

**THE
INDIRECT
EXCHANGE
OF
UNCERTAIN
VALUE**

**WE
KNOW**

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OF UNCERTAIN VALUE**

The Indirect Exchange of Uncertain Value

Fiona Jardine

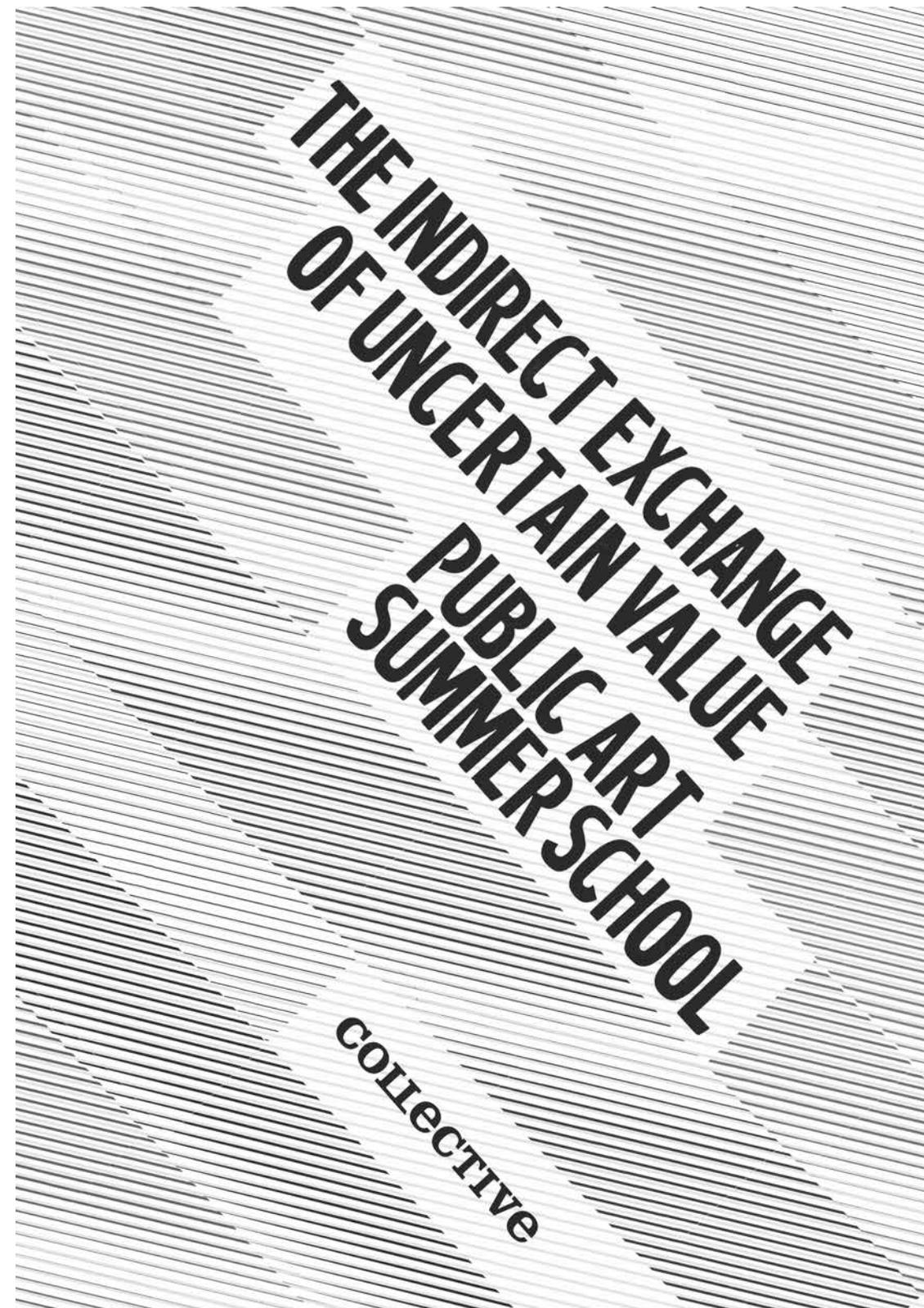
At least two titles frame *The indirect exchange of uncertain value*. Most immediately and with highest billing, the headline described the public presentation of a site-specific installation during a three-week period in August 2011 at Fettes College. As such, barely visible on the esplanade commanding the aristocratic sweep to Learmouth Gardens, a shed-sized *Cat* and *Boot* painted in heavy camouflage flanked the school's front door — part heraldry, part dazzle, gross. Respectively, the *Cat* housed a sculpture (bronze) and the *Boot*, a video (choral). Daily tours ran from a temporary plywood booth stationed at the college gates, neatly hung with colourful posters like a campaign office or Christian bookstall. Shorter on the bill, a subtitle — *The performance of public art* — was given to a day-long symposium held on 5th August. Ostensibly a launch event, the symposium brought to conclusion a week-long Summer School and a month-long wider participation programme for pupils and staff at both Fettes, and its close neighbour, Broughton High School. *The performance of public art* finds itself couched inside *The indirect exchange of uncertain value*: an explanation qualifying a declaration.

Titles are specifically designated proper nouns — 'names'. As for any designated event, place or thing, the names brought into play by *The indirect exchange of uncertain value* are numerous, if covert and couched. They include the individuated names of artists, exhibits, locations, enabling organisations, workshop participants, subscribers, delegates, dates and so on, each of which is a fractal, mobile social construct. Jacques Derrida's formula '3 + n' describes authoring as a corporate operation that is multiple and indeterminate. Those lodging a claim to be recognized as authors may try to direct the origins and ends of a 'work', but according to logic, the determination of origins and ends is essentially an arbitrary excision, an excuse for authoring or asserting

an authorial credit. Authoring is, in these terms, a proprietorial process concerned with defining or owning 'work'. The creative manipulation of material or the reconstitution of narrative responses is secondary to the power of the force channeled in order that credit (for work) may be taken. To entitle or name is to gather activities and information under a pseudo-singular point of convenience (e.g. a title, the name of an author, the name of an event etc.), which acquires density (materiality), territory and power through use. The allocation of a title is, then, an authorial act that designates something at the same time as investing in it the capacity to author and be authored. Titles acquire substance, morph and become more or less visible through perpetual motion — they preface work and they organise its archival presence, conducting at all times the power and threat of resurrection. Titles take shape as *topos*. They are architectural structures endowed with the capacity to be distinctively recognised and inhabited. The linguistic transactions which construct them are incessant variably accelerated processes of rationalising, acquiring, modifying, reinvesting and downgrading. They illustrate the becoming of any proper noun; of complex, idiosyncratic things. When does authoring begin and when does it end? What are its shapes? Where are the boundaries of a project like *The indirect exchange of uncertain value* to be drawn? Who do we leave out and what do we include? These are, of course, political questions.

Early in the 20th century, Duchamp cast a prescient light on the overriding importance of naming and signature to art. In this, he also anticipated the structuring of an information based economy. Arguably, the disconnect between art and idiom which characterises the contemporary field is permitted by signature, the statement and restatement of an authorial name. Signature is a claim to credit that becomes simultaneously a point of marketable reduction, a tactic for cultural colonisation and palpable material for creative practice. In *Kant After Duchamp*, Thierry De Duve reflects on Duchamp's readymade *Fountain* as a nexus; a live circuit of endorsements, enactments and mediations.¹ The 'R. Mutt' signature Duchamp applied to the surface of a urinal brought focus on the operative conditions that perform and

1. De Duve, T. (1996) *Kant After Duchamp*.
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.



THE INDIRECT EXCHANGE OF UNCERTAIN VALUE PUBLIC ART SUMMER SCHOOL

Mon 1 – Fri 5 August 2011, 10am – 5pm

Collective is delighted to introduce a new opportunity offering 14 people the chance to be involved in an intensive and productive week-long experience of thinking, talking and making public art.

You will

- ▲ **Have workshops and discussions with artists Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan as well as Chris Evans**
- ▲ **Go on two specially designed walking tours with leading academics Dr Ray McKenzie (Senior Research Fellow at Forum of Critical Enquiry) and Dr Angela McClanahan (Lecturer in Visual and Material Culture, Edinburgh College of Art)**
- ▲ **Visit Little Sparta, celebrated artist and poet Ian Hamilton Finlay's garden**
- ▲ **Make and show Public Art text works on the BBC Big Screen in Festival Square, Edinburgh**
- ▲ **Attend Collective's one day Symposium marking the opening of The indirect exchange of uncertain value at Fettes College. Speakers include seminal artist, poet and architect of public space, Vito Acconci**

This summer school offers an in-depth experience running in conjunction with Collective's project The indirect exchange of uncertain value; a Collective offsite project developed with Joanne Tatham & Tom O'Sullivan, sited at Fettes College, Edinburgh. The project presents a major new work by Joanne Tatham & Tom O'Sullivan alongside commissions by Chris Evans and Elizabeth Price.

Through practical workshops, discussions, debates, walks, talks from artists and public art specialists, visits to public art sites in Edinburgh and beyond, participants will experience the breadth and scope of public art from several perspectives.

Prices:

Book before **10 July** to be eligible for early bird discounted rate – £140.

Thereafter:

Concession – £140 / Full price – £165.

For more information and a full timetable visit
www.collectivegallery.net

Book via

www.collectivesummerschool.eventbrite.com

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thereby construct art. It is instructive that the loss of an 'original' has not prevented *Fountain* from registering as the most significant work of the last century. *The indirect exchange of uncertain value* self-consciously implicated itself as a series of nodes—as a nexus—using the spectacular setting at Fettes to bring focus on the processes of instituting. Fettes is a grand edifice made grander by the distinctions of its alumni and network of Old Fettesians. How was it reconfigured by the temporary intrusion of a bellyful pair, an agit-prop *Cat* and *Boof*? To what extent was its detritus, (the excess of meaning), absorbed and reworked by *The indirect exchange of uncertain value*? As titles crust over, the process of picking scabs is the (by now classic) process of deconstruction. So much is unseen.