workers who rejected union compromises and called for go-slow policies and a refusal of work (Wright, 2005). Mario Tronti wrote: ‘The working class cannot constitute itself as a party within capitalist society without preventing capitalist society from functioning’ (Tronti, 1966: 2). This radical strategy of refusal of cooperation with capital was planned to instigate a crisis in capitalist production. Known as *operaismo* in Italy, the tendency is a curious hybrid socialist philosophy with supporters from and correlations with anarchism, poststructuralism and Marxism. Autonomists argued that society has become a social factory (Wright, 2002: 40). They developed the concept of post-Fordism and post-Fordist production to signify the shift from labour as a productive activity to being an all-encompassing form of life. Hardt and Negri described this shift into immaterialist production as concurrent with the transition from ‘modernization to postmodernization’ (Hardt & Negri, 2000: 276).

The operaismo movement fell apart in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Wright has described how the ‘movement of 77’ emerged and collapsed as they lost support from within the wider working class as Italy became highly fractured (Wright, 2002: 212). In what became known as the ‘Years of Lead,’ horrific violence was perpetrated by the Marxist-Leninist Red Army Faction and fascist terror groups; some of who even consisted of a shadow group within the state (Dossi, 2001). Though the political philosophers have stressed their personal passivity, some were implicated by rhetoric and association. Antonio Negri fled to France where he fused autonomism with French poststructuralism before returning to an Italian prison. Paolo Virno was also imprisoned though he was fully exonerated of all charges in 1987 (Raunig, 2008).

The global appeal of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* text in 2000 re-energized autonomism and instigated the emergence of post-operaismo thought. Initially, I held many reservations regarding much autonomist analysis. Their rejection of the divisions between private and public spheres and the Imperialist centre/ periphery model of control concerned me (Hardt & Negri, 2000: 144). These negations of binaries are directly related to their disavowal of the dialectical method. They also discarded traditional class categorisation in favour of the ambiguous and all-encompassing conceptions of the precariat and the multitude. In his analysis, Steve Wright, argued that such categories were constructs wherein ‘certain members of the tendency attempted, with considerable obstinacy and ingenuity, to force the reality of working class composition’ (Wright, 2002: 224). As such, reality is forced to fit an abstraction. To my analysis, their vague yet convoluted conceptualisations can suit those who celebrate ambiguity to reinforce privilege by arguing that privilege itself is a social construct. Of course, this analysis is limited and ultimately somewhat irrelevant. My interest is in Virno’s conceptualisation of exodus and its potential as a politically motivated artist strategy.

2.2.1 Paolo Virno’s strategy of exodus

Following the social tumult of the ‘70s and ‘80s, Paolo Virno developed the strategy of exodus as an alternative to direct opposition as he believed such dialectical negations of hegemonic power

soon ‘resemble each other in a static mirror reflection’ (Hardt & Virno, 1996: 261). The corrosion within revolutionary conflicts is arguable inevitable. One cannot expect to confront serious political power without serious consequences which resonate through all sides. The 1789 French revolution, the 1917 Russian Revolution and the 2011 London riots were all unstable masses of energy, capable of taking and being manipulated by many forms. Such mercurial negations are deeply ambiguous and embody both nihilistic and egalitarian tendencies. They are not to be celebrated or condemned but perhaps understood. A Marxist analysis would argue that they are inevitable manifestations of the historical contradictions of material inequality in society. Perhaps an anarchist would argue that they are screams against exploitation? Whether art or artists or indeed any agent can or would wish to embody or be associated with such dangerous energy is an entirely different debate. Though I hold to negation and the dialectic, Virno’s non-dialectical conception of exodus is nonetheless inspiring in its disavowal of antagonism with a corrupt power. For who wants to perpetually fight when it is mutually corrosive? He and Hardt defined the exodus as such:

Dialectical politics constructs negations, but exodus operates through subtraction. The state will crumble, then, not by a massive blow to its head, but through a mass withdrawal from its base, evacuating its means of support. It is important however, that this politics of withdrawal also simultaneously constitute a new society, a new republic. We might conceive this exodus, then, as an engaged withdrawal or a founding leave taking, which both refuses this social order and constructs an alternative (Hardt & Virno, 1996: 262).

For Virno, the exodus functions as both a personal and political project. On a personal level, humour can function as a potent negation of said order. Drawn from his analysis of jokes as a fusion of displacement and innovation, he sees the exodus as operating like wit; it is both a response to and possible solution of political crisis (Virno, 2008). The strategy of exodus has traversed the writing of differing autonomist thinkers and should not be considered the sole property of Virno. Steve Wright, has described how Andrea Colombo considered the exodus strategy as a valid path out of the relationship with capital in the first issue of the autonomist journal *Luogo Comune* - meaning ‘commonplace’ (mydictionary, 2012). Colombo wrote of how the

'Back to Africa' call of the 1960's Black Nationalist movement (Marcus Garvey, Bob Marley and Malcolm X) was a seminal inspiration (Wright, 2005).

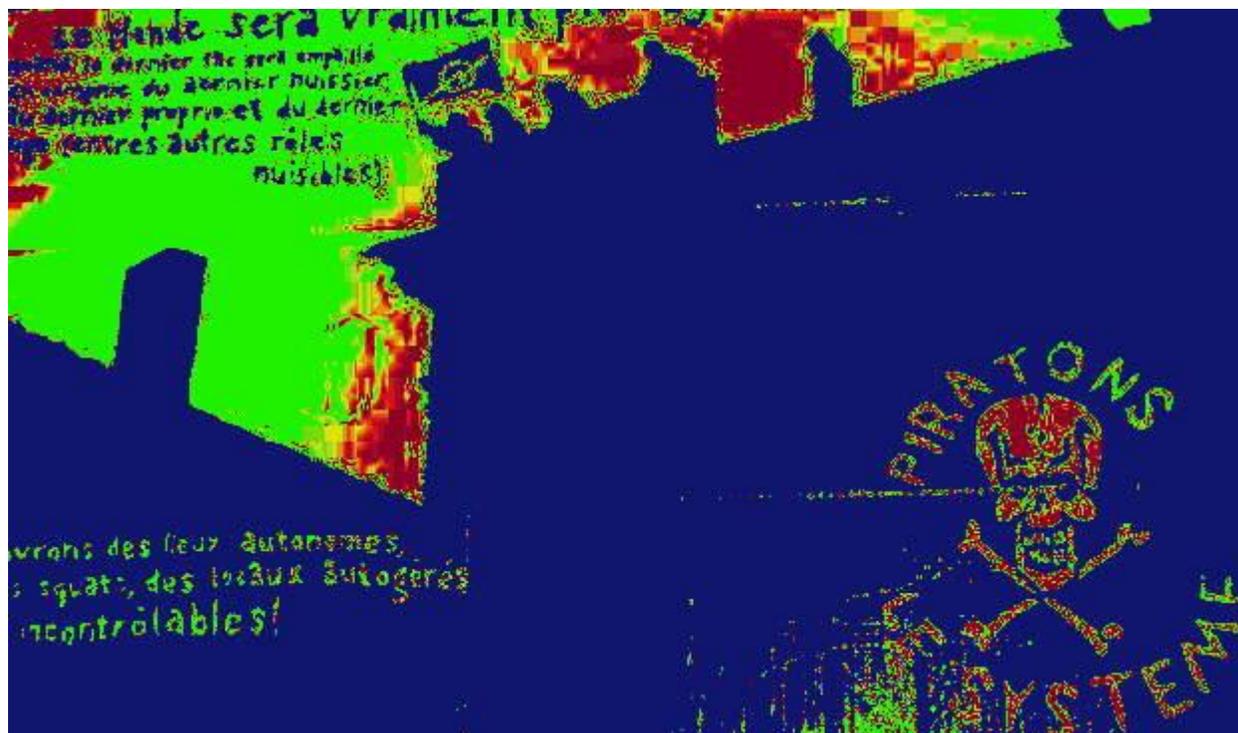


Fig. 10: *Pirats les Systeme*, French squat, acrylic on card/ digitally altered, 2010

Autonomist spaces antithetical to corporations and the state have manifested across Europe in squats, occupations and artist run cooperatives over the past few decades. Despite their vocalised support for autonomist ideals, Virno has a much broader, egalitarian conception of how refusal and the exodus should manifest. While his strategy may appear naïve, impractical or utopian, it resonates with the 'Consent of the governed' doctrine that underpins the mandate and legitimacy of democratic governance. In the United States of America's 1776 *Declaration of Independence*, it proclaimed that 'all men are created equal' and that 'governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed' (archives.gov, 2011). Ultimately, power is maintained through acquiescence. When the people withdraw their acquiescence,

mandate or consent to be governed, serious crisis emerges. Virno essentially calls for such a withdrawal from representative politics and the realisation of alternative, truly democratic fora.

2.3 Art as exodus

Virno's exodus has inspired numerous authorities within art and popular culture. For example, Tobias Van Veen argued that pre-commodified rave culture was and can once again be an embodied, non-representative, collective exodus (Van Veen, 2010: 40) while the recent 'Quit Facebook' campaign deployed Virno's exodus as an inspiration (Quitfacebook, 2010). In Nicolas Bourriaud's defence of this as the age of the altermodern for an exhibition at the Tate, he argued that the exodus phenomenon is manifest in nomadic transnational art that ruptures traditionally divisive, national identities. Taking inspiration from Gustav Metzger's production, he proclaimed:

(T)he vital thing today, starting from the standpoint of the extreme globalisation of world culture is to grasp afresh the emblematic gesture of modernity – the exodus. This may be defined as a wrenching separation from the traditions, customs, everything in fact that anchors an individual to a 'territory' and the habits of a culture petrified by fixed ways of doing and saying things (Bourriaud, 2009: 12).

On initial reading, Bourriaud's heralding of a global art inspired by exodus that rejects rigid identity thinking appears thoroughly appealing. It negates the art world's exclusion of producers from the global south and east and opens up a space where knowledge of other cultures may in turn foster understanding and peace. However, his thesis is not without its contradictions. Much of the celebrated altermodern producers are thoroughly institutionalized within the global art market. This deification by the Tate can thus be interpreted as a cynical gesture aimed at developing networks with the emerging B.R.I.C. economies. It is also worth considering that the total disavowal of cultural identity and customs is not inherently worthy but can be interpreted as the general tendency of neo-liberal neutralization of difference. Perhaps this rupturing of our sense of self should not be glorified but questioned? In a 2009 interview, Virno agreed that art can indeed

be resistance and exodus. However, while acknowledging that politically engaged art forms a part of social movements, he emphasised that they are separate and operate on different levels:

The common ground of art and social movements is never about content. Art that relates to social resistance is beside the point, or rather art expressing views on social resistance is not relevant. The radical movement and avant-garde poetry touch on the formal investigation that yields an index of new forms denoting new ways of living and feeling, which results in new standards (Lavaert et al., 2009).

While this may appear a rigid differentiation of the two disciplines and a conservative outlook that resonates with Adorno's aesthetic theory, he goes on to argue that art is everywhere and anybody's. I interpret this as a suggestion that art is no longer the sole preserve of artists or the art world. He stated: 'There is no longer a monopolistic location for the production of art; the artistic experience is molecularly disseminated' (Lavaert et al, 2009). This interpretation of a universal art resonates throughout this thesis. Ultimately, Virno's exodus functions as inspiration for an alternative model of art. Though I would not claim to hold an autonomist philosophy, the thought has proven inspirational in my reflections on contemporary social organization and artist strategies. Despite misgivings on the feasibility of the exodus as a political project, there is great potential in the concept when applied to artist strategies. The research is not specific to the dense theoretical terrain of autonomist thought or Virno's conception of the exodus. Ultimately, the exodus concept is a point of departure to consider potent egalitarian artist exits. At this juncture, I will now turn to consider the causality of the phenomena.

2.4 Why exit?

To elucidate on my early dismay with the agency of art and to address the causality and motivations for the exodus phenomena, I will begin by developing an expanded critique that revolves around Mark Wallinger's *State Britain* installation before contextualising my remote site specific art production in the early stages of the research. In the secular academic tradition, critique

emerged out of Kantian philosophy (Foucault, 1997). It can be interpreted as a development upon the Greek and Roman tradition of rhetoric. However, while rhetoric schooled the ruling classes in power, discourse and hegemony (Eagleton 2009: 101), critique provides the tools to negate such authority. Critique is a mode of negation. Enlightenment questioning formally channelled the discontent that motivated the revolutions of the 18th century (Habermas, 1989: 14). In the seminal lecture *What is Critique?*, Michel Foucault defined critique as ‘the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth’ (Foucault, 1997: 32). In the Marxist dialectical tradition, critique has become an active science that seeks to ferment change through provoking the contradictions of an unequal society. Marx sought to implement ‘a ruthless criticism of everything existing’ (Marx, 1978: 13). György Lukács described how the Marxist dialectical method sought to comprehend and convey the interrelations of all historical events and outlooks in contrast to bourgeois thoughts analysis of isolated phenomena (Lukács, 1971: 27).

2.5 State Britain

In late 2007, Wallinger was awarded the Turner Prize for his recreation of Brian Haw’s Parliament Square peace protest at Tate Britain. The installation was an aesthetic critique of the Labour government’s foreign policy and its restrictive internal legislation. It addressed the contradictions between the laws of the state and the rights and beliefs of the people. On June 2nd 2001, Brian Haw, a righteous evangelical Christian, instigated his occupation and negation in Parliament Square to draw attention to the deaths of Iraqi children incurred by U.N. sanctions (brianhaw.tv, 2010). It developed into a protest against the 2004 Iraq invasion, the military occupation and the civil war. In 2003, the ‘House of Commons Procedure Committee’ held a short enquiry that concluded that protests in Parliament Square could provide a ‘cover for a terrorist attack’ (Atkins, 2007). This resulted in a passing of the 2005 Serious Organised Crime and Police Act. As the law banned all unauthorised demonstrations within a one-kilometre radius of Parliament Square, Haw’s encampment was confiscated (BBC, 2006). During the Parliamentary debate, MP Patrick Cormack gave a forthright justification for the law when he stated that life was ‘made intolerable by

those people baying away, without a crowd to address, merely repeating themselves ad nauseam' (Cormack, 2005). However in January of 2007, Judge Quentin Purdy overruled the legislation, deeming it unworkable (BBC, 2007). Haw thus returned and remained in Parliament Square up until his premature death in 2011. Despite his passing, the protest continues and is currently being manned by Babs Tucker who was on hunger strike for almost a month in early 2013 to protest against war and police persecution (Tucker, 2013).



Fig. 11: *Parliament Square Peace Camp*, London, 2010

Britain's empire may have faded but its colonial 'will to power' policies arguably continue through its strategic allegiance with the geo-political hegemony of America and other interventionist states. From an analysis of declassified British documents, Mark Curtis has claimed that Britain is complicit in the deaths of at least 10 million 'unpeople' since the Second World War (Curtis, 2004). A 2008 publication on E.U. defence by 'the Centre for European Reform' provides a vivid insight into the thinking behind foreign policy in Britain. The lobby have been termed 'by far the best of all EU think-tanks in London' by the Guardian and 'a think-tank with an increasingly influential role in the planning of official policy' by the Financial Times (CER, nd). In the paper *E.U. defence in 2020*, the authors called for the creation of a European military force that will

proactively intervene militarily in foreign countries when the U.N. and N.A.T.O. do not have the will or legitimacy. Citing the threat of terrorism or instability, they argued that intervention will most likely be needed in Iraq, Nigeria, Algeria, Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines and the Congo (Keohane and Valasek, 2008). Such targets should not be considered farfetched considering the recent military interventions in Libya, Syria and Mali. Indeed, Prime Minister David Cameron has declared how Britain will engage in a ‘generational struggle’ in North Africa to defeat these ‘poisonous’ extremists (Morris, 2013). Alan Greenspan, the ex-chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve provided an insight into such planning when he wrote: ‘I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil’ (Beaumont & Walters, 2007). The egalitarian art group Platform have defined Britain’s foreign energy policy as such:

British Foreign Energy Policy aims to influence and control the extraction and flow of energy resources abroad. This includes pressuring oil-producing countries to allow foreign control over their resources, supporting British companies in gaining long term contracts and asserting military and diplomatic dominance (Platform, 2006).

In 2010, the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination was invited by the Tate to hold a workshop on art and civil disobedience. However, they were informed that they could not address Tate or its sponsors in their discussions. Liberate Tate emerged from this censorship. In 2010 and 2011, the group poured oil over themselves and the Tate to highlight the exploitation of the symbolic value of art by the prominent sponsors BP (Liberatetate, 2010). John Jordan was a central organising figure in the group. In *Deserting the Art Bunker*, he called on artists to ‘become invisible’ and apply their creativity ‘directly to social change, to social movements, to acts of disobedience and strategies of survival’ (Jordan, 2003). For him, this involved working with Reclaim the Streets and Platform. In contrast, Mark Wallinger strives to effect social change from within the art world.

Robert Smithson argued that art loses its charge and goes through an ‘esthetic convalescence’ within museums, which he saw as functioning like asylums and jails (Smithson, 1992: 947). Artists

and the institution of art repetitively place ‘the other’ within their framework. This may be the institution promoting a person (be that a naive outsider like Jean Michel Basqiat) or the artist promoting a theme (be that homelessness, immigration or sexism). In doing so, the artist or institution raises awareness of and represents the sense of otherness within society. However, in doing so, they, like politicians, often become lauded by capital and thus alienated from the other that they sought and failed to represent. An example of the appropriation, commodification and neutralization of ‘the other’ is the fate of the ephemeral ground art of the Australian aborigines over the past few decades. In stark contrast with its tradition as an ephemeral, anonymous, communal activity, the market sought to glorify paintings on canvas by celebrated individual authors. Such display and division is anathema to their sacred land art tradition and their gift-giving economies (Byra Mixie Mosby, 1996).

Through his earthworks, Smithson sought to create a dialectical art ‘outside of cultural confinement’ (Smithson, 1992: 947). The art gallery as an institution of confinement is literally manifest in Tate history. Tate Britain was opened in 1897 on the site of the old Milbank Penitentiary (Schiller, 2008). Built using the utilitarian principles of Jeremy Bentham, the panopticon consisted of a space wherein the prisoner could be seen at all times (Schiller, 2008). Michel Foucault described Bentham’s design as symptomatic of the omniscient disciplining of the individual since the Enlightenment (Foucault, 1977: 200). Be it in offices, public houses, galleries or on the street, people are frequently being watched via CCTV. It is worth noting that recent University of Cambridge research has claimed that these cameras have little effect on inner city crime despite one for every twelve people in Britain (Whitehead, 2009).

State Britain was nominated for the Turner Prize following its display within the ornate Duveen Galleries of Tate Britain. Henry Tate made his personal fortune through sugar trading in the 19th century (Tate, nd). Though not directly involved in the slave trade as it had been abolished, there is little doubt that he was involved in the exploitation of Africa. Meanwhile Baron Joseph Duveen was perhaps the preeminent art dealer of the early 20th century. He was a bridge of sorts between American wealth and European culture. However, his final years were mired in controversy

following his botched whitening of the Elgin marbles at the British Museum (Secret, 2005). The Parthenon marbles have caused generations of resentment after Thomas Bruce; the seventh Earl of Elgin removed them from the Acropolis in Athens at the turn of the 19th century. The act has entered contemporary discourse to such an extent that the French encyclopaedic dictionary Larousse defines the word 'elginisme' as a 'form of vandalism consisting of taking works of art from their countries of origin to put them in public or private collections' (Larousse, 2012). Could one relate Wallinger's appropriation of Haws protest to an act of elginisme?

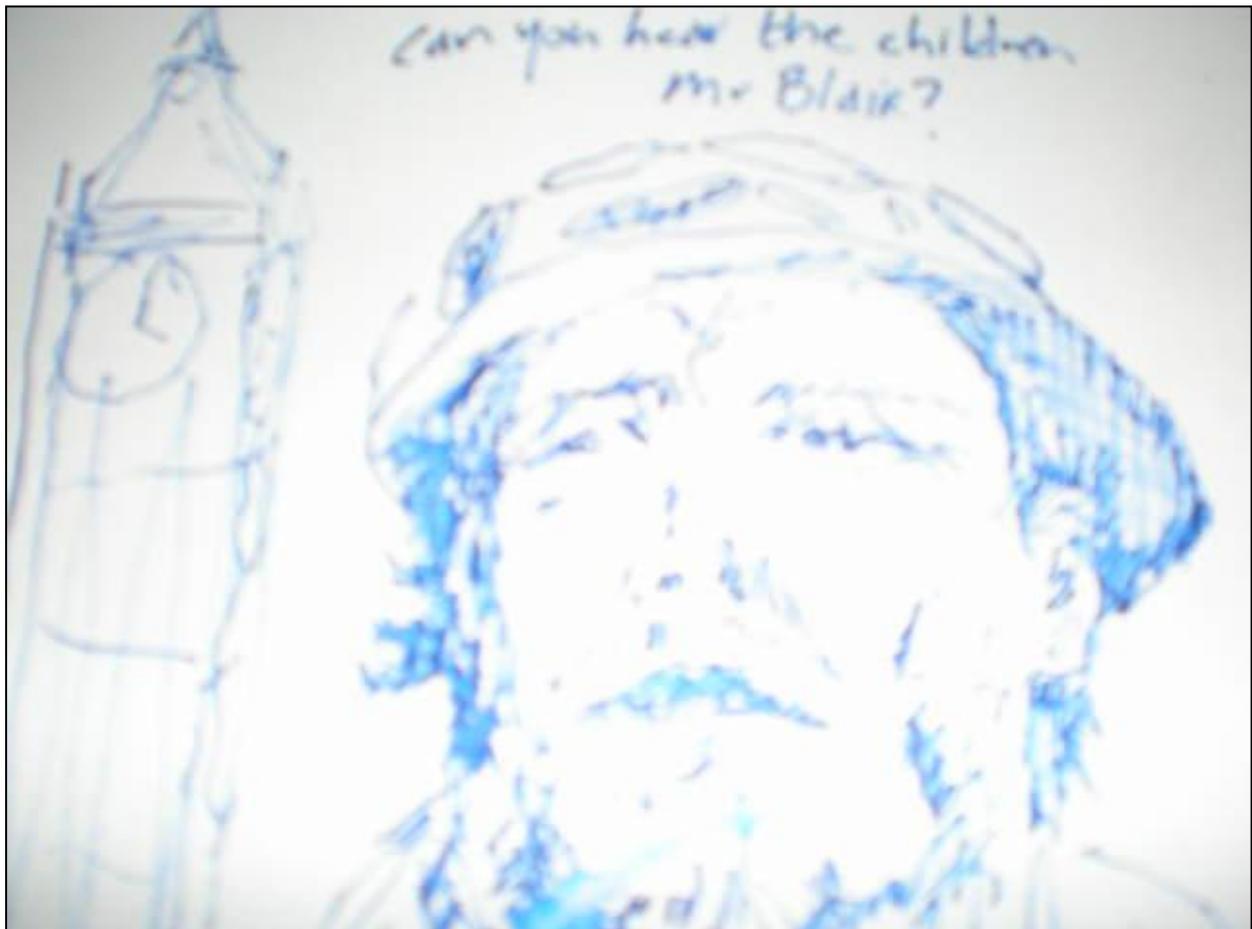


Fig. 12: *Brian Haw*, pen on paper, 2011

While Wallinger immediately credited Haw upon receiving the prize, there is an inevitable power imbalance and the potential for exploitation when artists work with or appropriate others work. This is invariably due to financial and authorial credit. Was *State Britain* the work of Wallinger, Haw, the artisans who recreated it or all the people who donated it? The 40-metre installation consisted of reproductions of 1,500 banners, placards and toys that were gifted to Haw from numerous disparate individuals and groups. It took six months for 14 assistants from Mike Smiths Design and Fabrication Company in London to recreate the confiscated protest (mikesmithstudio, 2010). The Stuckist painter, Abby Jackson rejected Wallinger's appropriation and argued that she and the others who originally produced and donated the work were the real authors (Dickson, 2007). Upon reflection, they are potentially all involved in the authorship of the work. Haw as the catalyst is pivotal. Though Brian Haw did not partake in contemporary art discourse or practice, he could be interpreted as an artist in the Bourdieuan sense of 'making a sensation' (Bourdieu & Haacke, 1995: 23). He attracted much media and public attention and his negation inspired much of the 2011 St Paul's Occupy Movement. Waldemar Junuszczak argued that the quandary of ascertaining authorship was the most fascinating aspect of the installation (Januszczak, 2007). Wallinger thus simultaneously appeased both the disinterested critic and the emotive conceptual novice through his fusion of a childlike scream against war alongside a critical distancing of said scream.

Wallinger reportedly paid £90,000 to Mike Smith to recreate the outlawed protest (Marre, 2008). What it has sold for or who now owns it is unclear. However, the production costs provide some insight into the profit margins for some in contemporary art. Wallinger has acknowledged that he sells his art through his gallery to 'very rich people' (Bhattacharyya, 2007). His *Capital: after Marx* paintings of the homeless outside London banks were reportedly bought by Charles Saatchi (Slater, 2009). There is little doubt that Wallinger's anti-war critique and its subsequent plaudits following the award have significantly developed his cultural capital and market worth.

2.6 The modern artist as jester

In a review of *State Britain*, Dean Kenning contrasted Wallinger's installation with the absurdist stunts of Mark McGowan, aka the Artist Taxi Driver. McGowan's provocative performances (which he often publicises directly through the tabloid media) have included turning on the taps in a Camberwell gallery for a year to highlight waste, eating a corgi to protest against the Royal's hunting, lying on the ground as a dead soldier for a week to protest war and keying cars as a community arts project. Kenning described McGowan as an embarrassment to the art world as he shuns established channels of discourse and appears to 'confirm the common view that art is indulgent nonsense' (Kenning, 2007: 12). While the performance *Artist Keys Cars* is a malignant act, it is also a powerful nihilistic negation of the patronising assumption that an artist being placed in a deprived community may improve or placate the community. McGowan's negations confront a contemporary art world and society wherein arms dealers, private security firms and oil contractors are not the only beneficiaries of war. Liberal journalists and politically engaged artists also profiteer. For example, the Guardian editorial boasted of their increase in sales in their America edition on the 10th anniversary of the Afghanistan invasion (Guardian, 2011). It may be an uncomfortable truth but a safe institutionalised critique in art may be as much of a commodity as war. This outlook is by no means a radical analysis. In Adrian Searle's review of *State Britain* in the Guardian, he wrote:

Since the 1960s, many artists, from Hans Haacke to Daniel Buren, Cildo Meireles to Allan Sekula, have made work which offers a critique of the institution that houses it, and the structures, financial and ideological, that support it. However critical such art may itself be, it also serves to highlight the institution's liberalism, by allowing it to be there in the first place (Searle, 2007).

While I agree with Searle's analysis, there is a limitation to what is usually displayed in contemporary art spaces. While anti-war or pro-immigration exhibitions are routine, it is exceedingly rare to observe an exhibition that displays content that questions the vested interests of the gallery and its network. Julian Stallabrass has argued that contemporary art is a 'social salve'

and that it has become a tool of corporations and government under modern capitalism (Stallabrass, 2004). He claimed that contemporary arts feigned unconventionality was entirely conventional: 'beneath its apparently various surfaces there is a hidden uniformity... it acts as an agent of neoliberalism, celebrating as the exercise of freedom all that is forced upon us' (Stallabrass, 2004: 182). In 1967, the Arte Povera ('poor art') critic Germano Celant described the modern artist as 'the new apprentice jester':

(H)is behaviour is conditioned into never offering more than a 'correction' to the world, perfecting its social structures but never modifying or revolutionising them. Even though he rejects consumer society, he discovers himself one of its producers (Celant, 1967).



Fig. 13: *The jester*, clay, 2008

The androgynous jester that misruled European courts between the 12th and 18th century first emerged in Western culture as comic actors during the Roman Empire (Otto, 2001). Beatrice K Otto described how they were forced to flee Rome due to fermenting discord. From this displacement, one can imagine the birth of travelling circuses and see resonances with the Romantics, the Beat generation, Virno's exodus and Gilles Deleuze's celebration of nomadic flight lines (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In court, they tended to target 'religion and its representatives, self important scholars, venal officials and nobles, and erring, corrupt or lazy rulers' (Otto, 2001: Xxiii). As such they spoke truth to power and embodied the commoner's dissent. Of course the jester, king, queen and commoners were all socialized within their allotted roles within. Otto described how 'the trust bestowed on a jester by his sovereign is perhaps due to a shared sense of isolation' (Otto, 2001: 40). Ultimately however, she argued that the jester was integral to the court and no real rebel.

Punk, hip-hop and rave subcultures all emerged as potent negations or exits from the mainstream music industry and conventional political organisation. Often consisting of numerous, indefinable members, they fused a participatory DIY ethic and aesthetic that rose up from below. They were a marginalized antithesis to the prevailing culture that problematized authorship and reification. However, artistic heroes and commodification soon emerged and they often became (like the pigs in Orwell's *Animal Farm*) what they replaced. Perhaps such egalitarian movements are inherently unstable and must naturally decompose soon after their emergence? Like the jester in the court, the toleration or glorification of the antithesis is often used to highlight the veneer of antagonistic positions within western democracies. In April of 2002, Prime Minister Tony Blair described how he passed protesters every day in Downing Street. He stated: 'I may not like what they call me but I thank God they can. That's called freedom' (Judd & Morris, 2005). However, when an antithesis is truly potent and contains significant agency, it is often demonised or criminalised. This is evident in the SOCPA law that was passed in response to Haw's protest.

2.7 Home?



Fig. 14: *Derry/Londonderry*, photograph(s), 2011

The early research focus emerged in 2007 and 2008 as I lived in the border region of north-west Ireland. The area of Londonderry/ Derry/ Doire and Donegal/ Dhún na nGall is a contested, liminal and peripheral location between the states of Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. This rigid division that was demarcated in 1921 has arguably led to conflicted loyalties, underinvestment, unemployment, violence and emigration among its citizens. Signposts are often vandalised to read ~~Londonderry~~, ~~Londonderry~~ or (my favourite due to its non-identity nature) ~~Londonderry~~. From a global economic perspective, it is also a somewhat privileged space with little homelessness and a good standard of living for many in a scenic part of the world. The locations conflicted identity has subliminally influenced the emergence of the non-identity, negative dialectical method. Emigration and my migration (be it physical or psychological) to and from the region has in turn influenced the exodus focus. In the unpublished *Refugee Conversations*, Bertolt Brecht wrote: ‘Emigration is the best school of dialectics. Refugees are the keenest dialecticians. They are refugees as a result of changes and their sole object of study is change’ (Brecht, 1940). The traversal of the bipolar dialectic of the margins/ centre within this

research goes beyond the geographic to address marginalization and exclusion in art and society. Indeed, as the research developed, it sought to manifest the 1960s Italian workers call: ‘the margins to the centre’ (Power & Lotringer, 2009).

2.7.1 Great Recession



Fig. 15: *Representative democracy?* digitally altered, 2010

2007 and 2008 marked the explosion of panic that engulfed the stock markets, banks and western governments amidst the crisis in capitalist trading. In the Republic of Ireland, the epochal moment was the 28th of September 2008. On that fateful night, senior members of the Irish government secretly met a group of bankers and agreed to temporarily underwrite the debts of the troubled banks on what they claimed was a temporary liquidity difficulty (RTE, 2008). A downward spiral

has emanated from this decision; the deal became a permanent fixture and tens of billions of the banks private debt have been transferred onto the public. As a result, anonymous speculating lenders from across Europe and the rest of the world have had their risk refunded. This socialisation of private debt is of course against every tenet of free market capitalism. Within two years, the bankrupt government were informed by Jean Claude Trichet (then head of the European Central Bank) to request a bailout from the IMF, ECB and the EC to ensure the banks received their money (RTE, 2011). Former chief economist of the World Bank and Nobel Prize winner, Joseph Stiglitz, castigated this decision:

This is a pattern that I used to see at the World Bank. You have these crises, the bankers come in and say you have to do something very quickly and basically they rob the taxpayer (RTE, 2009).

Trichet was previously governor of the Banque de France who had undoubtedly speculated heavily in Irish (and other emerging European) markets. The Troika now dictate the fiscal policies of the indebted Republic. Unemployment has risen by hundreds of thousands and hundreds of thousands of others have emigrated (indexmundi, 2012). In a nation with a workforce of just 1.8 million people, the debt is reported to be at least €64 billion (Begg, 2013). Even the Financial Times, the bulwark of the City of London has condemned what has happened. In their editorial for January the 14th 2013, they claimed that it was ‘a disgrace’ that the Eurozone powers had backtracked on their June 2012 arrangement to use ESM funds to break the ‘vicious’ link between sovereign and bank debt in member states. They described how ‘in the Irish case, nearly half the country’s annual income has gone to making whole private, risk-taking investors, mostly from other euro members’ (Financial Times, 2013).

In contrast, the Icelandic President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson instigated a referendum by refusing to sign a bill put forth by the government to rescue speculators from Britain and Holland who had heavily invested in the privately owned Landsbanki (Kollewe, 2011). To the chagrin of the Icelandic government, the IMF and the consensus of ‘saving the banks and ourselves mantra’ among many governments and media commentators, the Icelandic people voted against

underwriting the debts on two separate occasions. As a result, Iceland has since returned to the markets and its economy has steadily grown and is in a reasonably healthy condition (OECD, 2011). This is of course how democracy and risk-reward capitalism should operate. Meanwhile, the now deposed Irish politicians have since claimed to have been misled by the bankers on that fateful September night. Unbelievably yet entirely believable considering the legal ramifications, there are no recorded minutes providing information of the initial guarantee (Minihan, 2012). However, the new government have fulfilled their election promise to renegotiate the deal; following an agreement with the ECB, they have passed legislation wherein payment of the debt are extended until 2054; thus ensuring that future generations will pay it off (Kenny, 2013).

2.8 Outside of cultural confinement



Fig. 16: *Roberts*, digitally altered photograph, 2007

Prior to the PhD, my Masters in Research at the art school consisted of an aesthetic critique of colonialism and its legacy through a study that pivoted around the Lord Roberts monument in Glasgow's Kelvingrove Park. Roberts was an Anglo-Irish, British soldier who traversed India, Africa and Afghanistan in the late 19th century (Hannah, 1972). Upon reflection, I was somewhat dismayed by the work. Postcolonial critical art and theory can become embroiled in conflicting identities which can further engender divisions. The PhD developed from this study of place, power and the aesthetic. However, the art production altered after moving from Glasgow to Ireland. In Ireland, I began to produce site specific, ephemeral work in remote areas along the northwest coast and border region. The research focus on artist exits in part thus derived from a series of negations within my art production.



Fig. 17: *Cui Bono?* Acrylic, Inch Fort, Donegal, 2008

In 2008, I painted the above mural on the wall of a dilapidated, out of bounds fortress on the island of Inch in County Donegal. The fortress was initially built to defend against Napoleonic forces and was updated by the British Forces during the 1st World War to defend against German naval attack. A few miles from the border, it was the site of a battle between the fledgling Irish Free State army and the anti-treaty I.R.A. during the Irish Civil War of 1921/1922 (New York Times, 1922). Considering this historical backdrop, it was an ideal location to produce a work addressing conflict and division. The mural reconfigured characters from Rene Goscinny and Albert Uderzo's comic book Asterix. The cult series detailed the mythic adventures of the rebellious village of Gaul's of North West France as they battle the encroaching Roman Empire in 50 B.C. Within the mural, the Gaul's are fighting the Roman soldiers, the pirates and each other. Meanwhile Vitalstatistix, the village chieftain is welcoming Julius Caesar and other dignitaries while Getafix the druid is mixing a magic potion which appears to be hypnotising the combatants. In this version, 'mass media' is painted onto the cauldron to elucidate upon media manipulation.

The Glasgow University Media Group have developed a rigorous empirical deconstruction and critique of the mainstream news organizations through a close analysis of the language deployed, imagery produced and the distribution of time for opposing arguments in conflicts. Alongside this excavation, they gather audience responses through interviews and focus groups. They have concluded that the major news organisations are not impartial or objective but that they direct and manipulate public opinion in favour of elite interests (Philo, 1999). Indeed Chris Blackhurst, the editor of the Independent has recently acknowledged that journalists and politicians formed 'a giant club' at Westminster (Greenslade, 2012).

I sought to convey this manner of manipulation within the mural. The druid and chieftain were of course elite figures within early societies and had significant agency as both gatekeepers of knowledge and symbols of power. To encourage the viewer's suspicions, I painted 'Cui bono?' alongside Caesar. This famous Roman maxim was reportedly uttered by Lucius Cassius and quoted by Cicero (Partridge, 1978). A legal adage that has become a popular phrase, it means: 'who stands to gain? I.e. from a crime, and so might have been responsible for it' (OED, 2004:

348). The work was originally conceptualised in 2007 for the Postgraduate forum at the art school. While reflecting on the differing and at times conflicting identities of the international students, I realised that that which differentiated us was not our different natures per se but the conflicting national histories, stereotypes and identities around which we had grown. We are all allotted identities through our work, class or origins and we often socialise ourselves within these identities. In *Shooting an Elephant*, George Orwell described how he became socialized into being the colonial British policeman during the Raj in India; he described how he 'wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it' (Orwell, 1936). Louis Althusser asserted that we are interpellated (or called out) to act within ideological structures (such as the family, school or prison). For Althusser, ideology creates not just objects but subjects, be that the oppressor or the oppressed (Althusser, 1970). We are all potentially the soldier, the pirate, the Gaul or indeed the druid or chieftain. Ultimately the mural seeks to engender a questioning of rigid identity divisions.

To my analysis, socialization is ambiguous; it can be benign, malign or indeed both. Socialisation operates in art (like in any other field) through inclusion and exclusion. Be it sculptors or painters socializing separately or contemporary art spaces and commercial galleries avoiding each other's events, we become grounded within our identities and institutions dogma. This is not always a bad thing. For example, supporting a football team or art movement is in the most part quite harmless and healthy. Be it in a family or organization, most humans thrive when they believe themselves to be part of something greater than their individual self. As social animals, we seek to belong. On the other hand, serious acts detrimental to humanity have frequently been carried out or covered up due to blind loyalty, fear or faith to an institution (be that a religion, corporation or nation).

As the negative dialectic demands 'thinking against itself', it is imperative that the mural is not only analysed but is in fact negated. Despite my avowed intentions to the contrary, the work could be accused of narrow identity thinking. This derives from its content and the context of its physical location. As it is located near the border, it could be interpreted as directly related to the Northern Irish conflict. A critic observing it could assert that it was suggesting that the native Irish (Gaul) leaders were betraying their people to the occupying British (Roman) forces. From a southern Irish

perspective, it could be interpreted as the Irish government betraying their people to European bankers or governments. Were it painted in Glasgow, it could be interpreted as an attack on the SNP government's dalliance with big business while in London it could be interpreted as suggesting that the coalition government are betraying the people to Europe, Washington or the bankers. Ultimately, the viewer projects his or her worldview into the work. Personally, I am seeking to convey a general or universal message that seeks to problematize our allotted identities and engender reflection upon manipulation. However, I acknowledge the viewer (as Duchamp said) creates half the work and I have no ownership over its meaning. This wariness of misinterpretation is the central reason why the work was produced in an out of bounds fort as opposed to on a gable wall in Derry (where political and personal messages are routinely posted).



Fig. 18: *Home.2* Cold-cast, mirror, stencil, foliage, 2006

Prior to studying in Glasgow, I created a number of site-specific interventions that were situated outside of the institutions of art. For example in 2006, I displayed a cold-cast mould of the façade of a 19th century Irish cottage along a popular Galway waterfront. Though it was quite a literal work, the installation was met with silence from the passersby. Nonetheless, there was perhaps a tacit understanding in the west of Ireland that it addressed Irish historical poverty, the home, poverty, prosperity and emigration. In hindsight, it arguably in part foresaw the looming disaster that was to engulf property prices and standards of living in the country. Nietzsche's concept of 'eternal return' seems apt. This direct public presentation was not an overly conscious rejection of the institutions of art. On the contrary, my applications to exhibit were often rejected as I perhaps did not have a sufficiently developed practice or the network, rhetoric and cultural capital at this early stage in my work. The external location was thus initially motivated by circumstance more so than by choice. As such, this form of dissemination was entirely logical. Over time and with the development of my political and philosophical outlook, my thinking and practice became fascinated by questions of institutional inclusion and exclusion in general.

2.8.1 Outsiders

Pierre Bourdieu's deep sociological investigations of class and taste can be historicized within his life. He grew up in the peasant region of Bearn in the provincial French Pyrenees and went on to be a colonial soldier in Algeria. Seeing clear parallels between his social position in France and the Algerian natives, he became fascinated with exclusions and subtle forms of social organization. Indeed he has spoken of how he always saw himself as an outsider (Lane, 2000: 9). His work can thus be seen as in part motivated by a wish to negate the elitism within the Parisian intelligentsia and ruling class. Despite holding a lower status than philosophy within French academia, he saw sociology as the ideal discipline within which to critique the veils of society. His writings have attracted much opprobrium. He has described how many in the cultural field interpret his work and sociological analysis in general as siding with 'the mass of petty, obscure actors, justly unrecognized, and to be an ally of what is repugnant to the 'creators' of an era' (Bourdieu, 1996, xvi). Of course, few professions appreciate a forensic critique of their modus operandi. Inspired by

Bourdieu and the institutional critique developed by Hans Haacke, my work became fascinated by the circulation of power and finance within the art world.



Fig. 19: *Funding?* Pen on paper/ digitally altered, 2009

The above image charts the Arts Council Ireland’s allocation of funding to individual artists between 2007 and 2009 (artscouncil.ie, 2010). Through the tedious task of collating the figures, it became apparent that Dublin based artists gained over €2 million in funding whereas not one

person from Monaghan, Westmeath and a number of other counties received a grant. Despite the population differences, the disparity is self-evident and conveys information that contradicts the ethos of the funding council; it suggests a cultural Pale may have existed in the mindset of the funding committees. Whereas opinions are easily disputed, it is difficult to argue with cold statistics. The purpose of such an aesthetic negation and critique is to effect change through instigating reflections and engendering contradictions. It was motivated by my failure to access funding in Ireland or Britain and my sense of otherness between these nations. It is included to elucidate on personal, political motivations for the exodus phenomena - if one feels excluded from art or from within a state, it is entirely rational to seek out an exodus. It is important to note that Ireland is of course not alone in its centralized focus. From a brief online search, I discovered that London was granted over £190 million of a budget of £427 million from the Arts Council England in 2010/11 (Randell, 2012). This scenario undoubtedly replicates itself across the world in numerous fields of endeavour.



Fig. 20: *Tenets of Buddhism*, Fahan, Donegal, 2008

While living in Ireland between 2008 and 2010, I produced a series of ephemeral works in remote regions. They included scoring imagery and text into sand, manufacturing sculptures with the natural foliage and detritus washed ashore and drawing and writing with chalk on rocks. Though pleased with the work on an aesthetic level, its physical dislocation appeared to vastly reduce its agency. However, such remoteness is not total as it has been seen by many through documentation, reproduction and distribution online. While the displaced production can be interpreted as an attempted negation of the commodity form through its physical displacement and ephemerality, its ambiguous content and remote location also suggested an exit or negation from a polemical critique. In hindsight, it can be interpreted as a manifestation of a dismay with the effect of antagonistic art critique. Though sympathetic, I had little motivation to follow the radical art writing of Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray and embed the art practice within local activism. At this time, the Socialist Environmental Alliance was picketing the weapons manufacturer Raytheon in Derry (Mc Daid, 2009). Reading Friedrich Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* on the remote island became an embodiment of this refusal.

2.9 Working within or without arts institutions?

Many of those who hold the fatalistic outlook that art is a closed system for a select few and has no real social effect seek a way out. In 1968, Allan Kaprow declared that anti-art in the provocative Dada tradition had become naïve and nullified from within the institution (Kaprow, 1972: 100). Declaring himself an Un-artist, he called for a rejection of the artist label and championed the fusion of a playful creativity into all aspects of life. Paraphrasing Karl Marx, he declared: 'Artists of the world drop out! You have nothing to lose but your professions!' (Kaprow, 1993: 109) Ever the iconoclast, Jean Baudrillard eventually turned on his artist followers and proclaimed that art has become 'empty, null, void and insignificant' (Baudrillard, 2005: 27). He argued that all critique is co-opted, marketed and neutralized and that the only solution was the death of art. In the Forward to the 2012 Berlin Biennale, Artur Żmijewski's proclaimed that 'Artists, as well as the theorists and philosophers gravitating in their world, have become practitioners of impotence' (Żmijewski, 2012). This dismay with the potential of art mirrors a wider discontent with the possibility of

realising progressive social change following the failures of 1968. At the outset of this research, I held a similarly fatalistic outlook when contemplating the agency of art. I interpreted the art world as a monolithic, profit-driven entity wherein artists or collectives (be they complicit or critical) are a product to be marketed and traded. A short poem inspired by Adorno and Horkheimer's *Culture Industry* essay conveyed my stark outlook on arts agency:

A world where the 300 richest have the wealth of billions... Meanwhile in the culture industry, our artistic heroes create objects or environments for the perpetuation of the myth of their empty being (Harron, 2008).

The poem sought to address the contradiction of global wealth inequality and the narcissism of identities within much contemporary art. In hindsight, it reads as somewhat trite and hypocritical as I am not an aid worker and art is a field of business within a capitalist society. Nonetheless, the poem operates as a vivid illumination of my thoughts at the time. The logic followed that if opposition is celebrated, marketed and neutralised, then the only valid strategy is an exit. As I approach closing these reflections on the motivations and causality of exodus from a personal and political perspective, it is important to negate the rigid critique of Wallinger's installation. To markedly differentiate between him and McGowan is reductive thinking. McGowan is not some pure, mythical outsider; indeed he describes himself as part of the art world (McGowan, 2012). And Wallinger is not a stooge playing the art game for money and fame. Despite the polemic, I admire his art. I was being forcefully critical to force the logic in order to convey the causality of the exodus phenomena. His cross media explorations of history, identity and class have influenced my work. As an aestheticized negation, *State Britain* had real agency; it was a critical manifestation of the mass disgust with the Iraq war in Britain that in part added to the quantitative pressure that resulted in the effective qualitative change of Prime Minister Blair leaving office.

A rigid rejection of operating within the institutions of art is entirely dogmatic. Does it mean refusing to participate in a group show at a local co-operative gallery? There are spaces for rigorous critical inquiry and the potential to effect change through and within contemporary art. In a

discussion with Pierre Bourdieu, Hans Haacke claimed that art can play a ‘catalytic role’ in society. He described how ‘all productions of the consciousness industry no matter whether intended or not, influence the social climate and thereby the political climate as well’ (Bourdieu & Haacke 1995: 21). Real social and political change occurs through a serious dialectical pressure on power. Actions create reactions wherein change occurs on both sides. Brian Haw convincingly argued that if 100,000 people stayed for a week or longer in 2003, the war in Iraq may have been averted (Taylor, 2011). An apt example of the agency of art occurred during Haacke’s *Taking Stock* exhibition at the Tate in 1988. It consisted of an oil painting of Margaret Thatcher surrounded by numerous books with references to the Arts Council, the British Museum, British Conservative Elections and the South African Nationalist Party. That all the above were clients of the Saatchi & Saatchi advertising agency and that Charles Saatchi was a member of the Tate Board was not a coincidence. Apparently so infuriated by the exhibition, Saatchi immediately resigned his position on the board of the Patrons of New Art (Sennert, 2005).

Like Haacke, Gregory Sholette rejects the binary division of inside and outside the institution. Inspired by Deleuze, he claimed that ‘the institutional border runs directly through each of us, penetrating even our cherished sense of autonomy’ (Bloom, Pietroiusti & Sholette, 2009). While acknowledging that the art world often neuters activist art through the canonisation of a select few political artists, Sholette holds to the potential of subversion from within rather than dropping out of the art world. In a similar vein, Andrea Fraser argued that we cannot escape the institution as we internalise the system that defines what we do as art (Fraser, 2005). To problematize the pyramid of art, Cesare Pietroiusti searches for ‘folds to work through and against the institutions’ (Bloom, Pietroiusti & Sholette, 2009). In 1996, he was invited to participate in a national group show of emerging artists at the XII Quadriennale in Rome. Rather than reject the invitation, he expanded it by inviting whomsoever wished to participate. This resulted in 250 uninvited artists exhibiting. Currently Pietroiusti is working on the the Italian Museum in Exile project. This involves showing work by ignored, unknown and outsider Italian artists in exhibitions around the world. In a similar trajectory, the art collective Little Berlin sought ‘to lessen the authority of the art world’ through inviting every visitor to Philadelphia’s City Hall to put an artwork of their choice into their exhibition during their 2011 residency (author-LESS-ity, 2011).

A positive manifestation of the institutions of art would see them functioning as a microcosm of Jürgen Habermas' conception of the public sphere and the non-state public spheres championed by Paolo Virno (Virno, 2004). In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas described the emergence of genuine spaces of democratic dialogue and critique amongst the educated bourgeois of the 18th century (Habermas, 1989: 14). He asserted that these informal gatherings in cafes and public squares were the antithesis of the regimented feudal order. However, he claimed that such a sphere has collapsed over time and that democratic fora have since been usurped by private interests (1989: 160). As these confluences were the preserve of wealthy white men, Habermas' theory has understandably attracted much critique for its failure to address the sexist, racial and class exclusions of such groupings (Fraser, 1992). However, he does acknowledge the prejudice of overlooking 'the plebeian public sphere' from the outset (1989: xviii). Free art collective seek to initiate 'a miniature and temporary public sphere' through initiating dialogue in response to their sloganeering interventions which exist both on the streets and in the institutions of art (Freee, 2008: 120). For example, their slogan 'the economic function of public art is to increase the value of private property' was directed at both passers-by and the art world through its reproduction on public billboards and art journals. As a form of polemic, they seek to engender debate, agreement and conflict to develop democratic instincts beyond the 'debased public sphere' (Freee, 2008, 120). The difficulty in such a project is breaking both the social apathy and the hermetic sphere of the art world.

While contemporary art has the potential to operate as a microcosm of and laboratory for an egalitarian society, it has serious issues with breaching the perception that it is an elitist environment. Statistics show that ethnic minorities and working class communities are low participants and attendants. Hans Haacke's audience surveys from the 1970's revealed that visitors on both sides of the Atlantic were mainly from middle to upper class backgrounds and were 'almost uniformly white' (Haacke, 2009: 9). While this has changed, the institutions of art remain a privileged space. Recent research from the Higher Education Statistics Agency show that Glasgow School of Art has one of the lowest rates of participation from students from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds in the U.K. (Denholm, 2012). Meanwhile Glasgow's Tramway Gallery has recently acknowledged that the local Asian community in South Glasgow have not significantly

increased their attendance despite this being a stated policy of their Footprints Audience Engagement Project (Tramway, 2012).

My position fluctuates on the conflicting merits of working within or without the institutions of art. While acknowledging that art can affect change, it is nonetheless limited as no single actor or act has significant agency. But art can effect consciousness and thus be a part of social change. As a dialectical analysis seeks understanding over a rigid outlook, I seek to find the merits in the differing perspectives while also realising that the divisions are nuanced. The debate should be considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, the 2009 11th Istanbul Biennale ‘What Keeps Mankind Alive?’ sought to reinvigorate Bertolt Brecht’s radical Marxist project of revolutionising art and society. Soon after, a group known as the Resistanbul Commissariat of Culture were set up in direct opposition to the Biennale. They declared:

We do not have the right to work, we do not get free healthcare and education, our right to our cities our squares and streets are taken by corporations, our land, our seeds and water are stolen; we are driven into precarity and a life without security (...) Join the resistance and the insurgence of imagination! (Resistanbul, 2009)

While the Biennale organizers undoubtedly had good intentions and the conflation of producers most likely provided a thoughtful event, they nonetheless were the selected few. The Resistanbul’s negation is also entirely understandable as they felt and probably were aesthetically and politically excluded from within their own city. As I write in early 2013, my home town of Derry has just begun its year as the inaugural U.K. City of Culture. While impressive events are occurring, funding and participation appears skewered towards external acts and connected insiders. Of course, antitheses are already emerging and what shall resonate is in the ether.

2.10 Withdrawal



Fig. 21: *Flight*, photograph, 2008

In theology, art and philosophy, the path to self-knowledge, enlightenment and truth is often achieved through a sacrificial eremiticism. Clearly the intention is to create a trancelike state from which some kind of cleansing and awakening emerges. Such departures have led to metaphysical insight in the legends of Moses in the desert, Mohammed in the cave, Van Gogh in Arles or the travels of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. Peripheral living, utopian thought and bohemian artists emanated in my mind as I further reflected upon the remote site specific work in the early research. Considering their recurring manifestations in art and society, I felt it critical to address

such apolitical flights. However, in his celebration of Virno's exodus as manifest in activist art, Gerald Raunig fundamentally rejects any correlation with escapism, artistic hermeticism or political withdrawal (Raunig, 2009: 2). He argues that Isabelle Graw's claim that the exodus is realised within the 'anti-neoliberal, isolated painter' that rejects the corporate art network is 'ultraconservative' (Raunig, 2009: 8). While it is valid to argue that the isolated artist has a limited agency, it is also understandable when concepts such as exodus, flight and withdrawal are misinterpreted as apolitical departures. This may be the antithesis of what Virno intends but it is the danger of the terminology deployed. For example, the *Sustainability and Contemporary Art: Exit or Activism?* conference in Budapest in 2008 addressed the dilemma between:

(A) conscious decision to slow down, decline to participate, to seek a way out, or 'exit' as envisioned by Paulo Virno, or on the other, there is a passion to overcome political exhaustion and confront head on rampant injustice, environmental degradation and lack of liberty' (translocal, 2008).

Virno would clearly be appalled by such an inaccurate interpretation of his call. He emphasized that it was a politically engaged withdrawal. Raunig insists that many art world commentators have depoliticised Virno's work; that they have entirely misinterpreted or ignored his writing on the political potential of virtuosity; that they have overlooked his 'specific connection of the performative-virtuosic with the public sphere, with the concept of the political, and with new post-Fordist forms of labor' (Raunig, 2008). While agreeing with Raunig's analysis of the misinterpretation of Virno, I also believe that depoliticized, utopian flights are a recurring phenomenon that cannot be ignored in a dialectical analysis of the exodus phenomena.

The ambiguity of the exodus project is furthered by Raunig himself when he approvingly describes Bartleby from Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* as 'the exemplary protagonist of flight' for both Gilles Deleuze and Giorgio Agamben (Raunig, 2009: 2). Melville's strange 1853 short story details the tale of an unknown man who suddenly appears in a New York lawyer's office and begins to work uninvited. After warily being accepted by the boss and working prodigiously as a scrivener, he suddenly refuses to work anymore as he would 'prefer not to' (Melville, 1853: 21).

To his colleagues' confusion, Bartleby will not work nor will he leave. Indeed he never seems to leave; he even sleeps in the office. The classic story is open to endless interpretation. Is Bartleby an anarchist rebelling against society? Is he clinically depressed or (what we now term) autistic? Is he the alter ego of Melville, scorned by the failure of *Moby Dick* or is the tale a mockery or celebration of the individualist bohemianism espoused by Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and the wider Romantic art tradition? (Mc Call, 1989) From my perspective, the celebration of Bartleby as an emblematic figure of exodus is deeply problematic as he is misunderstood and entirely alienated. Though a sympathetic character, he is an ambivalent figure within which to project a political strategy of emancipation. Ultimately, like the exodus concept, he remains deeply ambiguous.



Fig. 22: *Departure*, photograph, 2011

After addressing the classic gestures of refusal and negation in art (empty canvases, closed galleries and silent artists), Alexander Koch argued that quitting the art world may indeed be a 'radicalised form of institutional critique' (Koch, 2009). However, he stressed the need to differentiate between

positive and negative withdrawals. Koch claimed Lee Lozano's departure from the art world was a negative 'retirement in resignation' (Wright, 2009). In 1969, the one-time painter, performer and conceptual artist began the action *General Strike Piece*. She declared her intention to 'determinedly avoid being present at official or public 'uptown' functions or gatherings related to the 'art world' in order to pursue investigations of total personal and public revolution' (Sperlinger, 2005: 19). Soon after, Lozano instigated the *Drop Out* project. This involved a total renunciation of the New York art scene. She moved to her home state of Texas and ended all art production (Wright, 2009). Following in the romantic tradition of the tortured visionary artist, she was hospitalised in a psychiatric unit and died relatively young. Death is of course the ultimate exit. Bartleby's departure into himself ends in similar tragic circumstances when he is found dead having committed suicide. Perhaps he was (as Antonin Artaud wrote of Van Gogh) 'suicided by society' (Artaud, 1963). In contrast to Lozano's inner exile, Koch claimed that a positive drop out is not a resigned departure but it involves an evolution. For him, this was realised by Charlotte Posenenske; believing art to have little substantial effect on inequality, she quit her participatory artwork in 1968 and retrained to practice as a social scientist (Koch, 2009).

While the departure of Lozano may appear to be a forsaking of her agency, her work lives on in numerous publications and retrospectives. Like Van Gogh, Nietzsche, Sylvia Plath, Kurt Cobain, Bas Jan Ader or indeed Bartleby, she has become an inspiration, a myth, a commodity and an enigma. As such the debate on what quantifies as a potent exit is far more nuanced than it may initially appear. Every act in art and society has significance and a magnitude that is often indecipherable. An apt example is the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia in 2011. What initially seemed just another tragic event in the region became the catalyst for regional uprisings across the Middle East (Abouzeid, 2011). This is not in itself a good or bad thing; however it conveys that the negation of self can be entirely political and loaded with agency.

2.11 Utopian flights



Fig. 23: *Croatoan*, tree carving, Donegal, 2010

Desertion and the American frontier stood out as symbols of hope for Virno and the autonomists exodus project (Virno, 2004: 45). The United States of America was built upon the myth of fleeing the dogma and bigotry of the old world and going west to set up a new life in ‘the land of the free.’ This communal exodus/ negation can be interpreted as integral to the formation of many religions, nations and sects. An infamous 16th century departure has gone on to inspire many modern day drop outs and refusals of society. The legend of Croatoan follows that a group of early English settlers were left by Walter Raleigh to settle the island of Roanoke in North Carolina in the 1580s

(Bey, 2008: 122). They were ordered to mark a cross on a tree if they were attacked by the neighbouring indigenous tribes. However, upon the explorer's return they found a tree with 'Croatoan' etched into the bark - this being the name of the local native tribe. Tales soon emerged of English speaking native Americans with grey eyes.



Fig. 24: *Inch fort*, photograph, 2011

The legend fits within a long lineage of utopian departures. Due to its remote location on the edge of Europe and its mystical legends, the west of Ireland has often attracted those seeking exile or enlightenment. Both Joseph Beuys and Antonin Artaud sought out its pre-Christian spirituality. The escape from or search for a home may in part be a motivation. This dialectic of nostalgia and

wanderlust could be interpreted as related to an archetypal quest in Carl Jung's thought (Nichols, 1980) or as a search for a lack induced by language in Jacques Lacan's work (Ross, 2002). The out of bounds fort in Inch where I produced the Asterix mural was home to an intentional community known as Meitheal, the New Age healing community in the 1980s. They were a sister or 'daughter community' to 'Findhorn' in north Scotland; a group which has been lauded for its ecological and social work while also denigrated as a cult (Melling, 2009). In the 1970s, the small Donegal island of Innishfree was home to an infamous intentional community that became known as 'the Screemers' (Braid & McGuirk, 2000). The Atlantis Ecological Community was a matriarch-led group that consisted of drifters and dreamers from a diverse range of backgrounds and locations. Due to antagonism deriving from their hedonism and confrontational behaviour, they eventually left Ireland for Colombia where the few remaining members are still in the mountainous jungle. However, their utopian departure encountered tragedy when one of their children was murdered by the pseudo-Marxist FARC guerrillas (Jones, 1987).

There is clearly a strong dystopian current running through the utopian drive. Etymologically, utopia derives from the Greek *ou* 'not' and *topos* 'place' and means 'an imagined perfect place or state of things' (OED, 2004: 1593). Developing upon Plato's Republic, Thomas Moore's seminal text from 1516 sought to imagine such an ideal society. Molly Nesbit, Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Rikrit Tiravanija describe utopia as 'an ancient search for happiness, for freedom, for paradise' (Nesbit, Obrist & Tiravanija, 2006: 185). They sought to re-energize the concept during the 2003 Venice Biennale. In hindsight, it seems a somewhat despairing response towards the imminent invasion of Iraq. Dieter Roelstraete argued that a serious malaise has permeated art and political consciousness since the September 11th terror attacks and the invasion of Iraq (Roelstraete, 2009). He argued that this dismay has manifested in a regressive artistic culture that celebrates 'inner exile, escape, introspection, retrospection, depoliticisation, mystification and an apathetic hedonism' (Roelstraete, 2009: 31). While insightful considering the limitations of effecting change, his analysis could be applied to many artistic scenes since Romanticism in the late 18th century. I did not manifest a physical departure or utopian journey within the research as I thought it somewhat hackneyed at the time. As the East European art collective IRWIN said of their journey across America:

What makes the project different from a tourist trip abusing art as an excuse for stealing national and international funds in the interest of structuring pleasure, as well as various self-accusatory images in which the participants saw themselves as a bunch of demoralized, neurotic individuals in pursuit of some abstract private utopias, non-existent relations, and deficiencies that cannot be compensated for (Cufer, 2006: 140).

Despite their cynicism, the journey and encounters with the American artistic and intellectual community drew out a sense of otherness (which they shared with racial minorities) and reflections upon their identities that proved enlightening: ‘the relation of being the margin to the centre’ (Cufer, 2006: 141). Moses and the Israelites exodus from Egypt is perhaps the archetypal manifestation of a utopian departure. It has inspired and continues to inspire many who seek a better life elsewhere. The term ‘utopian socialism’ was applied to the early 19th century socialist thought of Charles Fourier and Saint-Simon which theorised ideal community’s void of prejudice and division (Engels, 1978: 683). New Lanark near Glasgow was loosely developed on such principles. Founded by David Dale in 1786 and developed by Robert Owen, it consisted of families (most of whom were Highlanders) who all lived in a self contained village in a forest where they worked the mills and received free education and healthcare. On visiting, I found the place to be somewhat disturbing; work was extremely difficult and their private lives were entirely controlled. It gave a stark glimpse into 19th century working conditions if this was considered to be benevolent. Owen ended his days in penury in the United States when his New Harmony project collapsed. Seeking to manifest a society without money, it was another paternalistic, utopian socialist experiment (Hogan, 2009). In contrast, scientific socialism was developed by Blanqui, Proudhon and Blanc and realised by Marx and Engels. Through the volumes of *Capital*, they sought to develop a critique that would provide the rigorous empirical framework within which to transform the economic structures within society.

David Graeber has described how Balzac first coined the term Bohemia in 1838 to define ‘marginal communities living in more or less voluntary poverty, seeing themselves as dedicated to the pursuit of creative, unalienated forms of experience, united by a profound hatred of bourgeois life and everything it stood for’ (Graeber, 2007: 252). The somewhat bohemian Irish and Romani

travellers emanated in my mind as I further reflected upon lived manifestations of the exodus. Gypsies have historically sought to live a semi-anonymous autonomous, communal life, free from external authority. Clearly modern capitalism, with its will to identify and classify demands their integration into society through housing, national insurance numbers, taxation and education. However, as notoriously secretive and proud people, they often reject and resent such identification. Their evasion of authority has inspired recent autonomist-anarchist thought and practice. For example, the authors of *Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the 21st Century* celebrate refusal and escape through the latent power of vagabonds and immigrants (Papadopoulos et al., 2008) and Stephen Shukaitis has argued that a gypsy-like invisibility, anonymity and concealment are potent resistance tactics for radical artists (Shukaitis, 2011). The most acclaimed radical treatise in recent years, *The Coming Insurrection*, speaks of fermenting ‘a political solidarity as impenetrable to state interference as a gypsy camp.’ It glorifies the exit from society: ‘flee visibility – turn anonymity into an offensive weapon’ (The Invisible Committee, 2007: 15). In 2009, members of the Invisible Committee were reportedly arrested and accused of attempting to sabotage a remote railway line and planning future terror attacks against the French state (Chrisafis, 2009). Dubbed the Tarnac 9, they had previously departed suburban Paris to live a communal life in rural France.

Developed upon the Tarnac flight, the Paris Commune and Virno’s exodus, the concept of ‘communisation’ has emerged in recent years. John Cunningham described it as a ‘Bartleby-style refusal that responds to the (re)production of subjectivity within contemporary capitalism throughout the entire social field by valorising negativity and dysfunction’ (Cunningham, 2009). While clearly politically motivated, the celebration of squatting, the ambivalence towards crime and the embodiment of a vanguardist activism is alienating to most people. To my analysis, real social change occurs through affecting the consciousness and lives of ordinary working and unemployed people. This shares Murray Bookchin’s critique of certain tendencies within the anarchist movement. He described how Hakim Bey’s *Temporary Autonomous Zones* was symptomatic of a general malaise in anarchism. Bey’s text fused peripheral living, occultism, Laingian thought, hashish, free love and radical politics (Bey, 2008). Bookchin argued that a philosophy steeped in Max Stirner, romanticism and Nietzsche and developed upon in Martin

Heidegger's 'authenticity' and Deleuze's 'desiring machines' was overwhelming the socialist pedigree of anarchism. He rejected postmodernists and primitivists outright; declaring them 'affluent urbanites who can afford to toy with fantasies denied to the hungry, poor and overworked employed' (Bookchin, 1995: 49). While harsh, it is an analysis that holds truth for much individualist and communal flights from society. While such flights are viable and sometimes admirable, they are not egalitarian but libertarian and rarely affect the lives of those out with the community. Egalitarianism is the central objective of the exits that I have set. As Virno emphasised, the exodus is not a departure into passivity or utopian idealism, but is 'an engaged withdrawal' from contemporary political organization and the creation of alternative egalitarian forums in our current location' (Virno, 1996: 196). While Virno's conceptualisation of exodus resonated with my reflections upon the remote production in the early research, it also convinced me that such production was invalid as a potent exit. While pleasing on an aesthetic level, it clearly did not satisfy on any political or social level. Considering this, I began to consider how a potent departure may manifest.

2.12 Call to act

Following the disappearance and death of Bas Jan Ader off the coast of Ireland during his *In Search of the Miraculous* performance in 1974, an underlined quote by Hegel was found in a notebook on his boat. It read: 'Art is still doubly a servant - to higher aims no doubt, on the one hand, but nonetheless to vacuity and frivolity on the other' (Daalder, 2004: 32). This bronze sculpture sought to evoke such a dialectically conflicted meaning. Resonating with pagan imagery, it seeks to evoke the primitive spirit of a time long gone. To contradict the symbolic profundity of the ram, it is fused with the frivolity of miniature Star Wars toys. As such its meaning is perpetually displaced. The staff ultimately symbolises a call to act; this being the ram's meaning in the Tarot. A site specific work, it was initially placed beside the ancient sun fortress of Grianan of Aileach in Donegal in 2008 before forming a part of the Doune the Rabbit Hole Festival outside Glasgow in 2012. Grianan was once a prominent seat of power in pre-Christian Ireland. It was reportedly a gathering point for ceremony, communal discussion, debate, worship, defence and celebration

(Bonner, 1974). The site evokes Virno's conception of an alternative public forum wherein the general intellect of the people is manifested (Virno, 2004). In the space, the sculpture perhaps stands as a symbolic manifestation or hope for such a democratic social arena.



Fig. 25: *Call to act*, Bronze, Donegal, 2009



Fig. 26: *The fallacy of false dilemma?* Clay, Aerosol & Stools, 2010

3.1 Fight or flight?

In 2010, I produced a work that sought to manifest my apprehension regarding the exodus project and the conflicting merits of the fight/ flight dichotomy within the dialectical and non-dialectical

traditions. The installation formed part of the PhD group exhibition ‘Half knowledge/ half’ at the Grace and Fyffe Gallery in the art school. It consisted of clay portraits on stools of the apparently antithetical Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche. On one side was Marx looking outwards towards society; he is of course associated with class conflict and the dialectical negation of capital. He once wrote of revolutionary’s exiting Europe:

If those honest people who struggle for a better future leave, they will leave the arena completely open to the obscurants and the rogues (...) Brothers, stay at the battlefront of Europe. Work and struggle here, because only Europe has all the elements of communal wealth. This type of community will be established here or nowhere’ (Marx in Jameson, 2009: 40).



Fig. 27: *The Boat*, Belfast to Stranraer ferry. Photograph, 2008

Most classical or orthodox Marxists reject the autonomist strategy of exodus. Both Chantal Mouffe and Dmitry Vilensky have insisted that we can never escape conflict in society and we must maintain an antagonistic relationship with power (Mouffe, 2008 & Raunig & Vilensk, 2008). The Communist journal *Aufheben* argued that the exodus strategy does not address the alienation in

production or the class struggle and scornfully suggested that Virno's thinking is merely a call to become petit-bourgeois (Libcom, 2004). In a similar trajectory, Marc James Léger took inspiration from Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou to reject the assumption that negation results in the return to the same and argues that the networked artist activism that is thought to embody the exodus is nothing but 'a contemporary transnational bohemia' (James Léger, 2010).

On the other side of the installation was the introverted Nietzsche looking downwards or inwards. His non-dialectical thought inspired tendencies in the autonomist and the poststructuralist tradition that have championed the exodus/ flight from power. In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche called for the workers to flee both capital and the revolutionary party (Lotringer in Virno, 2004: 8). In his writings on the exodus as manifest in activist art, Gerald Raunig celebrates a non-dialectical notion of resistance inspired by Nietzsche, Virno, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze (Raunig, 2009). Deleuze rejected what he interpreted as the binaries of the identity/ difference dichotomy that is central to the dialectic. He celebrated multiplicities, the rhizomatic and called for a line of flight from power (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 30). In a similar trajectory, Foucault called for an evacuation from the governed/ government dialectic; he heralded the 5th century B.C Roman plebeians who evaded the state through their flight to the mountains (Lorey, 2008).

In 1915, Walter Bradford Cannon theorised the fight or flight response to danger in animals (Bradford Cannon, 2010). Albert Otto Hirschman applied a similar theory for humans in what became known as 'Exit, Voice and Loyalty'. He argued that an individual or group would emigrate (Exit), protest (Voice), or passively acquiesce (Loyalty) when faced with psychological trauma or political repression (Hirschman, 1970). Paolo Virno has praised Hirschman's 'beautiful book' in his championing of the exit option (Virno, 2005: 19). Initially I was concerned by the rigid classification in Hirschman's theory. However, Bert Hoffman's recent research on migration studies emphasises that the categories are not mutually exclusive but permeated (Hoffman, 2008). For example, while a person may emigrate (exit) from their country, they might then go on to (voice) protest and effect change from abroad. In formal logic, two opposing arguments cannot be reconciled. Developed upon Aristotle's philosophy, this is known as the law of non-contradiction

(Thalheimer, 1927). In contrast, contradiction and the permeation of apparent opposites are central to dialectical movement. To some extent, the artwork sought to reconcile and problematize the differences in the apparently irreconcilable traditions. A comment book was provided but unfortunately or tellingly, it was left blank.



Fig. 28: *Eternal Return*, Largs, 2010

The sculpture was not a celebration or denigration of Marx and Nietzsche but a provocation to the viewer to reflect upon and judge these seminal, contradictory thinkers and the schisms that have emerged from their work. Upon deeper reflection, I could see merit in both their thought. The artwork was thus titled *the fallacy of false dilemma* to convey my suspicions of a rigid celebration of

one school of thought. In rhetoric and debate, this is the logical fallacy that argues that positions offered may both be false or true. A clear example was George W. Bush's pronouncement that 'You are either with us or against us in the fight against terror' (CNN, 2001). As the portraits were not cast or fired in a kiln, they naturally decomposed throughout the two week duration of the exhibition. Afterwards, they were taken to a beach near the coastal town of Largs and cast off into the sea. It seemed a fitting form of closure for the clay works to return to nature. This negation of the work and the exhibition resonates with Gustav Metzger's conception of an auto-destructive art; that being 'a work of art that contains the seeds of its own destruction, or that is destroyed by its creator' (Jones, 2009). This destruction of art has manifested in the work of Dada ('Erase the Traces!'), Jean Tinguely, Joseph Beuys, Franz Kafka and Douglas Gordon to name but a few. Resonating with the sacrificial act of self-immolation, it as an act of negation, of absence and of revolt. Mikhail Bakunin claimed that 'the passion for destruction is a creative passion' (Bakunin, 1842). In hindsight, it was cathartic to problematize, in part renounce and ultimately negate a dogmatic affiliation with both figures and traditions. Perhaps they would have wished for such ambiguity? This unknown act was as much a part of the artwork as the gallery presentation. It concluded the cyclical nature of creation and corrosion and reaffirmed the dialectical law of impermanence.

3.2 Exodus as negation

In hindsight, the installation symbolises the emergence of the negative dialectical method within the research. This was realised through its negation of an affiliation with either the dialectical or non-dialectical traditions and their conflicting glorifications of fight or flight as political or artistic strategies. The negative dialectic method taught me to be hesitant in affiliation and to acknowledge that everything is in a process of change. To my analysis, the autonomist and poststructuralist rejection of the dialectic is highly problematic as the dialectic is a totalizing system that incorporates its antithesis. I hope I understand the elusive dialectic but have never fully grasped what the non-dialectic entails beyond an abstraction. Indeed I interpret much non-dialectical egalitarian thought as entirely dialectical; as Maurice Blanchot wrote when considering Nietzsche's ideas of

transvaluation and circularity: ‘the philosophy of Nietzsche takes its distance from dialectical philosophy less in contesting it than in repeating it’ (Blanchot, 1993: 159). In this research, the exodus functions as part of the dialectic; exiting operates as negation in the dialectical process. Despite (or because of) the apparent contradiction, I enjoy the paradox of working with the non-dialectical exodus from a negative dialectical perspective.

The research is not a novel conflation of the two traditions; John Holloway’s philosophy consists of a fusion of autonomism and negative dialectics. He actively fuses Tronti’s strategy of refusal with Adorno’s non-identity thought which he sees manifesting within the struggles of the indigenous Zapatista people of the Chiapas in Mexico. However, Holloway argues that the autonomists have not gone far enough as they have not negated their own conceptualisation (Holloway, 2009: 14). When he visited the student occupation at the University of Glasgow in 2011, he called for a continuation of such negations to operate as cracks in capitalism (Holloway, 2011). His recent work with his colleagues at the Autonomous University in Mexico has called for a rejection of the poststructuralist emphasis on desire and difference and a reapplication of negation and an implementation of negative dialectics amongst the radical left (Holloway, Matamoros & Tischler, 2009). Fusing their anti-vanguardism with Adorno’s non-identity and taking inspiration from the Zapatistas slogan, they declare: ‘*preguntando caminamos*, asking we walk’ (Holloway et al., 2009: 11).

Although Virno rejects the dialectical method, he nonetheless believes firmly in the power of negation. He stated: ‘A living being who is capable of saying ‘no’, that is, who has linguistic negation and is possessed of the notion of potentiality, is a dangerous being for both itself and others’ (Lavaert et al., 2009). He claimed such negativity was critical to both artistic creation and progressive social movements. It is worth noting that Virno studied Adorno’s writings on labour for his doctorate (Joseph, 2005: 30). It could be argued that his work operates as a dialectical negation as it seeks to break through Adorno’s resigned inability or refusal to see beyond our historical aporia.

3.3 The dialectical method

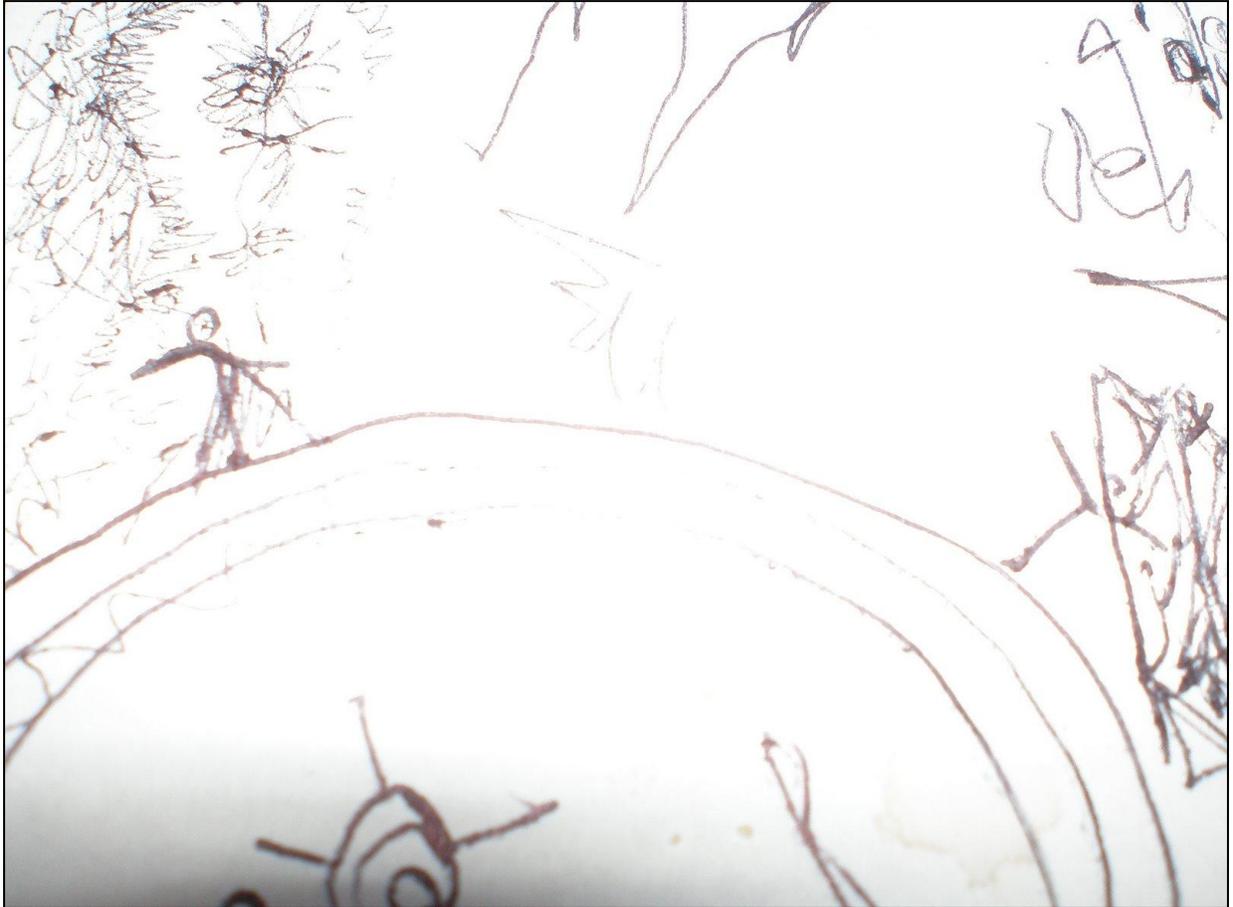


Fig. 29: *Permeation of opposites*, pen on paper, 2009

Negative dialectics is deployed throughout this research as I reject the synthesis and hold primarily to negation within the dialectical process. Of course, many may argue that the dialectic is essentially a process of negation and the conception of synthesis is a crude misinterpretation of the process of change within the method. While agreeing somewhat with this analysis, the negative dialectic makes it apparent. It also eschews an affiliation with the major schools of philosophical thought and their historical adherents. As negative dialectics is a sister philosophy to dialectics, it is imperative that I develop an analysis of the dialectical method within art before elucidating upon

negative dialectics. Dialectics comes from the Greek ‘dialogue’ which means to ‘debate, converse’ (OED, 2004: 396). The method is foundational to both eastern and western philosophical thought. In August Thalheimer’s dissection of dialectical materialism, he described how Heraclitus began to formulate a western dialectic through his analysis of change in the conflicts between the oligarchy, the peasantry and the emergent mercantile class in the 6th century B.C. Heraclitus famously declared that ‘everything was in flux’ (Thalheimer, 1935). Socrates developed the thought that seeks to reveal truth through his dialogues; wherein understanding was realised through contradictions in reasoning. Indeed, he disliked rigid thinking to such an extent that he refused to write down his thoughts; believing it destroyed memory (Ong, 1982: 79). In the Enlightenment period, Immanuel Kant resurrected the method in his Critiques. The dialectic became the cornerstone of GWF Hegel’s philosophical system in the late feudal period of 18th century Prussia. Hegel saw reality as a historical process; wherein conflicts emerged which lead to contradictions that resulted in change. For Hegel, these dialectical movements are ultimately driving us towards a conflict free society void of alienation. As a devout Christian, idealist and comfortable within Prussian society, he never applied his thought to his material world but focused solely upon the development of spirit, mind or geist (Thalheimer, 1927). Karl Marx inverted Hegel’s systematic thought; he discarded the idealism and fused the dialectic with Ludwig Feuerbach’s materialism to create what became known as dialectical (or historical) materialism.

Dialectics in part derives from the observations of the differences between the object and its concept, the self (identity) and the other (non-identity or difference) (Bonnet, 2009: 43). It is a method that concerns the interplay between these apparent polarities through observing how they alter each other as they meet. In *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels postulated three laws of dialectics that he developed from Hegel: ‘The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and *vice versa*; the law of the interpenetration of opposites and the law of the negation of the negation’ (Engels, 1978). A seminal example is the transformation of water into ice or steam as it encounters changes in temperature. Engels argued that nature itself was dialectical: ‘the whole world, natural, historical, intellectual, is represented as a process – i.e. as in constant motion, change, transformation, development’ (Engels, 1978: 697).



Fig. 30: *Qualitative change*, Donegal beach, photograph, 2008

Although dialectical thinking is thought to involve phenomena colliding with their opposites, it is not a dualistic or a binary method. Thalheimer encouraged the reader to reflect upon night and day or man and woman - while they may appear opposites, they are ultimately (like the yin-yang) in an interdependent unity. Fredric Jameson has sought to problematize these opposites; he described how Hegel's master/ slave dialectic does not involve a righteous and malignant opposition; rather 'the slave is not the opposite of the Master, but rather, along with him, an equally integral component of the larger system called slavery or domination' (Jameson; 2009: 20). Jameson calls for the structural alteration of the systematic oppression that binds people to become socialized within such roles and argues that the resolution lies in the obliteration of both terms as preconceived opposites.

3.3.1 The dialectic in art

In Peio Aguirre's analysis of the method in contemporary art, he argued that there is not one great method but many. He insists that its application in art through 'carefully crafted (dialectical) sentences to montage or assemblage techniques' are developed to serve 'social change or final revolutionary aspiration' (Aguirre, 2009). Aguirre describes how the method developed in the negating art of Jorge Oteiza through his implementation of a law of changes within his practice. Oteiza's work consisted of a process of recurring mutations and negations. Spanning the history of art, it developed from prehistoric paintings to avant-garde experimentation. No style was consistent and art itself eventually became totally negated and exited when he focused his energies on life and the urban sphere. Aguirre described how with this departure from art production, Oteiza 'provides (as a typically dialectical totalisation) a full theory for the end of contemporary art itself' (Aguirre, 2009).

Christoph Büchel develops a dialectical art in his hyper-real installations. In *Last Man out Turn off the Lights* at Glasgow's Tramway gallery in 2010, he addressed alienation, the marginalized and the criminal. The work consisted of adjacent Celtic/Rangers public houses that lead into a fabricated prison that then morphed into an aviation crash site. For the viewer, it was a bizarre and at times unsettling experience. The critical reception was somewhat negative. Jonathan Griffin suggested the work reflected a 'crashing (and indulgent) nihilism' (Griffin, 2010) while Susan Mansfield claimed that 'the connections between drinking, football, sectarianism, prison and terrorism seem clumsily drawn' (Mansfield, 2010). Though he refuses to discuss his work, a press release conveyed his dialectical intentions:

Büchel locates contradictions and social inequities in the ideological forces dominating society today (global capitalism, unprincipled consumption, religious conservatism, American hegemony) and finds a way through his work to satirize, demystify, and resist these forces by revealing them as constructed realities subject to change (Artleak, 2003).

To my analysis, Büchel was indeed linking working class Glaswegian environments with tribalism, violence and prison – and by extension he was addressing inequality and ideology. While this may upset some critics who believe such an outlook lacks ‘political incisiveness and subtlety’ (Griffin, 2010), the statistics contradict their denigration. Through an analysis of the socio-economic backgrounds of criminals, the sociologist Loïc Wacquant argued that prisons are a plaster to cover the wounds created by neo-liberal policies (Wacquant, 2009). For example, research shows that ‘one in five African American men in the United States, ‘with less than a high school degree are institutionalized’ (Raphael, 2004: 5). While prisons are of course necessary and poverty does not automatically engender violence, it is nonetheless apparent that improving equality and reducing poverty will vastly reduce social disorder.



Fig. 31: *Theatre of the Oppressed*, drawing/ digitally altered, 2013

During 2010 and 2011, I collaborated with the Active Inquiry arts company in Edinburgh. They run Theatre of the Oppressed workshops and performances for the local community of Leith. Boal developed the dialectical art form in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in the early 1970s. His techniques spread worldwide following his forced exile by the military dictatorship. He was greatly inspired by Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre. Brecht's dialectical realism sought to convey the manufactured nature of the theatre and the malleability of the forces within society. He deployed an alienation or estrangement effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) to rupture audience empathy with the actors and thus engender critical thinking (Carney, 2005: 14). From such an awakening, he hoped to instil an awareness of the potential to change society's structures.

Developing on Brecht's dialectical theatre, Boal worked to transform theatre from a monologue into a dialogue (Boal, 2008: xvi). Through creating a series of collaborative art forms, he strove to instil the belief that marginalized people can affect the social structure through realising and developing their group agency. Theatre of the Oppressed breaks with traditional conceptions of the author, the institution and the spectator. Like Living Theatre which followed in their footsteps, they do not fit easily within the traditional drama canon. However, recognition from the traditional theatre community was secondary to social transformation for Boal. Many artists have used their dialectical skills to primarily further a social or political objective. One time Dadaist George Grosz once said:

I came to believe, however fleetingly, that art divorced from political struggles was pointless. My own art would be my rifle, my sword; all brushes and pens not dedicated to the great fight for freedom were no more use than empty straws (Grosz, 1996: 421).

Whether the satirical drawing on the next page is considered art or propaganda is almost irrelevant. It was part of a series that I produced for Professor Greg Philo of the Glasgow University Media Group in 2010. An update of a drawing that was produced in the 1980s, I interpret it as an attempt to convey the dialectical contradictions and interconnections of events through a critique of the television news. A critical analysis of such drawings could suggest that they

reinforce a knowing resignation yet effect little real change. However, such an outlook is limited. Visual imagery has a potent though unquantifiable value as it can instantly evoke what many may feel but cannot express. It can also function as capable of intimidating the powerful and effecting change through altering consciousness within society. My motivations in the work were quite simple; it is didactic and seeks to deploy humour to reveal contradictions and hypocrisies and encourage viewer's suspicions of what they absorb on the news.



Fig. 32: 6 O Clock News, pen on paper, 2011

In *Power to the People*, the Active Inquiry theatre group developed a performance that sought to engender methods of social organisation amongst the local community. It concerned the protagonist Alice's attempts to campaign against the development of expensive apartments in Leith (Crichton, 2011). The play was instigated by actors on the stage before being developed by the 'spect-actors' through conversations with 'the joker'. Spect-actors is Boal's term for the audience and the joker is his term for the director (Boal, 2008: 144). The spect-actors were encouraged to leave the floor and come onto the stage and realise the drama as they saw fit. There is no conclusion to Forum Theatre; discussions continue afterwards and like life, it could go on and on.

As the joker, Gavin Crichton began every workshop with 'Games for actors and non-actors'. This involved the group jumping around and dancing to build rapport and cast off their overly conscious adult selves. Boal's games open up a cognitive and corporeal space which is ideal to develop the workshop. One of my clearest memories occurred during 'breaking repression theatre'. Crichton encouraged us all to consider a moment when we felt powerful and/or powerless. However, we were not to vocalise it as it was not therapy. From here scenarios would develop on power relations. In our class, an elderly gentleman appeared to be reliving some experience from his youth as a soldier. I unwittingly became embroiled in a hostage type situation. Ultimately the manufactured situations reminded us all of the complexity of conflict and our ability to realise our agency and alter our social circumstances. Ultimately, the strength of the group derives from their long term commitment to the people of Leith. Whereas the participatory art scene often involves a temporary visit from an artist to an underdeveloped community, Active Inquiry are permanently committed to their specific location. When asked if they would consider doing some work in Glasgow, they declined and suggested that others should train as facilitators and set up their own group. The group literally manifest the dialectic in art through engendering acts within the community and society. They realise a living, dialectical art that has no real answers but calls on the people to realise their own theatre and the destiny of their lives.

3.4 Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School



Fig. 33: *Theodor Adorno*, pen on paper/ digitally altered, 2013

Though I embraced the dialectical method within the art research, I was keen to develop a dialectic which was not connected to a specific political tradition. I sought to go beyond the dialectical/non-dialectical schism that pervades discourse in the academic, activist and artistic left. Such sectarian thinking is counterproductive when both traditions have so much in common.

Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics provided the research with the ideal framework. Adorno and his colleagues (Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, Friedrich Pollock, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas among others) developed the Immanent critique and critical theory of left-Hegelianism at the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt during the 1920s and 1930s (Jay, 1973). Immanent critique involves placing oneself within a belief system in order to locate and reveal its contradictions. The Frankfurt School thinkers deployed history, sociology, economics, politics, philosophy and psychoanalysis and fused Freud, Marx and Nietzsche alongside the classics of the western tradition to critique the inability of humanity to realise an egalitarian society (Jay, 1973: 86). As many had Jewish backgrounds (Adorno being of mixed catholic and Jewish descent) and most were sympathetic to Marxism (the Communist KPD party being banned in Germany in 1933), the critical theorists left Germany with the rise of the National Socialist party in 1933.

3.4.1 Non-Identity, negative dialectics

Following Adorno's return from exile in the United States in 1949, he set himself the task of developing a post-national dialectical method that could overcome the philosophical failings of a dogmatic Enlightenment identity thinking that (to his analysis) resulted in colonialism, fascism, totalitarian socialism and industrial capitalism. In 1966, Adorno's methodological conclusions were realised in the dense *Negative Dialectics*. The text and the method is a negation of an Enlightenment thought which manifested in barbarity through its obsessive identification and instrumental reason. Negative dialectics is driven by a non-identity thought. From my interpretation, identity thinking involves obsessively striving to realise some illusory unified wholeness (be it racial, scientific, political or religious) while simultaneously conceptualising and denigrating an abstract other. This other is that which we think we are not or perhaps deep down fear to be - be that chav, black, gypsy, Jew, Irish, homosexual, English, Muslim, lesbian, socialist and so on.

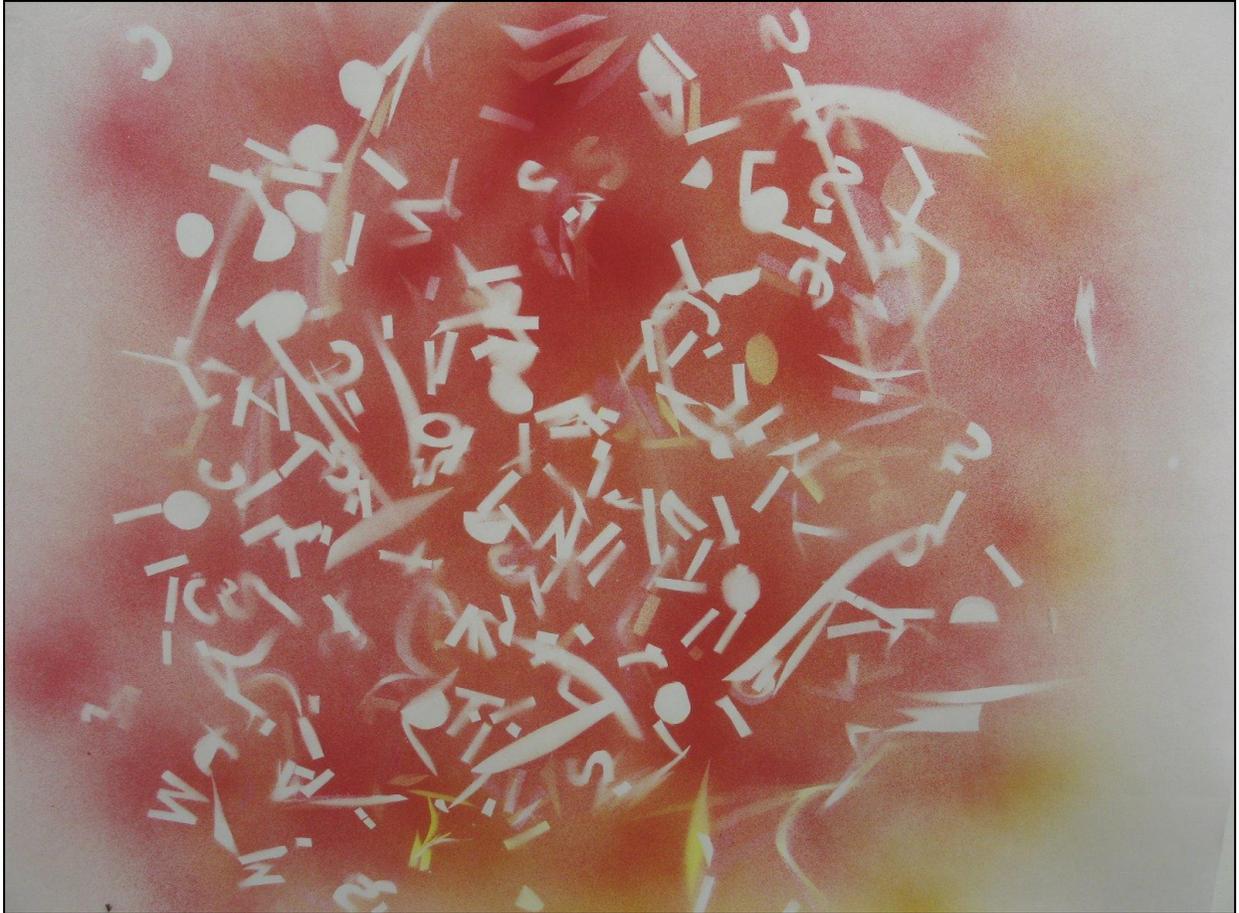


Fig. 34: *Aporia in the concept*, aerosol on paper, 2007

The negative dialectic method seeks to realise a dialectic towards freedom when the concept of freedom is all but lost; it does not reject Enlightenment principles but the wilful inability to realise them. Gail Day has described how Adorno's antagonism to the dialectical synthesis or sublation within Hegel's system derived from a belief that the *Aufhebung* can manifest as 'a closure on behalf of an unwarranted authority or as a premature cessation of the impulse of freedom' (Day, 2011:102). Adorno eschewed generalizing conceptualization; insisting that 'objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder' (Adorno, 1973: 5). While acknowledging that 'to think is to identify,' Adorno nonetheless strived to transcend the concept from within conceptualisation.

The negative dialectical method is thus continuously evolving, never static and consists of perpetual negations. As he wrote:

If negative dialectics calls for the self-reflection of thinking, the tangible implication is that if thinking is to be true – if it is to be true today, in any case – it must also be a thinking against itself (Adorno, 1973: 365).

This non-identity ‘thinking against itself’ is a daily process. In Martin Hielscher’s lecture on Adorno, he described how non-identity thinking involves a forsaking of self-identity as fixed, an understanding of the other, a questioning of dogma, an emphasis upon the gap between the concept and reality and critically, a deep awareness of suffering (Hielscher, 2009). This research seeks to be driven by negative dialectics, negation and non-identity thinking. It is important to note that negative dialectics is not a relativist position but a critical wariness of over-identification with itself or any set belief alongside a commitment to egalitarianism. The non-identity tendency compels the research to remain wary of glorifying a specific exit as it is generalizing and complacent. As such, even the aforementioned thesis is tentative and should not be thought of as fixed. Of course by holding the thesis and celebrating a specific exit, I am invariably problematizing and contradicting the non-identity project. However, the thesis will in turn be negated.

It will take a lifetime to truly understand Adorno’s thought. I approach it, immerse myself within it, sense it and seek to develop and negate it from within art. My understanding and application of Adorno resonates with Thomas Hirshorn’s thoughts on Michel Foucault. When considering his *Foucault Art Work*, Hirshorn wrote:

I don’t know Foucault’s philosophy, but I see his work of art. It permits me to approach it, to not understand it but to seize it, to be active with it. I don’t have to be a historian, a connoisseur, a specialist to confront myself with works of art. I can seize their energy, their urgency, their necessity, their density (Hirschorn, 2006: 154/ 155).

Irit Rogoff explained how her research on identities and locations emerged from an argument with a German friend during the first Gulf war. She described how he said: ‘well of course you would think that. You come from the Middle East’ (David & Rogoff, 2004: 84). To which she thought ‘the middle of whose bloody East do I come from?’ Her research developed from rethinking a geography that is organized around nation states and developed into a project on what she termed ‘un-belonging.’ However, this unbelonging or indeed non-identity (as I interpret it) should not be considered as a disavowal of one’s origins or ethnicity but as a critical relationship with a place (or belief) while simultaneously holding a critical sense of ‘un-belonging.’ For Rogoff, this involved ‘a very active, almost daily process’ of ‘shifting positionality’ (David & Rogoff, 2004: 84).

3.5 Negation in art

To my analysis, the negative dialectic method is almost manifest within the work of Gerhard Richter; wherein no style is consistent and all are eventually negated. As he once declared: ‘I don’t believe in the reality of painting, so I use different styles like clothes: it’s a way to disguise myself’ (Richter, 2009: 107). However, Richter eschews an affiliation with an egalitarian ethos for fear of its correlations with the perverse form of Communism that manifested across Eastern Europe in the 20th century. Considering this alongside its inflated economic value, his work may not quite approach or realise the method. Martin Murray related Andy Warhol’s practice to Adorno’s negative dialectics to demonstrate that ‘Warhol’s art is both current and backward looking, American and European, glib and philosophical, right wing and left wing’ (Murray, 2005: 61). However, I would again argue that Warhol (like Richter) was not faithful to the negative dialectic as he eschews Adorno’s deep philosophical commitment to egalitarianism and his disavowal of capitalism and state communism.

Allan Sekula’s exhibition *This Ain’t China: a Photonovel* is a work that addresses exploitation, strives towards egalitarianism while negating its own presumptions. As such, it could perhaps be thought to realise Adorno’s conception of negative dialectic. However, this again would be reductive thinking as a true non-identity art can perhaps never be realised or manifested as it is in

perpetual self negation. In Monika Szewczyk's analysis of the work, she argued that Sekula's practice is fundamentally a process of recurring negations (Szewczyk, 2010). The artwork consisted of a series of semi-autobiographical photographs in a 1970s Los Angeles diner that addressed the themes of labour, working class rights, representation and radical (Maoist) beliefs. Szewczyk wrote:

Sekula puts in place a play of contradiction that forestalls any notion of positive truth statements (in image or text). The photonovel begins with a negation of China, which puts pressure on every image and word that follows: what we see and read is not china/China. The fast food definitely ain't china (lower case). But the artist also notes that he is not filming where he might want to (i.e., in the boss' home) because it is impossible. Negation needs to be read (at least in part) as a form of desire. It is the key to dialectical thinking (Szewczyk, 2010).

Recurring negations are the driver of the non-identity and negative dialectics that is applied to both the art production and critical thought in this research. However, it is important to emphasise that the negative dialectic and negation differ significantly from negative thought or nihilism. Nietzsche defined nihilism as 'the devaluing of the highest values' (Nietzsche in Day, 2011: 106). However, negative dialectic is not an outright rejection of social values but the striving to realise the values of equality and freedom through negating false gods, beliefs or rigid identity thinking. As Szewczyk's argued, negation should be interpreted as 'a form of desire'. T.J. Clark described 'practices of negation' as political and aesthetic strategies of emancipation. Through an analysis of Goya, Beethoven, Malevich and others, he argued that 'the fact of Art, in modernism, *is* the fact of negation' (Clark in Day, 2011:37). Be it Gustav Courbet revolution in aesthetics or the Situationist *dérive*, there is a long lineage of artists negating and exiting conventional art for both political and aesthetic purposes. I shall now turn to reflect upon the seminal act of negation in art history.

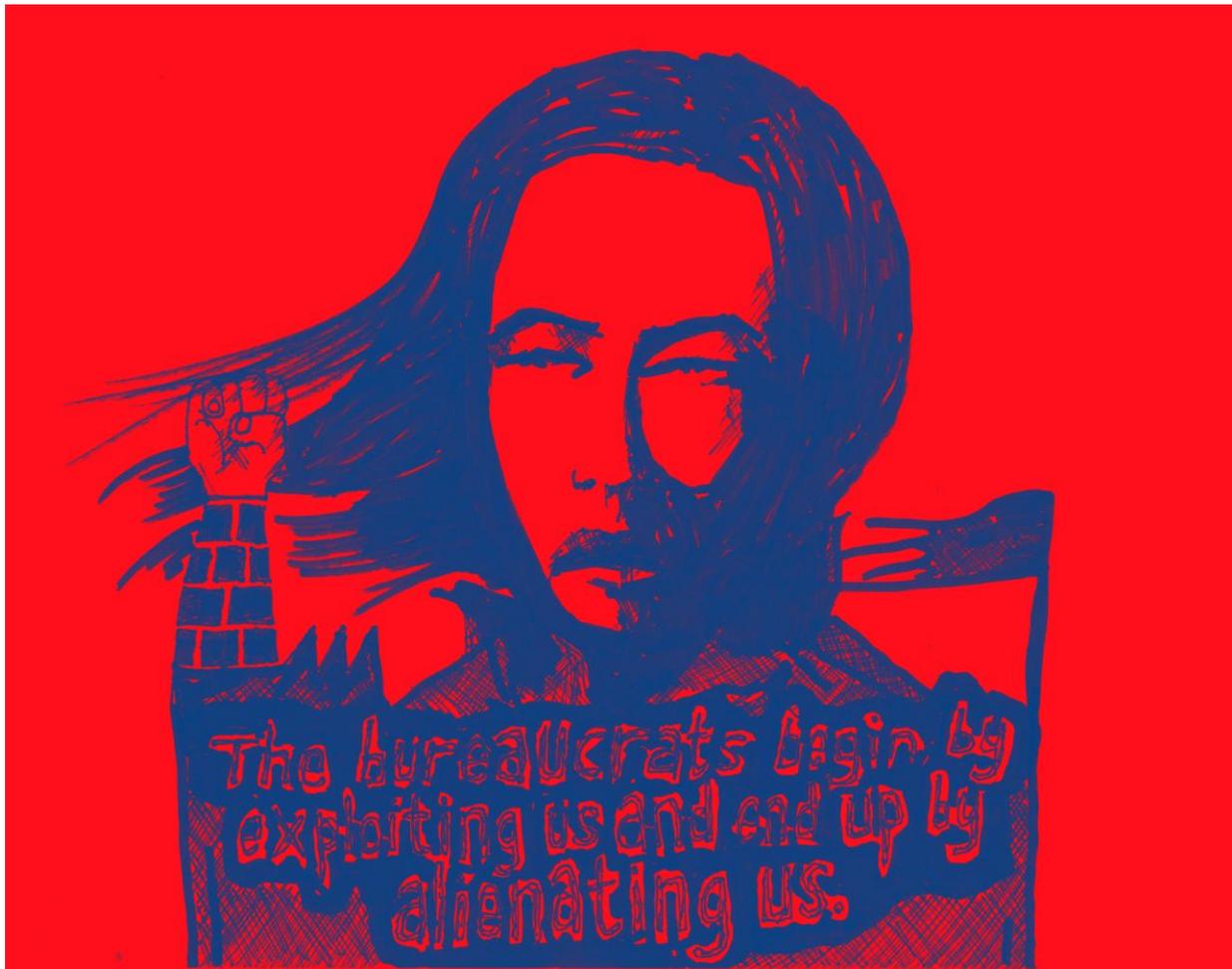


Fig. 35: *Refusal*, (After René Viénet's *Can dialectics break bricks?*), pen on paper, digitally altered, 2013

4.1 Situationist International

At a conference on artist exits in Budapest in 2008, Gene Ray argued that the potent artist exodus was not a withdrawal into passivity but it involves the reawakening of the historic avant-garde project. For him, it is the ‘progressive evacuation from the dominant institutions of the capitalist art system, in order to organise counter-institutions and counter-networks of struggle-oriented radical

culture' (Ray, 2008). Ray described the experiments of the Situationist International in the 1950s and 1960s as the principal embodiment of this politicized departure. The Situationists' radical wishes almost became prophecy when the tumult of May 1968 engulfed France (Raunig, 2007: 174). However, their spirit and unity fell apart in a wave of paranoia, acrimony and sectarianism as the revolutionary ideals of 1968 moment also faded. Inspired by Marx, Dada, Surrealism and Henri Lefebvre's critique of everyday life, the Parisian centred group emerged out of the left wing tendency of the Lettrist International. The early Situationists sought to provoke the contradictions within society through deploying negation within zines, slogans, art, film and literature. However, they eventually rejected the art world outright and sought to create situations of intensity to alter the psychic, social and political fabric and rupture the spectacle of modern urban alienation (Debord, 2006). In 1964, four of its members (JV Martin, Jan Strijbosch, Raoul Vaneigem and Rene Vignet) provided an illuminating insight into Situationist thinking on art and society in an interview with the Centre for Socio-experimental Art. In a withering critique, they castigated the artistic movements who apolitically 'regurgitating avant-garde strategies' and the art world officials of the Third Paris Biennial who proclaimed that it is 'forbidden not to participate.' On the general public's apathy towards art, they declared that every ruling class has its own art and thus:

(T)he masses have no reason to feel concerned with any aspects of a culture or an organisation of social life that have not only been developed without their participation or their control, but that have in fact been deliberately been designed to prevent such participation and display' (SI, 1964: 125).

They questioned their association with art by stressing the cultural scenes' resistance towards acknowledging them and their vision beyond art; they proudly described how 23 of their 28 excluded members were developing socially recognised and profitable roles as artists and 'as such they tended to reinforce the position of our enemies, who want to invent a 'situationism' so as to finish us by integrating us into the spectacle as just one more doomsday aesthetic' (SI, 1964: 129). Foreseeing a classless society where aesthetics will be superseded and there will be no art, they contested: 'the time for art is over... Art can be realised *only by being suppressed*... we maintain that art can really be suppressed *only by being realised*' (SI, 1964: 127).

4.2 Anonymous aestheticized resistance



Fig. 36: *Zapatistas*, acrylic on card/ digitally altered, 2010

Anonymous, aesthetic negations of authority have existed for centuries. Brian Holmes deployed Virno's exodus concept to celebrate the artist exit from 'the gallery-magazine-museum system' in the collectivised art-activism of Tucuman Arde, the Zapatistas, Reclaim the Streets, the Direct Action Network and the Tute Bianche of Italy (Holmes, 2008). In a post 9-11 surveillance society, he calls on art groups to reject authorship and institutions: to 'appear, dissolve and reappear in new forms and under new names' (Holmes, 2008: 7). Stephen Wright also called for an 'exodus from the intellectual bankruptcy of the mainstream art world' alongside a general exit from warfare and capitalism (Wright, 2008a). He rejects the art world's habit of creating more work to address social problems by insisting that the art world is part of the problem. To address the ontological crisis of modern art and to go beyond capitalist framing and commodification, he called for the creation of an 'art without artworks, authors or spectators.' He described such a stealth or spy art as visible, public and seen 'but not as art' (Wright, 2006). Wright argues that this avant-garde trajectory

manifests in the anonymous, activist art of Grupo de Arte Callejero (Wright, 2008b). GAC ('Street Art Group') brought aesthetic interventions to the streets of Argentina with their 'Escrache' performances. This involved them anonymously marking the houses of torturers from the military junta. Wright argues that such practices wrestle art from its Kantian dormancy (wherein arts purpose is purposeless) and drew it to impinge upon reality. Such a stealth art was developed by Cildo Meireles in the early 1970s. Prior to his success and perhaps inevitable identification within the art world, he instigated the *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* project. In response to the military coup d'état in Brazil, he negated art, the author, the regime and foreign exploitation through anonymously circulating subversive messages throughout the country. These direct interventions included tagging coke bottles and stamping banknotes with text before reintroducing them back into circulation (Meireles, 2007, 181). Meireles has described how:

(T)he *Insertions* would only exist to the extent that they ceased to be the work of just one person. The work only exists to the extent that other people participate in it. What also arises is the need for anonymity. By extension, the question of anonymity involves the question of ownership. When the object becomes a practice, it becomes something over which you can have no control or ownership (Meireles, 2007: 182).

This fusion of anonymity, non-identity and aestheticized activism has been taken to another level in recent years by the Anonymous hacking collective. The decentralised, anarchic group reportedly emerged as a response to authorities attempting to curb their online freedoms on the internet forum 'imageboard 4chan' (Coleman and Ralph, 2011). On the 4chan website, members upload everything and anything through the 'Random' /b/ image board.' In his heralding of 4chan, Brad Troemel scoffs at the selective socialisation of contemporary art and argues that 4chan's anonymous online forums are a real relational art - wherein art labels are discarded and real social participation are developed without hierarchy (Troemel, 2010). Deploying Alan Moore's Guy Fawkes image from *V for Vendetta* as their avatar and operating like modern day Robin Hood's, Anonymous have targeted and damaged the networks of MI5, Mastercard, the IDF and the CIA. In their online videos, they proclaim: 'we do not forget - we do not forgive - expect us!' (Anonymous, 2010) Their ambiguous identity is open to anyone to claim ownership of and as a

result their flux philosophy can appear to fuse egalitarianism, libertarianism and nihilism. Despite the disparate nature of their identity, there clearly is a highly skilled core group with a clear strategy. I have yet to resolve a firm opinion on their activities. However, from an unscientific analysis of the Daily Mail's online reader responses, their actions have been genuinely welcomed by people from across the political spectrum (Owen, 2012).

4.2.1 Socially engaged art?

Stephen Wright addressed the limitations and ethical contradictions of socially engaged practice in the art world through a critique of Judi Werthein's *Jump/Brinco* project. For the work, Werthein manufactured Brinco running shoes that were donated to immigrants on the Mexico/US border. Wright argued that Werthein was the sole 'winner in this relational aesthetic contrivance' as she is the author accumulating symbolic capital from an admiring art world while the immigrants remain anonymous (Wright, 2006). While Wright's analysis is harsh as the immigrants did receive an admittedly patronising but nonetheless useful object, he has raised an uncomfortable issue. Like aid to Africa, the participatory artist can be a barrier to a real social art. While Santiago Sierra's tattooing of prostitutes is ethically dubious, it at least conveys the reality of exploitation for some under modern capitalist conditions. In contrast, much relational or participatory art merely pacifies.

Nicolas Bourriaud defined the emergent social art of the past two decades as relational aesthetics. His conception developed from an analysis of the emerging networks of new media and the socialised art production of Rikrit Tirivanija, Pierre Huyghe, Vanessa Beecroft and Andrea Zittel. For Bourriaud, relational practices 'aim at the formal construction of space-time entities that may be able to elude alienation, the division of labour, the commodification of space and the reification of life' (Bourriaud, 2004: 48). While his aims are admirable, they are closer to projecting what he wishes to believe than grounded in reality. For example, he affirms the gallery based conviviality and sociability within Angela Bulloch's cafe, Georgina Starr's restaurant and Lincoln Tobier's radio stations before claiming that such production 'resists the mincer of the society of the

Spectacle' (Bourriaud, 2004). Debord would undoubtedly have argued that such passive production was immersed within the spectacle. Most celebrated relational production is entirely conducive to a nomadic, fees based, convivial art system. In his critique of Bourriaud's thesis, Graham Coulter Smith insightfully argued that Bourriaud's writing holds an irreconcilable contradiction - whereas he celebrated the death of the individual genius myth, all of his examples of relational producers are celebrated individual artists (Coulter Smith, 2009). Hal Foster was similarly wary. He argued that the celebrated conviviality of relational aesthetics may in time form part of a 'post-critical world' or indeed instigate 'the final end of art' (Foster, 2006: 195).

4.2.2 Trickster spirit



Fig. 37: *Anonymous*, pen on paper/ digitally altered, 2011

In contrast to much relational production, Anonymous are a deeply affective group. Biella Coleman suggested that they are an embodiment of the fabled trickster of folklore (Coleman, 2010). This is a suitable description as the trickster is a deeply ambiguous archetype that holds significant, supernatural agency. The pan-cultural tales are most strange from a rational Eurocentric perspective - the trickster is not only mischievous but is often a bizarre and repugnant character that simultaneously torments the world it protects. The North American Indian trickster was seen as a ‘creator and destroyer’ who ‘knows neither good nor evil yet he is responsible for both’ (Radin, 1955: xxiii). It is associated with an unbound Rabelaisian or Dionysian energy, evoking magic, madness and the other. In Gerald Raunig’s celebration of the exodus, he sees the reawakening of the repressed, carnivalesque trickster spirit in anti-capitalist street art-activism (Raunig, 2007). He sees Volxtheatre Karavan, Colectivo Situaciones, Tute Bianche and Reclaim the Streets as instigating disruption and confusion to engender social transformation. Mikhail Bakhtin described how the social structure is turned on its head during such carnivalesque rituals: ‘the king is the clown’ and the masses are in control (Bakhtin, 1984: 197). In 2011, I interviewed a member of the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army at the Free Hetherington student occupation in Glasgow. The Major discussed his near decade long implementation of ‘tactical frivolity’ (Major, 2011). He described how the clown seeks to slip between the gaps of protest and authority; it is neither male or female, stupid or wise or protestor or police. The analytic brain is suppressed; the inner child is released and it mirrors, cries and laughs to the bemusement of all.



Fig. 38: *YaBasta!* (Enough), George Square, Glasgow, 2010

While such horizontal groups undoubtedly have some political affect (one need but reflect upon the altered public perception of Nike), there is clearly a form of self-mythologizing of anonymous, street art activism. Whether such activity has proven truly catalytic is open to contestation. Indeed, it could be argued that both the much maligned traditional march and the carnivalesque protest have failed to break down the divisions between the politically active and the apathetic passers-by. The horizontalism that is celebrated in such anti-capitalist groupings is not some pure space. As Rodrigo Nunes has argued, open spaces always operate through exclusions and informal hierarchies (Nunes, 2005: 306). He rejects horizontality as an abstraction, arguing that it can be a fetish which groups cling onto to exclude others. To overcome this, he calls for groups to create commonalities and push beyond classification and the activist role.

4.3 Protest art



Fig. 39: *Truth?* Acrylic on card, George Square, Glasgow, 2011

Inspired by Brian Haw and the aforementioned activist art, I sought to manifest a potent artist exit through the display of handmade agitprop placards in Glasgow's George Square in 2010. The placards consisted of personal political statements alongside seminal left wing slogans and imagery. Situated in the heart of the city, the square was once the sole preserve of the wealthy. An ideal space to pontificate, it has been the site of numerous public rallies over the centuries. On 31st January 1919, some 60,000 working people congregated there and flew the Communist red flag on a notorious day that saw the army deployed on the streets (GDL, nd). One of the placards read: 'Truth is a word... as is genocide, murder and torture... he who retains ownership of definition and application retains ownership of truth.' Reflections upon military interventions and recent political enquiries have convinced me that in many cases truth is just a word. During the Chilcot Iraq war enquiry, former Prime Minister Tony Blair described his confusion with attorney general Lord Goldsmith's prevarication on granting the war legal cover without a second UN resolution. Despite retrospective unease, Goldsmith eventually granted that a 'reasonable case could be made' for the invasion in March of 2003 (Telegraph, 2011). As such, what is ethical is irrelevant. What is relevant is the ability of language to fit within a legal framework and thus be excused. George Orwell coined the term 'Newspeak' in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to describe the duplicitous official language of Oceania (Orwell, 2008: 6). The placard sought to convey something of the ambiguity and hypocrisy of modern day Newspeak. In 1892, Peter Kropotkin wrote:

Fine sermons have been preached on the text that those who have should share with those who have not, but he who would carry out this principle would be speedily informed that these beautiful sentiments are all very well in poetry, but not in practice. "To lie is to degrade and besmirch oneself," we say, and yet all civilized life becomes one huge lie. We accustom ourselves and our children to hypocrisy, to the practice of a double-faced morality. And since the brain is ill at ease among lies, we cheat ourselves with sophistry. Hypocrisy and sophistry become the second nature of the civilized man (Kropotkin, 2007: 12).

Kropotkin's critique is of course as applicable to many democracies today as it was of autocratic Tsarist Russia. The phrase 'hypocrisy and sophistry' often emanates in my mind when considering public discourse. The placards that were displayed on George Square were initially part of a series

that I created for an installation or a play about activism. However, as they were being produced, I began to have doubts about the project. Political art has evolved beyond the passive absorption of artistic representations of political struggles. After considering the collaborative work with Active Inquiry and reflecting upon the artist exits celebrated by Ray, Raunig, Holmes and Wright and manifested by GAC, Meireles and others, I realised the need to fulfil the research demand to bring the art production into direct political struggle. In an interview with Nina Power, Sylvère Lotringer stated:

Today it is difficult to imagine anything that could be excluded from art. Its field has expanded exponentially to include the entire society... Art has finally fulfilled the program of Dada with a vengeance, embedding art into life. The only thing left for art to do is 'auto-dissolve'... All it would take is to cut off the umbilical cord that still ties art to the market, or rather turn it into a rich rhizome. Some art groups are already working at it. Autonomists used to say, 'The margins at the centre'. We haven't yet given art a chance to grow autonomously (Lotringer & Power, 2009).

4.4 Free Hetherington 2011 Student Occupation

On February 1st 2011, a group of activists and activist students occupied the Hetherington Research Club at the University of Glasgow as a protest against its recent closure. The building was bequeathed to postgraduates as a space to study and socialise in 1954 (University of Glasgow, 2010). Due to financial losses, it was closed by management in 2010. The occupation was specifically opposed to the cuts across departments and generally opposed to the prevailing neo-liberal environment. 'The Free Hetherington' (as it became known) was a space for debate, learning, socialising and political organisation. There was a vegan kitchen and people were welcome to visit and stay provided they adhered to the safer space policy. This involved treating people with respect. Lasting 7 months, it was reportedly the longest running student occupation in British history (freehetherington, 2011).



Fig. 40: *The Free Hetherington*, University gardens, Glasgow, photograph, 2011

A few weeks into the occupation, I went to the space with a friend. In my mind it was akin to walking into 1968. Having spent years listening to talk about the apathy of youth, this environment of idealism, community and conflict was exciting. After they accepted my request to place the placards in the occupation, I began to participate in the events while hopefully maintaining some critical distance. Reception to specific artwork was mixed. Anarchists and socialists disliked each other's imagery while some liberals disliked radical imagery. Conservative students who were opposed to the occupation used an anarchist placard that declared 'Against all authority' to argue the space was hypocritical as there were rules. These minor conflicts taught me to be a lot more careful about the content of artwork. They also conveyed how art has real agency to affect the

environment through impacting upon people's consciousness. Most of the work remained and played an important role in the space. For example, the pencil replication of the 1911 *Pyramid of Capitalism* poster was part of the set for Jerry Levy's production of Howard Zinn's *Marx in Soho* play. After the occupation, the placards formed part of the Free Hetherington donation to the Spirit of Revolt Archive in the Mitchell Library that was organised by John Couzin and a committee of retired Glaswegian anarchists (Spirit of Revolt, 2013).



Fig. 41: *Pyramid of Capitalism & Autonomia Fist*, acrylic on card, Hetherington, 2011

A critique of the placards could argue they are merely regurgitations of past struggles that were irrelevant outside of their historical context. They could also be accused of being lacking in

imagination as they were mostly reproductions of others work. Some could also claim that they were even counterproductive as they confused the political and philosophical foundations of the occupation. To counterbalance this critique, they were reasonably well executed and situated the occupation within a historical lineage of people's struggle. In hindsight, the personally most rewarding production involved making banners for protests and facilitating art classes for visitors and occupiers. These collaborations within a productive environment helped bond people to a common cause which in turn facilitated discussions on personal, social and political issues. In her analysis of participation in art, Claire Bishop argued that such practices are motivated by a wish to develop communities, activate agency and problematize hierarchical authorship. She described how:

(T)he ceding of 'some or all authorial control is conventionally regarded as more egalitarian and democratic than the creation of a work by a single artist, while shared production is also seen to entail the aesthetic benefits of greater risk and unpredictability. Collaborative creativity is therefore understood both to emerge from, and to produce, a more positive and non-hierarchical social model (Bishop, 2006: 12).

On a practical level, aesthetic images are critical to protests as they create a focal point around which people can converge and they also attract the media and public's attention. However such production is often formulaic with little real imagination or developed collaboration. Cindy Milstein has warned that Anarchist attempts to reorient perceptions of value through allowing everyone to participate in cultural production often reproduces the social system they oppose. She claims that this manifests in a 'Wal-Martization of resistance art'; wherein groups collaborate to regurgitate standardized puppets for horizontal carnivals (Milstein, 2007: 301). In hindsight, it is difficult to evaluate the potency of the art production within the space. Following Marcel Duchamp and Allan Kaprow, it is even difficult to define where the art production begins or ends. The traditional mark making and collaborations were just moments within a wider creative process. This included singing, cooking or just joking on the front porch.



Fig. 42: *Hetherington eviction*, photograph, 2011

One month into the occupation, dozens of Strathclyde police officers evicted the occupiers. Pandemonium ensued as hundreds of students congregated before spontaneously marching towards the old university cloisters and then occupying the hallowed Senate rooms. That night, the eviction and Senate occupation became the lead story on *Newsnight Scotland* and on the front pages of the morning newspapers (BBC, 2011). Following protracted negotiations that went past midnight, management agreed to return the Hetherington to the students if they immediately vacated the Senate (freehetherington, 2011). At this time, the university was in crisis. Soon after, the First Minister Alex Salmond criticised the vice chancellor Anton Muscatelli's running of the college, terming him 'the Labour Parties favourite economist' (Kernohan, 2011). Within weeks, an open public meeting on the event and wider crisis was held that was chaired by the university Rector Charles Kennedy MP. As the Hetherington was returned and thus granted a degree of legitimacy by the university, the eviction became a symbolic victory for the occupiers. However, it was also a period of trauma and transition that would soon manifest within the space.

4.5 Contradictions of art activism

In May of 2011, I displayed an installation that addressed the Hetherington occupation. It formed part of the G.S.A. PhD exhibition at the former Glue factory in north Glasgow. As it opened on the night of the 31st of April (the date that marks the beginning of the summer in the old pagan calendar), it was titled Bealtainne. The installation consisted of placards from the occupation, candles for Bealtainne and a film (entitled *Glasgow Squirrels*) that detailed the before and after of the Hetherington eviction. Though pleased that some of the occupiers liked the film and installation, I nonetheless had difficulties with the work on ethical, aesthetic and political levels. From an ethical perspective, I was somewhat uneasy that it may have exploited the occupation. For who has the right to claim some form of ownership of an event through an artistic representation? To counter such a fatalistic outlook, it should be noted that without the documentation of events by artists, writers, historians and filmmakers, we would have little history. There is no simple answer to the dilemma on the ethics of production; some work is exploitative while other work is genuinely powerful and may indeed mirror, embody or become the zeitgeist.

On an aesthetic and political level, the installation also seemed lacking. While it looked decent, it remained a representation of a previous event. Like an animal in a zoo, the placards were out of their natural context and the overall look appeared static. It was not a living, dialectical artwork. Perhaps the film overly emphasised the spectacle of the events without addressing the social and political tensions that created the occupation in the first place. In Kyle Harris' critique of anarchist video aesthetics, he laments the lo-fi production, the 'incoherent rants' and the simplistic good anarchist-bad cop 'riot porn' that totally overlook the historical circumstances surrounding IMF and World Bank protests (Harris, 2007: 214). He argues that the results are 'messy, unstructured, and boring to all but narcissistic activists fascinated by their own sense of heroism' (Harris, 2007: 215). Deriving his critique from years of viewing and producing such media, he calls for producers to develop structure, background and engage with empathetic Aristotelian drama in order to attract unaffiliated viewers.



Fig. 43: *Installation view*, photograph, Glue factory, 2011

Thankfully the installation developed beyond a cold representation on the opening night when the anarchic Edinburgh duo AP & Swedo performed within the installation. Appearing caged behind the rope, they ranted like demented Beckettian nomads lost in the wilderness. Fusing white noise with audience interaction, the performance simultaneously evoked a mythic Dickensian past with a dystopian sci-fi future. Fellow research student Stefanie Tan invited them and the Glaswegian ensemble Blochestra to perform on the night. This choir of musicians inspired me somewhat through their entirely open membership. Everyone can perform, they just need to bring along an instrument and they are part of the troupe (Noble, 2011). While not breaking the audience/

performer dialectic, their troubling of the divisions between the artist and the audience began to impact on my considerations of a potent artist exit.

The Hetherington occupation pre-dated the Occupy movement that developed across the western world in the autumn of 2011. Inspired by the Arab Spring and instigated by the *Adbusters* journal, the global movement grew exponentially and significantly affected public discourse. Occupy became intertwined with art following the emergence of the Occupy Museums group in New York. Under the slogan 'Everyone is an artist,' an activist art group known as dOccupy gatecrashed and were then included within Documenta 13 in Kassel in the summer of 2012. Most famously, Occupy were invited to participate in the 2012 Berlin Biennale by curators Artur Żmijewski and Joanna Warsza. However, many within the art world were deeply suspicious of the event. Christy Lange described the 'sympathetic dread' and 'compassionate condescension' of some critics as they encountered the activists within the main hall at the opening (Lange, 2012). The activists were similarly ill at ease. In Maja Fowkes and Reuben Fowkes analysis, they described how Occupy appeared to slowly morph into 'a meta-artwork' by Żmijewski (Fowkes & Fowkes, 2012: 12). Żmijewski is known for instigating conflict within his manipulative collaborative works. However, the authors described how the activists turned the tables on their appropriation within 'the human zoo' and 'the tomb where movements would come to die' by proposing to democratically decide all budgetary and programming decisions within the Biennale. In conclusion, Fowkes and Fowkes saw the Occupy intervention as pushing beyond standard art world framing of social resistance. They affirmed the activist's commitment to the 99% and their negation of compromise and assimilation into the 'artistic jet set'. For the authors, Occupy provided a glimpse of an alternative social model to the unsustainable 'model of the art world based upon the maintenance of unjust power relations in society' (Fowkes & Fowkes, 2012: 16).

In Bourdieu's analysis of the field of cultural production, he argued that power and status is accumulated and retained through exchanges in social relations that operate as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984: 12). It could be argued that my street interventions and work with the occupation were somewhat disingenuous. They were in part instigated by the demands of the research and

were arguably developed to perpetuate some myth of myself as an activist artist. As the placard action was principally performed for the camera and placed on my blog, it raises uncomfortable issues on the ethics of activist art and research on activist art. The specific framing of the event for art discourse invariably problematizes the activism. For who is the intended audience – the art world, the research community or the general public? Has the act a social impact or is it a means of developing my cultural capital? In defence of my interventions, I would argue that the work is directed towards all these agencies. The blog and research is and will be open to anyone to access and much of the traffic is unlikely to be art or research related. However, there are no clear answers to these concerns; it is an entirely grey area.



Fig. 44: *Street resistance*, Buchanan St. Glasgow, photograph, 2011

Many activists spend hours on the streets protesting against war, injustice and tax dodging corporations while some also feed the homeless and help house asylum seekers. While such

activism is a social activity that gives their lives structure and a sense of belonging within a community, there is little if any monetary gain involved for most. Of course some go into conventional politics while others do seek to profiteer or gain some other form of power through their acts. As such, there is never a total ethical purity within activism. However, in general it is an altruistic act that may or may not lead to positive change. In contrast, the artist activist's career is bound up in their acts and they acquire cultural capital which may in turn lead to financial gain. This is a central contradiction of the artist/activist dialectic and it will not be easily overcome.



Fig. 45: *Bristol Anti-war protest*, photograph, 2011

In conversation with both artists and activists, some have claimed that art and artists are irrelevant to political struggle. One retired anarchist claimed that artists never seemed really committed or could be relied upon in local struggles. There is clearly a lingering general resentment and disconnect in society towards art and artists which in turn breeds an inner doubt and a belief that art is a pampered, irrelevant activity for the privileged. Like the demonization of chavs, the denigration of artists or hipsters (a term to define trendy, possibly wealthy, educated bohemian types) arguably embodies a form of acceptable class disgust (Frase, 2011). The fact that many art graduates are from comfortable backgrounds (due to the precarity of career opportunities and the cost of university education) does little to counter this accusation. The media arguably perpetuates this antagonism but arts insistence upon autonomy and its esoteric, alienating discourse do not assist in breaching the divisions between art and the general public. It is perhaps true that many artists are often wary of directly engaging in resistance as they may fear that it will threaten their career or damage the autonomy of their practice. However, this reticence permeates people in many professions; hence the scant numbers of activists despite the general public's dismay with governance and the structures within society. Personally I believe artists to be more sympathetic to social struggles than most as they often sacrifice a stable financial background or the potential of having one to live precariously for a cause they believe in. While the percentage of politically engaged artists is still quite low, it is undoubtedly higher than in almost any other profession in society. While saying this, many if not most only become involved in activism which directly concerns their lives.

Following a brief description of this research, an artist informed me that he believed art should be ambiguous. This was clearly an insinuation that political art is simplistic or propagandistic. While believing contradiction and ambiguity are integral to good art, I have difficulty with and a tendency to negate all universal assumptions on what is or should be art. This could be surmised with an Adorno inspired riddle: true art should be ambiguous to the extent that it transcends ambiguity. I.e. meaning is grasped yet forever displaced. I agree that writing 'war is wrong' on a wall may not be good art. However, intelligent and creative producers can develop work which is complex, contradictory and elusive while retaining a political core. Such a core may indeed also contradict itself. The intentions of the artist are of course a lot different to varying interpretations of the art.

Despite these doubts, many artists, activists and the public believe art is inspiring, loaded with potential and can drive political movements forward. While protest is often ignored or criminalised, art is granted a symbolic legitimacy that can escape policing sanctions as it is ‘only art.’ As a tool of communication, it can shift between the gaps of the gallery, the media and the street and inspire people to see or create their own futures.

4.6 Institutions of exodus



facebook Search for people, places and things

The Exodus: the end of an Era.

Public · By Glasgow Uni Occupied

Wednesday, 31 August 2011 11:00 until 14:00

Free Hetherington (the door!), ,

Occupied by the back-door: de-occupied by the front door. Seven months. Thirty weeks. Two hundred and twelve days. Five thousand and eighty-eight hours... (almost) full-time, twenty-four occupation of the Hetherington Research Club.

The plan is to stage a series of songs, speeches, poems, testimonies from the platform of the porch. Some music. Some tears. Some jokes. We will then form and finally close the door for one last time at 12 noon....

Who gets to close the door, of course, is a very special privilege: the person will be selected by a raffle. *tears*

Going (38)

Share: Post Share link Photo

Fig. 46: *The Exodus: the end of an Era*, facebook group, photograph, 2011

After an agreement with management in which there was a commitment that there would be no more cuts to departments or staff in the foreseeable future, the Hetherington occupation ended on the 31st of August 2011 (Free Hetherington, 2011). Writer Stuart Rodger titled the official departure ‘The Exodus: the end of an Era’ (Glasgow Uni Occupied, 2011). Of course, Virno

would undoubtedly contest this use of the concept and argue that the exodus was not the departure but the occupation itself. It was nonetheless pleasing that Virno's conceptualisation was incorporated within the history of the space. Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray have recently called for a new form of institution. Termed 'instituent practices', they claimed that such spaces do not oppose institutions but they flee institutionalisation. They emphasised that such practices manifest in actualising 'institutions of exodus' (Raunig & Ray, 2009: 20). As an alternative social forum of sorts, the Hetherington can be read as an institution of exodus for a brief period of time. The occupation could also be interpreted as following Joseph Beuy's conception of a Free International University; that being an organization focused upon 'the realization of spiritual and creative goals for society' (Bien, 1999). Such egalitarian models of autonomous education and collaboration have been developed across the world in recent decades. For example, the Copenhagen Free University, the Class War University and the Autonomous London School. They attempt to fulfil the Gandhian concept of prefigurative politics: 'being the change you wish to see' (Gandhi, 2002: 286).

Of course such conceptualisation of horizontally organized spaces of learning, creativity and co-operation is easier to write than to achieve. Group think and self-mythologizing is the antithesis of the negative dialectic method. As the method demands thinking against itself, the research must go beyond lauding the space and develop a critique. While the Hetherington was a powerful symbol of resistance to the profit logic of the modern university, it was not without its problems and contradictions. Indeed, much of the student campus was opposed to the occupation. Activists can and do alienate and leading activists can take on a heroic persona which engenders mistrust. There was also an unspoken hierarchy within the space which was questioned in meetings but never transcended. Formal groups within the space included members from the Scottish Socialist Youth, Socialist Workers Party, Anarchist Federation, Glasgow Feminist Network, Greens, UK Uncut, and the Palestine society. Such groups invariably and perhaps subconsciously seek to further their agenda. People were attacked from outside by right wing students and conflicts deriving from political and personal differences and hierarchical behaviour emerged from within. At the height of the divisions, a six hour assembly meeting descended into threats, tears and walk outs. There was clearly a prevailing tension over the ownership and future direction of the space. In the closing

months, there was perhaps an unbridgeable breakdown in the egalitarian ethos; its self-imposed closure was thus perhaps inevitable and wise.

It must be emphasised that conflicts occur within every social group and is healthy if it is openly addressed. Nonetheless, these difficulties reaffirm my belief in a non-identity outlook that rejects a concrete position or group affiliation. In saying this, a balance needs arrived at between a wariness of groupthink and an apathetic distancing from politics. Ultimately the Hetherington occupation was a success that enriched the lives of most participants. I have many fond recollections of the space. These included meeting and chatting with an immigrant from Zimbabwe, a bohemian American couple who spent their life on freight trains, ex commune members, CIRCA clowns, homeless and recovering alcoholics from Glasgow, Ken Loach, John Holloway, Zapatista spokesmen and many others. The Hetherington did affect the university and its policies. Despite its evident problems, the occupation permeated the consciousness of Glasgow and Scotland and reignited the radical Glasgow tradition. It affirmed the belief that people can affect and control their lives through negating that which is contrary to the common good.

As I considered the pros and cons of the occupation in hindsight, I was reminded of a text discussed by activists within the space. In the essay *Give up Activism!*, a group of anonymous London anarchists called for a renunciation of the activist lifestyle (Andrew X, 2001). After reflecting upon their activities (notably the infamous 18th of June 1999 City of London protest), they polemically argued that ‘the activist milieu acts like a leftist sect’ that ‘jealously guard and mystify the skills they have’ and in so doing they ‘reinforce hierarchical class society’ (Andrew X, 2001). The authors concluded by calling for a rejection of the activist label to foster a society without divisions between specialist activists and others. In so doing they sought to engender a society wherein everyone is an activist. This negation of self drew to mind Adorno’s conception of negative dialectics. Perhaps they seek to manifest a non-identity activism? The dilemma of these activists resonated with my emerging concerns on the artist alienated and divided from the people through their specialism. While many artists and art collectives do brilliant work, their authority

can function as a barrier. Their vanguardism as seers often alienates those they seek to help or represent.

4.7 Duchamp; the non-artist

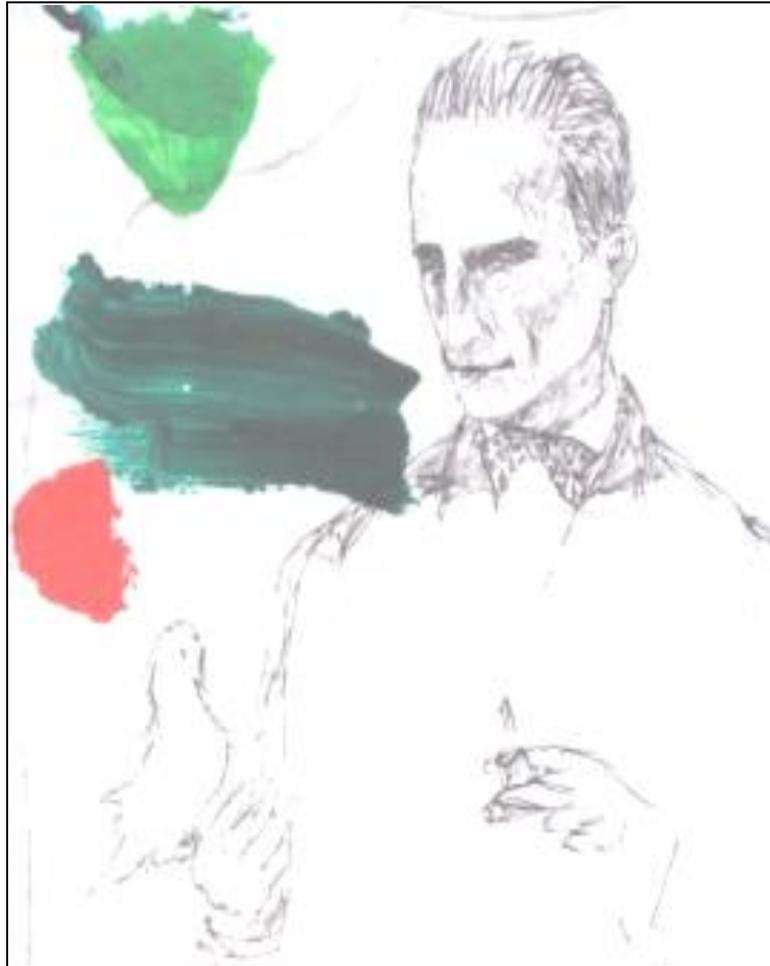


Fig. 47: *Duchamp with pipe and dove*, pen on paper, 2005

To escape from the bourgeois system of commerce and museums it was necessary to escape from the context of art, of the object and of artistic technique: true art would be anti-art, in a

contradiction that would run through all the most radical ‘artistic’ movements of our time (Santi, 2000: 21).

Tiziano Santi contested that this ‘desire for annulment’ and exodus from ‘the bourgeois system of commerce and museums’ reached its limit with the emptying of content and form in Kazimir Malevic’s *Black Painting*. However, he stressed that the break was total following Marcel Duchamp’s ‘negative aesthetic’ ready-mades; wherein the very notion of creation was ruptured and ‘the originality of the author is deprived of meaning and the artist, becomes, in the definition of Duchamp himself, a *non-artist* (Santi, 2000: 21). At a conference in the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1961, Duchamp puzzlingly proclaimed that ‘the great artist of tomorrow will go underground’ (Duchamp, 1975). Was this a declaration against the capitalist encroachment on art, an embodiment of some utopian longing for freedom or an ambiguous riddle? With the preeminent art trickster of his age, it could mean all or none of these things. T.J. Demos argued that Duchamp perpetually sought movement, displacement and exile in both his life and art as a strategy against regimented identity thinking (Demos, 2007). Demos described how Duchamp’s practice was:

(A) telling refusal of the very consistency of identity, of its unitary self-same definition, which served (and still does) as a theoretical foundation of the forces of order, expressed within nationalism, capitalism, and traditional social positions. In other words, it was from the fundamental basis of identification (of being classified as A, B, C, D, E or F) that Duchamp wished to escape in 1918 (Demos, 2007: 76).

This negation of identity manifested within his alter-ego Rrose Sélavy. However, it was under his other pseudonym, R. Mutt that the non-artist approached a non-identity in his art. Disguised as Mutt, Duchamp anonymously submitted the readymade *Fountain* to the New York Society of Independent Artists exhibition in 1917. Following the Parisian Societe des Artistes Independants which was set up in 1884 by artists embittered by the conservatism and nepotism of the official salons, the New York exhibition was entirely open with ‘no jury’ and ‘no prizes.’ As with the

French model, the New York Society was developed in opposition to the jury of the National Academy of Design, the then designator of art, artist's and taste in North America. The infamous art historical legend follows that a heated debate developed amongst the committee on whether Mutt's submission was a joke or a challenge. After which, the committee contradicted their ethos and rejected the work. Soon after, Duchamp, a founding member, resigned from the board in protest. A truly dialectical work, it is the negation of the negation in that Mutt's submission negated the jury's negation of the official sanctioning of art. Despite being apparently destroyed, never publically mentioned at the time and only known of through reproductions and a photograph by Alfred Stieglitz, it has become the pivotal artwork of modern art.



Fig. 48: *Fountains*, pen on paper, digitally altered, 2013

In 2004, *Fountain* topped a polling of 500 British art experts to name the most influential artworks of the 20th century (BBC, 2004). This decision conveys how art will appropriate anything; even deify its ultimate antithesis. As a field, art is arguably entirely empty. Yet within that emptiness is a plethora of symblic, aesthetic, financial and political games that can resonate throughout society. The readymade marked a Copernican shift in aesthetics that has yet to be resolved. Duchamp's denigration of the hand and affirmation of the mind affirmed the artists status alongside the philosopher and can in part be seen as symptomatic of a desire to negate the lingering fear of being seen as a mere craftsman. The standard layman response to the work is: 'I could have done that; therefore it's not art.' Yet it is art and it is not art. For Thierry de Duve, *Fountain* contains four distinct classic features that make it a work of art. There is an act or object, there is an enunciator who names the object or act, there is a viewer and there is an institution (de Duve, 1996). Of course, *Fountain* arguably negated all four of these conditions as its art 'objectness' was deeply questionable at the time, its authorship was a charade, the public never saw it and the institution destroyed it. My opinion of the work is conflicted; while I both like and dislike it, I can never ignore it.

4.8 Post war avant-garde

David Harding argued that the re-emergent vanguardist experimentation of the 1960s derived from the democratic idealism of the time. He claimed that artists began to negate individualism, self expression, galleries and the market and sought to realise maxims such as "the artist is not a special kind of person but every person is a special kind of artist" (Harding, 1995). In the quest for a space of equality, freedom or resistance to commodification, vanguardist art has repeatedly pushed an extreme logic against itself. This martyring or self-cancellation is intrinsic to the egalitarian goal to realise a universal creativity and agency. Within his happenings, Allan Kaprow sought to negate the identity divisions between the artist and the audience. He believed that conventional performance art was exploitative as it engendered resentment due to its latent sadism. As he wrote: 'To assemble people unprepared for an event and say that they are 'participating' if apples are thrown at them or they are herded about is to ask very little of the whole notion of participation' (Kaprow, 2006: 103).

In contrast, happenings had no audience and all the collaborators discuss the work in detail beforehand.



Fig. 49: *Art is life*, (after *Kaprow*), photograph/ digitally altered, 2007

Developing on Kaprow's thoughts on art and life, Suzanne Lacy pushed an egalitarian philosophy into the institutions of art. Addressing rape, prostitution, poverty and war, she literally brought the protagonists into the space through their stories and presence (Lacy, 2010). At certain junctures Lacy was absent; she became a conduit within which others communicated. The aptly titled book *Leaving Art* hints at the dematerialization of herself as an artist (Lacy et al, 2010). Meanwhile, the utopian group Fluxus sought to expand the framing of art and the artist by invited the audience to

realise their instruction pieces; thus negating the very conception of art and the specialist author. The global group were not a movement but a confluence of anti-art producers who worked in a variety of media and languages to explore chance, change, flow and indeterminacy (Pellico, 2008: 94). While such aesthetic experiments troubled the framing and developed our conception of art, Kaprow, Lacy and Fluxus have all become heralded heroic figures in the annals of art history while their collaborators have remained largely anonymous.

Duchamp publically scorned the neo avant-garde experimentation that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s (Demos, 2007: 28). Perhaps he felt art had reached its conclusion with *Fountain*? Indeed TJ Demos claimed that it marked ‘the logical terminus of modern art’ (Demos, 2007: 28). Arthur Danto interpreted Andy Warhol’s *Brillo boxes* as fulfilling Hegel’s ‘end of art’ thesis (for what is art if everything can be art?) but it was surely the iconoclastic *Fountain* that has ruptured the field (Danto, 1992). After 1923, Duchamp withdrew from producing art for public display and focused his energies on discourse and chess. However, he granted the right to reproduce his ready-mades in his later years. This could be interpreted as an experiment in serialisation and repetition or as symptomatic of his general decline as an artist; wherein he started to believe the genius myth that his work once negated. His departure from art was of course a ruse of sorts. Following his death in 1968, his hermetic New York studio revealed a return to representational painting in the *Étant donnés* installation. Perhaps this work was an elucidation on his ambiguous prophecy on artists going underground?

Duchamp’s absence cast a long shadow over 20th century art. In response to his public slight and general withdrawal, Joseph Beuys scrolled ‘the silence of Marcel Duchamp is overrated’ onto a wall during a Fluxus action in Düsseldorf in 1964 (Buchloh, 1980). This act was an explicit accusation that Duchamp’s departure was a forsaking of his socio-political and artist agency. Beuys believed he was developing Duchamp’s legacy through his social sculpture (Thompson, 2011: 87). For Beuys, this was an expanded creativity that developed from thought, discussion and drawing and opened up for people to work towards a holistic, harmonious society (Thompson, 2011). His call for ‘direct democracy through referendum’ that ‘strives towards worldwide cooperation’ still

resonates (Beuys, 1992: 902). However, his celebration of a universal creativity and call for people to realize their transformative, creative energy and agency in all aspects of their lives was met with suspicion and hostility by much of the art world. Perhaps embarrassed by his compatriot, Benjamin Buchloh went so far as to accuse him of fascist tendencies (Buchloh, 1980). Yet he also acknowledged his confusion when he pondered if 'he's simply a fool or a very shrewd trickster, or perhaps a mixture of both' (Buchloh, Krauss & Michelson, 1980: 16).



Fig. 50: *How to explain a picture to a dead hare*, pen on paper/ digitally altered, 2004

While ad hominem attacks are a weak critique, the persona can never be fully ostracized from the art or action in art. Beuys' shamanic aura undoubtedly troubled his egalitarian philosophy. For how can the seer and the egalitarian spirit co-exist? In the performance *How to explain a picture to a dead hare*, he evoked the sacrificial Jesus of Nazareth burdened with his or our cross to face his sacrificial martyrdom. Ultimately he will remain a riddle; both ridiculed and deified. However, his work and thought will nonetheless live on. Of Duchamp's gesture, Beuys declared:

He entered this object (the urinal) into the museum and noticed that its transportation from one place to another made it art. But he failed to draw the clear and simple conclusion that every man is an artist (Beuys in de Duve, 1996: 285).

In 1972, he was dismissed as Professor of Sculpture at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf for admitting rejected students to his class (Biro, 1995). This act was clearly a manifestation of his belief that 'every human being is an artist' slogan through its negation of the University's demarcation of the potential artist and the non-artist (Beuys, 1992). Despite it deeply troubling to the specialist field of art, this egalitarian ethos has a rich history.

4.9 Everybody is an artist

In *Kant after Duchamp*, Thierry de Duve wrestled with the complexity of defining art after the readymade; wherein 'this is beauty' has become 'this is art' (de Duve, 1996). Previously, great art was thought of as embodied in the auratic object formed by the hands of a visionary genius. In contrast, *Fountain* has generally been interpreted as signifying that the artist can now designate anything as art (Heiser, 2009). While seeing validity in this interpretation, I believe the iconoclastic object also suggested that taste itself was an elitist myth and that a basic object created by an anonymous artisan has potentially as much merit as a painting by one of the great masters. This alternative reading is genuinely radical as it deeply problematizes our conception of art and the identity of the artist, the critic, the curator and the collector. For what is the value of such professions if anything is art?

The belief that *Fountain* negates elite taste derives from its historical context. Along with Francis Picabia and Man Ray, Duchamp was a member of New York Dada. Though less overtly political than their transatlantic cousins in Berlin, Paris or Zurich, their thinking and practice cannot be ostracized from the general anti-art tendency. Disgusted by what they saw as an imperialist, capitalist war, Dada sought to rupture conventional bourgeois culture and create an egalitarian society wherein art would no longer remain the preserve of a wealthy elite. To do so, they sought to negate, exit and destroy art through anti-art. Gail Day describes the historic avant-garde as ‘negative thinkers making their philosophy into praxis’ (Day, 2011: 129). In 1920, Richard Huelsenbeck declared:

DADA is German Bolshevism. The bourgeois must be deprived of the opportunity to ‘buy up art for his justification’. Art should altogether get a sound thrashing, and DADA stands for the thrashing with all the vehemence of its limited nature (Huelsenbeck, 2007: 66).

In Peter Bürger’s thesis on the historic avant-garde, he charted how art mutated from being a collectively produced and collectively received sacred object in the late middle Ages into an individually produced yet collectively received representational art in the courtly period before settling into its bourgeois period wherein it was produced and received individually. He saw such bourgeois art as deeply contradictory - while it fused values of joy, truth and solidarity and protested against injustice, it also relieved ‘the existing society of the pressure of those forces that make for change’ (Bürger, 2006: 49). For Bürger, Dadaism countered such ‘pseudo-romantic doctrines of inspiration’ through mocking the individual artist’s signature by arbitrarily displaying mass products randomly. He claimed Duchamp’s provocative gesture ‘unmasks the art market where the signature means more than the quality of the work’ (Burger, 2006: 50). For Bürger, Dada’s dialectical assault on the status of art in bourgeois society involved the ‘sublation of art’; that being its destruction, transferral and ultimate preservation (though distinctly altered) within the ‘praxis of life’ (Bürger, 2006: 48). In a similar analysis, Boris Groys described how the vanguardists of Italian Futurism, the Russian avant-garde, Dada, Surrealism, Fluxus, the Situationist International and Warhol’s Factory all sought to ‘devalue the symbolic value of art’ through negating their ‘personal individuality and authorship to commonality’ (Groys, 2008: 28). Taking

inspiration from George Bataille's writings on the Aztec's sacrificial rituals, Groys argues that such repetitions of 'authorial surrender' do not diminish or nullify the self sacrifice but renew 'the vital strength of the society' (Groys, 2008: 26).



Fig. 51: *Emmy Hennings with Dada puppet, Zurich, 1917*, pen on paper, digitally altered, 2013

De Duve placed *Fountain* within a lineage of experimental, avant-garde production that he traced back into the art of German romanticism and the political ideals of the 1789 - 1799 French revolution. Citing Novalis as the first to proclaim that 'every man should be an artist', he asserted that such egalitarianism was developed by the rejected artists of the bourgeois Parisian salons in the mid-19th century (de Duve, 1996). He traces the emergence of the avant-garde to Gustav Courbet's

conflicts with the Salon of 1851 and the realisation of the Salon des Refusés (rejects) exhibition of 1863 . This exhibition, granted by Napoleon III, consisted of artwork refused by the official salon. For de Duve, this breaking of the padlock of the jury marked an epochal shift in art: ‘for the first time in history, the crowd was invited to decide not merely whether the refused paintings were beautiful, but whether they were art’ (de Duve, 1996: 315). He described how this egalitarian spirit was embedded within the utopian experiments of the spiritualists Kandinsky and Mondrian and the materialists Tatlin and El Lissitzky. He emphasised that such avant-garde production sought to ‘liberate a potential for art-making present in everyone (...) a potential whose field was aesthetic but whose horizon was political’ (de Duve, 1996: 289).

De Duve acknowledged that Duchamp would have dismissed an egalitarian interpretation of the readymade as he was ‘never a Utopian’ and would utterly reject ‘universal creativity’ (de Duve, 1996: 290). However, like any artist, Duchamp had little control over the interpretation of his work. Indeed in 1957, he argued that ‘the creative act is not performed by the artist alone’ (Duchamp, 2012). As such, the viewer or spectator is integral to the creation of the work. Even Clement Greenburg, the champion of formalist medium specificity conceded the uncertainty of defining art following a deep reflection upon the readymade. Greenburg declared: ‘What we agree to call art cannot be definitively or decisively separated from aesthetic experience at large’ (Greenburg in de Duve, 1996: 278). For de Duve, the readymade has affirmed, if only with ‘a grain of salt,’ that ‘everyone had already become an artist’ (1996: 289).

4.10 Self-negation

When considering the art of the Romantics, Hegel proclaimed that art had lost its value as it was no longer interconnected with the sacred. In his Lectures on Aesthetics from 1828, he wrote:

Art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our ideas instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place (Hegel in Weibel, 2002: 591).

In a treatise on self negation in art, Boris Groys follows Hegel's infamous thesis on 'the end of art' to convincingly argue that the secularization of art following the French revolution radically devalued the discipline - whereas Christian icons were once venerated, nobody seeks salvation from modern art. David Graeber has written of how the artist Henri de Saint-Simon and the sociologist Comte founded religions to fill the vacuum in people's lives following the demise of the Christian church at this time (Graeber, 2007: 251). As Bürger contested, this emerging Bourgeois period marked the schism between the artist and the people. Groys claims that attempts to overcome these divisions through self negation date back to the birth of modern art in the romantic era of the late 18th and early 19th century (Groys, 2008: 19). Graeber suggested that artists allied themselves with 'the most oppressed' and positioned themselves at the forefront of instigating political change due to their relative freedom and the space society provided them with to imagine alternatives to the emerging capitalist economy (Graeber, 2007: 253). He rejected the presumption that such artists were and are the offspring of the bourgeois. Citing Bourdieu's historical analysis of 19th century bohemianism, he argued that the scene consisted of a fusion of a small number from bourgeois backgrounds and a larger number of overlooked educated artists from modest origins (Graeber, 2007). As such, resentment can in part be interpreted as central to the emergence of artistic and political vanguardism. They became an antithesis to the status quo and their art, manifestos, slogans and interventions became their tools of negation.

To elucidate on the sacrificial negation of self, Groys turns to Richard Wagner's conceptualisation of the Gesamtkunstwerk (the total work of art) in his *The Art-work of the Future* essay. Written during the failed revolution of 1848 and 1849 prior to his enforced exile from Germany, Wagner sought to theorise a revolutionary aesthetic within the text. It begins with Wagner negating the egocentric isolated artist who produces goods for the rich before going on to envisage an art of Communism. To realise such an art, Wagner called on artists to reject all stylistic divisions and to recognise that the people, the Folk, are the true artists (Groys, 2008: 21). Groys describes Wagner's motivation:

People sing, dance, write poetry, or paint because these practices derive from the natural constitution of their bodies. The isolation and professionalization of these activities represent a kind of theft perpetrated by the wealthy classes upon the people. This theft must be redressed, and the individual reunited in order to re-create the inner unity of each person as well as the unity of the people (Groys, 2008: 22).

Groys stresses that such self-negation should not result in the death of the author; rather the symbolic 'self-abdication' that occurs on the stage is an attempt to instigate the multiplication of authors and the realisation of their agency in life. In the close of *Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes infamously proclaimed: 'we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author' (Barthes, 1977: 148). To Barthes analysis, the author's social history and biography are irrelevant and the notion of an 'Author-God' having original insight is illusory. For him, the text was a fusion of conflicting meanings that are not original and are not the property of the writer. Michel Foucault took Barthes polemic and pushed it to an extreme in *What is an Author?*² He claimed that the author role is intrinsically bound up with individualism and private property of the bourgeois, capitalist society of the 18th century (Foucault, 1984: 119). However, he argued that the author's ownership of the discipline and their role as 'the regulator of the fictive' was not inherently stable. He wrote:

Given the historical modifications that are taking place, it does not seem necessary that the author function remain constant in form, complexity, and even in existence. I think that as our society changes, at the very moment when it is in the process of changing, the author function will disappear (Foucault, 1984: 119).

Foucault was tentative in approaching the radical perspective of a total renunciation of authorship; arguing that it would be 'pure romanticism' to 'imagine a culture in which the fictive would operate in an absolutely free state' (Foucault, 1984: 119). However, he nonetheless called for 'a form of culture in which fiction would not be limited by the figure of the author' (Foucault, 1984: 119). He foresaw an alteration of the 'author function' in historical terms, believing it will change as capitalist society mutates. This alteration of the author function has a prolonged yet troubled history.

Inspired in part by Foucault's hypothetical proposal for an artistic production without any identities attached to the work, Joe Scanlan recently created the upcoming, young black artist Donelle Woolford to produce work, attend openings and eagerly participate in the art world game. To realise this ambitious project, Scanlan hires many actresses to play Woolford (Scanlan & Sigler, 2010). In a 2010 interview, he describes how the work addresses the constructed myths and reification of art and artists. He stated:

I like the perversion of Donelle going out to see shows on a Saturday afternoon and interacting with people, even though she may be the only person aware that she is an actor portraying a fictional character. Thousands of people might see her, maybe a dozen will "notice" her. But we have no way of knowing if even one person pauses and thinks, "Hey, was that Donelle Woolford?" (Scanlan & Sigler, 2010).

Scanlan's simulation is a potent and somewhat disturbing negation of art world framing. However, like the wider project of self negation, it is not without its contradictions. Such a public feigning of disinterest can be interpreted as a career boosting ruse. In the interview, Sigler ponders if Scanlan's 'symbolic death' is not an aspirational strategy to compensate for his own ageing, depleted career? Scanlan approaches rejecting this proposition before conceding that 'maybe it *is* "boutique" in the sense that it is a waste, an expenditure with no purpose, a kind of nihilism' (Scanlan & Sigler, 2010). In Groys text, he acknowledges this potential for failure. He describes the fate of the isolated and embittered Guy Debord as paradigmatic of the difficulties facing the artist seeking to stage and control their authorial demise (Groys, 2008: 28). However, he asserted that this in no reason to reject the negation of authorial self. Indeed, he claimed that the orchestrated fall will invariably result in failure for the author – yet in so doing, it realizes the *gesamtkunstwerk*: 'which is nothing other than the public performance of artistic failure' (Groys, 2008: 28).

Between 1977 and 1980, Gustav Metzger implemented an art strike to oppose arts egocentrism and its complicity within the violence and inequalities of capitalism. In an analysis that shared similarities with Virno's conception of exodus, he declared:

The use of art for social change is bedevilled by the close integration of art and society. The state supports art, it needs art as a cosmetic cloak to its horrifying reality, and uses art to confuse, divert and entertain large numbers of people. Even when deployed against the interests of the state, art cannot cut loose the umbilical cord of the state (Metzger, 1974).



Fig. 52: *Art Strike*, pencil & paintbrush, 2011

Metzger's strike against the institutions of art fits within a lineage of artist self negation. The Art Workers Coalition in New York implemented a strike against war, repression, racism and sexism in 1970 and Stewart Home carried out a three year art strike to highlight and negate the commodification of art in 1990. Inspired by Metzger, he was motivated to 'bring the class struggle to the art-world' as he saw its administrators as 'a faction of the ruling class who promote art as a superior form of knowledge and simultaneously use it as a means of celebrating the 'objective superiority of their own way of life' (Home, 1990). The latest strike occurred in 2009 after Vilnius in Lithuania become the European capital of culture. The Alytus Art Strike Committee called for refusals of neoliberal gentrification, the artist ego, the spectator and the critics (Diržys, 2008). Ultimately however, these art strikes are usually remembered as sacrificial failures. The authors

may genuinely consider their acts to be quasi-Christ like negations of self for the folk but they have also been interpreted as artistic strategies to develop their cultural capital.

In a roundtable debate in Glasgow on Metzger, Ross Birrell described his practice as ‘self-cancelling’ (Morton et al, 2008). For Birrell, this is an ‘ethical/ political procedure’ which evokes suicide bombing, self-publication and death. He turned towards Adorno’s negative dialectics to claim that Metzger’s work approaches ‘some sort of manifestation of that concept, ‘if thinking is to be true it is to be thinking against itself’ (Morton et al, 2008). In hindsight, Birrell’s fusion of Adorno’s negative dialectics with the project of self negation undoubtedly has had a strong impact upon this research. In the discussion, Ross Sinclair took Bill Drummond’s *No Music Day* (wherein Drummond called for a total renunciation of listening to music for a day) to argue that such self-cancelling practices act as a misnomer; they turn ‘against themselves in order to better understand them’ (Morton et al, 2008). This is clearly the essence of the vanguardist project of sacrificial self cancellation. It forsakes the author role in order to engender a society wherein everyone is an author.

At sunrise on midsummer’s day in 2010, I participated in a 17 performance organized by Bill Drummond at the Callenish stone circle on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. The performance consisted of 17 unknown people gathering together to perform a score of music. Drummond has composed and performed countless scores with hundreds of strangers across the world on a monthly basis over the past decade. The 17 reject all recorded music; there is no audience and the event and its significance exist only in the moment and the collective memory of the group (Drummond, 2008). At the stone circle, we performed *Score 8: TAKE:*

In June,

Take 17 people to a place

Where skylarks climb

High in the sky

Request the 17 to lie on their backs

On the grass and listen

To the skylarks as they climb

High in the sky (Drummond, 2010)



Fig. 53: *Skylarks, the 17*, Callenish Stone Circle, Isle of Lewis, 2010

My participation in the 17 project was instigated by earlier discoveries in the research. After reading of the Turner Prize's instigation in 1984, I was drawn to consider George Orwell's dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell wrote the classic book on the island of Jura while suffering from Tuberculosis in 1948. From a brief study of the remote Scottish island, I discovered that Drummond's former band, the KLF (consisting of himself and Jimmy Cauty) reportedly burnt £1million there in 1994. This act of creative destruction resonated with my thoughts on exiting and negation and compelled me to seek out the 17 performance. While Drummond's work is by no means central to the art world, it would be misplaced to consider his practice as outside of art or authorship. His events are often connected with art institutions and his authorship remains strong through organisation and orchestrating the scores. With the 17 happenings, he nonetheless problematizes the roles of the author and spectator. Ultimately, Drummond is perhaps seeking to inspire the collaborator to become an artist. As he recently declared:

Doing art should not be a full time job for the validated few. Doing art should be something we all do as part of everyday life... None of us should be getting our highs and lows vicariously through what other people do, we should all do the fighting, kicking, loving, fucking, painting, throwing, jumping, killing, singing, shouting ourselves, and not have actors, sportsmen, musician or artists doing it for us (Drummond, 2012).

Practices of self negation within contemporary art have a chequered history. For example, in 1999 Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno bought the copyright of the Manga character AnnLee before inviting other artists to produce work with her before granting her freedom through ensuring her symbolic death - by transferring all rights to herself via the AnnLee Association (Mayfield, 2002). Parreno declared: 'if you give (the character) to a lot of people, she belongs to everyone' (Mayfield, 2002). The project was an interesting experiment in collaboration but no way realised self-negation due to the celebration of the overseeing authors. However, Charlotte Young's film *Artist Statement* remains a potent demystification of authorial identity. Within the work, she dissected the oft fabricated statement through describing her (failing) art practice to camera while the reality of the fabricated declarations is documented in subtitles below (Young, 2011). For example, as she proclaims an interest in narrative, the subtitles inform us that she 'likes watching television'. The

artwork operates like the child who had the naivety or madness to declare that the emperor was in fact naked. Perhaps the closest work that I have seen to realising self negation in recent years was the *6 Works of Art for Your Interpretation* exhibition at Glasgow's Transmission gallery in 2012. It consisted of a wide selection of anonymously curated, anonymous artworks from both recognisable and unrecognised producers (transmissiongallery, 2012). From my analysis, it was a powerful affirmation of art through its negation of identities. And yet, it still fell short of celebrating a universal creativity.

4.11 Legacy of the avant-garde



Fig. 54: *No Art*, Foyle Bridge, Derry, Open Door 77, 2012

The avant-garde's radical dialectical project has become a chapter in art history. Their aesthetics have been subject to decades of reified, commodified repetitions while their utopian vision of an alienation free society appears entirely discredited and fanciful. Peter Bürger rallied against modern repetitions of their negation of the commodity form; arguing that they are ultimately affirmations of the individual creator myth following the acceptance of the readymade within the museum. For Bürger, this derived from the categorisation of their antithesis as art and the ultimate failure of the avant-garde project to sublimate art (Bürger, 2006: 51). A historian, advocate and mourner of the avant-garde, de Duve claimed that the public's disinterest in contemporary art has developed in line with this recuperation. He believed that art has now become 'the reign of the whatever' for the public while the art world strives 'to prove to the public, or to itself, that this whatever is not just anything whatever' (de Duve, 1996: 329). It is difficult to argue with his analysis when considering the multitude of random events and happenings that embody contemporary art. It is perhaps truly impossible to exit art when art has become everything and nothing. But for de Duve, it remains a noble project. He wrote:

There is no need for despair if you hold on to art's critical function, which is to watch over the requirement of universality, which, in today's thoroughly institutionalized artworld, ought to remind its members that whatever it produces, shows, appreciates, sells, and consumes, does have meaning beyond being mere luxury goods only insofar as it negates this artworld's actual boundaries. And if you understand Duchamp's readymade—this anything whatever that could have been made by anyone—to be the symbolic embodiment of art's address to everyone (1996: 459).

As the research demands recurring negations, I cannot close this section without problematising the vanguardist project. Interpreting their negations of society and self as an innately worthy project stymied by a corrupt art and social system is a gross simplification. As in any other phenomena, its many manifestations are riddled with hypocrisies and contradictions. There is an undoubted element of elite knowingness running throughout avant-garde posturing and experimentation. They negated the art game yet in so doing become a central player. In Erika Biddle's feminist critique of Dada, she rejected Peter Bürger's idealistic claim that the historic avant-garde responded to the 'individual genius' myth of bourgeois arts by radically negating the category of individual creation

and reception. For Biddle, who addressed the denigration and exclusion of women from within Dada, the artists did not discard their identities as authors but followed their bourgeois forebears and became entirely 'heroized' (Biddle, 2007: 274). There is real truth in her analysis. In Darij Zadnikar defence of negative dialectics, he proclaimed: 'Vanguardism is the absolute realisation of representative politics' (Zadnikar, 2009: 85). Perhaps art production will only ever become egalitarian when artists renounce this vanguardism and ownership of the discipline and herald a society wherein everyone is an artist?

5. Chapter 5 Towards a non-identity art

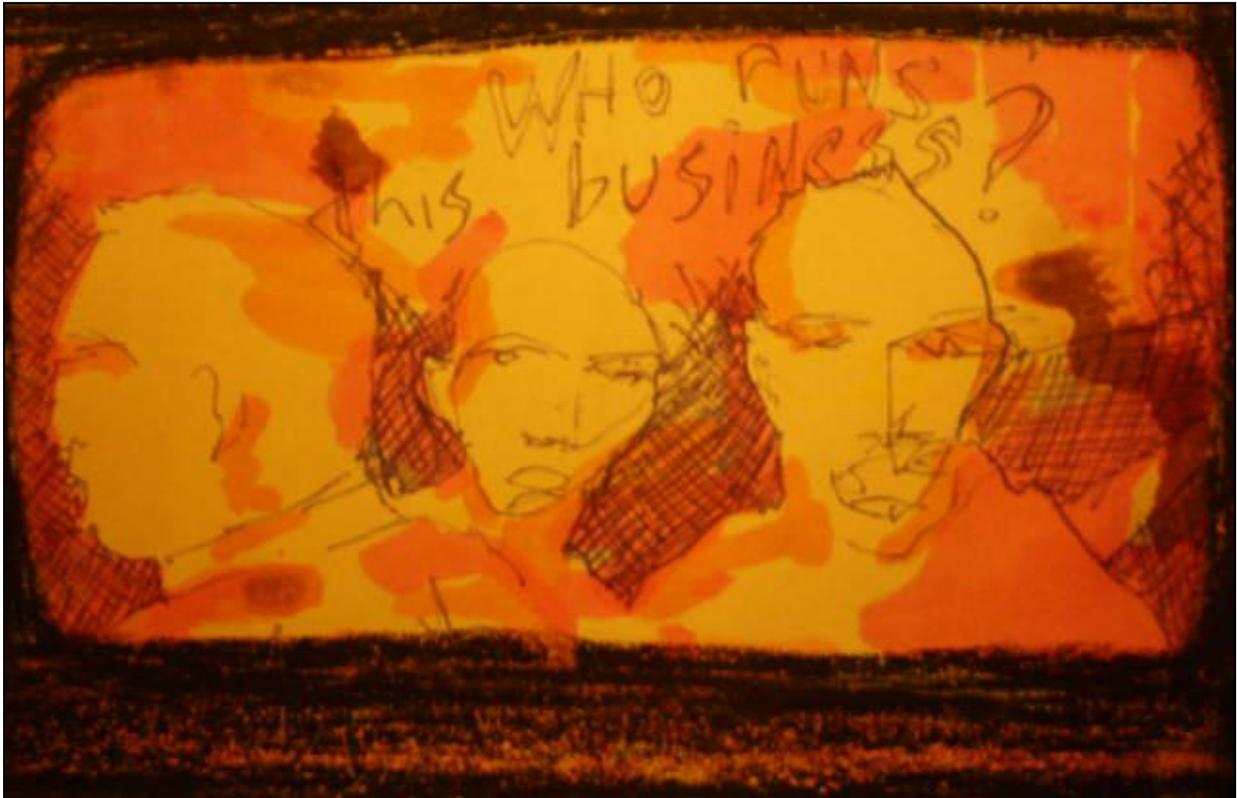


Fig. 55: *Division*, pen and ink on paper, 2010

5.1 Alienation and division

In Greek mythology, heroes were venerated like the Gods, some of whom were demigods - the child of a mortal and deity (Nagy, 1999). In the Homeric epics, they displayed supernatural courage from a position of weakness to achieve a goal for the greater good (Nagy, 1999). Such tales are of course pan-cultural and permeate the legends of Cú Chulainn, Étaín and Lugh in Celtic myth. Roma Chatterji has described the hero or protagonist of the novel as being an embodiment of the reader or viewer of the story (Chatterji, 1985). As such, we project ourselves onto them. Be

it Che Guevara, Joseph Beuys or Lady Gaga, the idolized heroic individuals that permeate popular culture can appear narcissistic to perform and voyeuristic to spectate. They can be interpreted as vicarious, archetypal attachments that are natural, at times healthy but are also symptomatic of a void created by unfulfilling, alienated labour. Conflicting emotions have engulfed me in the past when reflecting upon an exhibition, football match, film or concert. Although often enjoyable and informative, I also resented it at times. It clearly reminded me of my failure or inability to act or realise my agency as an artist or footballer or whatever one wishes to achieve in life. While these emotions are negative, they are entirely human and not uncommon. We live in an individualist society wherein we are socialised into seeking success and personal fulfilment. It can of course become malignant if unrealised. Within Friedrich Nietzsche's analysis of the master-slave relationship, he described the emergence of a slave morality steeped in what he termed resentment. He wrote:

The beginning of the slaves' revolt in morality occurs when *ressentiment* itself turns creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of those beings who, denied the proper response of action, compensate for it only with imaginary revenge. Whereas all noble morality grows out of a triumphant saying 'yes' to itself, slave morality says 'no' on principle to everything that is 'outside', 'other', 'non-self': and *this* 'no' is its creative deed (Nietzsche, 2007: 20).

As it is capable of taking both malignant and benevolent forms, this negativity is of course deeply ambiguous. In the trade union leader, Jimmy Reid's inauguration address upon becoming the rector of the University of Glasgow in 1971, he argued that alienation was the major social problem in Britain. He described how it manifested in 'young people who want to opt out of society, by drop-outs, the so-called maladjusted, those who seek to escape permanently from the reality of society' (Reid, 1971). He argued that this alienation simultaneously de-humanises others and makes them 'insensitive, ruthless in their handling of fellow human beings, self-centred and grasping.' Alienation derives from 'alien' which relates to 'belonging to a foreign country' (OED, 2004: 33). To alienate is to 'cause to feel isolated' and relates to 'a state of depersonalization or loss of identity in which the self seems unreal' (OED, 2004: 33). Gail Day has described how loss and alienation from God, certainty, value and meaning are a central debate in theology, psychology,

sociology and politics (Day, 2011). However, Fredric Jameson has argued that we are now totally fragmented and have even lost the sense of loss and alienation in the Postmodern era (Jameson, 1991: 203). While intriguing to read, I would reject Jameson's theorizing on this issue. As the 2013 Loyalist riots in Belfast contest, alienation is an ever present condition. The loss of identity, belonging and power within individuals and groups manifests at its extreme with violence - to the self or other. Suicide is of course an act of deep alienation; wherein the individual seek a way out. Recent statistics reveal that 525 people committed suicide in the Republic of Ireland in 2011 (O'Regan, 2013) while 6,045 suicides were recorded that year in the U.K. among people over 15 (Meikle, 2013).

The social alienation that permeates many aspects of modern society arguably derives from division, hierarchy and inequality which in turn engender a sense of powerlessness, confusion, despair and anger. Be it a nation, a social class, a profession, a school, a neighbourhood, a sex, a sexuality, an ethnicity, a language, a religion or a football team, we are all identified and bracketed as different from others as we grow. The effects of these social divisions are far reaching. In Northern Ireland, the future of most children can be mapped out at the age of 11. At this age, they are branded as successes or failures through the 11-plus exam and divided into grammar or secondary schools. In Marx's and Engel's early writing, they argued that the division of labour between and within classes created deep antagonisms that ruptured social cohesion (Marx and Engels, 1978: 133). For Marx, private property and private ownership of the means of production engender the evils of envy, war, egotism and crime. He claimed that though the propertied and the proletariat suffer from the same alienation, the propertied class are 'strengthened in this self-estrangement' while the 'class of the proletariat feels annihilated in estrangement' (Marx, 1978, Vol. 4: 36). This alienation and division of course permeates the field of art. The writer Ewan Morrison described how a sense of failure has permeated his peer group. He claimed that only four out of some 300 people in his social circle managed to become musicians, film-makers, poets or painters despite their wishes. He wrote: 'It seems crazy that that means there are 296 people who are living a life of resentment' (Ross & Morrison, 2007). He went on to describe how 'we have a set of unrealistic expectations about sustaining a creative life in the midst of a consumer culture.' His analysis is accurate within the current historical circumstance. However, alienation and division

should not be an innate human condition but a result of historical circumstances that are subject to changed.

5.2 External negations of authorship



Fig. 56: *War*, Aerosol & stencil, Glasgow, 2010



Fig. 57: *The Vandals*, & anonymous, 2010

In 2010, I produced and displayed a number of stencils in the back streets of Glasgow. The stencil that proved catalytic was this reproduction of Steve McCurry's iconic 1985 National Geographic photograph of the Afghani Pashtun refugee Sharbat Gula. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Gula fled to a refugee camp in Pakistan where she was photographed without her request by McCurry (Newman, 2002). The technique involved in manufacturing the stencil was

conveyed on my blog. Upon reflection, this revealing of the production methods is arguably more political than the content of the image. For centuries, artisans have closely guarded the secrets of their guilds. In *The Author as Producer*, Walter Benjamin argued that the committed artist must not merely create radical content in a work but s/he must revolutionise and socialise the intellectual means and relations of production (Benjamin, 1992: 483).

A month or so after producing the stencil, it was scored over by an anonymous tagger. Street art etiquette dictates that one should never deface another's work. Unfortunately, I may have stencilled over what appeared to be a couple of messy lines nearby. The violence of the iconoclastic act took me back. It did not appear to be an affirmative negation but purely nihilistic. Was it because I breached their code of conduct by defacing a work or was it an attack on my trespassing into their territory? Fortunately or unfortunately, I will never know. Street art can of course be as hierarchical as any institution. Indeed, it is its own informal institution with networks, divisions, agendas and hierarchies. While appearing egalitarian from a distance, it can also be a machismo culture that affirms an egotistical individuality. On the other hand, many street artists work in deprived communities to foster a positive creativity that brings meaning and direction to disadvantaged young people's lives (Man One, 2011).

Such collaborations are by no means without precedent; Jean Michel Basquiat defaced Andy Warhol's work in the Factory. While the defacement of my work was anything but a benign collaboration, the negation nonetheless has proven critical to the development of the research. The work became a truly dialectical artwork in that my anonymous negation of war was in turn negated. While the graffiti artist was potentially being malicious, they also added to the work. It was by no means an improvement but within the act was some message that developed my thinking on chance, collaboration, conflict and authorship. Ultimately the aesthetic conflict influenced my thoughts on a dialectical art that is ever evolving and consists of contradictions. However, the significant lesson was how it developed my conception of authorship. It drew me to reflect upon an expanded authorship wherein my authorial identity was near negated.



Fig. 58: *равенство*, (*equality*), Acrylic, aerosol & newspapers, GSA, Popova, S. & Harron, R., 2011

My authorship was further problematized in a collaborated with Svetla Popova for a mural at the art school. As members of the G.S.A. Mural Society, we produced a work in May of 2011 that addressed global division, war and exploitation. For the commission, I wished to reproduce the Gall-Peters projection of the world. The omnipresent 16th century Mercator map is a colonial construct that vastly overemphasises the size of the northern hemisphere. Cartographer Mark Monmonier has acknowledged that ‘geographers and cartographers have been far too tolerant of a mapism that magnifies the size – and presumably the importance of Europe and North America at the expense of Africa, Latin America and tropical Asia’ (Monmonier, 1995: 4). While no two-

dimensional representation of the globe can ever be truly accurate, the Gall-Peters map strives to be an area accurate projection. James Gall created the map in the 19th century and Arno Peters reproduced a similar design in the 1970s (Monmonier, 1995: 11). However, the official cartography community ignored both representations. As it is just a map, it can appear quite a neutral image. However, the more one looks, the more its meaning emerges. It can be read as a symbol of egalitarianism that elucidates on identification and power. To map or name is of course to identify, classify and ultimately to own. Indeed this was the basic objective of the Age of Discovery. Central to Adorno's negative dialectics is to forsake such ownership and rigid identification.

Due to the necessity of compromise in collaborations, we did not recreate the Gall-Peters mural. It was nonetheless produced in collaboration with others at the Hetherington occupation. For the mural, Svetla and I nonetheless developed the mapping theme. We produced a work that used allegory to address the exploitation and oppression of both animals and people in regions across the world. As it appeared somewhat generalising and literal, I stencilled the Bulgarian words *свобода* (freedom) and *равенство* (equality) on the wall (translate.google, 2012). I then glued dozens of ripped newspapers and magazines around the edges. This altered the dimensions to the flat image and hopefully added to its ambiguity and contradiction. The newspapers were incorporated to convey the pervasive influence of the media in framing everyday life. They were randomly selected that morning and included references to Osama Bin Laden's death, the Glaswegian football teams, celebrity gossip, the markets and war. While relatively pleased with the work on an aesthetic level, its importance to the research ultimately derives from external interventions rather than any content it may have had.

A few days after pasting the newspapers onto the wall, they were removed. Despite the poor weather, it seemed apparent that this was some form of vandalism. The motive of the puzzling act and the identity of the malcontent remain unknown. Then, as we were about to complete the work, we were informed by union representatives that a fellow student would replace the mural in the coming weeks. This was unusual as they usually stay up for about a month. Svetla wished to

create a petition to keep it up. Believing this could backfire as we were postgraduates without sufficient connections, I grudgingly acquiesced. At the time, we pondered if the decision reflected some antagonism to the political content of the mural or if it was favouritism. Ultimately we will never know. After a short period of resigned reflection, I decided to counteract the vandalism to the newspapers and the imminent removal of the mural by drawing freehand over it and invited others to do likewise by leaving a message declaring it free to draw over. Within a week, text and drawings from about a dozen unknown people appeared on the wall. As such, an anonymous, collaborative, work slowly emerged.



Fig. 59: *The lions are at the door, we ain't taking orders from snakes anymore*, GSA, anonymous, 2011

Three months later in early September of 2011, the new mural was still up on the wall. After considering the fate of our mural and the length of time that the new work was up, it seemed appropriate to negate it. Hopefully the fellow student will have appreciated that the alteration was not a purely nihilistic negation. From my interpretation or from what I have read about the artist, the initial work appeared to address feminism and advertising. It consisted of a pink wall with two adjacent phrases in gold: 'Legs Shut' on the left and 'Legs Spread' on the right. To highlight the

dialectical nature of the pronouncements and to signify my negation of this negation, I wrote ‘the permeation of opposites’ between the texts before writing ‘the negation of the negation’ below it. Following this, I painted evocative archetypal Jungian imagery around the original text. This included a juggling jester, a castle on a hill, a crow, the sun, a goat, flying witches, fish and hearts. This expressive, instinctive work was and was not related to the existing work. This act of negation arguably and briefly reaffirmed our agency. After many years, it was to be the last artistic act upon the wall. Within two weeks, the building was demolished to make way for the development of the new Steven Holl designed building. In hindsight, that which is of most value to the research was not the artwork produced or the intriguing conflicts. The emergent anonymous, collaborative work within the initial mural drew me to further consider the potential of self negation as an integral component to fostering a universal authorship.



Fig. 60: *Negations...* GSA, Acrylic, chalk, Harron, R. & anonymous, 2011

5.3 Egalitarian art

In 2008, I went on a pilgrimage of sorts to Hove music festival on a small island off the coast of Norway. In hindsight, the most vivid memory was not the bands on the stage, the film festival or the circus performers but the primal, rhythmic drumming that emanated from the forest. Over the week of the festival, many people collaborated to create a unique sonic experience. Dozens of drums and drumsticks were attached to trees from which anyone and everyone could perform. There appeared to be no organiser and no publication of the event. While there was of course some form of organisation, it remained anonymous. Its resonance resided in the manner in which the artist and audience division was neutralized - everybody was an artist. This experience draws to mind a collaborative work developed by Sally Madge yet authored by countless others. In 2002, she began to create a small shelter with found materials along a remote beach on the island of Lindisfarne off Northumberland. Without her knowledge, the shelter developed into an anonymous, collaborative creation between herself and the community who walked the strand (Jennings, 2011). Over time, the small space gathered toys, personal notes, mementos and numerous other paraphernalia from countless collaborators. In his review of the work, Tom Jennings describes how:

A sense of community, creativity and mutuality seems to have developed completely outside of the usual artificial frameworks of ownership, egos and institutions(...) hierarchical organisation is refused here - as are the patronising pitfalls of 'community art' (...) where professional moralisers purge creative deficits from ignorant masses and in the process fossilise the superstructures and discourses sustaining such calumnies (Jennings, 2011).

My interest in the work is not the retrospective designation as art or the celebration of the author but the anonymous, communal creativity. While declaring this, I realise that without Madge, the work would remain unknown outside of Northumberland. Nonetheless, it further developed my thinking on a potent exit from authorship and affirmation of a universal creativity. While the profession of the artist is arguably an exodus from conventional 9-5 societies, status accumulation

and competition can rupture the quest for an authentic life void of social conflict or divisions. As socialist writer Judy Cox has argued, creativity cannot negate the totality of alienation. She claimed that the ‘eradication of alienation depends on the transformation of society as a whole’ (Cox, 1998). GS Evans described how the emergence of a capitalist commodity-based culture in Europe and North America in the 16th and 17th century fundamentally altered the production and consumption of art. He claimed that ‘the art-commodity came to replace participatory art in most people's lives, and art increasingly became a source of alienation’ (Evans, 1989: 2). In response, Evans called us to reject the ‘fetishism of art products’ and overcome our artistic alienation through producing our own art. Such an art was briefly realised on the island of Hove and the shelter in Lindisfarne.

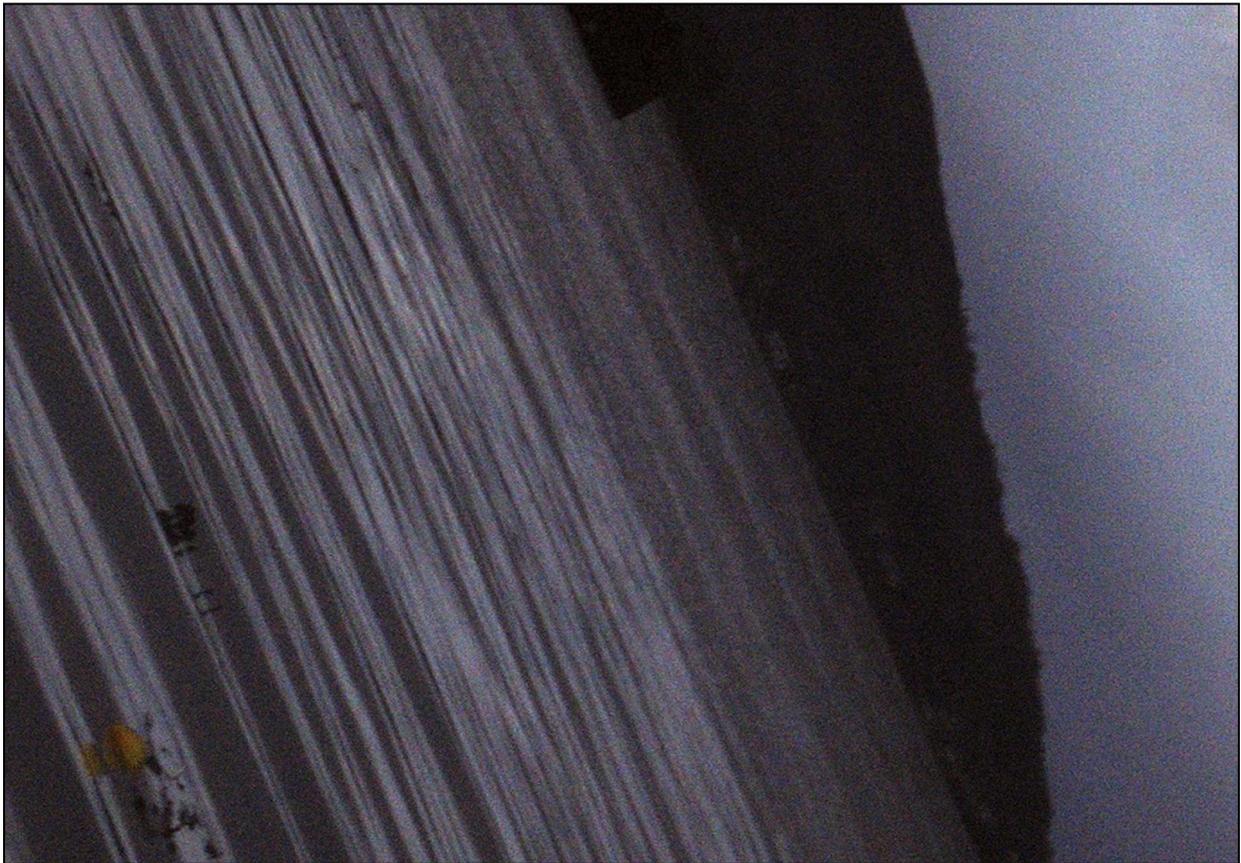


Fig. 53: *The Island*, photograph, 2008

Anthropologist Christopher Boehm has claimed that early hunter-gatherer societies of before 12,000 years ago were broadly egalitarian in nature. However, he emphasised that while everyone participated in decisions, there was still a form of hierarchy; one however that was based on anti-hierarchical feelings (Boehm, 1999: 9/10). He described how this involved the domination of 'megalomaniacal upstarts' by a collective of weaker members of the group. In a similar analysis, ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl has described how there was no clear divisions of labour outside of age and gender in such early societies. He stated that music was communally performed and there was 'little specialisation in composition, performance and instrument making' (Nettl, 1956: 10). Clearly developed democratic societies should strive through political and social institutions to create a society of greater equality. Recent research by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett has shown that societies with greater income equality are healthier, happier and safer (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). However, recent statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development convey that income inequality between the rich and poor is in fact vastly increasing (Gurria, 2011). As Slavoj Žižek famously contested, it is easier for us to imagine the end of the world before the end of capitalism (Žižek, 2011).

Despite their obvious benefits, policies to realize egalitarianism are rarely discussed in political or civil discourse. Peace scholar Johann Galtung claimed that we have been encouraged to believe in a pessimistic form of peace since the end of the Second World War. He described this 'negative peace' as consisting of an absence of violence and war. In contrast, he called on the creation of a 'positive peace' wherein human society is integrated (Galtung, 1964: 2). In later research, Galtung developed his thinking beyond the conventional actor-orientated explanation for violence to argue that physical violence stems from 'violence in the structure of society' (Galtung, 1969). For Galtung these structures include hunger, poverty, discrimination and social injustice. Considering this, Galtung argued positive peace would consist of a society void of structural violence. In Jimmy Reid's conclusion to his address on alienation, he argued that the 'flowering of each individual's personality and talents is the pre-condition for everyone's development' (Reid, 2011). However, many argue that excellence and equality cannot co-exist as we are not born with equal capabilities. Ayn Rand claimed that egalitarianism is a form of 'malicious envy' driven by hatred (Rand, 1999). Having attended a good grammar school, I fully support excellence in education. However,

excellence and equality need not be mutually exclusive. For example, the Finnish education system repeatedly tops the Programme for International Student Assessment poll on excellence in reading and science (Hsiao, 2007). However, it is markedly different from the UK or Irish models as it is based on the egalitarian philosophy that ‘everybody counts.’ There is no elitism, there is no segregation of abilities and the state funds all books and fees (Hsiao, 2007). Marx wrote of how there would be no professions in the communist society but people who hunt in the morning, go fishing in the afternoon and write criticism after dinner (Marx, 1978: 160). Such a space evokes the Christian concept of heaven, the Sugarcandy Mountain of Boxer’s dreams in *Animal Farm* and the mythic island of Tír na nÓg in Gaelic mythology. While the total rupturing of the divisions of labour is clearly impractical in the modern world, they do not halt the possibility of practical, incremental changes in art and culture which can permeate wider society. It became clear that this involved expanding the framework of the designation of the artist.

5.4 Thesis: Negation and affirmation

This research sought to counter the limitations of agency within the dominant model of art by proposing an alternative model of art inspired by Paolo Virno’s conception of exodus and Theodor Adorno’s negative dialectics. Through art production, participant observation and theoretical enquiry, the research has addressed the artist exit from art, the art world and the author. After much thought on the differing merits of conflicting (and complimentary) exits, I propose that the artist exodus from recognised authorship has real underexplored potential to further the egalitarian drive through problematizing art world framing. However, it is imperative that this exit of authorship consists of a double movement to avoid slipping into a nihilist vacuum of pure negation. In a similar dialectical trajectory to the Situationist call for the abolition and realisation of art in order to transcend art (Debord, 2006: 106), the thesis calls for the negation of the artist and the simultaneous affirmation of an egalitarian mode of art production and display. As with the logic of the Salon des Refusés, this would manifest in exhibitions wherein anyone can exhibit. After the motor of Theodor Adorno’s negative dialectics, I term this a non-identity art. It is termed as such as it strives towards egalitarianism while repeatedly negating itself. While Adorno may have had no

time for such an art, this thesis' motivation is more so political than it is aesthetic. It seeks to overcome the alienation between the artist and non-artist through the fostering of a universal authorship.



Fig. 62: *Choose your Destiny*, Foyle river walkway, Derry, anonymous, 2011

Through seeking to draw the margins to the centre of art, the thesis potentially celebrates outsider art, anonymous art, naïve art, community art, gypsy art, amateur art, autodidact art, handicapped art, elderly art, children's art, marginalized art and so on. To my outlook, the scribbled doodle by the janitor or the invigilator in the gallery often has as much cultural validity or artistic merit as many artists' installations. Such an outlook should hardly be radical as we approach the centenary of *Fountain*. However, it has yet to gain significant purchase in the art world as it is deeply

troubling to the identity of the author, curator, critic and the collector. Contemporary art is overly focused upon identities which the thesis seeks to negate. Brian Holmes claimed that the experimental art of the 1960s and 1970s should have redefined art but that the pushing against the framing of art was fought against by the commodifying demands of the institutions under capitalism (Holmes, 2005: 2). In response, he called for ‘egalitarian and direct democratic’ experiments wherein self-organisation and participation are key. Within such laboratories he sees the model of an egalitarian future. A non-identity art has yet to significantly manifest in the field as it is arguably a threat to lifestyles, privileges and the human drive for self preservation and dominance. For what is the purpose of such professions if everybody is an artist? The curator Rudolf Frieling honestly stated that ‘the art world has generally proven derisive of participation’ in art ‘since few marketable objects are actually generated’ (Frieling, 2008: 34). Somewhat defiantly, he claimed that the myth of the author returns stronger despite the repeated negations. In a somewhat ominous tone, he asserted:

Ultimately, if artists wish to operate within the art world, they will inevitably be perceived as the ones responsible for the work, even if they involve collaborators, let others take on the actual production, utilize online networks, or... court unknown participants (Frieling, 2008: 35).

The status of the author, curator and critic is thus retained while the audience remains other. However, this condition is of course not stable. The norms and criteria of excellence are repeatedly problematized. As Foucault affirmed, the author function will alter as society alters and society is shifting rapidly across various fields of endeavour. While anything can be art, only the art world has the formal authority to frame it as such. However, it has been the imperative of artists to push against such framing for both aesthetic and political objectives. To elucidate on inspirations for such an art, this chapter details a selection of artwork by unknown producers that I documented between 2010 and 2012.



Fig. 63: *Stickman*, Inch Fort, Donegal, anonymous, 2011

The thesis does not involve artists renouncing art production; rather it calls for the problematization of authorial identity alongside the multiplication of authors. It is only author-less in the sense that is without a hierarchical, identifying authority. Such a non-identity art strives towards egalitarianism. As Dave Beech wrote when considering the social turn in art and Benjamin's *Author as Producer*: 'Participation is the solution for the ethically oriented, but for the politically oriented, it is the universalization of authorship that holds more promise' (Beech, 2011). The thesis seeks to develop upon the general tendency of open source communication and the social turn in contemporary art. However, a non-identity art and the prevailing relational, participatory and social art scenes are markedly different - the thesis' negation and affirmation retains no mediating artist.

Whereas the appropriation art of Sherrie Levine negated the artist genius myth, this thesis seeks to negate the artist myth. In doing so, it fits within the authorial tradition through its dialectical negation of said tradition. Pierre Bourdieu described the ‘continuous battle between those who have made their names and are struggling to stay in view and those who cannot make their names without relegating to the past the established figures’ (Bourdieu, 2003: 1021). He contested that this oedipal friction is endemic in all fields, be it class struggle or cultural production. To celebrate or over-identify with one tendency in art is folly as they (like everything in life) are transitory and will be replaced. As such the negation of self fits within a lineage of refusals. This sacrificial negation derives from reflections on the limitations of identity art production alongside observations on the alienating gap between the artist and the audience. It resonates with the anonymous London anarchists who described how activists reinforce ‘hierarchical class society’ (Andrew X, 2001) and seeks to develop upon their call to engender a society wherein everyone is an artist. To paraphrase Adorno: if the artist is to be true today, s/he has to be an artist against herself.

5.5 Manifesting an egalitarian, non-identity art

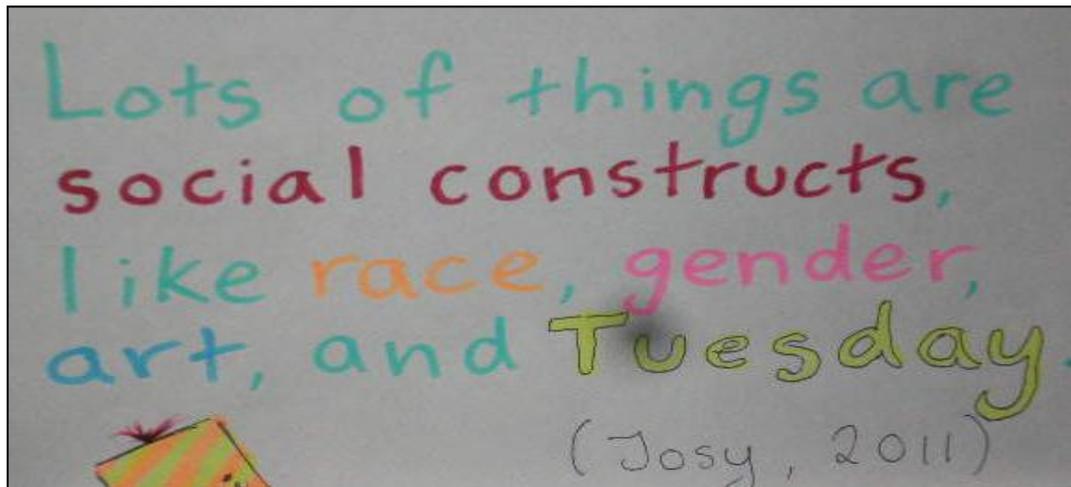


Fig. 64: *Constructs*, Free Hetherington Student Occupation, anonymous - Josy, 2011

While creativity and cultural production have become celebrated as pivotal to the development of modern cities (Florida, 2002), many people feel it is something others do. I have encountered this personal insecurity on several occasions when discussing or making art with non-artists. However, there are clear signs of significant changes in this attitude as new technologies have opened up art production and dissemination. Paulo Freire believed creativity to be quite ordinary (Pope, 2009: 53) and Paolo Virno emphasised that ‘humans are linguistic beings: art is anybody’s’ (Lavaert et al., 2009). Noam Chomsky argued that the capacity for acquiring language is encoded within our DNA (Chomsky, 2006) and Carl Jung asserted that there is a universal creative energy (Collective Unconscious) within us all (Jung, 1996). In 2012, I attempted to organise an entirely open ‘no jury, no prizes’ exhibition in both Glasgow and Derry. At the time, I believed it was important to manifest the thesis. To test public interest, I initially placed an advertisement in the Glasgow Gumtree classifieds. Titled *Everybody is an artist* and later developed into *Art after Duchamp*, it called for anyone and everyone who wished to participate in an art exhibition.



Fig. 65: *Guy*, near GSA, anonymous, 2011

Within a week, well over a dozen artists and non-artists from all ages, nationalities and backgrounds responded. Following this, I put forward an exhibition proposal to the city council and a number of local art galleries. To structure the exhibition, a set of parameters were formulated for the participants. While this may appear to contradict the egalitarian ethos, Christopher Boehm argued that egalitarian societies do not function without hierarchy but with a special form of hierarchy - wherein the needs of the many are paramount. The guidelines included: Everyone can participate provided their work is acceptable to the management of the spaces ethical policy. All work is not for sale. Each artist/ non-artist can place/ perform one work in the space. Finally, to mitigate against any conflicts within the space, the participants would not meet unless they attend the weekly discussions wherein attendees could debate art after Duchamp, the framing of art, the content of the exhibition, egalitarianism and any other relevant issues.



Fig. 66: *Passageways*, Inch Fort, anonymous, 2011

Unfortunately the proposal was either ignored or rejected by both Glasgow and Derry authorities. Perhaps they did not believe that it was an original or a good proposition, perhaps they did not like the thought of unknown people putting art in their space, perhaps they felt threatened by the latent institutional critique within the proposal or perhaps my method of communication was lacking. After a request for feedback, one gallery informed me that they tended to focus on artists with a developed studio practice and a history of exhibitions. The exhibition with the Glasgow respondents was thus never realised. In hindsight, I perhaps did not drive the proposal to the extent that I could have done as it had many unresolved questions due to its recent conceptualisation.

5.6 Viva

For my viva on the 28th of August 2012, I presented an installation which sought to approach a physical manifestation of the non-identity art thesis. Approached is the most suitable term as it was far from realised. Earlier in the summer, I contacted the dozen or so respondents to the Gumtree advertisement. This time, I invited them to participate in an in-house exhibition at the art school (the viva). Unfortunately but perhaps understandably, they did not even reply. Despite their previous eagerness, they were clearly disappointed about my inability to realise the initial exhibition. The ethics of this specific attempt at collective production were brought to the fore. Clearly I had failed them; my attempts at inclusion arguably engendered alienation. In my defence, I openly acknowledge the validity of these charges and the contradictions of such an art. To ameliorate against their lack of voice, I have included below three responses from those who did not attach work and six artworks from those who did. This work and these declarations should elaborate on how such an art may look and provide an insight into the thinking behind such producers.



Fig. 67: *Untitled*, Marika Fyfe, 2012

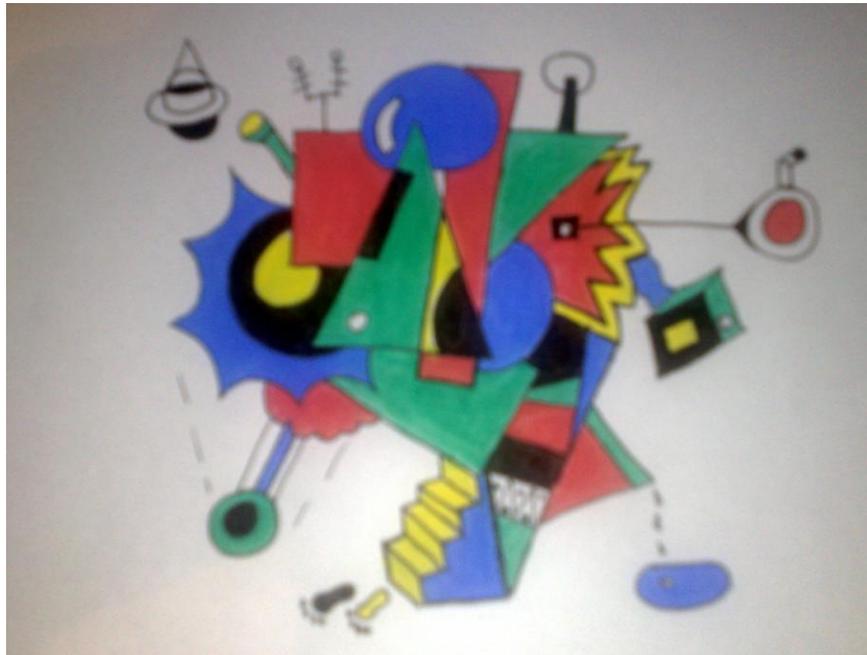


Fig. 68: *Magic Kingdom*, Tommo, 2011



Fig. 69: *Untitled*, Linzi O'Neill, 2012



Fig. 70: *Real leather and suede wall art*, Tanya Watson, 2011

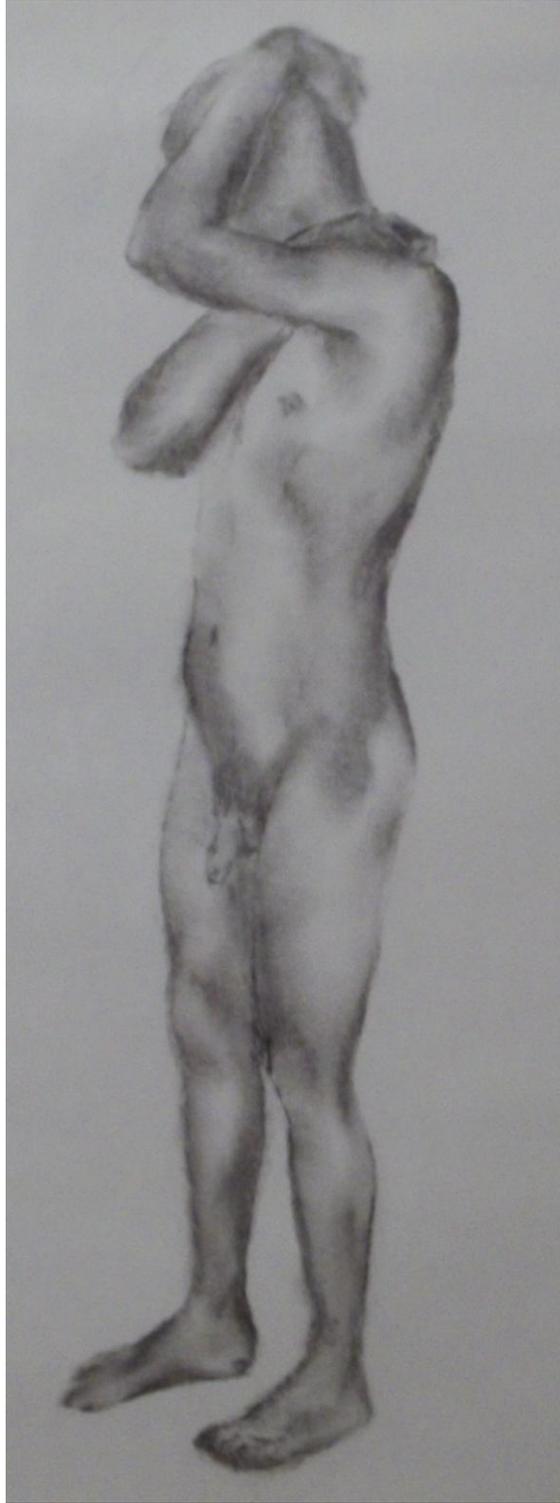


Fig. 71: *Prisoners of the mind*, Andrew Beglin, 2011



Fig. 72: *Piotr Śmieja - Tarnogórski rider*, Adam Gawenda, 2012

Respondent A: I've just seen your ad in gumtree about an art exhibition you are organising. Are you still in need of works from "non-artists"? I like the idea about equality in art, I would be interested to contribute, if that's the case, let me know. Thanks, Psafia.

Respondent B: My 5yr old daughter does a lot of sculptures. I would love to exhibit one of hers they are amazing. It is a mobile with an alt twist.

Respondent C: Hi my mum has only recently taken up art but her paintings are amazing. My grandfather was an artist and my brothers have painted many pictures but they feel they are not good enough to be shown. I think they're amazing however my talents must lie in other areas but I woud like to sneak some of their work into an exhibition. Thanks Karen McFadden



Fig. 73: *Exodus: Towards a non-identity art*, Installation view, photograph, 2012

Despite the setback of the aforementioned artists/ non-artists understandably declining to donate work to be included in the viva, I was nonetheless adamant that the non-identity art thesis must still form some aspect of the proceedings. As I did not wish to put out another public call, I decided to incorporate online art production with open source, creative commons copyright for the viva. I.e. Free to use and exhibit providing it is cited. The installation thus consisted of work by other producers and myself. As the work fused the research inquiry and the thesis, it was titled *Exodus: Towards a non-identity art*. It consisted of a dozen printed creative commons artworks on three walls and a floor installation that I produced. The theme of the installation was the exodus. This literalness gave it a clear coherence and structure. All twelve open source artworks were titled *Exodus* and were downloaded from Flickr, Deviant Art and Picasa file sharing websites. The

producers were both amateur and professional (though the majority were amateur). All work was accredited with title, date and authorship. A sheet was handed to the examiners with this information at the beginning of the viva. (This information has not been reproduced here as the work is not being presented in this context.) The choice of producers was not random but selective. Those that were selected either resonated with my research concerns or aesthetic preferences when considering the overall installation. Memorable imagery included an aerial photograph of a car convoy departing the Burning Man festival, Japanese pilgrims descending a shrine, a painting of the Mormons going west, a gothic graveyard, toy figurines of Moses with his followers, an aged Bulgarian gypsy couple, elephants traversing a plain, dinosaurs in a futuristic world and (the only image I produced) a church in Clonmany, Donegal (near where some of my descendents once lived).



Fig. 74: *Exodus: Towards a non-identity art*, Installation view II, photograph, 2012

On the floor of the installation was the work that I produced. Prior to its production, I had an image in my mind of a work that resonated with Antony Gormley's *Field* installation from 1991 and Martin Boyce's Turner Prize winning *Do Words Have Voices* sculptures from 2011. Gormley's timeless installation, which evokes a tribal art, consisted of thousands of small terracotta figures that were produced by locals in differing locations around the world. Boyce's sculptures form to create an installation that evokes an autumnal landscape and raises questions about modernity, nature and utopianism. Within my work, there were two encampments at opposing corners of the room from which groups of people from differing cultures departed on boats to the other encampment. The small clay figures were selected as representations of the human form are a recurring trope in art since the dawn of humanity. The ground was covered in a few hundred blue and green plastic bags from supermarkets to represent the sea.

The clay figures and boats departing into the sea can be interpreted as evocative of the morphing of a representational art into abstraction or even the evolution of art from being a mark making humane craft to a computerised, serialised commodity. The bags are also evocative of a throwaway society, refuse piles and the drinking culture that permeates modern Irish and British cities, estates and suburbs. The work could thus be interpreted as addressing the transformations of peoples from a rural, feudal existence to an urban, industrial capitalist society. Clearly the floor sculptures and the imagery on the wall address the theme of emigration, exile, displacement, loss, longing, hope and of course exodus. That both groups are travelling towards each other (wherein their destination is similar to their home) furthers the ambiguity of their quest and the exodus research.

Alone in one corner of the installation was a small clay owl that watched on. Instinctively produced as I sculpted the figures in Donegal, it is a somewhat humorous attempt to evoke Hegel's infamous pronouncement on the Owl of Minerva. In the Preface to his 1820 *Philosophy of Right*, he described how philosophy came too late; it only appears after reality has completed its formative process: 'Only when the dusk starts to fall does the owl of Minerva spread its wings and fly' (Lukács, 1971: 59). From my interpretation, Hegel was claiming that understanding and comprehension is delayed or displaced. We can only truly comprehend a time, a place or an event

in hindsight. The owl sought to address the difficulty of understanding the installation, the viva and the research at this juncture. It is difficult to derive meaning of a visual artwork through language. In *Minima Moralia*, Theodor Adorno's book of aphorisms, he wrote: 'true thoughts are those alone which do not understand themselves' (Adorno, 2006: 192). This outlook mirrors my thoughts on art. However, this is not a celebration of obscurantism; on the contrary I believe art should have a structure which may indeed be structureless.



Fig. 75: *True are only those that do not understand themselves*, stencil, Foyle Bridge, Derry, 2012

Alongside the apparent theme of exodus, the installation is fundamentally concerned with taste. Which of these is a work of art? Which of these works are good art? Who designates this framing, how and why? In hindsight, I see the work as a form of folk art infused with conceptual thinking. For his 1972 Düsseldorf exhibition titled *The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present*, Marcel Broodthaers eschewed his production and operated as curator. The exhibition consisted of some

266 objects chosen by Broodthaers that depicted the symbolic eagle in history, art, popular culture and folklore. They had no titles, dates or identification of authors but each were labelled 'This is not a work of art.' In the catalogue essay, Broodthaers related this to Duchamp's *Fountain* and Rene Magritte's *Treachery of Images*. In Thierry de Duve's analysis of the exhibition, he described the labelling as a negation of the tacit assumption or convention that whatever is in a collection or museum is a work of art. He asserted that Broodthaers experimental exhibition 'tests the convention according to which works of art are shown, already judged as such' before claiming that by 'playing museum director, Broodthaers seeks to delegitimize the museum's institutional authority' (de Duve, 2006: 421). While my installation had little intention of delegitimizing any authority, it did seek to raise important questions on the designation of authorship and the framing and ownership of art.

5.7 Contradictions/ negate

As should be apparent by now, it is critical that I problematize the installation. It could be reasonably argued that the non-identity focus of the research was negated by including my work alongside the other producers. However, while I was inclined to solely display the creative commons work and thus draw closer to a non-identity art, this was not an exhibition but a visual exposition on the research project. As such, it was imperative to incorporate both the research inquiry and the thesis; my subjectivity and that of others. Another possible contradiction was my rigid selection of the creative common production. It clearly was not an open, 'no jury,' egalitarian art but an entirely subjective 'meta artwork' formed by the dictating artist-curator. This charge is entirely valid yet I would yet again stress that the installation was part titled 'towards a non-identity art'. As such, it was a tentative approach as oppose to a realisation of a non-identity art. Nonetheless there remains a contradiction with my authorship that probematizes the installation and the overall inquiry. The accusation that the non-identity thesis could be condescending, tokenistic or even exploitative of the participants has some merit. It could also be argued that the research has a set of preconceived assumptions about people's passivity and supposed alienation. It flagrantly ignores that many people live perfectly happy lives, are content to absorb entertainment

and have no interest in producing artwork or realising their wider political agency. This accusation has real substance. However, I would reply by stressing that collaboration is a choice and not an order.

There is also a clear power imbalance if all the collaborators in the hypothetical exhibition are anonymous while I potentially own and control the project through setting the parameters and retaining the sole acknowledged authorship. Such an anonymous, collaborative exhibition could be interpreted as an entirely egocentric contradiction of the egalitarian ethos. When described as such, it probably would be. However, as with the Transmission exhibition, it would be entirely possible to organise such an event without my identity being publicised. It is also entirely possible to name each participating artist and non-artist. Robert Atkins has incisively described how participation involves assistance whereas collaboration demands a shared recognition and it ‘elevates the role of participant to co-creator’ (Atkins, 2008: 58). Clearly a non-identity art must reject participation and demand collaborative rights for all. It could of course also be possible to renounce all ownership of the project and grant the collaborators total ownership of the exhibition. In this way, it would remain purely theoretical on my part and open to interpretation and experimentation by anyone. As such, it would remain a truly non-identity conceptualisation. While stating this, it must be emphasised that I can never escape my own ego. The negation of self has rarely if ever been realized. As Groys emphasised when considering Debord, it usually ends in failure. Ego and art appear irreconcilably interconnected in modernity. In 1974, Ben Vautier proclaimed ‘to change art destroy ego’ within a work. However, he fully concedes the difficulty of exiting ego. He recently wrote:

I study ego in Fluxus,

I hate both sides of my own ego.

I hate myself when

People coming to me ask 'you are Ben?'

And I hate myself when they don't ask me (Vautier, 2012).

The acknowledgement of ego is the critical imperative. While some may believe the proposed thesis to be naive, romantic or even idealistic, it can also be interpreted as highly pragmatic, opportunistic or even cynical. In Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of bohemianism in the 19th century, he claimed that Gustave Flaubert and Charles Baudelaire subconsciously developed a strategy of disavowal (pretending to not be doing what one is doing) of the market and society to achieve symbolic and financial capital (Bourdieu, 1996). The purported sacrificial, symbolic death of the artist can be interpreted as a strategy of disavowal by those without power to gain recognition and admission within the field. The art world perpetually seeks out cultural production which negates itself. Almost every great art movement of the previous century has troubled the accepted definition of art. In defence of self-abdication, I would argue that all positions within the game of art are strategic and one person's cynical gesture is another's altruistic activity. There is perhaps some truth in both perspectives.

Considering Adorno's negative dialectics demands a perpetual negation, it is perhaps fortuitous that the research has not fully realised a non-identity art exhibition. Were it realised and lauded, it would have contradicted the negative dialectic method. As the method can never stop with a comfortable affirmation or synthesis, I thus may have felt compelled to discard the method from the research. However, this logic is flawed as I would undoubtedly have in turn negated the exhibition following its realisation. It is important to stress that such negation is not an accusation of failure but can be interpreted as a form of desire. Thierry de Duve has elaborated on the utopian goals of the vanguardist strategy of negation:

As long as artistic activity is not cut off from an emancipation project, critical function and Utopian function are one and the same. Or better, Utopia resorts to the ends, critique to the means: Utopia is a promise, a projection into the future, an anticipation, a daydream; and critique is the rejection

of the past and the negation of the present, and implementing a strategy for change (de Duve, 1996: 427).

5.8 Universal creativity

The revolution in technology over the past decade has undoubtedly democratised cultural production. With the arrival of Twitter, Flickr, Tumblr, Blogger and YouTube, we can now develop news stories, design our own Nike shoes, make films and produce our own music for everyone, anyone and no one. Who needs actors, artists or journalists anymore when the doors have opened? In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin predicted the emergence of an egalitarian form of communication with the arrival of mass production (Benjamin, 1992: 512). To his analysis, the auratic art object and the bourgeois concept of genius would become fatally damaged by the new technology. While his analysis underestimated the ability of the market to reify even serialised images, it nonetheless was prescient in foreseeing an altered future for the author.

The democratisation of production is deeply troubling to many fields of endeavour. For example, a recent exhibition in Paris that consisted of work approaching a non-identity art was met with suspicion by some commentators. The curators of the *From Here On* exhibition at the 2011 Arles Photography Festival included photography from both established photographers and anonymous, online, amateur production. Their promotion flyer declared:

Now, we're a species of editors. We all recycle, clip and cut, remix and upload. We can make images do anything. All we need is an eye, a brain, a camera, a phone, a laptop, a scanner, a point of view... This technological potential has creative consequences... We want to give this work a new status. Things will be different from here on... (Arles Photography Festival, 2011).

The curatorial team claimed that the ubiquity of the digital camera will trouble the author and ‘elevate the banal’ in the future. In Sean O’Hagan’s review of the exhibition, he was left bewildered and ‘longing for more quality control’ (O’Hagan, 2011). He questioned the curator’s democratic premise when they were the final arbiters of the work. Of course they were being selective but one could also argue that they were merely seeking to embody the present and foresee the future as opposed to control it. And yet, O’Hagan’s apprehension and insecurity is entirely understandable as nobody yet knows how such an art may develop? In discussion, a number of people have claimed that a non identity art could consist of poor quality work. Though this argument does relate somewhat to Hobbes and Machiavelli’s warnings of mob rule, it is nonetheless quite plausible. Upon reflection, such an art may be entirely aesthetically conservative in content but politically radical in form. Its realisation could consist of watercolour landscapes, acrylic portraits, videos of pranks and photographs of pets. Perhaps it would be akin to walking around an old market? This shall only be discovered through prolonged experimentation and critique.

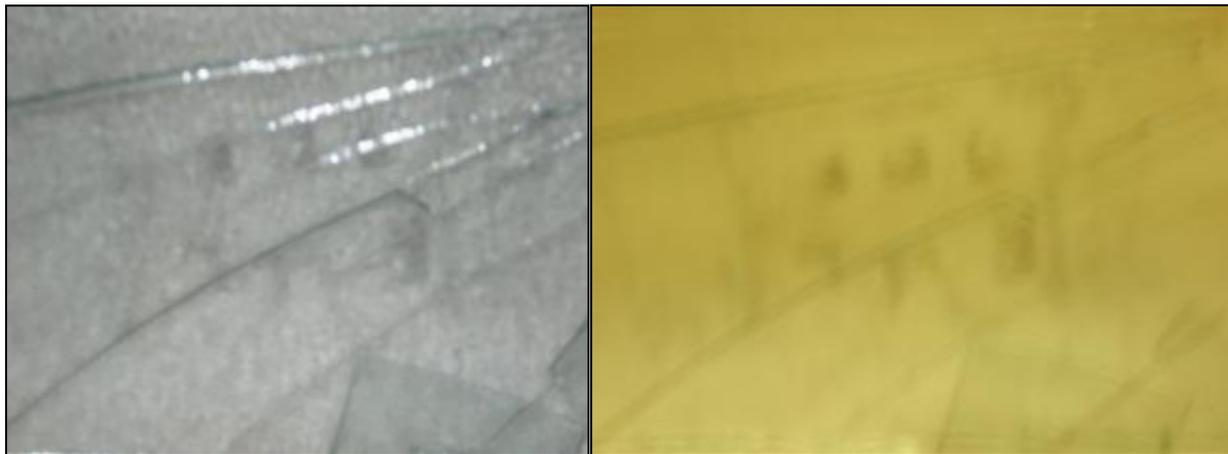


Fig. 76: *The Old House*, paper and glass, 2010

Lev Manovich has asked if professional art can ‘survive the extreme democratization of media production and access’ with the rise of Web 2.0 (Manovich, 2008: 77). He is doubtful that it will evaporate as he believes those driving the innovation and experimentation to be today’s students

and the professionals of tomorrow. However, he remains nonetheless sure that ‘the incessant innovation, energy, and unpredictability’ of Web 2.0 culture is a true challenge to art (Manovich, 2008: 78). While believing creativity is an innate faculty of all humans, learning, discipline and craft (be it physical production or conceptual enquiry) are critical to excellence in almost every art form. One need but reflect upon the effort required to master Shaolin wushu, Egyptian hieroglyphics or Baroque painting to realise the importance of schooling. Some may reasonably argue that you would never expect a medical student to develop on Bourdieu’s sociological investigations so why should untrained amateurs exhibit in an art gallery?

Contemporary art production tends to fit within a tradition which is schooled and has an underlying cognitive investigation that many outsiders cannot unpack. However, unlike many other fields, nothing is stable or sacred in modern art. The denigration of taste is taste in art; the crisis of representation has developed to the point wherein anything is art. There is no a priori art; it is a social and aesthetic construction that has been repeatedly negated from within. Indeed, its negation is intrinsic to its being. The art world arguably renounced its ownership of a nebulous conception of value through its glorification of *Fountain*; as such, it must live with the ramifications of its own logic. I personally believe that a non-identity art exhibition would be of as much interest as the work in many contemporary art spaces. Daily updates on this or that exhibition by some artist have become tedious. From my perspective, there is at least a curiosity or fascination with what may manifest with a non-identity art.

While studying for an MFA at Manchester, my dissertation took Beuys’ ‘every human being is an artist’ declaration and asked: if such an art is realised, what then will become of the artist? The enquiry derived from the contradiction of holding an egalitarian philosophy while simultaneously developing an individualistic expressionist practice. It was thus motivated in part by a subconscious fear of a loss of specialism. For what would be my fate if everyone was an artist? Today I realise that the disappearance of the artist as we currently conceive it is by no means a tragedy as it would evolve into something else. While saying this, it is not even a realistic possibility. The author function shall undoubtedly remain in some form. The thesis is but an experimental hypothesis that

may participate in the incremental alteration of a particular tendency in art production. In Kyle Harris' critique of the activist art scene, he acknowledged 'the rise of interactivity and the democratic possibility of online distribution' but warned that 'anarchist media makers cannot afford to abandon traditional, viewer-spectator product-oriented media and hope "the people" will organize themselves into an effective, decentralized network of citizen journalists' (Harris, 2007: 212). His analysis is wise and should be heeded. A dogmatic adherence to some abstract egalitarian citizen's art overlooks people's desire for passive entertainment alongside the genuine communicative power of individual creation.

Andy Warhol once said: 'If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it' (Warhol, 2001: 71). Perhaps Joseph Beuys' infamous proclamation has in fact become a command in the age of interactive, user-generated culture? People are potentially morphing into avatars wherein what they project in a simulated reality is what they become. Perhaps such a quasi-Baudrillardian dystopian future should be negated and not affirmed? It is clear that the proposal is ambiguous. Like the exodus concept itself, it can manifest in both positive and negative forms and permutations of both. Like people, a non-identity art could be brilliant, banal, antagonistic, peaceful, kind, cruel and all else in between. Ultimately it will only ever be understood or developed upon through experimentation.



Fig. 77: *Horses at dusk*, Clonmany, Donegal, 2010

6.1 Summary

In the anonymous, site-specific interventions in Donegal, I sought to manifest an art ‘outside of cultural confinement’ (Smithson, 1992: 947). While pleasing on an aesthetic level, its physical displacement suggested a renunciation of social relations and a clear reduction in the artist’s agency. Reflections upon this production drew me to Paolo Virno’s conception of exodus. To my

analysis, the exodus functions as negation in the dialectical process. It is a departure that derives from both dismay and hope. An extremely ambiguous concept, it can be applied to the emergence of the world's faiths, the World Social Forum, the cooperative community Mondragon, the Arab spring or the Flashmob phenomena. However, as Adorno wrote: 'the name of dialectics says no more, to begin with, than that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder' (Adorno, 1973: 5). This emphasis upon the gap between the concept and the thing is the basis of non-identity. Considering this, it was imperative that I did not hold rigidly to Virno's conceptualisation of exodus but deploy it as a point of departure from which to consider artist exits with real egalitarian potential.

To counteract the tendency of radical art and thought to assume the righteousness of its stance, the research elucidated on the causality of exodus through a critique of contemporary production within its social and historical context. The thesis extrapolates upon the dialectical method in art, its negative dialectic variant and non-identity thinking. Though the exit from society was addressed (considering its many manifestations in utopian living and exile), the central exits of analysis were the artist exit from art - and by extension the art world - and the artists exit from recognised authorship. The exit from art was rejected as I believe one can never exit art once it is within one's blood; one may of course alter careers and resist a practice but the thought process remains. The exit from the art world is of course plausible and has a rich history with much potential in its many manifestations. Though difficult to reject (as much of my inspiration derived from such practice), my focus was upon discovering an underexplored exit. Within the research I manifested the call to act that the bronze staff heralded through collaborating with the 17, Active Inquiry, the G.S.A. mural society, Glasgow Media Group and the student occupation at the University of Glasgow. Reflections upon this production drew me to realise that though they create great work and retain strong agency, much collaborative work and radical art groups retain a fundamental contradiction through their embodiment of a specialist persona that can alienate the outsider. The call to *Give up Activism* inspired the thinking on an art production without division, specialism and mediating artists. As the research developed, it sought to manifest the autonomist call: 'the margins at the centre' (Lotringer & Power, 2011). A glorification of the exit of the art world would thus contradict the logic of seeking to draw the excluded to the inside. The research was conceiving of a strategy

wherein institutions would ultimately legitimate all art production, framed or otherwise. Considering this, the thesis does not reject the institution; rather it rejects rigid institutionalised thinking.

The exit from my individual authorship was instigated by the collaborations at the Hove festival, with the 17, Active Inquiry and the Hetherington occupation and it further developed through observations on the alterations to the G.S.A. mural, the Afghanistan stencil and reflections upon the divisions between artists and non-artists. The thought of Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Joseph Beuys, Thierry de Duve, Boris Groys and Greg Sholette and the production of Cildo Meireles, Allan Kaprow, Cesare Pietroiusti, Donelle Woolford, Marcel Duchamp, Gustav Metzger, Marcel Broodthaers, Sally Madge, Little Berlin and AS220 also proved inspirational. The research began to celebrate a non-identity art production that seeks to problematize the division of labour between artist and non-artist and foster an egalitarian art wherein anyone can exhibit. The proposed thesis seeks to open up authorship in order to affirm the agency of the many. This negation of the authorial role is not a call for artists to quit making art but it calls for a restructuring of our conceptualisation of authorship and multiplication of authors. Though this thesis was difficult to arrive at, it stands out as holding the greatest potential as it has yet to sufficiently manifest due to its destabilising of our current conceptions of the artist, curator, collector and audience. The thesis arguably takes the next step in the authorial tradition. Only time will tell if such an art has or has not merit. Whether it is defined as art is outside this remit. It potentially is and it potentially is not. That would only be ascertained through display, peer discussion and critique.

6.2 Art as potential

Despite stating that Virno's exodus was a point of departure for the research, the thesis almost comes full circle in its resonance with his conception of an alternative forum wherein the people's general intellect is manifest (Virno, 2004). It echoes with his pronouncement that 'the artistic experience is molecularly disseminated' (Lavaert et al, 2009). My unaligned political philosophy is

sympathetic to a form of democracy with much greater participation and decision making by the people. Developing from this outlook, the proposal seeks to problematize top-down representative art and celebrate a more participatory or direct democratic mode of art production and display. However, an insistence on this is itself dogmatic and should be avoided. If the thesis has a manifesto, it must simultaneously negate itself to overcome reification and the glorification of an abstraction. Though he was an egalitarian, Adorno emphasised that we had to transcend egalitarianism in order to realise it (Adorno, 2001: 147). As such, a non-identity art must in turn be negated in order to be fully realised. This shall be done through continuing to produce my own artwork and negating any manifestations of the thesis. The thesis is not a personal project but is related to a specific research inquiry. By leaving the proposition to remain an unrealised theoretical hypothesis, it affirms the non-identity nature of the enquiry.

Despite my early misgivings, art has the potential to be catalytic and even prefigurative of social change. Joseph Beuys once described art as ‘the only revolutionary force’ (Beuys, 1973). Alain Badiou described Mark Lombardi’s aesthetic critique of the Bush dynasty (wherein he conveyed the interconnections of elite interests) as ‘an artistic prophecy’ and the ‘creation of a new knowledge’ (Badiou, 2003). As the institution of art is both autonomous and heteronymous, it remains an ambiguous experimental arena wherein developments may permeate wider society. To my analysis, the appropriation of the antithesis is not to be resisted provided the antithesis is strong. An egalitarian art can arguably deal with institutional appropriation as it is not intrinsically radical in content but in its form. There is no product or individual or collective to celebrate beyond the people’s creative energy.

6.3 Contribution to knowledge

As the proposed thesis shares such similarities with the thought and practice of the aforementioned thinkers, artists and activists, I would contest that it is not new knowledge but perhaps dormant knowledge. Though not defined as a non-identity art, egalitarian displays of people’s art and creativity have manifested or near manifested on numerous occasions. For example, in the *Do It*

Yourself series from 1962, Andy Warhol developed a collaborative art wherein collective production was celebrated. Instigated within the infamous Factory, the series involved designing painting by numbers kits of flowers and landscapes to be distributed and completed by the audience collaborators. Warhol declared:

I think somebody should be able to do all my paintings for me.... I think it would be so great if more people took up silk screens so that no one would know whether my picture was mine or somebody else's (Warhol in Frieling, 2008: 90).

In their analysis of art research, Carole Gray and Julian Malin's declared: 'If knowledge has a sell-by date, then the most important thing is meta- knowledge - knowing about knowledge, knowing how to acquire, manage, analyse, synthesize and communicate knowledge' (Gray & Malin, 2004: 17). This outlook appears highly dialectical as it affirms that all knowledge is in a process of change. This is not to argue that the knowledge acquired in this research is void; on the contrary I firmly hold to the enquiry and the outcomes. Ultimately however, like water, everything is in a process of change. As such, the original contribution to knowledge is not the proposed thesis but the application of negation, non-identity and the negative dialectical method to art and art research. This involves a process of perpetual negation that eschews comforting and often misplaced synthesis. Critically it adamantly holds to egalitarianism despite the necessity to negate such an affiliation. This knowledge concurs with one example of Estelle Phillips and Derek Pugh's description of originality in research: 'making a synthesis of things that have not been put together before' (Phillips & Pugh, 2000: 63).

Ultimately I hope the research encourages the reader to reconsider the author role, the framing of what we consider to be art and the artist; their historical contingency and their potential to change. The thesis seeks to reawaken dormant knowledge on the potential to realign our conception of authorship. I also hope to have elucidated upon the potential of the negative dialectical, non-identity method as a tool of analysis and practice in practice-based art research. I believe it helps

reveal the flux in all positions and the need to refrain from a dogmatic over-identification with one while retaining a strong egalitarian ethos.

6.4 Future Research



Fig. 78: *Open Door 77 art collective*, Stephen Boyle, photograph, 2012

Future practice-based or purely theoretical research could take manifestations of a non-identity, egalitarian art as the starting point from which to quantify the mutating roles of the artist, the

curator, the audience and the art. As it would involve non-art becoming art within the institutions of art, it invariably would entail giving presence to an absence. This draws to mind the ‘tree falling in a forest’ thought experiment. As with Broodthaers *The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present* exhibition, such an experimental display would operate as a catalyst from which to develop a deep philosophical inquiry into the future of art if everything is indeed art. It would question the presumption that an egalitarian art a good thing. It could ask if such an art is indeed an order in a user generated age. After Hegel and Baudrillard’s declarations, it could be titled: the end of art? Of course the death of art has been prophesied on numerous occasions. Following an analysis of the expansion of art in Fluxus, Happenings, Actionism and Performance, Peter Weibel claimed that the three constants of classical art (the author, the work of art and the viewer) were all ‘radically subverted and transformed’ (Weibel, 2002: 664). However he insisted that Hegel’s ‘end of art’ thesis has not instigated the death of art; rather ‘the iconoclastic hammer does not destroy art, instead, paradoxically, it creates new art’ (Weibel, 2002: 632).

On a personal level, I intend to develop and disseminate the research by producing a documentary film of the thesis. Despite the interest in the avant-garde, Italian autonomism, the Frankfurt school and practices of aesthetic negation, there is a dearth of films which address these critical themes. I intend to open up negation and dialectics to a wider audience who can in turn develop and negate it. Film is the ideal medium for such a task. Despite the formal closure of this research, the non-identity art thesis will hopefully be realised some day. It is a vision that I must exorcise at least once before negating it and returning my main focus to personal and collaborative art production. Currently I am in discussions with the Culture Company in Derry and they have agreed in principle to holding a ‘no jury, no prizes’ exhibition during this year’s U.K. City of Culture. The thesis is also integral to my membership of the Open Door 77 art collective. We are seeking to open a space wherein anyone and everyone, artist or otherwise, can go to and produce art.

In response to the art world’s overlooking of unrecognized art producers, Gregory Sholette proposes strikes or boycotts of specific galleries and publications (Sholette, 2011: 41). He argues that the art world is dependent upon this struggling mass as it holds the pyramid together. While

seeing great merit within his analysis, this thesis is not seeking to negate selective art spaces but realise its own space wherein everyone can exhibit. There can and should be room for both. The thesis' aims resonate with the ethos of AS220 in Rhode Island, Providence. The non-profit arts organisation were founded in 1985 with a 'vision for a local unjuried and uncensored forum for the arts' which provides classes, facilities and services 'to any artist who needs a place to exhibit, perform, or create original work.' Eschewing the conventional gallery model, they emphasise genuine inclusivity that is 'synonymous with an egalitarian, accessible approach to creative community' (AS220, 2013).

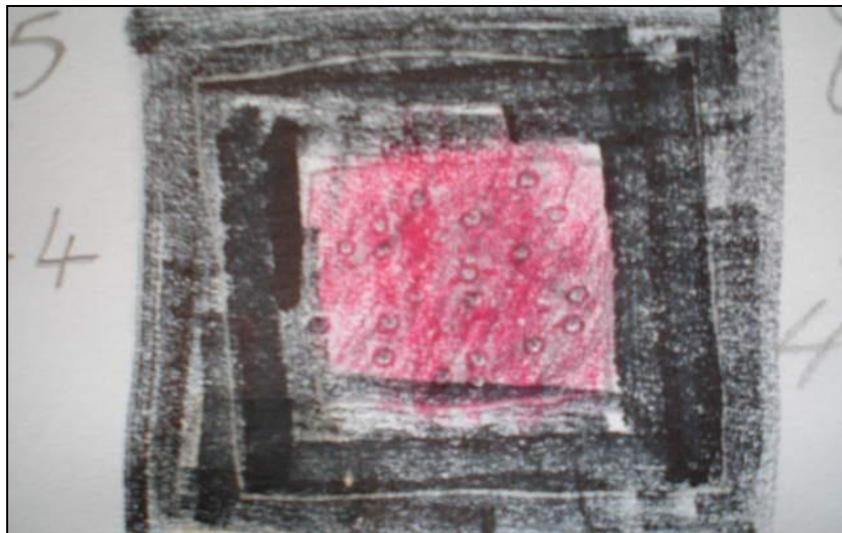


Fig. 79: *Dark Matter*, Marker, pencil & marker on paper, 2010

The wider benefits of this research may not initially appear apparent to the reader; indeed the thesis may engender apprehension among many within the field of art production. For what use or applicability can a call for self negation have to an MFA student or an artist paying for a studio and striving to get any recognition for their passion? It is entirely valid to argue that the call for the renunciation of the artist's identity from within a doctoral thesis is entirely hypocritical as the author is developing a form of cultural capital within the field of art research while simultaneously negating the little agency artists may hold. In defence, this is not a call for artists to renounce art

production but it is a call for artist's to realise the historical contingency of their identities as authors and their essential mutability. As the current system fails the majority of producers, it seeks to implore producers to reconsider an alternative model of display; wherein the needs of the many takes precedence over narrow self interest. This of course is already occurring all around the art world in collectives, artist run spaces and in numerous galleries. In an analysis which shares similarities with Greg Sholette's writings on 'dark matter', John Roberts has described the informal, non-market 'enclave' art economy as defining the socialized terrain in which the art economy now operates (Roberts, 2009). As such, this is by no means a utopian image but a reasonable analysis of the changes that are already occurring. For example, in Art Review's 2012 Art Power 100 list, it named the curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev as the most powerful person in art for her inclusion of philosophy, economics, literature, historical artefacts and social theory alongside visual art in documenta 13 (Art Review, 2012). In Steven Henry Madoff's review of the art fair, he describes how it addressed the 'fundamental, living strangeness of all things' and asked the question 'not who thinks, but what thinks' (Madoff, 2012).

The thesis can also assist critics, curators and educators to reflect upon value and ownership beyond the egocentric model that is currently prevalent. On a schooling level, I could see art classes that analysed artwork by anonymous artists and non-artists. Practically students could be instructed to negate each other's work, to develop work anonymously and to work in collaborations wherein authorship is deeply problematized. To my analysis, modern art is a process of recurring negations and to expand upon it demands artists to go beyond merely acquiring residencies or bursaries and to realise the project of aesthetic negation of the framework of the field. In tandem with the Situationist call, the artist will only be realised through being negated.

7. Bibliography

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