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In Advance of a Broken Attestant, or Where is Art's Critical Subject?

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Abstract:

Two concurrent understandings of criticality in art assign it as a potential property of artworks themselves, or bemoan it as lacking in art's audiences. This division can be traced to its roots in the Romantic conception of criticality, in which the critical procedure completes an unfinished work. This act of completion, and an accompanying conception of transformatory potential, is generally held to occur in the presence of a primary audience; an idea which is undermined by recent attributions of critical force to non-present secondary audiences. This essay traces these orientations of thought as they structure recent approaches to practice, then offers an example of a mode of practice which refuses to attribute any critical or transformatory capacity to either its original material effects or a primary audience. Any critical or transformatory force is played out as the work propagates and adjusts itself in its afterlife.

Keywords:

Criticality; afterlife; transformation; primary audience; secondary audience; excluded middle;

Author's biography:

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In Advance of a Broken Attestant, or: Where is Art's Critical Subject?

I: Criticality

> *Close as is their inward union, they are, nevertheless, entirely divided, and even in*
> *their overflow of harmony, shattered and broken into countless fragments.*
>
> Frederick von Schlegel

Introduction

The status, and indeed possibility, of art's criticality is by no means secure. Despite an apparent resurgence of interest in thinking about art in relation to negation, collectivity, resistance, and the avant-garde, *criticality*—the category to which such concepts are most readily aligned—refuses to submit to coherent scrutiny.

For a generation of artists emerging into the young century, the cornerstones of earlier signposts of criticality in art (autonomy, abstraction, allegory, reflexivity, etc.) have appeared careworn and toothless; inept in the face of unprecedented financialisations of art's values and instrumentalisations of its encounters. Furthermore, as digital platforms have expanded their reach into all corners of the social milieu, art has become less-and-less able to support any claim to be a primary repository for what had been its key critical tools (niche expertise, ideational exchange, bodily transgression, laborious or contemplative excess, etc.). Nor is art any longer a privileged site for the production of images, the telling of tales, or the spreading of values.

Approaches to the state of criticality in contemporary practice and thought appear to occupy four loose orientations: left-melancholic bemoanings of its near-total annihilation in the co-opting and inverting flows of neo-capitalism (Galloway 2015), exasperated denunciations of its internal contradictions and illusions (Rancière 2009b), a pragmatic reliance on its continuing relevance for thought and practice (Osborne 2013), or an (over)identification with the term's resonance as a marker of radicality or political force (Hirsch & Miessen 2012).[1] This latter camp neatly squares the circle of positions, espousing precisely the kind of 'strategic essentialism' Alexander Galloway calls for to counter criticality's state of utter disempowerment, and yet being at the same time the most clearly institutionally regulated of the bunch.

A thoroughgoing examination of these disparate and often contradictory orientations and interpretations of 'criticality' is not the task of this essay. Rather, it feels more prudent to accept that criticality (for art at least) is perhaps a broken or 'saturated' category,[2] wherein a procession of historical configurations—Kantian, Hegelian and Marxist C*ritique*—rub shoulders with the devalued figure of the *Critic*, the increasing historicisation of *Critical Theory*, conceptual art's *self-critical* praxis, practices of political, social, institutional and identitarian *critique*, and the everyday art-school experience of the discursive *crit*.[3] These divergent modes share a genealogy which we might comfortably label 'post-Kantian', but they are no less disparate and contradictory for it. To attempt to reunify them—to iron out their differences in the name of recovering a coherent concept of 'criticality'—as well as being futile, would be to do each configuration a disservice.

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[1] I am thinking also of the Critical Practice research group at Chelsea College of Arts, the Critical Practice pathway at the Royal College of Art, Critical Art Ensemble etc..

[2] This idea of *saturation* as the presence of a plethora of 'simultaneously conservative and eclectic' tendencies is outlined in the first chapter of Alain Badiou's *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (2005b). See also Bartlett (2006:221).

[3] For a meditation on the interplay between criticism, critique and criticality, see Rogoff (2003).

The sensible approach to inhabiting criticality's terrain of contradictions is by positing it as a function of discourse, for which art appears well-equipped. In the short opening section of Peter Osborne's recent *Anywhere or Not At All*, for instance, the roll call of putatively 'critical' things extends to knowledge, meaning, vocabulary, intelligibility, concepts, categories, demands, judgement, discourse and histories (Osborne 2013:2—3). Criticality here appears as a relational concept, a function of language; the opening up or maintenance of a space—'critical distance'—for the operation of a decision one-way-or-another. Out of this discursive space, however, two more troublesome orientations emerge. On the one hand, we encounter a *materialisation* of criticality; we find ourselves discussing 'works that are critical' (Osborne 2013:142), which we can more-or-less imagine as an extension of the tradition of literary criticism, but eventually we run into the 'critical art object' (Vidokle 2009:193), which requires us to think criticality in a different register altogether. If criticality is simply the property of an object, (how) are its discursive effects propagated? And by whom? On the other hand, we encounter a *subjectivization* of criticality, which is not so much a retention of the Kantian figure of the critical subject of practical reason, so much as a straightforward differentiation between those who have lost or refuse political agency, and the 'engaged citizen-subject' or public (Vidokle 2009:192), or 'avant-garde artist' (Roberts 2015:90), in sole possession of the required transformatory agency. If criticality is the domain of a particular group, again, who are they? And by what means is their criticality materialised?

My task here is not to answer these questions empirically. Instead I will attempt to trace something of their origins in historical conceptions of criticality, and to plot the trajectory of their consequences through recent strands of practice which look to either the object or the subject as the sole bearer of art's critical capacity. Unfortunately, this involves riding roughshod over a number of hard-won distinctions within these broad orientations: between relational, participatory, dialogic, pedagogic and durational practices, for instance. For this reason I try to avoid taking sides, and instead focus on what is held in common between orientations. This appears, in the last instance, to be the possibility of art as the site of transformatory procedures.

If the last remnant of the avant-garde tradition that contemporary art has retained is a belief in its own potential as an arena in which new subjectivities might emerge from material effects (be it the deployment of things, or the gathering of folk), I would like to point towards ways in which this might be possible under the crushing weight of capitalist expropriation of both the disjunctive object *and* the collective subject. If the art object is redundant, what is the role of materiality in art's critical procedures? And if the public sphere appears as an endless flow of recuperation, from where might the fractious bearer of such critical procedures emerge, and when?

A Twofold Criticality

Since the Romantic critics, and especially since Walter Benjamin's re-interpretation of their legacy, we have recognised an idea of criticism—the 'critical procedure'—as the elevation of a work of art; a 'heightening of its comprehension and reception' (Benjamin 1996:151). More specifically, it is to Benjamin's reworking of Schlegel and Novalis that we owe our understanding of the critical procedure as not so much a supplementary judgement appended to accomplished work, but instead as the *realisation* of works which are necessarily *incomplete* (1996:154). The critical procedure indicates 'the completion, consummation, and systematization of the work', its 'resolution': we might say it *carries out* the work (1996:159). But not only this. For the Romantics, the critical procedure goes so far as to actually determine the work's status *as* art: 'If a work can be criticized,' states Benjamin on their behalf, 'then it is a work of art; otherwise it is not' (1996:160).

For art at least, the critic himself, as instigator of the critical procedure and privileged 'beholder', is now all-but dead, displaced by a twofold absorption of his role, his procedure, into both the conceptual structure of the work, and the active role of the spectator.[4] Already disquieted by the 'theatrical' corruptions of Minimalism, and the performative exertions of Fluxus, which had begun to incorporate the spectator as a necessary element of the work,[5] the critic suffered a fatal backhand from Conceptual Art at the tail end of the 1960s. Conceptual art's 'suppression of the beholder' opened up space for artworks to fully internalise the problems of 'completion', 'consummation' and 'systematisation' that had previously been the critic's privilege, and develop internally complex and therefore 'critical' audience relations. This ultimately opened up the possibility of an outward-facing 'institutional critique', in which artworks effectively began to turn the tables on their critical frameworks and proffer forms of discriminatory judgement against the social and economic structures via which their presence in the circuits of culture was made possible. More-or-less in parallel with conceptual art's appropriation of this criticality, Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author* (1977b), and assorted post-structural theories of the encounter, gave precedence to reader-centred or 'reception' theories of meaning, which likewise undermined the supposedly privileged channels of expert critical force, and placed critical competence firmly in the hands of the receiver.[6] *All* art after conceptual art, 'postconceptual' art, as Peter Osborne defines it, is art that is conceptually bound to the theoretical and discriminatory (and thus critical) assertion of its own possibility (Osborne 2013:46—51). The critical procedure as conceived by the Romantics is in this sense already 'actualised' when any work of contemporary art is encountered by its receiver.

An understanding of art in these terms is now commonplace, and the critical procedure thus appears to inhabit two distinct milieus. On the one hand, there is the criticality of the work itself, often upheld as an outward quality of particular works and equated with outwardly political and/or inwardly conceptual ambitions. This is what triggers Boris Buden's description of 'the ability of art to criticize the world and life beyond its own realm' existing alongside 'the practice of critical self-reflexivity' in an art which is 'critically aware of the conditions of its possibility [and] production' (Buden 2009:33). This capacity for criticality, for Osborne, inheres in *all* contemporary art as a necessary conceptual ground, whether apparent or merely implicit. On the other hand, there is the criticality of the audience, who share something of the work's own criticality (having been lured by Minimalism and Fluxus etc. into its ontological fabric), but who also enjoy the heuristic and hermeneutic freedoms wrought by a post-structural de-throning of both the author/artist and the critic. The possibility of criticality inheres in an irresolvable tension between the audience's inclusion in the logic of the work, and its attentive freedom (or 'distraction'). As Andrew Benjamin notes: 'the audience's state of absorption retains a partiality precisely because of the ineliminability of the potential for criticality' (Benjamin 2005:245n7).

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[4] I use the masculine form advisedly. Proclamations of the death of the critic are rife; see de Man (1983) for an earlier example. Elkins (2008) offers a more recent insight.

[5] See Michael Fried: 'the experience of literalist art is of an object *in a situation* - one that, virtually by definition, *includes the beholder*', 'literalist work *depends* on the beholder, is *incomplete* without him' (Fried 1995:125,140), and Hannah Higgins: 'The effort to make [the viewer's experience] happen can be described as the performative element of all Fluxus work: the audience has to do something to complete the work.' (2002:25).

[6] Benjamin quotes Novalis' extraordinarily prescient phrase: 'The true reader must be the extended author' (Benjamin 1996:153). The most widely-read example of this legacy is Jacques Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009b); a recent attempt to problematise Rancière on this matter can be found in Lampert (2016). See also Lecercle (1999).

Critical Conditions, Apparitions and Divisions

If the root of the Romantic conception of criticality is the 'incompleteness' of the work, what hope is there for criticality when incompleteness itself appears increasingly elusive; when contemporary democratic materialism and postmodern interpassivity have reduced 'partiality' to 'opinion', and 'anticipation' to 'enjoyment' (Badiou 2011; Žižek 1991)? That there might be a critical capacity in artworks, and a potential for a critical audience, is of no regard if *conditions* for such a criticality to gain purchase—to have any kind of transformatory effect—are nowhere to be found.

Nevertheless, criticality endures as a (necessary) horizon for art, albeit in the somewhat spectral form of a 'strategic essentialism', in which the question of 'which criticality?' is often lost in favour of a straightforward affirmation of 'some' in opposition to 'none'. It would be tempting to draw battle lines between two opposing camps. We could, for instance face off the 'some' camp, comprised of those who uphold the enduring possibility of negation and the avant-garde (Roberts 2015; Léger 2012) against a 'none' camp comprised of those who insist on practices of 'post-critical' affirmation (Rancière 2009b; Rancière 2009a; Dewdney et al. 2013). My attention is drawn, however, to a number of instances where the assertion of 'some criticality' or 'no criticality' is not made on behalf of art (as a more-or-less stable encounter between work and audience), but where battle lines between 'some' and 'none' are drawn *internally*, between work and audience, and subsequently *within* the audience itself: between what we might call 'critical subjects' and mere spectators. My attention will then turn back towards the consequences of mirroring this audience division *within* the work.

Critical Objects vs Critical Publics

In 2009 the artist, curator and co-founder of e-flux, Anton Vidokle, wrote an influential account of *Unitednationsplaza* (2006-9), a curatorial project he had initiated in Berlin, then Mexico and New York. Sensing an increasing passivity and de-politicisation of art's audiences, he described a widening gulf between the critical, transformative potential of art objects and an available public of (as he puts it) 'engaged citizen-subjects':

> It is still possible to produce a critical art object, but there seems to be no public out there that can complete its transformative function, possibly rendering the very premise behind contemporary art practice effectively futile or, at the very least, severely reduced in its transformative political and social agency (Vidokle 2009:193)

Taking this statement at face value we can immediately draw one of two conclusions. Either:

1. We can continue to make critical art objects (whatever that might mean) in the hope that one day an 'effective public' will turn up to 'complete' them, or…
2. We should stop making critical art objects and plough our efforts into trying to find or make effective publics some other way.

Vidokle, who readily admits he 'do[es] not have so much faith in the public of the future' had opted for the latter option, establishing what he describes as a temporary 'exhibition as school' behind a supermarket in what had formerly been East Berlin's Lenin Platz (Vidokle 2012). The project sought to engage its audiences with a year-long programme of free lectures, extended seminars, conferences, film screenings and performances etc., drawing on the input of a number of key artists and theorists, including Boris Groys, Martha Rosler, Liam Gillick, Walid Raad, Lalal Toufic, Nicolaus

Hirsch, and Tirdad Zolghadr. The project made a conscious effort to turn away from the exhibition of art objects and towards dialogic, educational models of practice, which might allow for a 'recuperation' of art's 'transformative function' (Vidokle 2009:193).

The explicit aim of the project was not simply to draw the spectator into the conceptual logic of the work, but to form and transform publics within the active unfolding of duration and content in the work's production:

> *I would argue that this possibility of the audience having an active stake in the situation enabled the kind of productive engagement that is still possible, if spectatorship is bypassed and traditional roles of institution/curator/artist/public are encouraged to take on a more hybrid complexity. To me this means the public can be resurrected and the modality of critical art practice can be preserved…*
> *(Vidokle 2009:198)*

This approach is broadly typical of what has come to be known as art's 'educational' or 'pedagogic turn' which traces its genealogy through a range of relational, participatory, dialogical and social art practices (O'Neill & Wilson 2010). Such practices reject the traditional sequential model of artist (and studio), then artwork, then gallery, then audience, in favour of establishing more immediate relations of conversation and exchange between artist (or institution) and audience.

The emphasis—as Paul O'Neil and his various collaborators have argued—is on the extended 'circulation of ideas' and the durational exchange of knowledge, over and above any more immediate relations of art's 'production and display' (O'Neill & Wilson 2010:19). The benefit of this durational approach, claim O'Neil & Claire Doherty, is that such practices 'allow for the formation, dispersal and reformation of temporary, active communities' (O'Neill & Doherty 2011:9). These 'temporary, active communities' appear to be forming precisely along the lines of what Vidokle had mourned as art's heretofore missing critical or 'effective' publics. And despite Rancière's disavowal of the logic of criticality, we find here also a clear mirror of the 'required' presentational situation which opens *The Emancipated Spectator* 'where those in attendance learn from, as opposed to being seduced by images; where they become active participants as opposed to passive voyeurs' (Rancière 2009b:4). This positive model of a dialogic criticality appears to do away with the negative forms of criticality (performative rupture, institutional critique, etc.) which had previously held sway. As John Roberts sarcastically ventriloquizes Grant Kester, one of the key advocates of dialogic practice: 'We do not need a theory of autonomy or the avant-garde when artwork, artistic producer and audience form an integrated and transformative whole' (Roberts 2015:95).

Primary and Secondary Audiences

O'Neill & Doherty implicitly acknowledge, however, that the 'temporary constituent publics' gathered and supposedly transformed by pedagogic, educational or durational projects are often both limited and unstable in their precise constitution and mode of engagement, rendering any meaningful claims of 'transformative political and social agency' somewhat moot (O'Neill & Doherty 2011:10). Specificity and local agency ('wholeness') appears to be attained at the expense of intelligible outward reach. This causes problems for the differentiation of audience and public on which Vidokle's claims rest, since the effective horizon of such projects seems to be limited to that of a finite participant-subject, not, after all, the active citizen-subject, the 'effective public' he craves.

This situation is rescued by what O'Neill & Doherty refer to as 'subsidiary audiences' which are encouraged to form 'beyond the initial participants or co-producers' (O'Neill & Doherty 2011:10). These 'others' are able 'to receive the project anecdotally through the dispersion of the narrative of the project by its participants…over time'. This formation of subsidiary audiences of 'others' allows such projects to 'transcend their immediate relations' and hence be 'translated and extended into the future'.

In *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop makes a similar argument. In order to escape the limitations of what she refers to as their 'primary' audiences—their 'specific constituencies' of participants and attendees (Bishop 2012:191)—participatory and pedagogic projects need to find ways to 'communicate' or 'convey' their activities outwards towards a more general or universal 'secondary' audience:

> *The secondary audience is…essential, since it keeps open the possibility that everyone can learn something from these projects: it allows specific instances to become generalizable, establishing a relationship between particular and universal* (Bishop 2012:272).

This is of course anecdotally true, and Bishop herself, in her talks to launch the book, was at pains to include herself in the class of 'secondary audience' for much of the work included in its pages, having only encountered many of the projects through documentation and conversation with artists ans participants.

What becomes radically unclear at this point, however, is precisely how such forms of *anecdote*, *communication*, *conveyance*, *translation*, *extension* and *dispersion* are in any way different from those on which more conventional object-based practices appear to rely as they encounter their wider distributary publics. Indeed if, as O'Neill & Doherty suggest, participants are often 'unaware [of] exactly what they are taking part in', and 'participation is not something that can be measured or evaluated in any clear way', it becomes hard to imagine exactly what kinds of 'effective' critical public such projects are able to gather, and how the scope of any 'transformation' might transcend those of object-based practices whose public reception appears far less aporetic.

Secondary Criticalities
Bishop goes as far as to claim that for participatory practices this secondary audience offers a necessary critical handbrake, limiting the possibility of socially engaged works disappearing into what she implies to be the tame localism of 'community arts'. The secondary audience, she insists, provides a 'discursive framing', an 'elaborated culture of reception…comparison and analysis' which 'facilitate[s] comparison and analysis with similar projects' (Bishop 2012:190). The secondary audience is, in this sense, the only 'critical' one, charged not with some vague notion of transformation but with critical procedures of *discernment*, and a refashioning of the Romantic concept of *completion*.

In direct contradistinction to the claims of Vidokle, Bishop insists that this critical framework is *only* possible via the mediating effects of the material trace or object:

> *[P]articipatory art has always had a double ontological status: it is both an event in the world, and at one remove from it. As such, it has the capacity to communicate on two levels—to participants and to spectators…. But to reach the second level requires a mediating third term—an object, image, story, film, even a*

> *spectacle—that permits this experience to have purchase on the public imaginary* (Bishop 2012:284).

Vidokle's favouring of a discursive, participatory practice over the rigidities of object-based exhibition appears, in Bishop's account, to be stranded at the mercy of the very material forms it seeks to eschew, and it is telling that unitednationsplaza.org is heavily populated with precisely such non-discursive forms of outreach.

Prior to the above extract, Bishop alludes to Rancière's conception of the 'genuine participation' of an 'unpredictable subject' which transcends 'the mere filling of spaces left empty by power' (Rancière 2007:61). It is tempting to project the former—the unpredictable democratic and transformatory subject—onto the uncertainties and unmeasurables of the primary participatory audiences of projects such as Vidokle's. Even on the base level of occupying the rear quarters of a supermarket on former Lenin Platz, however, the spaces left empty by power appear impossible to transcend.

Rancière suggests that this pragmatic 'filling of spaces' is the result of a 'mongrel idea', born of a fudging of the two grand narratives of *revolution* and *reform*. Vidokle clearly seeks the former: what Rancière describes as 'the permanent involvement of citizen-subjects in every domain', but is brought down to earth by the latter, in the form of 'necessary mediations between the centre and the periphery' (Rancière 2007:60).

A Proliferation of Objects

I'd like to return to the earlier passage from Vidokle's text—'It is still possible to produce a critical art object, but there seems to be no public out there that can complete its transformative function'—and re-examine the first of the options I presented in its wake: namely that, in the absence of a critical public, we might continue to make 'critical art objects', in the hope that one day an effective public will turn up to complete them. The first problem we encounter is the seeming ridiculousness of imagining a critical object *being* critical without an act of interpretation, which is to say a critical receiver. There are myriad philosophico-ontological defences of this position, and indeed the Benjaminian interpretation of the Romantic tradition upholds the idea of the work (and indeed everything else) as being *alive* in a very literal sense (St. Andre 2011:110), and certainly a *bearer* of critical possibility. Vidokle has no interest in elaborating a concept of the object in this sense however, and simply wants it out of the critical equation. Tellingly, in a subsequent iteration of the same passage for a different audience, Vidokle reneges on his assertion that 'it is still possible to produce a critical art object', and plumps instead for what seems like the complete opposite: 'you can still produce the most *fantastic* art object,' he now proclaims, before repeating his original refrain: 'but there is no public out there that can complete its transformative function' (Vidokle 2012 [my emphasis]).

Somewhat predictably, the market-led artworld wasted no time in finding ways to incorporate pedagogic, discursive and participatory practices into the Biennale and Art Fair sideshow circuits in order to shore up the latter's discredited critical credentials. This move appears to have reached something of a point of saturation, and the object is enjoying something of a renaissance, regularly troubling the contributors to Art Monthly and the like (Walsh 2013; McLean-Ferris 2013; Charlesworth & Heartfield 2014).

Fuelled by the rise of Speculative Materialism and the various Object-Oriented factions of recent philosophical discourse (in particular the work of Quentin Meillasoux, Graham Harman and Bruno

Latour), and of course by the nagging insistence of the market, artists are now wallowing in the freedoms wrought by flat ontologies which level hierarchies between objects: a category which now seamlessly extends to include still and moving images, virtual renders, immaterial labour, and the internet's voracious consumption of images of things.

Eddie Peake's 2015 show in the Barbican's Curve Gallery, *The Forever Loop*, is either a zenith or nadir of this particular trajectory, depending on one's point of view, comprised as it was of two naked, choreographed performers,

> *a video of past performances, a home movie…a film…maze-like, plastered wall structures…a raised scaffold walkway…a sheer suited roller skater…surreal objects…Perspex bears [wearing knitted scarves], brightly coloured whale bones, a metal figure with an acrylic box head filled with autobiographical items…delicate bronze pipettes nestled on shelves with plaster sculptures,*

not forgetting a checkerboard dancefloor, a couple of paintings, some text, a smattering of 'No Photography' signs and various security staff (Barbican 2015). Notably, the audience itself in this instance was explicitly created, prior to entry, as a particular kind of compliant object, being informed in no uncertain terms, by a pair of large signs and a stern lecture, that any behaviour which exceeded given boundaries would result in immediate expulsion.

Entrenched Humanisms

At first glance these two strands of contemporary practice—the participatory, pedagogic project, and the object-based exhibition—appear as polar opposites, especially with regard to their treatment of the audience. On the one hand, participatory projects seek to draw their audiences into sustained dialogue, creating supposedly fluid opportunities for mutual transformation and exchange. On the other hand, recent object-based, and especially what have come to be known as 'post-internet' practices, pay scant attention to the intellectual faculties of the audience, eschewing meaningful interaction and transformatory dialogue in favour of blunt presentation and the requirements of the self-contained dispersible digital image.[7]

The audience, more than ever, is held to be an integral part of the work. Rather than 'completing' or unfolding the work in any critical, or at least discursive, manner, the audience in recent object-based presentations is re-cast as just another object; as what Graham Harman recently described as a 'co-constituent of the artwork itself' (Harman 2014). At best, any critical or political ambitions for the work are relegated to an open, Rancièrian nod towards a 'change [in] the cartography of the perceptible' wrought by the object as its presence registers in the common culture (Rancière 2009b:72). But, in the words of Brian Droitcour, 'it's hard for me to believe that anything close to critique is happening' between the object and its insertion into the circuits of promotion and distribution (Droitcour 2014). At worst, as Pil & Galia Kollectiv have pointed out, a reliance on the supposedly inherent agency of objects exposes 'a generalised, universalising humanism that disables political action' and 'undermines [any] potential for anti-humanist critique' (Pil & Galia Kollectiv 2010).

This implicit humanism is precisely what links both pedagogic and object-based work: its binary logic of 'presence' and 'absence' ensures a belief in the necessity and value of a temporally and spatially *present* audience. To put it another way, what is unquestioningly described as the 'project' or the

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[7] I am reminded, here, of Benjamin's quote from Novalis: 'Only the incomplete can be understood, can lead us further. What is complete can only be enjoyed' (Benjamin 1996:154)

'work' coincides precisely with the physical and temporal presence of Claire Bishop's 'primary' audience. The spectre of a more-or-less invisible and indeterminate 'secondary' or 'subsidiary' audience is held at bay through a supplementary distribution of residual material effects: youtube clips, anecdotes, photographs, Facebook shares, Vines or Instagram posts, or mere indifference.

Indifference

This willingness only to consider the primary site of the 'project' or 'work' as coterminous with a finite viewing audience does little to challenge the given relations of art's consumption and distribution. In his account of *Unitednationsplaza*, Vidokle makes reference to Martha Rosler's analysis of these relations, outlined (or as she put it 'encircled') in her landmark study: *Lookers, Buyers, Dealers & Makers* (Rosler 2004). Vidokle, who had invited Rosler to collaborate on Unitednationsplaza, bases his differentiation between art's passive audience and his ideal public comprised of 'groups of engaged citizen-subjects' on Rosler's analysis, noting that what she had observed four decades earlier 'is now a fait accompli':

> *…audiences are groups of consumers of leisure and spectacle; they have no political agency and no necessary means or particular interest in affecting social change…the audiences for art are enormous, but there is no public among them. (Vidokle 2009:193)*

Rosler's essay builds a socio-economic account of art's receivers along class boundaries, separating 'onlookers' from the '*actual* audience' and the 'owners' of high culture. But Rosler's criticism was not directed at the passivity of the audience, so much as at the passivity of artists themselves, and their inability to challenge structural divisions in the constitution of their audience.

Making special note of the entry of art into the competitive free-markets of capital following the decline of aristocratic patronage, Rosler identifies, in the discourses of art, a 'proscription against a clear-eyed interest in the audience' and, in the romantic figure of the artist as lone rebel, 'the impossibility of a sense of responsibility to any audience' (Rosler 2004:25). In the aftereffects of Kant's treatment of aesthetic judgement, and Romanticism's pursuit of autonomy, we find the root of what had by the late 1970s become entrenched as received wisdom regarding art's 'proper response' to its public:

> *Unconcern with audience has become a necessary feature of art producers' professed attitudes and a central element of the ruling ideology of Western art set out by its critical discourse* (Rosler 2004:11).

This unconcern or indifference to the audience, claims Rosler, underscores a complicity on the part of artists in the maintenance of strict class divisions within art's wider audience. A majority of the working class, who we can only assume are potentially what Vidokle sees as his ideal public of 'engaged citizen-subjects', are merely 'onlookers'. They are kept outside the boundaries of what is generally held to be the 'audience' for art by just sufficient artistic education to enable them to discern that art's values belong elsewhere. The '*actual* audience', she argues, are the aspirational petite bourgeoisie; the 'professional and managerial class' whose actively cultivated 'understanding'[8] and 'appreciation' of art maintains both a distance from the proles outside, and a link to the 'owners' who pull the levers on (and of) the market at the heart of it all; the haute, or, in

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[8] There is perhaps a conflict here between Rosler's somewhat derogatory use of a concept of 'understanding' and Novalis' Romantic precedent noted above.

Rosler's terms, the 'big' bourgeoisie (Rosler 2004:16). Artists, claims Rosler, as unwitting members of the petite bourgeoisie, have been complicit in upholding art's repellence of the 'onlooker' by refusing, in the tradition of Romanticism, to take proper responsibility for the constitution of their audience.

Art's manipulation of both 'meaning' and capital, as promulgated by artists, is instrumental in the maintenance of these class boundaries. The dominant theoretical discourses and financial relations, which uphold the very possibility of art in its current guise, mitigate against any 'clear-eyed interest' in the audience by casting the artist in the contradictory roles both of visionary outsider—divorced from the responsibilities, guilt and aspirations of the petite bourgeoisie—and, at the same time, as a fundamental conduit between the world of the petit bourgeoisie and their haute masters. Artists, in Rosler's formulation, both disavow and produce class division, and are thus unable fully to comprehend or articulate their relation to the audiences they hold in place.

Present and Correct Audiences

Vidokle's model of discursive participation and direct audience engagement is, on the face of it, a straightforward attempt to rectify the situation Rosler describes, engaging audiences as individuals rather than ignoring them en masse. The problem, though, is that in allowing—and usually encouraging—the convenient division of audience into 'primary' and 'secondary' roles, projects of this kind mimic precisely the class division between petite bourgeois 'actual' audience and working-class 'onlooker' that Rosler describes. At worst, discursive practices hide art from the onlooker within the artworld's established circuits of distribution, and simply take existing artworld audiences and turn them into participants. At best, just as the National Lottery takes money from the poor and gives it to the instantaneously rich, participatory practices turn excluded onlookers directly into willing participants or understanding appreciators, without ever really challenging the bourgeois apparatus of production and distribution which continues to hold the onlooker as its constitutive outside.

Vidokle's well-meaning strategy, in the terminology of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, is to challenge the formation of what he takes to be a broken public sphere through the establishment of 'counterpublics', from which the correct form of critically-engaged citizen-subjects might emerge (Negt & Kluge 2016). A counterpublic, or 'proletarian public sphere' emerges in opposition to the bourgeois industrial-capitalist public sphere, and takes root in autonomous, marginalised spaces of collectivisation and organisation. Within these spaces, claim Negt & Kluge, new modes of experience beyond the reach of capital have the possibility of being developed. The logic of such spaces, or 'enclaves', rests on the primacy of shared experience and participation (Negt & Kluge 2016:32,205).[9] Vidokle—if I might borrow a phrase from Miriam Hansen—stakes his utopia of a critical (counter)public sphere of experience on a Habermasian 'vision of direct participation, openness, and self-reflexivity grounded in face-to-face relations' (Negt & Kluge 2016:xxxv). The premise, though, lacks teeth, since the terrain of shared experience remains simply the 'project' itself, or the experience of being-in-relation-to-art and not, as Negt & Kluge insist, the experience of the worker. Vidokle's 'engaged citizen-subject' is patently not the 'social producer-subject' crucial to any such lasting proletarian endeavour (Negt & Kluge 2016:8). Such a subject remains outside the fence.

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[9] Negt & Kluge note the tendency for such forms of organisation to result in 'thinking in terms of "camps"', and it is interesting to note the appearance of this terminology in contemporary attempts to build counterpublics, for instance the Critical Practice research group's 'Barcamps' (Critical Practice 2008). See also Roberts (2009).

Ultimately, this face-to-face strategy fails to challenge art's romantic prerequisite of a 'present-and-correct' audience; one tasked with completing the work through common understanding, and one rooted in indifference to the excluded onlooker. It exposes its own lack of either the will or the resources to present persistent material challenges to this exclusion. And too often it lacks the motivation to adequately, as Rosler puts it, 'rupture the false boundaries between ways of thinking about art and ways of actively changing the world' (Rosler 2004:45), insofar as it is impossible, face-to-face, to think one without the other, neutralising both, and excluding critical distance.

II: Monument

> *It is not a question of perceiving a latent structure of which the manifest work is*
> *an index, but of establishing that absence around which a real complexity is knit.*

> Pierre Macherey

Anticipation, Withholding and Refusal
At which point my somewhat technical nit-picking of Vidokle, based on a necessarily flippant quote in his generous narrative of what was a rightfully influential and significant project, starts to look a lot like hubris.

I will push this essay towards its close by offering a brief outline of an approach to the production of criticality which, unlike Vidokle's, does place some 'faith in the public of the future', and purports to function in advance of an as-yet unknowable 'engaged citizen-subject'. The example I will use will be one of my own collaborative works, *Monument to the Excluded Middle*. This was a public commission undertaken in collaboration with the artist Dylan Shipton for HOUSE 2013, a publically-funded art programme which operates yearly in parallel with the Brighton Festival. The approach I will outline marries something like an outright reversal of Claire Bishop and Paul O'Neil et al.'s desire for 'transversal' practices of communication between primary and secondary audiences, with a limited adoption of Vidokle's pedagogic model based on engagement with multiple counterpublics. Whilst I wholeheartedly reject Vidokle's initial suggestion that objects can be critical in-and-of-themselves (since criticality, of course, is always a function of discourse[10]), more than ever, art needs to pay close attention to the discursive role of its material effects. My approach here is to withhold ontological priority from the (primary) viewer or participant, from any specified public which forms in relation to the artwork at any given time of its production and dissemination, and from the artwork qua bounded object or process itself. This entails a refusal of Rosler's distinction between the audience and the onlooker (*Monument…* feigns to treat both with equal contempt) in order to fully exploit the critical capacity of the secondary audience, which eludes her analysis. Priority is given to an understanding of the audience as a fractured, unreadable, enduring multiplicity; always capable of making unthinkable connections, of raising new objections, and ultimately of drifting away as active *bearers* of the work.

The Floating Work I
Monument… was premised on the explicit production of what appeared to be a self-contained material effect for a primary audience; a conventional art object with no outward pretence of durational unfolding or pedagogic depth, and certainly no directly authorised participation. It involved an outright (and theatrically literal) rejection, from our point-of-view, of what would

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[10] Though as a disciple of Alain Badiou I would also assert that so are objects.

normally be considered to be its primary audience. Instead the multiple, overlapping and unpredictable dispersions of the project—as it was wrestled into existence as an object, and as it is now propagated in its afterlife—have become, for us, the primary scene of production and (albeit very modest) transformative agency. The object was a 2m high Heras fence, of the kind commonly used to secure construction projects, encircling a somewhat crude 1:10 scale model of a crash-landed airship, its two pieces propped in place and separated by an indeterminate area of 'wreckage'. *As* an object, it endured what Thomas Crow might have described as a 'terminal contradiction' to its site, being neither use nor ornament for many of the regular (and particularly vocal) users of the park in which it had landed (Crow 1996:135). Contrary to Crow's thesis, however, the object's antagonistic presence and brief duration were not in-and-of-themselves signs of critical 'strength', not least because its brief duration and impositional status were given conditions of the curatorial brief. The critical 'work' or 'procedure', as I am considering it here, was (is) produced, and endures, elsewhere, not constrained by its spontaneous, local public. In the words of Pierre Macherey: 'The work is available beyond the closed circle of its initial intended audience. It is not circumscribed by a spontaneous reading' (Macherey 1978:71).

This approach can initially be grasped via Roland Barthes' separation of *œuvre* and *Texte*, wherein the material substance of the *œuvre* (the artwork or 'object', in my terminology) trails behind the 'methodological field' of the *Texte*, which I am rather confusingly upholding as the 'work' or 'critical procedure', hence my retention of Barthes' original French (Barthes 1977a:157).[11] The *Texte* is the artwork's 'process of demonstration'; it is 'held in language' and 'only exists in the movement of a discourse'. It is in no way reducible to an object, and is thus 'experienced only in an activity of production'. It is important to separate the free and wage labour which produced the object in its *actual* field (labour which in its execution—if not in the scale of its reward—was no different from any other form of construction-based wage labour), from the artistic labour or 'work': the discursive activity which produces and intervenes in art's *methodological* field. Just as Paul Ricoeur and his followers, for instance, have successfully separated an idea of 'the political' from the dirty machinations of 'politics' (Marchart 2006; Marchart 2007), so it is important to uphold the conceptual operations of a work over and above the grubbiness of its initial material execution.[12]

This separation of the object from its labour of production *as* art has crucial implications for any attempt to identify the mode of engagement of its various publics. The material substance—the object, the fence enclosing the structure—patently engaged a more-or-less random selection of the Brighton populace in the established spectacular manner of large-scale temporary public sculpture. That much can be said, but the effects of that engagement are neither calculable nor germane. Our ostensibly 'primary' audience was predictable only in its multiplicity, and its calculable engagement with the artwork ranged from outright hostility (the man who attempted to climb the fence shouting 'I'M 'A COME IN THERE AND FUCK YOUR BOAT UP!' as we struggled at the very edge of our strength and competence to raise and secure the precarious timber structure; the woman who repeatedly argued we should move the whole thing a few metres away from her usual seat; the dog-walker who insisted we didn't enclose the tree where he hung his rucksack twice a day), through theft (ingeniously done, of our circular saw), indifference, and vocal interest ('OI, MATE, WHAT YOU BUILDING?' shouted hourly across the road or park, for which we became grateful of the simple and

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[11] I am forced into a pragmatic rejection here of Stephen Heath's canonical translation of *œuvre* as 'work'. As a general term, 'work' struggles to accommodate the thingliness of *œuvre* as distinct from the labour of production Barthes invests in the *Texte* (which is also quite amenable to translation into the English 'work')

[12] This process of 'strong' reading which separates the 'work' from its material effects or its explicit intentions can be seen in operation in Thomas Crow's readings of Gordon Matta-Clark and Richard Serra (Crow 1996).

effective retort: 'CRASHED AIRSHIP!'), to sometimes exhausting interest (the faces which would appear at the fence in our busiest moments and engage in deep conversation about the precise materials and techniques we were employing and the historical significance of the structure; the artist who sat on an adjacent grassy knoll and sketched the structure in pastel[13]). But fully in keeping with the Romantic tradition in which the work is explicitly bound, [14] the views, and indeed presence of those or any other spectators are ultimately of little use to us as practitioners. This is absolutely not to suggest, as Vidokle did, that there is no viewer adequate to the work; to think in these terms would be to position the work as the product of an unmatchable feat of intellectual endeavour. Rather, it is more the case that no adequate framework exists in which the experience of the primary viewer might be adequately grasped and assimilated into the fabric of the work.

Iterations and Afterlife

Far more tangible than any perception of the work's primary reception, and dare I say far more transformative, are the discursive effects of (and on) the work as it is propagated in its afterlife via talks and presentations, where we have been able to discuss the project with multiple audiences in an ongoing procession of contexts. The physical instantiation of the work, now consigned to a set of photographic images among a variety of others, is just one aspect of this broader material propagation. Each context of this propagation has presented us with the opportunity to make adjustments to the work's terms of address and frame of reference.

In the first instance, our designs for the initial proposal, and our selection of images for the shortlist interview for the commission, foregrounded formal correlations with the curatorial remit and with the work of Mariele Neudecker, the lead artist around whose practice the overall project was organised. Our proposal followed through on the aporetic logic of the curator's call-out, which had invited proposals for site-specific works without being able to specify what sites might be available. With nothing to go on, we proposed a structure notionally indifferent to its location, and wary of the motives of its spectators. We sketched a network of relations between the historical development of airship travel and Neudecker's concerns, and revelled in the possibility of addressing the spectator as those charged with protecting the carcasses of crashed airships had done.

Following the commissioning of the project, and its imposition on St. Peter's Gardens, we gave a public lecture in the adjacent University building. This lecture, delivered while the structure was still in place, offered a more generous account of the work's social, technological and artistic precedents, and deliberately located the work within what Peter Osborne describes as the de-conceptualised 'moralism' of conventional site-specific discourse (Osborne 2013:144). The artwork here was presented in relation to the aforementioned set of historical tropes (Robert Smithson's *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1970); Daniel Buren's *Affichages Sauvages* and *Hommes-Sandwichs* (both 1968); the emergence of the airship in the early part of the twentieth century as a fatally flawed projection of technological, military and economic power; Gordon Marra-Clark's *Splitting* (1974); Caspar David Friedrich's *Das Eismeer* (1823-4); airship crash-site security; the reconstruction of captured

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[13] Dominic Alves. The result can be seen here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/dominicspics/8739038759. Like the official HOUSE 2013 photographer and a French TV crew, he was troubled by the fence, and omitted it from his drawing.

[14] The work was conceived in response to a call for proposals which sought to commission four site-specific projects in relation to an already-commissioned central project by the artist Mariele Neudecker, citing the Northern European Romantic tradition, 'unknowable and sublime landscapes', the 'cropped edge' etc. (HOUSE 2013).

structures for expert analysis; exotic travel for the bourgeoisie; Vladimir Tatlin's scale model of his proposed *Monument to the Third International* (1919) etc.), to the site itself (the park), and to our individual practices and previous collaborative works.

Aside from a series of slapstick negotiations to secure an ethically satisfactory recycling of materials, this lecture marked the end of our engagement with anything like Bishop's 'primary' audience. Rosler's petit-bourgeois 'understanders' and 'appreciators' had been well served by a flurry of publicity brochures, interpretation panels, our lecture, and so on, and the haut-bourgeois 'owners' (the Mayor of Brighton and assorted councillors and benefactors) had been similarly appeased by an evening of speeches and revelry to mark the opening. The onlookers had gathered in the distance, unamused, occasionally venturing forth to scare away an alarmed press junket, or to force open the fencing so as to venture inside and enjoy a secluded evening booze-up.

It came as no surprise that the structure itself, the object, the artwork in its actual field, was essentially useless on its own as a conduit for the full range of references at play in our thinking. As a set of images, however, it was perfectly sufficient, and able to play a necessary role in precipitating the articulation of these references into something like a position. Our later presentations of the project to audiences who had not encountered the object began to create more space for this position (and the 'work') to develop and transform. Away from the ethical responsibilities that accompany any ongoing commission of this sort, the work began to incorporate a more forthright investigation of its relationship to the ideological nature of public art commissioning, and in particular to the curatorial conception of art's relationship to its excluded publics, which had been the focus of the bulk of our negotiations during the development of the project. This approach, understandably driven by the curators' twofold wish to safeguard the structure from vandalism and to ensure public safety, manifested itself in an outright fear the onlooker.

Unruly Onlookers

This fear had been brutally manifested the previous year (2012) in a series of rear-guard attempts to protect David Batchelor's neon-outlined *Skip* (which had been the lead commission for that year's project) from the wrong kind of public participation. The artwork itself was a battered and rusting builder's skip, carefully outlined with yellow neon tubes, installed beside a restaurant in a pedestrianised square in Brighton's city centre. Almost immediately, members of the public had been caught climbing into the artwork, and the decision was taken to surround it with a ring of five sections of Heras fencing.[15] Undeterred, onlookers took to throwing bottles and other rubbish over the fence and into the skip. Eventually, the five sections of fencing were overlapped to form a tighter square configuration, and a roof of green nylon mesh was secured over the top to protect the artwork from further unwanted attention.[16]

This running battle with over-eager participants had left a lasting impression on the curators. As our own structure had taken shape, and as our initial sketchy knowledge of the curatorial response to *Skip*'s reception had developed, we had abandoned our initial (logically flawed but aesthetically rich) plans for an orange mesh 'groundwork' fence in favour of the more rigorously symbolic Heras defence. Any attempt we might have made to enact a more direct critique of that curatorial response to *Skip* in the initial proposal would have no doubt guaranteed the rejection of our proposal, but fortunately, to adopt another phrase from Osborne, 'the borders of the work are

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[15] This is the arrangement depicted in the artwork's official documentation and press imagery, some of which, as with our *Monument*, attempts to lessen the impact of the fence through inventive camerawork (HOUSE 2012; Telegraph 2012).

[16] I only know of two images of this configuration, taken by Alan (Fred) Pipes (Pipes 2012).

historically malleable', and not coterminous with the blunt fact of its Heras fencing (Osborne 2013:143). Thus, as the work has drifted into its afterlife it has freed itself from its immediate responsibilities to its curators, and followed through on its theatrical staging of a rejection of the primary audience.[17] A central aspect which we had at first pragmatically downplayed has been freed-up to perform its critical task, and the critical capacity of the secondary audience everywhere makes itself felt.

The Floating Work II

The 'work' now inhabits a shifting set of images and conversations 'not confined to its initial context of reception' and radically in excess of its initial material form (Roberts 2015:199). It is able (forced) to adjust itself according to each specific context. In refusing the contribution of any primary audience in favour of the criticality of secondary ones, and in separating the work from the local finitude of its original object, we can begin to understand the work as occupying an unknowable transformatory critical space. Pierre Macherey took exception to the normative judgements of the external critical enterprise; the prescriptions of the critic, but if we view this critical enterprise (or procedure) as *internal* to the work, Macherey's words take on a new inflection:

> *...for in the space generated by that initial gesture of refusal and separation there is born a new and perhaps different object, something which only criticism could have brought to life. Refusing to accept the given work as definitive, and emphasising rather its modifications, the critical judgment affirms the presence of the other, of the elsewhere which ratifies judgment* (Macherey 1978:16).

The internalisation of an open-ended critical procedure produces new spaces of encounter for the work, and allows it to transform itself in response to them.

In *Anywhere or Not At All,* Osborne attempts to theorise the multiple spatialities at play in contemporary artworks. His analysis posits the work as a 'distributive unity' which is able to occupy a 'multiplication of materialisations' (Osborne 2013:143). He cites, for example, Dan Graham's *Homes for America* (1966-), which he claims is distributed across four different forms of presentation, the film, earthwork and essay forms of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), and Matta-Clark's *Splitting* (1974), which is exhibited in the form of a number of photomontages depicting the original bisected house. Osborne, however, fails to adequately account for art's wider public distribution as documentation—in books and magazines, Pinterest accounts and Instagram feeds and so on—even though this is by far the most widespread form in which most works are encountered. His account is skewed by the market-led proliferation of officially sanctioned artefacts, even though in the instances he cites the 'original' artefacts offer nothing more than their photographic documentation except some kind of nostalgic charge, or lingering disappointment at their slightly careworn materiality. Ultimately, he remains in thrall to the artist's intention and the trace of their hand.

Nevertheless, Osborne's analysis of the ability for what he calls postconceptual work to exceed its material substance holds true:

> *The critical point is that it is the plurality of spatialisations that preserves the conceptuality of the postconceptual work by breaking the identification of the work with any particular material instantiation* (Osborne 2013:145).

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[17] 'Afterlife' is a translation of Benjamin's 'Nachleben' and 'Uberleben', taken up by Osborne (2013:28n38). See also St. Andre (2011:110). The same concept appears elsewhere as 'half-life' (Grayson 2015:1) and 'after-effects' (Roberts 2015:199).

We must insist, however, that the work's 'material instantiation' extends far beyond any re-exhibition, re-staging or dealer-enforced dispersion. To adopt the terms of the Romantic critic, we can insist that each 'original' material instantiation is always necessarily incomplete (there is a distributive unity but no *totality*, no *definitive* experience of the work) and so any claim that the wider circuits of documentary distribution are unable to adequately convey a work rests on a flawed premise. *All* encounters are partial, it's simply that some are more partial than others.[18]

Conclusion

> [E]very situation can be cracked open from the inside, reconfigured in a different regime of perception and signification. To reconfigure the landscape of what can be seen and what can be thought is to alter the field of the possible and the distribution of capacities and incapacities.
>
> *Jacques Rancière*

The publics our work now seeks to engage are not the mythical critical citizen-subjects who have vanished from Vidokle's broken public sphere. Instead they are perhaps best imagined as the occupants of what Simon Sheikh has called 'a potential multitude of different, overlapping spheres and formations' (Sheikh 2004). They are gathered as and when the opportunity arises to re-present and re-think the *Monument…* with no predetermined boundary to their future constitution or subjective capacity: 'neither the work nor the spectator can be formally defined and fixed' (Sheikh 2004).

I earlier made a claim for *Monument…*'s transformatory potential, and I must now support that assertion. This very modest claim for transformatory agency is twofold:

Firstly, it resides in the work's ongoing capacity to foreground critical discussion (of public art commissioning, of approaches to audiences and onlookers, of the logics of site-specificity, etc.) in multiple and varied discursive situations, and hence to transform discursive space.

Secondly, and most crucially, it resides in the work's ability to subtly transform *itself* in relation and response to those situations. It aspires, in its limited way, to what John Roberts has described as an ability to refunction and denaturalize, involving 'producer and spectator in a transformative encounter with the conceptual *open-endedness* of artistic labour' (Roberts 2015:37). This I hope bears some comparison to the possibility of a truly dialectical public art envisaged by Mark Hutchinson some years ago, in his landmark application of Roy Bhaskar's four-stage dialectic to the problem of Public Art. The fourth stage of public art to which Hutchinson attests is one which steps beyond dislocation, assimilation or self-reflexive 'presence' in its primary site, and instead makes moves towards the 'practice of (self) transformation' and hence agency (Hutchinson 2002:437). 'Agency', he insists, 'is transformative practice; that is, practice which transforms itself'.

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[18] I 'understood' *Homes for America* from books and journals, long before I encountered one of its material instantiations in the flesh. I had studied its text, and spent quality time with its images. I cannot say that waiting for dusty, faded slides to change in the crowded back room of the Photographers Gallery, or seeing the thumbed corners and failing glue of the magazine paste-up added anything to my experience of its conceptual force.

> *This fourth dimension is public art that potentially transforms itself; transforms its publics; allows itself to be transformed by its publics; and allows these relationships and definitions to be transformed, too* (Hutchinson 2002:438).

My argument tallies with Vidokle and O'Neill et al.'s position insofar as I agree that this transformatory dimension is only possible from within an extended discursive space. I insist, however, that in anchoring the work to its encounter with its finite primary audience, such practices dislocate themselves from the unknowable critical capacity of their secondary publics, and place strict limits on any potential transformatory agency. A full analysis will have to wait for another time, but there is a clear correlation between Hutchinson/Bhaskar's progression of dislocation, assimilation, self-reflexive presentation and transformation, and Alain Badiou's analysis of the 'four forms of change': modification, fact, weak singularity and event (Badiou 2009:93,355). A nod towards Badiou's system might allow us to think the 'engaged citizen-subject' Vidokle mourns in a different way.

For a start, it would allow us to put to use Badiou's assertion that:

> *A subject is not a result—any more than it is an origin. It is the* local *status of a procedure, a configuration in excess of the situation* (Badiou 2005a:392).

Vidokle, and the humanist logic of durational participation, recognises that the engaged subject cannot be the *origin* of the work, and instead seeks the subject as a *result* of the work. He imagines the transformatory (critical) procedure as internal to the work's primary duration. For Badiou, however, the negative horizon of criticality is inconsequential, and what counts is the subjective procedure which alone is capable of constructing transformatory concepts: new truths, unthinkable in the current situation.

The subject capable of attesting to new artistic or political truths, the subject of transformation, is always outside the bounds of the situation. It is not a unified pre-existing citizen-subject waiting to make sense of—or be mobilised by—an art object or a gathering of educated participants. It is not an audience or a public or an onlooker, but is simply comprised of *people*, in the manner of Sylvain Lazarus' 'certain indistinct' (Lazarus 2015:x): 'Nothing is prejudged (this is what makes it "indistinct"), except their existence (this is what makes the term certain)'. It is a fractured and multiple bearer of possibilities, indiscernible in the immediate vicinity of the work.

Work must proceed in advance of such a subject, on the conviction that what appears now as broken may eventually have come to make sense.

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