

Thesis Title

**Art Ontology Value:
staging the ontology of art in
systems of value**

By

Kirsten Cooke

Acknowledgements

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Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged to the best of my knowledge.

Thesis Books

Asymmetrical Cinema

Blocked Over-Drive

Colliding Totality and Contingency

Concrete Plastic

Confrontations

Empty Set

Glossarium: a collection of glosses

Kwartz Kapital Konstruktion Kollider

One-Dimensional Disco

The Plot: complicit with ambivalent objects

Recalcitrant Crystals

Turbulent Surfaces

Blocked Over-Drive

0 Remote Device

This is a book in a series of bound texts, as opposed to the introduction to a linear thesis. 'Blocked Over-Drive' is not a master list, which would provide a meta-text or tautology for the subsequent books. 'Blocked Over-Drive' is an autonomous object and a navigational device, which acts like a remote control rather than a prescriptive foreword. Like the remote it can exist in any location but in this context it floats in the series of books that are encountered in this box set.

It is crucial to this artist that her research and practice are understood as contiguous and both elements will from now on be referred to as practice. In conjunction with this supposition, this producer's curatorial and literary practices co-exist in the same platform of the box set and deploy the same methodology while operating in different registers. Each curatorial and literary strategy is stimulated by the same methodology but is practised in parallel, in order to resist the temptation to utilise one practice to act as a meta-text or case study for the other. As opposed to impoverishing either the literary or curatorial practices by asking one to serve the other, this artist stages each literary or exhibition publication as an end in itself.

This artist deploys curatorial and literary strategies on the primary level of production. Instead of acting at a secondary or tertiary level this artist's curatorial treatment confronts and mediates each object she encounters (whether it is an artwork or theory) but resists the temptation to interpret its meaning towards a reader or viewer. Aware that she is a flawed subject who is constructed from the very same state of affairs as the rest of the population, this artist does not think that she can transcend her circumstances to interpret them for a reader or viewer. Unconcerned with a reader or viewer, although aware that they exist, she cannot overwrite the work that she encounters. This strategy both delimits the contingency of the

work while avoiding impoverishing the reader or viewer. A secondary or tertiary practice could predetermine the artwork or text's effects, which would reduce their field of possibility to a single meaning. This latter scenario encourages a process, which can only ever forge works that act as conduits for a past meaning: rendering a conservative reading or viewing environment for the subject. In contrast, this artist deploys curatorial and literary methodologies that treat the artworks and texts as entities in themselves, which her practice then acts in tension with to create a series of clustered and dense objects.

Consistent with this primary approach, a series of curatorial publications as exhibitions have been collated. These books do not formally document the previous exhibitions, as this act would result in a tertiary form of production and would create an overarching meaning for the shows. In the deployed model, of publication as exhibition, the viewer confronts the artworks and curatorial architecture in the present book form rather than reading it as referencing a show that exists in the past. This form of active re-staging avoids producing a meta-text for the artistic practice in favour of a positive presentation of each publication as exhibition. Concurrently, each time-based or physical exhibition is situated as separate from the book as exhibition and is seen as a discrete entity in itself. In this sense the curatorial treatment of the publications renders each exhibition and each book, which deploys images of the exhibition, as independent from each other.

'Blocked Over-Drive' acts as an end in itself while being integrally linked with the traversing of this box set. It opens with an index of this box set's literary books and then goes on to develop an autonomous platform through its own exploration of the production of images and texts. This book then continues through a series of channels that inform and coalesce with the other texts in this box set. It will not attempt to provide a textual ground for the exhibition

publications because this would produce the meta-text that the re-staging of the exhibition as book has circumvented. These exhibition publications exist on a different register to that of writing and are a separate practice, so these will be encountered on their own terms.

Indexing the literary section of the Box Set

The literary contents to be confronted in no particular order:

Confrontations

An active editor and manufacturer of textual images, constructs this critical-fictional literary model. She abstracts philosophical and fictional narratives, reweaving the existing literary fabrics into an active rendering of a globe. This act conceives a planet that consists of Neo-Kantian and Bergsonian hemispheres. This book stages the dialectical bind or conflation, which I suggest captures much contemporary creative practice in frozen parentheses.

Glossarium: a collection of glosses

Idioms from the book 'Confrontations' are highlighted and transported to 'Glossarium', which explores the context of each term and simultaneously re-constructs expressions and definitions. The phrases, abstracts and disambiguated terms from 'Glossarium' traverse this box set, as it acts as a bespoke dictionary for the other books.

The Plot: complicit with ambivalent objects

Constructed through a series of flawed enquirers 'The Plot' is carved out from but exists in its landscape. It does not attempt to colonise its environment or to parcel out land in the form of property. In contrast, it tunnels and deepens into its landscape: exploring various theories of the image, while treating these texts as philosophical objects that are encountered as discrete entities. Complicit in 'The Plot's' construction, but also in a symbiotic relationship with its material, the protagonists are mutually impinged by their

confrontations with the ambivalent theoretical objects. An unforeseen trajectory prevails, in which the materiality of the text exists in the active moment produced by the friction in the encounters.

Colliding Totality and Contingency

This book acts as a Large Hadron Collider and is an experiment in fission and fusion. It stages the collision between the philosophies of Carl Einstein and Quentin Meillassoux. Einstein's 'total' art object is crashed against Meillassoux's 'super-contingency', in order to explore the lacunae that exist between their two positions and to produce a positive alternative composite.

Recalcitrant Crystals

This is a literary exercise in which a protagonist, whose consistency changes, encounters various recalcitrant environments in a counter-intuitive fictional space-time. 'Recalcitrant Crystals' explores a genre similar to the literary form Quentin Meillassoux describes as 'Extro-Science Fiction'. It attempts to break with the conceptual parameters of probability and regularity by staging nonsensical fragments that are super-contingent in the sense that some can (if the universe is super-contingent then it can remain stable) and others cannot (irregular events) fit into a scientific explanation.

Empty Set

Is a bibliography, the title of which necessarily refers to the other virtual possible outcomes that could have been produced if this research had been approached differently: the title also nods to the ontology of the 'Blocked Over-Drive', which navigates this box set but whose name, when situated in the thesis or box set, exists outside any master list.

00 Exploded Contemporary

In *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating* (2013), edited by Jens Hoffman, the curator Joao Ribas answers: ‘Question 7: What to do with the Contemporary?’ Ribas’ response is that curating has not actually dealt with its contemporaneous position, which he states is situated in the dialectic of the past and present.¹ This is due to his assessment that:

...despite a central fact the history of curating evinces: how exhibition practices have functioned as the “archive” of the contemporary, as “the systems that governs the appearance of statements” in the Foucauldian sense, and as such, how they structure the contemporary as a historical and institutional object.²

This suggests that curating frames and freezes the contemporary as an institutional object for thought, while also promoting the contemporary as an expanded present, highlighting that both curating and the contemporary are temporal constructs that exist inconsistently in the assumed logic of an unfolding linear time.

Exhibitions are synonymous in structure with the contemporary, as in a linear time frame both are positioned somewhere between the past and future. Exhibitions and the contemporary exist as a cut between past and future; the present - like the boundary between the waves and shore - does not actually exist in a stable form. Counter to this, curatorial practice is also understood as a form of signposting, which designates the value of certain objects in the unstable present. This then turns the contemporary exhibition into an

¹ Jens Hoffman (ed.), *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating* (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2013) pp. 93–108.

² Ibid, p. 97.

institutional object for thought through the documentation and archiving of an exhibition. Stabilising the meaning of the exhibition and the art objects in it paradoxically reduces the exhibitions and the artworks present to existing in the past. It becomes necessary, therefore, to question both this notion of linear time and the contemporary, which is the forever present, in curatorial practice itself.

In *The Curator's Egg* (2002) Karsten Schubert highlights the contradictory nature of the contemporary and how its very construction is related to the rejection of the past:

Gertrude Stein's critique of MoMA, that one could either be modern or a museum but not both simultaneously, holds true to this day for all museums of contemporary art... When the Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929 the terms 'modern' and 'contemporary' were virtually synonymous in the minds of most observers. Gradually the meaning of the two terms pulled apart, as Barr's 'comet' became tail-heavy.³

To collect and archive is to be concerned with preserving the past for the future, which simultaneously cuts out the present or the contemporary. A long and concrete tail that cut to the future limiting its consideration of the plastic present stunted Barr's 'comet', which was meant to storm into the future with a short-lived tail by feeding de-accessions to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. What is contemporary will now become a past form and even the term may change in the future, pushing the temporal or present firmly into the past.

In contrast to this preoccupation with the past, present and future, Quantum Mechanics and the theory of Relativity put

³ Karsten Schubert, *The Curator's Egg: The evolution of the museum concept from the French Revolution to the present day*, London: Riding House, 2009, pp. 47-49.

into doubt such spatial and teleological terms. If subjects and objects are experiencing different time frames and spatial confrontations then there cannot be an overarching processional concept of time in exhibition practice. Time and space are pluralised and contingent, which flattens out a time that has no origin and creates an entirely different field for the staging of artworks and exhibitions. A de-territorialised field that destabilises the notion of the contemporary produces the following question: *which curatorial and artistic practices can respond to the notion of contingency and the enveloping or multiplication of time and space without reproducing an obsession with the past, present or future?*

001 Level Heaven Interface

A digital image of a lady's face is treated with a noir filter on her Apple iPhone 6: she likes the way the black and white tones bring out her cheekbones and soften her hair, while also inflecting a trendy nostalgia for the 1920s. As she makes the final crop on layer seven of the image (each digital image has roughly seven levels) before uploading it onto Facebook, the primary level of code (zeros and ones) is also changed. Through the reciprocal relationship in the image (the automatic feedback between its internal levels) she becomes a naïve programmer or human terminal in the network of capitalism: consuming and producing its image flows. When she clicks upload, the coded pattern of zeros and ones is scattered into a variety of ordered packets. Her iPhone software manages the dispersal of packets so that they can exit her device via the quickest and most efficient route. Its porous nature enables her iPhone to shoot out code from a variety of vectors and 000111100 flashes off down one of the larger bandwidth highways. All traffic surfing on 000111100's wave is flowing at nano speed but those that are on other lanes are travelling at varying velocities through the air due to different levels of crowding or blockage. This could result in other components of 000111100's collective image being nano-seconds behind it, which will hold up assemblage at the other end. Gliding across the radio waves, through buildings, flesh and trees, 000111100 reaches its data farm in record time and enters one of the three racks of servers created for Facebook to store its information on every day. Packet 000111100 is then united with the rest of the code that was sent on alternative pathways, as each set of data is indexed with its place in the sequence so that it can be reassembled by the receiving device into a whole and cohesive image. Waiting as the icon circles itself, like a snake eating its own tail, the owner of the iPhone finally sees her image with heightened features appear on her Facebook page. Her hard drive's magnetic field had just nano-seconds before received the code of the altered interface and

deployed its magnetic fields to calibrate this change on the Facebook page on her screen. Existing in a cloud her popular digital image is continuously split up, sent on a variety of routes and then recalibrated on different devices throughout the world: each time zone feeding into the mix to create a 24 hour interconnected digital motorway system and an infinite network of data.

0011 Alchemical Economy

Hans Christoph Binswanger, in *Money and Magic: A Critique of the Modern Economy in the Light of Goethe's FAUST* (1994), claims that the economy and art have an inherent link with alchemy. Through pursuing the narrative of Faust, Biswanger highlights how John Law's introduction of paper money, to help the French Emperor clear his debts, does not leave alchemical methodology behind but produces it at an imaginary level:

It is not vital to alchemy's aim, in the sense of increasing wealth, that lead be transmuted into gold. It will suffice if a substance of no value is transformed into one of value: paper, for example, into money.⁴

In alchemy the four natural elements are melted down to extract the fifth element, which is the philosopher's stone, this is then deployed to bring out the primal qualities of lead. Alchemy adheres to the theory of thermodynamics that something cannot be produced from nothing, so they have to tap into the primal chaos in order to 'grow' the elements of lead that are already gold, rather than create gold.⁵ Biswanger explains that paper money values are produced through a similar process and that the contemporary economy also relies on the mysticism of the philosopher's stone. Biswanger depicts this through his allegory of Philosophical Mercury, Sulphur and Salt. In this analogy, Philosophical Mercury equates with paper money and the validity it was given through the gold standard, which has now been sold off, as well as the validation of the crown's signature. Philosophical Sulphur is the money

⁴ H. C. Biswanger, *Money and Magic: A Critique of the Modern Economy in Light of Goethe's FAUST*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 9.

⁵ Ibid, p. 8.

value developed through the ownership of property but all of these stages climax in the development of Philosophical Salt, which is the value of real capital. Culminating in the ultimate Philosopher's Stone: the ability that a fluid economy affords to create money out of money.⁶ Through his literary exploration of 'Faust', Biswanger exposes the ideological nature of the economy, which is often assumed to be rational.

In contrast to capitalism's rational visage, Biswanger states that we have never managed to expel the mythology inherent in alchemical practice but just deploy it at a deeper imaginary level. He explains that futurity is the ideological domain of the economy because what is accumulated will be spent or yielded in the future. Capitalism's edifice is built on an abundant future but this future that is meant to reward the speculative subject could be one of scarcity. Not just because the subject's stocks could plummet in price but also because the very nature of the future could be different from the one presumed by the system.

But since the economy is geared to money values, the future is lost again because the money value can only be secured through constant additional consumption of the world, for this money must be covered by the real goods excavated from the mine of the world. The future is then threatened to the extent that the world is limited, that the world's mine is exhausted.⁷

Biswanger states that the economy's presupposition of endless growth is inconsistent with the ecological fact that the materiality it relies upon, the natural resources that it is tied to through conversion, is forever dwindling. It is also becoming apparent that the growth that capitalism requires in order to

⁶ Ibid, p. 28.

⁷ Ibid, p. 88.

function is also decreasing in velocity. Biswanger does not merely attempt to expose the system but goes on to suggest alternatives. He calls for a return to subsistence economies, which do not mine the world's resources but just harness what is necessary and maintain equilibrium in their environment. Unfortunately, this position often requires ring-fencing communities and making them peripheral to the central power. This, as in the case of the self-sustainable or non-for-profit sectors, can either be seen as opting out or can make projects vulnerable to private and corporate interests. By taking this stance, Biswanger tries to avoid being exploited by governmental interference but the strategy he has chosen cannot change or alter the system. The approaches referred to act as a negative withdrawal from the system and do not offer a positive alternative.

Biswanger also posits a more confrontational approach when he discusses the potential of staging art. He states that although art cannot negate actions from its remit it does operate in the present so it can resist the deployment of purposive exploits: 'Art's striving to realize the moment in the present is diametrically opposed, therefore, to the modern economy.'⁸ Biswanger argues that art is focused on the present and so it is opposed to capitalism's gamble with the future. As a result, Biswanger's generic art can resist the preoccupations that the economy has with future consumption or profit. Biswanger appears to be proposing art's theoretical procedure and ignores its material value. Artworks can be plugged into the economy and these commodities do act as assets that are stored rather than viewed. Biswanger states that the form of the artwork is more important than its molecular structure because he requires the object to evade its material value when circulated in the system of capital. In contrast, if we are to claim that certain artistic practices can resist the temptation

⁸ Ibid, p. 85.

to conjure the past or expect a tautological future then it is necessary to disagree with Biswanger and state that the actual molecules in the artwork's materiality are as important as its form. It is through its physical materiality that the object can be proven not to care for us and to be unconcerned with our preoccupations with past, present and future. This then affords artworks, exhibitions and texts the ability to be discrete entities that are not reliant on the backdrop of capitalism, as a naturalized system that they can only critique. Instead of Biswanger's scenario, artistic practice is theorized as being able to produce objects that can differentiate themselves through their ontological resistance to meaning.

00111 Human Terminals

In his book *The Soul At Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (2009), Franco Berardi Bifo described the soul as ‘the energy that transforms biological matter into an animated body. In a sense we could say that the soul is the relation to the other, it is attraction, conflict, relationship.’⁹ Bifo describes how the construction of these souls, which are created not given, has been dramatically altered through the changes in the conditions of their labour. Human souls or subjectivities are produced through relationships with their environment and this is where Bifo’s concern with the network of capitalism lies. He argues that in Fordist labour, although the manual conditions of the assembly line were seen to alienate the workers from their subjectivities, they also had some time outside work.¹⁰ It was because they had this concept of a time anterior to production that, Bifo argues, the Fordist workers could actually over-identify with their estrangement and go on strike (Italian Workerism and their 1968 collectivity with

⁹ Franco Bifo Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*, trans. by Francesca Cadel and Giuseppina Mecchia, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009, p. 115.

¹⁰ Fordism is a term that was coined to describe the manufacturing industry set up by Henry Ford, which was prevalent in the USA and Europe in the 1920s. Fordism’s defining features were its:

- 1) technological advances and the division of labour through the introduction of the assembly line, in which workers performed repetitive tasks;
- 2) mass production and expanded growth of the economy;
- 3) the standardization of commodities, so that everyone could access the same model;
- 4) dense manufacturing centres and the production of societal expectations for a wage labour that could pay for socializing. This time outside work was also created by the increase in the speed of production and the free time made available by the abundant and affordable utilities.

students). Through their active estrangement the workers claimed something for themselves and demonstrated that their subjectivities were not completely defined by their conditions of labour.

Bifo states that this time outside labour has disintegrated due to two complementary factors: the process of technological developments that have replaced the labourer with the machine and the workers' fight for a form of labour that did not alienate their subjectivities. Bifo terms the resultant tertiary form of work 'intellectual labour': a labour that is concerned with the promotion and distribution of commodities as opposed to their assemblage. However, this form of labour relies on the deployment of subjectivities, in order to create the fields of desire that advertising requires. Late capitalism not only puts human souls to work but workers also endorse this expansion of the field of labour. Bifo's term, late capitalism, similarly to post-Fordism, attempts to define the change in the conditions of labour since Fordism.¹¹ The prefix in post-Fordism is deployed to signal that the term refers to a different stage of capitalism: a stage that is differentiated through its flexibility, as opposed to

¹¹ Post-Fordism is theorized as being a system that: 1) is an adaptable production service based on flexible technologies and workforce. It deploys micro technologies that connect a global economy and increase the speed of information and the production of goods. It is also known for its zero-hours contracts and precarious labour conditions; 2) constructs macro-economic growth that is built through economies of scope, which produce multiple differentiated markets; 3) is an interdependent system constructed out of discrete corporations that work together to respond to the changing demands in a flexible system; 4) creates a spatial division of labour, in which workers are often found in the suburbs or in business districts but are also free-lancers and flexible in their site of work.

standardization. In trying to provide a schema for the system of capital, post-Fordism can fall into the trap of endorsing a capitalist teleology (from Fordism to post-Fordism that the term itself exemplifies) and capitulates to it as the only game in town. Bifo deploys the term late capitalism to differentiate it from post-Fordist theories, as it relates to a particular historical stage that originates from the mid-1940s. As a result, Bifo refrains from defining capitalism as a holistic system and refuses to accept it as an inevitable feature of society. In contrast, Bifo deploys the term late capitalism, in an attempt to limit the system by placing it in parentheses: framing late capitalism as occupying a particular period in the chronology of time. He then explores the subject's relation to labour in this time period, in order to render the mechanisms of late capital transparent.

Industrial factories used the body, forcing it to leave the soul outside of the assembly line, so the worker looked like a soulless body. The immaterial factory asks instead to place our souls at its disposal: intelligence, sensibility, creativity and language.¹²

Bifo states that in late capitalism the desires of the system are conflated with its subject (worker) through the intellectualization of labour: CVs and online profiles become the markers of subjectivity and the human worker is presented as a walking portfolio of entrepreneurial skills. Subjective desires become synonymous with work, as self-realization is located in intellectual labour and as work is networked, so too are human desires and subjectivities.

Liberal economics produced mutational devices in the organism [that] are active in the biological and cognitive texture of society, in its chemical

¹² Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, p. 192.

composition, and not on superficial forms of behaviour.¹³

Bifo suggests that the capitalistic construction of subjectivities works at a chemical or molecular level. In intellectual labour subjectivities become human terminals that are permanently plugged into the flows of capital. These androids are connected to the network and consume, digest, rearrange and release information back into the flows of capital. It is through this process that these subjectivities are continuously composed because they are a product of their environment and the conditions of their labour. It is often through portable cellular devices that human subjectivities remain plugged into the network and it is also through these phones that human beings become cells.

Humans become cells in both the sense that their very subjective make-up is wired and altered by the flows of capital but also because they become cellular in nature: subjectivities become singular rather than collective, as online work (pro-suming) is often an individual endeavour. This singular endeavour produces a global consciousness but one that is constructed out of a bio-digital economy, which exists as connectivity but not as collectivity. Connectivity creates connections between individuals and local systems, whereas collectivity is historically related to the construction of new hybrid forms in which the meta-system itself might change.

Ironically, the virtual flow and plasticity of the capitalist network creates rigid rather than fluid identities in its parallel realm of the concrete. This is partly due to the way in which the virtual realm influences and produces subjectivities through connections. An Internet search engine produces an algorithmic bias because it creates a vertical list of

¹³ Ibid, p. 113.

corresponding sites. It constructs a hierarchy so that the search is both more accessible, precise and as a result of certain ranking qualifications. The sites that appear at the top of the list are often the most linked, visited, or have paid the search engine for adverts.¹⁴ In terms of social networking sites, blogs or tweets, the most 'liked' source gains the most press and attention. This also tends to result in the reproduction of the most popular identities, which correspond to the social norms or taboos deployed in advertising. Any attempts at transgression can easily be swallowed up by the sheer amount of content on the Internet. Transgression relies on the existence of laws that can be broken but a rhizomatic system of proliferation provides no such boundaries and the act is submerged or lost. As a result the reiteration of standardized subjectivities also correlates with a system of infinite becoming. The proliferation of options distract from the mechanisms that actually limit the extent of this choice. A system that keeps on growing produces an unlimited amount of choice but this inhibits change because permanent becoming actually equates to a continuous non-becoming. As a result, the connectivity produced by the Internet tends to be weighted toward a prolific production of the same as opposed to difference because it is a platform that is mediated through the virtual and algorithmic flows of economic and social capital.

¹⁴ See book 'Glossarium: a collection of glosses' under the title 'xxi Goggle Effect: Google effect, geospatial entity ranking and extramission', pp.15- 16, for more information on the mechanics of search engines.

001110 Factory without Walls

Maurizio Lazarrato also explores the production of social capital and interaction, which he describes as immaterial and most similar to an interface. Lazarrato states that cultural information only exists in the form of networks and flows. Events are demanded by the capitalist system and are constructed utilising ad hoc forms, which then dissipate after the happening has occurred. Communication continues after the forms themselves are dispersed, so this mode of immaterial production creates social relationships as opposed to physical merchandise. Social relationships become the new commodity and this connectivity, as opposed to concrete forms, cannot be destroyed. Instead a commoditised environment occurs in which the ideological and social landscape of the consumer is both fluid and restrictive.¹⁵ A consumer is necessary in this mode of production because they both construct the reason for the happening and give it validity post the event. Simultaneously, the subject becomes a part of the commodity itself and is restricted by its relationship to the network and the constellations that they produce. Through this process Lazarrato highlights that consumers are complicit in the construction of commodities that circulate in online industries and contribute to the signifiers and meaning makers, which construct our lived environment.

The capital relation becomes the commodity, or continuation of the event through the proliferation of connections. The curator is one subject who constructs this relation by providing the platforms that disperse these events for the system of interpretation but she or he does not act alone in the dissemination of the exhibition. In many institutions there is a double process, in which the author of an event is no

¹⁵ Maurizio Lazarrato, 'Immaterial Labour', *Generation Online* <<http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm>> [accessed 7 November 2014] p. 5.

longer an individual, or a team of curators and artists, because the viewer is also a communicator who is put to work after the event. In museums the ideological product or the commodity is the event of the public encountering and interpreting the artwork. The public is central to the museum, as they are necessary in building this relationship and promoting further connections to the institution. Visitors to museums are productive in the reception of their relation to the event by giving it a place in their environment. A popular event is circulated via tweets and other forms of social media, which communicates the show to future viewers. As a result, the Internet facilitates the construction of a whole apparatus for the interpretation of art, which, due to the online presence of exhibitions, does not even have to be visited in order for a viewer to be able to comment or be linked to the event. This flow of information becomes the artwork or exhibition, which the physical version has merely facilitated. Online prosumers cluster around events and these areas of connectivity (capital relations) are the concrete effects that result from and perpetuate Lazarrato's events of capitalism.

Lazarrato's argument is that economics can only appropriate these forms and entrepreneurs can only manage and regulate the production of meaning but cannot create it. He supports Mikhail Bakhtin's view that creativity is a social process and so one that can be rewired. This also merges with David Balzer's assertion, in his book *Curationism* (2014), that everybody is a curator or facilitator of production. In contrast, Balzer goes onto suggest that these everyday curators are not necessarily inventing new forms but are rather managing the flows of these forms. These communication flows are in turn driven by a system based on popularity, which becomes the currency of the event. If the social relation is now the commodity and communication the mode of building subjectivities, then everyone is plugged into an institution that is surveying their actions because each member is watching the other. The ramification of such a process is that we are motivated by our

relations to the other and, therefore, insert the capitalist relation into our very mode of living. It also encourages a certain form of curatorial practice, which builds its currency out of its connections with artists. These artists are then heavily promoted in order to maintain the curator's reputation and position in the system. The artist is constructed as a commodity through informal and formal communication and acts as the curator's capital relation. When focused on facilitating communication an artist, curator or writer is rendered incapable of constructing alternative models and the homogeneous system is reiterated endlessly. This results in the following questions: *what forms could curatorial or literary strategies take in an artistic practice that does not define itself through or against communication? Can an artistic practice create an event without requiring a social or capital relation? Or, to put it another way, can an exhibition or book differentiate itself from its landscape for itself, as opposed to for the system of communication?*

00111011 Slow Art

Now, the issues for any artistic practice that wants to resist the complex network of capitalism are as follows:

a) Art is actually an exemplary form of Bifo's intellectual labour and Lazarrato's immaterial labour: it is often precarious and involves zero-hour contracts or no contracts at all. It is a form of labour that has failed to unionize successfully because it does not have a single institutional employer that would create or answer to the conditions of labour.¹⁶ Artists are self-employed as sole traders and compete against each other for the market share. Artistic and independent curatorial production can be further exploited because it is entwined with the practitioner's sense of subjectivity. As a result, precarious cultural workers often spend extensive hours on multiple projects.

¹⁶ The attempts and failures of Film Co-ops that tried to accomplish unionization in 1970s- 80s was brought up in a panel discussion organized by Petra Bauer and Dan Kidner, as part of their programme 'Visions, Divisions and Revisions: Political Film and Film Theory in the 1970s and 80s' at Raven Row. Esther Leslie chaired a discussion between Paul Willemen, Colin MacCabe, Margaret Dickinson, Noreen MacDowell and Felicity Sparrow [attended: 9 March 2010]. Many of the panellists stated how they were very optimistic about both the political and democratizing potential of film. In contrast to this perspective, they acknowledged that the developments of late capitalism had taken them by surprise. When they did identify that film practices objectified the subjects they depicted and that capitalism exploited this, as well as promoted the free prosuming of images, it was too late. They then became disillusioned with the medium's ability to democratize society and their potential to unionize in the face of limitless free producers.

b) Art objects circulate through the system of capital and can be invaluable assets for collectors and auction houses. Commercial art and curatorial practices that maintain their reputation through the artists they promote justify the capital relation and endorse it as a worthy enterprise. In order to maintain practices that are recognized as valuable (economically, socially, or for the production of knowledge) curators can choose to link themselves to just a few artists. This results in a meagre number of artists being promoted to the level of notoriety that would ensure an income based solely on their practice. A select group of artists then become well known and incredibly wealthy, while others remain relatively unacknowledged. Superstar artists, groups, curators or novelists have usually had their name communicated to the extent that it has become its own brand. This corporate identity or commodity is often constructed out of the myth of a singular author, whether the practice is actually composed through one singular figure or a collective. This is in part due to the labour conditions of artists who compete against each other over the limited share, carved out by dealers, curators and collectors, in the market. As a result artists need to define their intellectual property (practice) through a cohesive identity if they are to gain further opportunities in a system based on value. A process that again produces an image of artistic individualism, which runs contrary to a system that actually relies on co-authoring (artist, dealer, curator, critic, administrator, manager, editor, audience etc.) to stage and communicate art. Furthermore, no form of gallery or practice can exist outside the system of capital because each labourer needs a roof over their head and food to eat, which has to come from somewhere even if it is supplemented by another form of work (that actually further exploits the art worker's time). If artists or curators receive public or private funding for a community programme they can often find that their work acts as a plaster or salve for the neo-liberal methodologies through which their own labour is exploited. When governments, or corporations that mediate and limit

the former, choose not to provide an infrastructure for marginalized communities, they outsource the responsibility to the art world and as a result often escape having to pay the managers of these projects. The community projects that are funded by councils or private benefactors are often chosen because they appear to fill in the gaps of a neo-liberal system, which does not care for its subjects, at a very low cost. These projects create events for existing communities and fail to produce new audiences that could challenge these capitalist mechanisms.

c) Networked subjectivities that communicate in a realm of images, language and information tend to see an art object and want to automatically put it to work. We simultaneously see the artwork and its operation, as we are unable to separate the object from its function or social relation (the term artwork already assumes that we will put it to work). This automatically instrumentalises the art object (creating its use or surplus value) and inaugurates it into the system of capital. In this process we also assume that an artwork always has to produce meaning and are thwarted when we realize how slow it is to communicate compared to the automated capitalistic production of information. In capitalist networks data travels at such velocity that the system continuously morphs and will have formed multiple constellations in the same time a singular art object or exhibition has been produced and is perceived by an audience. Before the artwork reaches its stage its meaning could already be outdated by the system it may wish to critique.

d) Tertiary modes of production – of which art is one form – are political because they govern both the desire for and flow of commodities, which in turn shape subjectivities. However, like any other mode of alternative production, art that aims to transgress the logic of neo-liberal mechanisms can always be subsumed by the capitalist system. For it can be put to work as just one more option among a proliferation of choice or it can

be lost underneath the more popular information but it cannot transgress because there is no boundary to be crossed. An additive system does not need to make certain information illegal (unless proscribed and monitored by outside agencies, such as governments) because this information is always productive or if not, it will be immersed by more popular and, therefore, more successful forms of data.

001110110 Criticism: Extending the Fourth Wall

Bifo's text is not only limited in scope because it excludes people without access to the Internet or cognitive labour and places them outside the frame, but also in writing about late capitalism he is simultaneously perpetuating (similarly to post-Fordism) late capitalist mechanisms. Bifo asserts that the operations and effects of capital appear to subjects in the form of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of chaos: the system of capital is too illogical and sublime for humans to comprehend.

As a result, Bifo's contemporary subjects require artworks that can act in a similar way to Deleuze and Guattari's 'chaoids'. Chaoids are artworks that are able to distil or create a freeze-frame of the invisible and temporal flows of capital without losing their complexity. This is a contradictory process because after stating that capitalism is a form of chaos they then invoke a subterranean logic behind capitalism and in the process frame chaos as merely a system of logic too vast for us to comprehend. This problem they then suggest can be solved if capital's flows can be captured in the realm of the sensible, as capitalism could then be comprehended. Even if it is possible to capture the reportedly illogical structure of capitalism in the realm of the sensible, the artworks thus rendered would act as artefacts of a past form of capitalism. Distilling a network that may have already morphed into a different constellation and left the artwork far behind (rendering it redundant).

Bifo actually develops Guattari's theory of 'Schizoanalysis' further and leaves chaoids behind. This is because Bifo believes that as terminals in the capitalist network, humans can poison the perfection that neo-liberals perceive of as the market. Instead of believing that capitalism just goes through moments of 'crisis' he suggests that we are in a permanent crisis, as a single crisis suggests that the organism has the ability to deconstruct and restructure while managing to maintain its functional structure. Capitalism, on the other hand, is always in crisis because of the depletion of planetary resources and the lack of any boom in growth means that it cannot be rectified. It is this sense of permanent competition and crisis that Bifo states leads to the development of schizophrenia under capitalism.

Counter-intuitively, Bifo suggests that this form of schizophrenia is not a tumour that needs to be stopped but is a process that could be co-opted. If subjectivity is constructed and not given then it is always entrenched in a contaminating field of battle. A schizo-virus could, therefore, be incubated in subjects and could act as an alternative infection that traverses the networks of capital and deviates from its usual production of obsessive schizophrenics. Obsessive schizophrenics repeat actions and their subjectivities become reified. Instead, Bifo argues that 'therapeutic contagion' could refocus an estrangement from the capitalist system by honing a delirious and creative schizo-subject.

As a result, Bifo deploys Guattari's theories too directly and uses vitalism to justify a schizo-subject that splinters and saves the logic that exists in capitalism. It is through exploiting what he describes as the capitalist system's tendency to create depression that Bifo states areas of resistance can begin. By locating the systems lack, Bifo believes that resistance can be realised through providing a form of therapeutic contagion. He asserts that if subjects come to terms with the new technologies and systems, then they will understand that capitalism is not the only game in town. Bifo claims that this then means that subjects can leave their notion of a fixed identity behind and allow their subjectivities to split off into different directions.

Taking control of, or flowing with, the system subsequently enables the subject to regain the desire that has been lost to depression. Bifo frames this process as exploiting the flow of capital, which modulates subjectivities, because it actually resists the production of fixed identities. He then asserts that this navigation of the system is a type of therapy, which because it operates like the capitalist virus can act as a form of contagion itself. In contrast to his intention, Bifo is actually asserting that capitalism is the only logic in town and we need to deploy this logic if we are to utilize the system's mechanisms towards different ends. As a result, Bifo accelerates the capitalist system in order to create the infrastructure for his theory and a need for his therapeutic contagion.¹⁷

¹⁷ See book, 'The Plot: complicit with ambivalent objects' under the title 'Part 1. Buendia's Enquiry', pp. 29– 30, for an account of Benjamin Noys' theory of accelerationism.

This box set is a response to this tendency in critical theory to actually echo capitalism but does so without grounding itself in the former's discourse. It locates materials and processes of resistance that do not define themselves through the neo-liberal frame. Feminism is also invisibly embodied in the writing of these books but it is not situated as an object in this text. When feminism is represented as a subject, as opposed to a position, it can fall into the trap of restricting its operations. In representing feminism there can be a tendency to return to earlier discourses that claim that there are bodies, performances, labour or relations, that are female and so this site becomes a territory. This is exemplified through artistic practices that objectify the female body in order to claim ownership over it. Early feminist practices attempted to construct a female version of what it is to be a woman (body, desire, gaze, language, or reveal their lack) but actually reified women through this process by reducing them to an essential or physical form.¹⁸ Current feminist practices, which deploy a similar stance or try to provide an alternative, continue to feed into capitalism and its preoccupation with ownership and identity because they objectify what it is to be a woman and

¹⁸ Earlier attempts (First Wave feminism) at locating a female canon were driven by the realisation that women had been positioned outside the masculine symbolic order and were constructed from a position of lack. Hélène Cixous was among a group of women who tried to produce a female language called 'Écriture Féminine' (1970s) and referenced writing in her mother's milk to provide a female notion of cultural lineage. As a result, Cixous linked women to their reproductive function and affirmed their position outside the central male language. Creating a position for female desire, as a form of authorship outside of the male gaze, was also prevalent in the practices of female artists of the time; as is seen in performance works such as Carolee Schneeman's 'Interior Scroll' (1975).

thus reduce and fix the female position.¹⁹ Deploying this strategy strengthens capitalism's ability to be both fluid and to give rise to reified identifications by joining the process at this end point of identification. Even if these representational practices retroactively reorganize the origins of female

¹⁹ A) The '(Dis)identifications' conference organized by Alexandra Kokoli and Catherine Dormor at the ICA [attended: 27 May 2015] is a current manifestation of this historical project. It set out to provide an alternative female position through contemporary artistic practices. In contrast, as the title itself highlights, much of the discussion revolved around existing subjectivities in an attempt to counter them: in order to dis-identify it is necessary to, first of all, identify. During this conference I suggested that perhaps a better term would be a positive form of dislocation, which has to provide a location or process in order to appear and, as a result, does not have to rely on the existing system. B) Vanessa Beecroft's practice, which deploys a sequel of titles that are constructed out of her initials and a serial number (e.g. 'VBDW₀₁', 'VBDW₀₂' etc.), has been claimed to be an example of Third Wave feminism because it attempts to go against previous feminist constraints. Beecroft does not try to locate an ideal female position but objectifies a simultaneously one-dimensional, yet complex, female body: her more recent performers are often female models and can have a condition called 'exercise bulimia' from which the artist also suffers, they can be restricted by clothes that are too small, are directed to stand for long hours in uncomfortable shoes and positions, are often scantily clad and appear as indistinguishable (lack identifiably different attributes) as possible. When Beecroft's ambivalent position towards women is theorised as a commentary on the female body, her practice's conceptual parameters can be reduced to an act of internalised female cruelty that can be identified through the display of naked and ideal female bodies, the physical pain of their fashionable garments and the uniform features. This objectifies Beecroft as an artist who over-identifies with the biological and cultural conditioning that women are subjected to through social norms and marketing.

identification by arguing that there are different molecular (biological and social) manifestations from those of the patriarchal forms, they are still acknowledging that these existing systems have the central power. As a result, unlike capitalism, these reactionary feminist practices are not involved in the production of mainstream identities but rather contest and try to deconstruct/reconstruct them after the fact.

The methodology deployed in this box set identifies itself more closely with Sadie Plant's practice. In her book, *Zeros and Ones: Digital Women and the New Technologies* (1998), Plant actively writes women into the history of technological developments and produces a positive model for their future rewiring of systems. Plant's archaeological account finishes with her assessment that subjects can exploit the invisibility of coding by programming alternative threads from within the system. A position that is distinguished from promoting the invisible practice of domestic labour for one that looks into the viral abilities of the technological worker. This author does not follow Plant in giving examples of a positive gendered history, which would objectify certain types of female labour and performance, but starts at her conclusion. Commencing with the following questions: *What happens when a feminist practice takes the risk in not caring for the grid of existing identities by deploying a post-human methodology? Can an artist maintain a feminist position and deploy actions and processes that, similarly to capitalism, are invisible?*

0011101101 Ad hoc

In his article 'The Logic of Disorder: The Sculptural Materialism of Abraham Cruzvillegas', Robin Adele Greeley explores how Cruzvillegas' sculptures deploy a third position that neither promotes a form of critique nor a utopia. Greeley claims that Cruzvillegas' process, which is titled 'autoconstrucción' and translates to mean self-building, is plugged into the asymmetrical nature of architectural and sculptural experiences produced by a globalised economic system.²⁰ Cruzvillegas deploys the ad hoc processes utilized in the illegal settlements of Mexico City called the paracaidista barrios without claiming that this method is a viable alternative to capitalism but, rather, that it is one of the system's asymmetrical productions. Neo-liberalist mechanisms are quite capable of simultaneously producing the slick architecture deployed by Parametricism's algorithms and the international art market, alongside slum settlements and knock-off designer goods.

Greeley states that the immediate problems in site-specific local circumstances produce Cruzvillegas' sculptures-cum-architectures, which deploy a tension between sculptural form and architectonic space. A practice of necessary solutions is thus cultivated, in which the material availability, site conditions and economical parameters form the basis of the artwork. This is all pursued alongside a negotiation and acceptance of the material's own resistance to his deployment and as Mark Godfrey puts it, 'Cruzvillegas refuses the negation and defeatism of an architecture in fragments [by proposing] an architecture of fragments.'²¹ It is due to this process that

²⁰ Robin Adele Greeley, 'The Logic of Disorder: The Sculptural Materialism of Abraham Cruzvillegas', *October*, 151 (2015), Cambridge: The MIT Press, 78–107 (p. 82).

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 101.

Greeley attests to Cruzvillegas' ability to reduce signs to their material existence and thus his opaque sculptures deform any claims for a clear signifier.

Greeley also points out the problem of anthropomorphizing objects, which ends up in limiting artworks to mimicking human lives or acting as their mirror. He claims that it is inherent in Cruzvillegas' practice that objects and subjects are on completely different registers. It is at this point that Greeley's argument differs from this practitioner's because he goes on to deploy Theodor Adorno's theory of negative dialectics and Immanuel Kant's philosophy that the object is completely unknown to us and subsequently necessary for experience. Arguing for a dialectical practice falls into the trap of assuming that the logic of capitalism is a totalizing force, as dialectics always adds up to one. Although the faces of object and subject are seen as irreducible they still constitute the same coin and create a currency for a total view of the world. Objects are reduced to subjective experience and are created for us, as opposed to remaining ambivalent to our existence and economic practices. Greeley states that Cruzvillegas' sculptures dismantle autonomy through materiality but this would only be the case if his artworks were seen as bearing a dialectical, and therefore relational, otherness to existing forms. In Greeley's scenario, Cruzvillegas' artworks rely on those practices that create sealed forms, which circulate under capitalism, in order to assume the stance of an explosive and anti-capitalist materiality. Greeley's claim for Cruzvillegas' dialectical process is actually a product of meaning not of materiality. In contrast, asymmetry is a term that refers to the actual materiality of objects. The material and atomic make-up of objects is not dialectical because it does not attempt to create a whole worldview by combining opposite poles. Asymmetrical objects do not fit negatively or positively with any other form but are discrete entities in themselves.²²

²² See book 'Glossarium: a collection of glosses' under the title 'xv Outside: Subject centric and anthropocentric authorship', p.12, for and account of Kant's and Adorno's negative dialectic.

00111011010 Poly-velocity

This author can agree with Bifo that Neo-liberal mechanisms actually do highlight a point of resistance in their own system but would stress that it is actually because they do not correlate with a human being's sense of time. Capital's material make-up is virtual and so it occupies less space and travels at a greater velocity to that of the concrete realm of human processes. It is this very notion of parallel speeds that enables us to locate a materiality that does not exist for the comprehension of human subjects. These un-correlative speeds are also attested to in Quantum Mechanics and the theory that there is a time interior to objects and that in certain conditions, such as acceleration, this time can counter-intuitively slow down when any exterior observation would attest otherwise. If an object in space speeds up, a human observer would say that it has accelerated but its internal time could have slowed down, so it is not moving at the same rate as its perceived motion. This realm of velocity opens up the possibility that art objects exist in a different temporality and their materiality does not care for its viewers: simultaneously carving out a space in the system of capital that does not cater to the production of meaning or communication. A theory that counters the temptation to speed up the mechanisms of art to match that of capitalism, which could actually risk art operating in a neo-liberal methodology. The pertinent question is: *is it possible to deploy a curatorial and literary methodology that embraces the artworks inability to translate effectively?*

001110110100 Astriction Nimiety

'Do two negatives form a positive?' s/he felt h/er/is lips mouth these words as a shooting pain that enters through h/er/is left temporal lobe breaks h/er/is slumber. H/er/is pallet tastes of a washed-out ashtray and h/er/is throat is as rough as sun-scorched desert sands. Running to turn on the shower, s/he trips and blood gushes from h/er/is right foot as it settles on the tiles of h/er/is rudimentary cubicle.

Blood curdles in the water and swirls down the plug to reveal a half-hanging nail. Finally, hair submerged under the cool torrents, h/er/is mind settles and ceases to swim. S/he furtively sticks out h/er/is tongue to lap the liquid and a searing expanding icicle slams outwards from inside h/er/is head.

Warmth enters h/er/is body as s/he finds h/er/im-self standing in front of an escalator with impatient shoppers tapping their feet behind. Forced onto the first corrugated step s/he is confronted with an intense light that is shining at h/er/is from a variety of surfaces. Looking up s/he takes in the geometric mirrors that assault h/er/is body and stares down at h/er/is feet as s/he are submerged into the drowning light.
Whiteness.

Feet running beneath her, she looks around to survey her landscape and finds that she is running toward a tunnel. Limp light rays are projected from a passing street lamp, which suggests that it is growing dark. She heads towards

shelter in the mist that is starting to gather momentum. Blackness. She can smell and feel the damp wrap itself around her body. 'Am I trespassing?' her voice echoes off the hard brick surfaces. In the distance she hears a track by Miley Cyrus but her footsteps don't appear to be able to transport her any closer to the source.

Suddenly he finds himself surrounded by a heavy fabric, like the material you find hanging in a butcher's that separates the shop floor from the refrigerated meat. Pushing his body around or through the material and navigating protruding shards, he suddenly glimpses a flickering image rebounding off or is it being projected on one of the walls? He aimlessly tries to locate the image but the blunt instrument does not succumb to his curiosity and he collapses in the attempt.

Sitting next to a fountain of liquid crystal, they find a tumbler in their hands, which they proceed to dip into the water to quench their never-ending thirst. Heat burns their oesophagus as the liquid travels down their throat. Reaching up for more nectar from the waterfalls that gush from a spherical mirror, they are aware of the oppressive density of the concrete architecture surrounding them. Pressing in on them the space constricts with the weight of the walls and their lungs begin to collapse due to the restricted circulation of oxygen.

