Negotiation Theory and the Critique of Dialogue in Dialogical and Relational Art

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Abstract

This research takes as its context the "social turn" in contemporary art of the last fifteen years, which has emphasised social relationships and made use of the key term *dialogue*. Four exhibition projects demonstrate an alternative theorisation based on the concept of *negotiation*. Participation is often related to notions of the public realm, where dialogical art is increasingly superseding the autonomous sculpture as the favoured form of public art. Socially engaged art projects also draw support from political concepts such as social exclusion and inclusion, and as a consequence have become increasingly instrumentalised.

Three models of the public realm are explored and related to forms of public art making. Hannah Arendt's space of appearance and action is shown to relate to the Modernist sculpture of the 1970s, which forms the subject matter of one body of drawings. Mikhail Bakhtin and Jürgen Habermas provide the central notions of dialogue and the discursive public sphere, which are then shown to underpin much relational art through a detailed examination of Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) and Grant Kester's *Conversation Pieces* (2004). Subsequent debates among art critics around Chantal Mouffe's formulation of an "agonistic public realm" are also followed.

The dialogical paradigm is subject to a critique based on its inability to deal with real difference. Negotiation theory is proposed as an alternative model, specifically the Harvard Negotiation Project's integrative model of *principled negotiation*. Four practical projects based on four aspects of principled negotiation are described and presented through documentation. These were exhibited at The Henry Moore Institute, CHELSEA Space, Picture This, OUTPOST gallery and Wysing Arts Centre between 2008 and 2010. Each project demonstrates how negotiation theory models specific interactions between unequal parties, and together they suggest an alternative theorisation of relational art in the agonistic public sphere that avoids both dialogism's utopianism and agonism's provocative gestures.

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Part I

1. Introduction

This research project is intended to suggest and demonstrate the applicability of "negotiation" as a systematic approach to a range of art practices that engage with the public realm. These might take place in the public realm, or may take relationships within it as their explicit content and, as my creative projects will make clear, are certainly not limited to the idea of "public art" as an artefact simply located in public space. The specific model of negotiation used is that emanating from the Harvard Negotiation Project, which I introduce more fully below.

This research sits within the context of a European contemporary art scene that currently places great importance on "the social", and a pervasive but often undefined notion of the public realm. This is most often conceptualised instrumentally, as an ideal place of coming-together where communities are able to form and re-form themselves with relative ease. Problems like poverty and unemployment in real communities have been reframed under New Labour in the UK through the notion of "social inclusion", and this political agenda has directly and indirectly supported a widespread flourishing of "socially engaged" art practices that place great emphasis on the ethical quality of their engagements with audiences and participants.

This "social turn" (Bishop 2006*a*) in contemporary art must be seen within the wider European political context of the 1990s and 2000s. The principle of detached or "arm's length" funding followed for so long by the Arts Council in the UK was eroded significantly by the introduction of National Lottery funding in 1995 which targeted recipients on the basis of a specific set of political criteria. The implications of this are debated in some detail in Mark Wallinger and Mary Warnock's *Art For All?: Their Policies and Our Culture* published by the gallery

PEER in 2000. Tony Blair's New Labour government from 1997 redefined art as one of the creative industries, and its cultural policies implied that "certain social goals and political aims are so self-evidently good that subordinating much of publicly supported arts culture to them is justified" (Wallinger & Warnock 2000 p40). Cash-hungry arts organisations were quick to adjust to the new programme.

Claire Bishop is just one critic who has noted, however, the way that "socially engaged art has been largely exempt from art criticism. Emphasis is shifted away from the disruptive *specificity* of a given work and onto a *generalized* set of moral precepts" (Bishop 2006*a* p181). This ethical turn in criticism and discourse has occurred at the cost of more detailed analysis of the specific operations that such art practices might carry out.[1] One of my aims is to propose a possible framework for just such an analysis.[2]

As well as reflecting political vocabularies, the rise in collaborative and dialogical projects can be seen to mirror developments in industry and economic thinking. The turn away from making gallery-based objects towards performances where services are provided (Madoff 2008), or the creation of immersive experiences for the viewer both reflect contemporary capitalism's embrace of the "experience economy" (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Whether artists simply reflect or are critical of these commercial developments, collaborative work can be described as "situated at the intersection between sensibilities promoted by post-1968 social movements, and hardcore post-Fordist mechanisms, playing out the problematic and contested elements of both" (Billing, Lind & Nilsson 2007 p15). The figure of the relational artist, essentially a project manager with good networking skills and high mobility, strongly resembles the ideal type proposed in Boltanski and Chiapello's *New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005), to such an extent that "promoting network and its values such as connectivity, flexibility, mobility, openness now emerges as promoting the core ideology of the third capitalism" (Svetlichnaja 2005 p13). The risk of producing work that is unproblematically affirmative of the prevailing economic culture makes it essential to interrogate the process of dialogue at the core of ostensibly oppositional socially engaged and participatory practices.

The Dialogical Paradigm

This research will show that many artists working with people, communities or the public realm, as well as writers including Nicholas Bourriaud (*Relational Aesthetics,* 2002) and Grant Kester (*Conversation Pieces,* 2004) ultimately ground their practices on a loosely defined concept of "dialogue" between parties that is lacking in both detail and nuance.[3] Dialogue is the mechanism through which participation

is constructed, participation being meant to lead inevitably towards emancipation and ultimately full inclusion in the activities of the public realm. Whatever the context and particularities of the ethical relationships, the core transactions between artist and participant, or audience members themselves, are simply described as dialogue. This is assumed to be a fluid process regardless of any power inequalities that resists analysis but through which people somehow achieve satisfactory outcomes. If problems persist, more dialogue is the panacea.

Responsibility for real problems within society is placed squarely, then, on the individual citizen rather than wider structural factors. This echoes certain criticisms of the social inclusion/exclusion agenda made by the political theorist Ruth Levitas, who identifies a vocabulary and set of concepts that "obscure rather than illuminate patterns of inequality, and which do not question the nature of the society in which people are to be included" (Levitas 1998 p6). By defining people as excluded from mainstream society, or worse by claiming that they exclude themselves through moral inadequacy, responsibility is shifted away from larger macroeconomic and structural factors and onto the individual. The unemployed do not face a macroeconomic problem, then; their problem is lack of skills or personal ability.

> As employability is represented as something individuals must actively achieve, it is transformed into an individual obligation. Inclusion becomes a duty rather than a right, and something which requires active performance. (Levitas 1998 p128)

Socially engaged art projects targeted at excluded participants are one way in which the government provides opportunities for people to "perform" their inclusion in the "theatres of community" (Levitas 1998 p158). This is true of outreach work managed by education departments as much as participatory works made by well-known artists in gallery settings, and that mode of participation reflects if not actively affirming the model of the experience economy discussed above.

The very act of participation is seen as a key that will inevitably lead to "other forms of social integration, particularly increased employability and social mobility" (Fitzpatrick 2009 p21).[4] The ideology of individual inclusion is echoed in the language often used to talk about society. Where once there was the "public realm", now there are "communities". But something important is lost in this semantic shift.

> The public has long served as a rallying cry against private greed, a demand for attention to the general welfare as against propertied

> interests, an appeal for openness to scrutiny as opposed to corporate and bureaucratic secrecy, an arena in which disenfranchised minorities struggle to express their cultural identity, a code word for socialism. (Robbins 1993 px)

The word "public" implies openness of access, whereas the word "community" demands some kind of duty and almost by definition excludes those who are not part of it. Christian socialist John Macmurray, cited by Tony Blair as an influence, defined communities as being built on "personal relationships, by fellowship, and by conscious acknowledgement of this connection" (Levitas 1998 p107). Raymond Williams identifies five meanings of "community", from the "people of a district" to "a sense of common identity" (Williams 1976 p75), but notes that it embodies several contradictory tendencies. More recent writers have emphasised the divisions and constitutive differences within communities (Deutsche 1996), and I shall return to this in chapter three (p39). To revert to the use of the word "public" today rather than "community" almost automatically implies an ideological stance that resists the Third Way's individualising agenda. The work of the art collective Freee [*sic*], for instance, and their member Dave Beech whose writing I will refer to below, is positioned in this manner. My own interest in the term is also intended in this way, and one of the interesting implications of my research into dialogue as it is used in art practice is the analysis of its hidden political connotations.

The phrase "public sphere" has a more specific meaning, being linked closely with Jürgen Habermas's 1962 book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, and therefore his notion of a discursive, specifically bourgeois, white European, male public sphere that generates public opinion as political force that may be used to guard against the excesses of the state. In this written commentary on my work I shall use "public sphere" when I mean to emphasise public discussion and discursive institutions, and "public realm" when I mean a wider notion of common spaces, buildings, media and culture. A third variation, "publicness", I shall use when I want to foreground the effect that operating in public has on the individual subject. It implies a certain attitude or feeling of being in public.[5] I hope that my usage of these differing terms will make their different inflections plain.[6]

As I shall describe in more detail in the next two chapters, dialogical and relational art practices are what emerge when public art embraces the notion of the discursive public sphere. Rosalyn Deutsche writes:

> the public sphere replaces definitions of public art as work that occupies or designs physical spaces and addresses preexisting audiences

> with a conception of public art as a practice that constitutes a public, by engaging people in political discussion or by entering a political struggle. (Deutsche 1996 p288)

The site-specificity of the 1970s shifts towards a more social view of context-specificity, and interactions between people become the new material of choice. My initial interest in this area of research was focused on the way that the individual relates to the notion of publicness, and it was this that led to an investigation of relational aesthetics and socially engaged practice as they seem to me to be the contemporary manifestation of what was once called public art. I had also seen the strong influence of instrumentalised local government arts policies while working as a curator for non-profit galleries in London between 1999 and 2006.[7] The rhetoric of participation and dialogue seemed to have become a new orthodoxy among arts professionals that left no room for a more reflexive critical practice. Wanting to have better tools to analyse contemporary practice, and better tactics for generating my own work in the studio, I felt that the idea of dialogism was in need of unpacking and started to develop my use of negotiation theory in relation to publicness and art that addresses the public realm.

The main aim of this research, then, is to question and critique the prevailing "dialogical paradigm" as it currently stands, and to propose the use of negotiation as an alternative generative metaphor for the structuring of new artworks. Two questions are at the core of this theoretical and practical project:

- In what ways is dialogue theorised in relational and dialogical art practice?

- Can strategies drawn from negotiation theory provide a better model of these relationships?

The theorisation of dialogue is tackled through a close reading of two defining texts, which are shown to relate back to ideas from philosophy and political theory. One of my objectives is to suggest how these complex ideas are simplified and reduced as they pass from philosophy, through art criticism and into everyday studio practice. As I describe in chapter three, Grant Kester's definition of dialogical art is tied very closely to the writing of Jürgen Habermas and Mikhail Bakhtin through the idea of many voices coming together in participatory dialogue. Relational Aesthetics as proposed by Nicolas Bourriaud, however, is rooted in a specifically psychoanalytic conception of subject formation through relationships. My argument is a critique of

dialogue. However, in practice there is a great deal of slippage between relational, dialogical, participatory and socially engaged art, and as I demonstrate in chapter four (p51) it is the dialogical quality of the work that is valorised, even in the case of avowedly relational aesthetics. This is why I believe it is appropriate to talk of a wider "dialogical paradigm".

Rather than mobilising "negotiation" in a general and undefined sense, I have chosen to use the Harvard Negotiation Project's model of *principled negotiation*, which I introduce in chapter five (p62) and expand upon in my discussion of the individual artistic projects. Principled negotiation was chosen because it is the most widely used example of an integrative and normative approach, i.e. a model that offers specific tactics for analysing and describing the elements of a conflict. My exhibition projects are each based on one of the four key aspects of principled negotiation, and have been generated by applying the idea of negotiation at a structural level to particular relationships between people, institutions or groups. Each project is intended to demonstrate that negotiation theory offers a more precise and better-articulated model of the dynamics inherent within contemporary art practice than it is possible to construct with dialogue. I will also argue that negotiation is a better reflection of the conflicts and tensions that exist within contemporary society, and therefore enables the creation of more critical artworks.

My discussion of the context for this argument starts by examining three major political theorists of the public realm, Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas and Chantal Mouffe. Each of these writers has created different ways of thinking about the public realm, and subsequently influenced different types of art that address or inhabit it. I will discuss their major work in this area along with relevant critiques that have emerged. It is Mouffe's model of an "agonistic" public realm always in a state of low-level conflict that has risen to prominence in recent years in the art world and which provides the specific context for my own ideas about the use of negotiation theory. The notion of dialogue in recent art practice is central to my critique, and I consider the key literature around both dialogism and relational aesthetics in some detail in order to flesh out the issues. This is followed by a case study of a recent dialogical exhibition project (*The Fifth Floor* at Tate Liverpool 2008–9), which unpicks and analyses the assumptions about dialogue made by the featured artists. I also look at the work of two artists who seem to be engaged with the idea of negotiation, and discuss Liam Gillick's recent model of discursivity. The fifth chapter addresses my methodological approach to this research, with a note on the relationship between theory and practice, and an introduction to the discipline of negotiation theory and principled negotiation. This is followed by a

critique of dialogism and an analysis of the effects of my approach. Part two of the commentary describes and discusses four very different artistic projects that I have produced during the course of this research, as ways of both demonstrating and testing my propositions. Each of these has been exhibited at significant galleries as part of group or solo presentations across the UK between 2008 and 2010. The final chapter examines some of the issues that have arisen and discusses the political implications of my overall project.

1 Bishop points to a lack of *criticism*, not a lack of writing. There has been plenty of generalised discussion about social engagement and dialogue, but critics are often reluctant to make negative judgements about work that often has a high level of personal investment from ordinary people. There were many outraged blog comments, for instance, when Bishop make some fairly innocuous criticisms of the *Revolutions in Public Practice* conference at the New York Public Library on 15 November 2009 in *Artforum* (Bishop 2009).

2 In addition, the common use of participatory strategies to set up a dialogue has had the effect of inuring such works to criticism, since "participatory art is an open invitation; the viewer's refusal to participate, or the participation of only a small number of people, counts as much as total physical engagement" (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art 2008 p13). The work operates successfully no matter what actually happens.

3 I am thinking of exhibitions like *Traffic* at CAPC Musée d'art Contemporain de Bordeaux 1996, *Utopia Station* at the Venice Biennial 2003, *Common Wealth* at Tate Modern in 2003, or more recently *theanyspacewhatever* at the New York Guggenheim in 2008. Ideas of dialogue, participation and interactivity trickle down into the kind of new orthodoxy exemplified by the South London Gallery's *Games and Theory* 2008, *Who Wants to Be?* by The People Speak in Copenhagen 2009, or the inclusion of a space for holding meetings in the otherwise essentially sculptural installation *The Nature of the Beast* by Goshka Macuga at the Whitechapel Gallery 2009.

4 Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that participation in arts and cultural activities led to increases in trust, voluntary activity, civic participation including voting, confidence and interpersonal skills, and could "help communities create and consolidate positive, secure identities" (Keaney 2006 p27).

5 My interest in this idea was greatly stimulated by the exhibition titled *Publicness* at London's ICA from 29 January to 16 March 2003. This included various projects by Jens Haaning, Matthieu Laurette and Aleksandra Mir and considered publicness in terms of "the artist as public persona, the institution as a public space and the production and circulation of public information" (Institute of Contemporary Art 2003*a* p1).

6 Henri Lefebvre's division of space into categories such as dominated, abstract, appropriated and détourned in his *The Production of Space* (1991) is important for the shift in emphasis

away from the physical attributes of a given space towards the flows of power and discourse around spaces. Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988) makes a similar point, advocating oppositional readings of given cultural forms (the most famous being the Situationist *dérive* across established routes) that maintain the political possibility of an active public realm in the face of its erosion by the bureaucratic forces of the state.

7 Working at Notting Hill's Tablet gallery, and later for Camberwell School of Art, I attempted to curate projects that took a more critical and interrogative stance to their role within the public realm. These included a poster edition of carnival speaker stacks by Jeremy Deller & Alan Kane, a monologue performed live by a local actor written by Juan Cruz, and a temporary peace garden on the site of an abandoned nuclear shelter by Cornford & Cross.

2. Models of the Public Realm

Development of public art: from commemoration to conversation

The notion of what exactly "public art" is or can be is naturally subject to debate and is routinely contested by each new generation. All art is "weighed down by the kind of world in which it is made" (Hutchinson 2002 p429) or to put it more positively, "different types of public art show how art conceives of possible (and the possibility of) relationships with a potential audience or audiences" (Hutchinson 2002 p431). In her classic 1979 essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field,* Rosalind Krauss identifies the historical origins of modern sculpture as the outdoor commemorative monument, giving the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius set in the centre of the Campidoglio in Rome as an example (Krauss 1985 p279). Such statuary is representational, vertical, raised up on a plinth and intimately tied to the location in which it sits, although that context does not affect it in return. In this account, classic Modernist sculpture is by contrast primarily defined by its detachment from a specific site, becoming "functionally placeless and largely self-referential" (Krauss 1985 p280). Krauss then uses this as the basis from which to develop her model of the expanded field, which incorporates both "axiomatic structures" related to architecture, and site-specific work. In this way she constructs a framework to analyse the plethora of expanded and outdoor practices that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in terms of their relationship to sculpture, landscape and architecture.

The shift from formally placeless sculpture to site-specificity can also be read in Mark Hutchinson's 2002 essay *Four Stages of Public Art*. Using quite a technical philosophical model borrowed from Roy Bhaskar, and explained using the example of anthropology, Hutchinson begins his development of specifically public art with a purely assertive first phase, presenting an artwork in public with

an "unquestioned confidence in the project and the separation of the protagonist from the place of reception" (Hutchinson 2002 p432). This is followed by a phase in which the relationship between artwork and context becomes legible, in other words "the negation of the idea of art's detachment from everything else" (Hutchinson 2002 p434), or site-specificity. He gives the example of Stephen Willats, who creates information and text pieces based on the contributions of specific communities, although this is seen in a negative light since the artist is still imposing his overall structure on the work from a position on the outside. Hutchinson's third phase (the fourth is a hypothetical one) consists of a greater responsiveness to the social and cultural context, and "implies a détente between the meanings of the artist and the meanings of the public" (Hutchinson 2002 p436) that might allow for genuine dialogue and equal interaction.

This move from commemorative statuary to site, and then context-specific work, reflects the type of practices that are collected together in Suzanne Lacy's influential book *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (1995). This compendium of community-based and socially engaged projects did much to popularise those who were once seen as marginal artists, and bring them nearer to the centre of

Marcus Aurelius on horseback, Campidoglio, Rome (Strong 1976 plate 151)

artworld discussion (as evidenced by the fact that Group Material, Judy Chicago, David Hammons and Mierle Laderman Ukeles are now well-known figures). Artists from earlier generations are included, such as Vito Acconci and Alan Kaprow, the unifying factor being "a common interest in leftist politics, social activism, redefined audiences, relevance for communities (particularly marginalized ones), and collaborative methodology" (Lacy 1995 p25). In her introduction, Lacy articulates four key social factors that gave such art new impetus in the 1980s: a conservative backlash that led to increased racial discrimination and violence, the anti-abortion movement and attacks on feminism generally, increased cultural censorship, and the rise of AIDS and ecological awareness (Lacy 1995 pp28–9). In the vast majority of the work discussed, the idea of the audience is central: finding new audiences, making work with the audience, questioning the traditionally passive role of audiences altogether. The "new genre" that is identified is "not art for public spaces but art addressing public issues" (Lacy 1995 p54), and in some instances the important

Meirle Laderman Ukeles *Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance: Outside* 1973
(Osbourne 2002 p141)

artistic element of a piece of work turns out to be "a representation of or an actual manifestation of relationship" (Lacy 1995 p37). This is the thread that would be formalised and developed a few years later in relational and dialogical practices (this is explored in more detail in the next chapter with a discussion of Nicolas Bourriaud and Grant Kester's writing). Lacy's own attempt to construct a critical vocabulary for this work in her final chapter is based on the ideas of interaction, activism, audience, intention and effectiveness. Other critics have subsequently identified what has been labelled "service aesthetics" (Madoff 2008 p165) in the profusion of performance-based works that offer personal experiences to participants in order to mount a critique of commodity or alienated social relationships.[1] This parallels the rise of the service economy in affluent Western nations during this period, and suggests that the contemporary interest in immersive, participatory experiences could be seen as reflecting the rise of the "experience economy" offering encounters that, in contrast to external commodities, "actually occur within any individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level" (Pine & Gilmore 1999 p12).

I have concentrated my discussion here on what could be called a type of art-in-public, but the contemporary sensitivity to the contextual at all levels means that an awareness of a work's positioning is demanded of almost all types of artwork today. "If the critique of cultural confinement of art (and artists) via its institutions was once the 'great issue'," writes Miwon Kwon, "a dominant drive of site-oriented practices today is the pursuit of a more intense engagement with the outside world and everyday life" (Kwon 2004 p24). In other words the element of institutional critique that once drove art outside the gallery has become less important than the desire to operate in, and with, the wider world in all its richness. Art is embracing the world, not running away from the gallery. Of course at the extremes there still exists highly hermetic art destined for the gallery showroom, and social activism that is hardly identifiable as contemporary art at all. But there are a huge number of artists working in the fertile middle ground who are uninterested in labelling what they do, or perhaps reluctant to do so.

I have offered here a very brief survey of the way art that relates to the public realm has developed over the last hundred years or so, which is naturally tied to developments in more gallery-based work. As I mentioned at the start, these developments also reflect changes in the way that artists have conceived of the public realm and economic system within which they operate; from the certainties of tradition represented by Renaissance Rome in Krauss's example, to Modernity's drive toward freedom from the past, and postmodernism's re-embracing of specific

cultural histories. I will now go on to describe three important paradigms of the public realm in this chapter and the next, and explore the implications that these have had for contemporary artistic practices.

Hannah Arendt's space of appearance

Hannah Arendt is probably best known as a philosopher, deeply affected by her German-Jewish identity and her era, which was marked by the Holocaust and WWII. Her most widely read book is almost certainly her account of the trial of Adolf Eichmann, in which she coined the phrase "the banality of evil", however prior to this she had published two significant works on the structures of society: *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), and *The Human Condition* (1958). It is the second of these that is most relevant here since it contains a well-elaborated theory of the public realm and the individual in relation to it.

Arendt's model of the public realm was informed by her earlier studies of totalitarianism, and the desire to critique the individualising force of bureaucratic society.

> For a Commonwealth based on the accumulated and monopolized power of all its individual members necessarily leaves each person powerless, deprived of his natural and human capacities. It leaves him degraded into a cog in a power-accumulating machine. (Arendt 1967 p146)

Her model, based on the agoras and ethic of civic participation found in ancient Greece in which she sees the "originary and in some respects still quintessential expression of freedom and power" (Villa 2000 p151), was based on the idea that human beings are fully expressed only in "action", and that this action must take place in a suitable arena in order to be visible. *The Human Condition* contrasts action with "work", meaning physical endeavour, and at the bottom end of the scale with "labour", which is identified with fulfilling subsistence needs. In action, however, "men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world" (Arendt 1958 p179). She equates it with great deeds that "break through the commonly accepted and reach into the extraordinary" (Arendt 1958 p205), the type of thing that goes down in history and (in the Grecian mind at least) ensured immortality in myth and legend.[2] A person might live a full and good life and die happy, but in her system a life without action "falls short of being a human life because it fails to disclose what is uniquely and unrepeatably individual about this life" (Fuss 1979 p159).

In *The Human Condition*, actions require a special place in which to be made visible, and this place is the particular classically inspired public realm that is relevant here. For Arendt, the public realm is first and foremost a realm of appearance.

> Everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. For us, appearance – something that is seen and heard by others as well as ourselves – constitutes reality. (Arendt 1958 p50)

Once something appears in the public realm it becomes entangled in the web of meaning and history created by other human beings; meaning itself is created by other people's witnessing of an act. This is the important role played by the public realm in Arendt's work. Without a shared public realm, there can be no shared meanings in culture. If they do not enter this realm, "action and speech, initiation and self-revelation are utterly futile. They lose their capacity for endurance as they lose their very meaning" (Fuss 1979 p164). So it is clear that the public realm has a central and important role to play in Arendt's description of the "human condition" as she describes it. However, the roots of her analysis in ancient Greece create problematic issues when carried forwards to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The famous birthplace of democracy was run by wealthy, propertied men who needed to be in possession of their own home (and run it effectively) in order to be permitted participation in the institutions of the state as full citizens. Private life, everything from the family to one's commercial interests, was strictly bracketed out of public affairs and considered unworthy of consideration.

> To live an entirely private life means above all to be deprived of things essential to a truly human life: to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others, to be deprived of an "objective" relationship with them that comes from being related to and separated from them through the intermediary of a common world of things, to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself. (Arendt 1958 p58)

The word "private" is closely linked here to the idea of "privation", and is far from the glories and great deeds that are possible in public life. But this is clearly a very particular model of the ideal life. Everything that we value today about family life and personal satisfaction is deemed irrelevant in relation to the pursuit of greatness through political action. Furthermore, the "profoundly egalitarian and free" public realm is "shot through with inequality and flagrant nonfreedoms when it's consid-

ered from the perspective of its external limits. The equality instituted in the public realm is based on the inequality of all those who are not admitted" (Muhle 2006 p83): not just those without properties, but women, slaves, and all those who were forced to work for a living in a trade or commercial business.

Unacceptable as this may be in today's world, Arendt offers this model of the public realm based on free action in order to emphasise the philosophical importance and possibility of the individual's intervention in public matters. "A man who lived only a private life, who like the slave was not permitted to enter the public realm, or like the barbarian had chosen not to establish such a realm, was not fully human" (Arendt 1958 p38). The public realm as she describes it, therefore, assumes the most central and important place within human life. Everything else is secondary to what appearance in the public realm allows, and as a construct built of the actions and witnessing of other free citizens, it is "more specifically 'the work of man' than is the work of his hands or the labor of his body" (Arendt 1958 p208).

Arendt's model in *The Human Condition* functions in contrast to the way that she perceives contemporary society. In fact her idealisation of the public realm in these terms serves mainly as a prelude to what happens next, which is the transformation of public matters into what she calls "the social", which combines elements previously kept separate in the public and private spheres and is identified by her with the modern state (with its roots in the Roman system). The social demands behaviour rather than action, and does not permit the public visibility and differences of perspective that the public realm enabled, denying people the chance of "seeing and hearing others, of being seen and heard by them. They are all imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience" (Arendt 1958 p58). Just as the existence of a public realm demanded a certain kind of action from its citizens, the social

> expects from each of its members a certain kind of behaviour, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to "normalize" its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement (Arendt 1958 p40).

In common with many other writers working in the 1950s and 1960s,[3] Arendt perceived in the increasingly bureaucratic and administered Western world the death of the individual, and in her terms the end of the possibility of meaningful action. Society "demands of its members a sheer automatic functioning, as though individual life had actually been submerged in the over-all life process of the species and the only active decision still required of the individual were to let go" (Arendt

1958 p322). Her concepts of action and the public realm of appearance that enables action to become meaningful are a politically charged corrective, a call to arms. Her strangely anachronistic paean to ancient Greece is in fact "equal parts aspiration, remembrance, and recognition. We may still use words like action, power, politics and freedom, but we do not understand their full meaning because we lack the experiences from which they spring" (Villa 2000 p162).

Arendt's public realm and artistic practice

This approach to thinking about the public realm in terms of what it enables, rather than how it might be constituted, seems quite unusual when we are perhaps more used to a generally negative narrative that sees public space as "what's left over when all of the other spaces have been appropriated, walled, shut, fenced, or screened off by whatever groups or individuals can enforce private claims to them" (Antin 1990 p259). But I would suggest that it actually suits the art of its era well. Modernist sculpture, which was increasingly exhibited and located outdoors from the 1950s onwards,[4] very often made use of a rhetoric of assertion that agrees with Arendt's idea of heroic action. In the introduction to his seminal book *The*

William Tucker *Victory* 1981 (Yorkshire Sculpture Park 2001 p23)

Language of Sculpture (1974), William Tucker makes the remarkable claim that Arendt's *Human Condition* was "the only book that really influenced my thinking on sculpture" (Tucker 1974 p7). It is possible to draw an analogy between the bold abstract forms that were commonly used to give a place a clear identity, or as landmarks, and the concept of action that is just as removed from the everyday world of behaviour and private life. I discuss the subject of Modernist public sculpture and assertion in relation to my own artwork in chapter seven.

It is interesting that Arendt crops up in Suzanne Lacy's *Mapping the Terrain*, too, in Patricia Phillips' discussion of community involvement in public art. The public realm, she writes, should be a place which stimulates "impassioned deliberation rather than a thoughtless resignation" (Lacy 1995 p69) about what goes on there. In fact this would seem to be closer to what Jürgen Habermas described four years after Arendt's *The Human Condition* was published.

Jürgen Habermas and the Bourgeois Public Sphere

While Arendt's conceptualisation of civic life and space can be applied broadly to some specific artworks, there is a much more explicit theoretical connection between contemporary art and the model of an Enlightenment-inspired Bourgeois public sphere most influentially defined by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, first published in German in 1962 and translated into English as late as 1989.[5] Although he worked as an assistant to Adorno in the 1950s and was strongly influenced by the Frankfurt School, Habermas's work as a whole rejects their pessimism and instead "sees in the human capacity to communicate, and thus in the ineradicably social nature of human existence, sources of both theoretical criticism and the justification of political action through which capitalism can and must be challenged" (Edgar 2006 p51). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* was one of his first major works, which is in a sense elaborated and extended into more abstract philosophical areas with the bulk of his later writing on communication and discourse ethics. It is a book that primarily offers a critique of the poverty of public life under twentieth-century consumer capitalism, and traces the shift from what Hannah Arendt would call a *citizen* to today's *consumer* (of ideas as much as products).

To do this it is first necessary to reconstruct the history of the former. It is telling that in both Habermas's and Arendt's books their model of the ideal public realm is essentially a prelude to a critical analysis of how far the current situation diverges from that template.[6] Habermas constructs an historical and sociological investigation of particular eras in specific countries, notably France, Germany and

Great Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At this time of great change in Europe, nation states were being formalised and the individual's role was being reinvented. In the emergent free press and bourgeois urban institutions like salons, societies and coffee houses (which Habermas evokes in great detail) a type of relationship was created between people that "disregarded status altogether" and allowed a "parity on whose basis alone the authority of the better argument could assert itself against that of social hierarchy" (Habermas 1989 p36). These discussions were carried out face to face, informally, or at meetings, lectures and seminars, and in the pages of daily and less regular journals in the form of articles and letters. Habermas pays particular attention to the simultaneous rise of the novel as literary form, itself evolving from the mode of the public letter, which creates an ideal new form of interiorised individual subjectivity. Critical debate about the world of letters meant that "subjectivity originating in the interiority of the conjugal family, by communicating with itself, attained clarity about itself" (Habermas 1989 p51), and so two new categories emerge at the same time with greater clarity and demarcation than before: private and public. In this way the discussions of the salons actually create the common concerns that become the rightful interests of what Habermas calls the Public Sphere, enabling "the problematisation of areas that until then had not been questioned" (Habermas 1989 p36) because they had not been so clearly legible.

The ideal of the liberal public sphere is described as "a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organises itself as the bearer of public opinion" (Habermas 1974 p50), and these public opinions acquire a legitimacy and force which enables them to play a corrective role in relation to unjust decisions made by the emergent apparatus of the state. This is the ideal situation that has been influential to artists, as much as an aspiration as a possible reality. The principle of dialogue that runs through recent art in the public realm also has much in common with Habermas's later concept of communicative reason, characterised by "free and open discussion by all relevant persons, with a final decision being dependent on the strength of better argument, and never upon any form or coercion" (Edgar 2006 p23). But these are, inevitably, flawed descriptions. The latter half of *Structural Transformation* is concerned with the erosion of this scenario through the colonising power of capitalism, which reifies discussion and commodifies opinion to such an extent that it is only possible to agree or disagree with propositions that are laid before the consumer like so many items for sale. "The public is split apart into minorities of specialists who put their reason to use nonpublicly and the great mass of consumers whose receptiveness is public but uncritical" (Habermas

1989 p175). This is the state of affairs that Habermas sees around him towards the end of the twentieth century.

Critiques of Structural Transformation

Such a provocative and influential philosopher as Habermas has naturally attracted much comment, and there is a useful and detailed summary of the practical and theoretical criticisms of his work given in Crossley and Roberts *After Habermas* (2004 pp2–17). Just a few of the major points will suffice here. Firstly, the idealism of his model has been attacked as being simply unrealistic. His mechanisms "do not in a substantive way concern themselves with, much less address, the embodied experiences and activities of actual people in the context of their everyday lives" (Gardiner 2004 p30). In a similar vein, Michael Warner argues that

> no one really inhabits the general public. This is true not only because it is by definition general, but also because people bring to such a category the particularities from which they have to abstract themselves in consuming this discourse. (Warner 1993 p252)

The identities and individualities of different people prevent them from perceiving themselves as being public, and they in fact have to adopt "a very special rhetoric about their own personhood" (Warner 1993 p238), effectively effacing it, in order to participate as such. The Public Sphere, then, is seen as being a piece of idealistic rhetoric rather than a functional object.

Secondly, there is the small issue of hierarchical power relations, which Habermas simply brackets out of his model in order to facilitate free communication. His emphasis on the specifically bourgeois public sphere is related to this issue, since it was the bourgeoisie of the time who were emancipated, literate and able to devote time and energy to the project. This has naturally been challenged by a host of postmodern and feminist writers (Robbins 1993). How is it at all possible for people to debate equally in these new forums for public opinion when "these discursive arenas are situated in a larger societal context that is pervaded by structural relations of dominance and subordination" (Fraser 1993 p12)? Access to the public sphere was always limited to certain sections of the population. But this is also a challenging of the bourgeois public sphere as the most significant and legitimate public sphere at all, since "virtually contemporaneous with the bourgeois public there arose a host of competing counterpublics, including nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women's publics, and working-class publics" (Fraser 1993 p7). This is surely even more the case today in a world that is much more conscious

of difference and the sensitivities that surround personal identity. Simon Sheikh wrote recently, for instance, that we should today "only use the notion of public in a plural sense, as multiple, co-existent publics" (Sheikh 2008 p32), and that the whole notion of a single public sphere is a "nineteenth-century concept based on specific ideas of subjectivity and citizenship, that cannot be so easily translated into the modular and hybrid societies of late global capital, into the postmodern as opposed to the emerging modern era" (Sheikh 2008 p29).

It seems that the Enlightenment-inspired, Habermasian bourgeois public sphere has been significantly challenged. And yet, as a model of participation in the public world, it still implicitly or explicitly underlies much recent art that seeks to address issues of publicness or involve itself with broadly emancipatory politics. There is a clear connection here between a politically motivated and sometimes even activist art, and Habermas's own intentions to provide a politically useful critique of contemporary society. The next chapter discusses some of the key types of art practice that take inspiration from the notion of the Habermasian public sphere. The various criticisms of dialogical and relational art that have been made by some critics will be seen to broadly follow on from the largely philosophical critiques I have outlined above.

1 Madoff's article cites Michael Bramwell's *Building Sweeps* 1995–6, Lee Mingwei's *Dining Project* 1998, and Natalie Jeremijenko's *Environmental Health Clinic* 2008 as examples (sweeping hallways, cooking for individual gallery visitors, and offering eco-friendly advice, respectively).

2 It seems likely to me that Arendt's interest in heroic action comes directly from her experience of World War II, when life, death and heroism were nearer at hand than today. Her political commitment was made world famous in her later coverage of the Eichmann trial.

3 See for instance Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* (1991).

4 London County Council staged a series of exhibitions of sculpture outdoors at Battersea Park from 1948 on into the 1960s. Although these at first featured much figurative sculpture on plinths, they very quickly became a platform for more abstract work that related to its placement on the ground. The outdoor setting was thought to put viewers in a relaxed frame of mind in order to be more receptive to the art.

5 This connection is made explicitly in Grant Kester's book *Conversation Pieces* (2004), which draws on Habermas specifically on pp108–14.

6 Bruce Robbins' book *The Phantom Public Sphere* (1993) situates publicness as "a quality that we once had but have now lost, and that we must somehow retrieve" (Robbins 1993 pviii). It may always have been, he suggests, some sort of ideological phantom.

3. Dialogism and Relational Aesthetics

This chapter devotes considerable space to the examination of relational and dialogical art practices since they seem to be the latest manifestation of the desire for artists to make work that interacts directly with the public and the public realm. They are an important part of the context within which my own work is made and exhibited (although my work is not necessarily dialogical in this way), and one of the main purposes of my research is to construct a critique of what I have called the "dialogical paradigm". This detailed discussion will also highlight some of the links between the philosophical works described in the previous chapter and the practice, interpretation and criticism of contemporary art.

Current critical discourse around contemporary art practice based on relationships between individuals and social groups is dominated by two influential books: Nicolas Bourriaud's *Esthétique Relationnelle* first published in 1998 and translated into English as *Relational Aesthetics* in 2002, and Grant Kester's *Conversation Pieces* from 2004. They are two very different books that aim to do very different things. Bourriaud's writing – a collection of essays, some previously published and some new – is an attempt to create a theoretical context for an international group of artists he had been working with during the 1990s in his role as a curator across various European and North American institutions. It was seen very much as a manifesto, particularly when Bourriaud was appointed co-director (with Jerôme Sans) of the new Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2002. Kester's *Conversation Pieces* is much more in the tradition of books like Suzanne Lacy's *Mapping the Terrain: New genre public art* from 1995, or Lucy Lippard's *The Lure of the Local* of 1997, in that it is mostly concerned with artistic practices that engage with local communities or specific places, and it is the ethical qualities of these interactions

that are read as the more significant elements of the works as a whole. Kester's primary argument is that the conversational or dialogical processes involved in this way of operating can be redefined in terms of traditional (meaning Kant via Greenberg) aesthetics. This reframing is carried out in order to support a range of socially engaged practices that are often marginalised in relation to more commercial or institutionally supported work. There is also, perhaps, the art historian's concern to analyse new practices in terms of precedent and genealogies of influence.

Despite their different emphases, however, both books have fed the renewed contemporary interest in artistic practices that use social relations as their material and subject matter. Their content has been subject to much debate (some of which I will describe below), and a desire for wider contextualisation has encouraged the production of anthologies like Claire Bishop's *Participation* (2006*b*). This debate has formed an important part of the background to my research in that there is currently such wide interest in the public realm and the process of reflecting, activating or producing real social relations through art. This should also be seen in the context of recent British politics, which since 1997 has seen New Labour employ rhetoric "almost identical to that of socially engaged art" (Bishop 2006*a* p180) as I discussed earlier (see p6). Although both Bourriaud and Kester see the work they describe as attempting to repair damage done to the social fabric by unfettered market forces, their strategies have been effectively absorbed and, I would argue, neutralised. My thesis is an attempt to unpick generalised notions of dialogue into individual strands that can be identified, analysed and critiqued. As an artist my desire is for a more detailed and better articulated model that can be used productively in the studio.

WochenKlausur *Intervention to Aid Drug-Addicted Women* 1994-5 (Kester 2004 p2)

Conversation Pieces (2004)

As indicated above, Kester's book is primarily concerned with projects that directly involve community groups, often with the aim of social inclusion or the regeneration of what are perceived to be neglected neighbourhoods. Although his examples are mostly from the USA he relates them to a strong history of community arts in Britain "evident in the 'town artist' schemes of the 1960s, the community arts programmes of the Greater London Council in the 1980s, and the early projects supported by the Gulbenkian Foundation" (Kester 2004 p126). Involving many people in the production of a work, and taking place over time periods of months or years so as to allow for real communication to develop between artist and audience, these types of art practices are located in direct opposition to what he calls "the glacial isolation of the recalcitrant object" (Kester 2004 p49), meaning the classic formalist autonomous artwork isolated within a white cube gallery space. One example which Kester returns to at several points is a project by the Austrian group WochenKlausur in 1994–5 which brought together activists, journalists, politicians and other stakeholders in a series of discussions held on a boat to address the problems faced by drug-addicted prostitutes in Zurich. Although there *was* a tangible object produced as an outcome – a building transformed into a safe house as a result of the discussions – it was the conversations themselves and the activity of getting people together under unusual conditions that were considered the significant component part of the artwork. WochenKlausur member Wolfgang Zinggl is quoted as stating "This type of art does not need the artist as prophet or priest … Instead it arises from intersubjective communication and reflection on the possibilities of taking part in a changing world" (Kester 2004 p101).

Kester locates the roots of what he calls "dialogical" practices in early post-minimalist and conceptual art, which enabled an initial untethering from the auratic object and developed into dematerialised, live and often durational works (he gives the example of Dan Graham's performances, for instance). But bodies such as the Artists Placement Group (John Latham, Barbara Steveni, Jeffrey Shaw and Barry Flanagan) and artists like Stephen Willats are named as more significant precedents. More contemporary examples include Suzanne Lacy's large-scale performance *The Roof is on Fire* (1994) in California, and Jay Koh's object-exchanging performances in street markets, *Exchanging Thought* (1995–6) in Thailand. Both involved a relatively long period of development and interaction, including workshops with participants, leading up to the final presentations which again feature large numbers of people actively taking part.

Although Kester's book is concerned with what might be considered fairly

radical or avant-garde artistic practices, inasmuch as they tend to straddle interdisciplinary divides and resist straightforward definitions such as activism or social work, the main thrust of his argument serves to locate dialogical practice in relation to mainstream art history and theory. He ends the book by discussing some of his reasons for doing this, perhaps the primary one being to help establish a traditional continuum behind what can otherwise be transient and ephemeral events. But his main thesis (expounded largely in the third chapter *Dialogical aesthetics*) is that the transformative effects of the interactions between artist and participants parallel the transformative "shock" of encountering an avant-garde art object. The characteristic mode of acceptance that is necessary for honest intersubjective relationships is compared with the transcendental receptivity that crops up frequently in Modernist art theory.

> This receptive openness to the world runs throughout avant-garde discourse, in Bell's and Fry's rejection of normalizing representational conventions, in Greenberg's assault on the clichés of kitsch, and in Fried's criticism of the theatrical art that shamelessly importunes the viewer. (Kester 2004 p49)

Instead of the egocentric artist figure translating or embodying this receptive viewpoint in an object that can subsequently shock its audience into seeing things differently, Kester explores a "new aesthetic and theoretical paradigm of the work of art as a process – a locus of discursive exchange and negotiation" (Kester 2004 p12). Importantly, this involves transformation on both sides, as both artist and audience allow themselves to open up to communicative exchange. It is this empha-

Jay Koh *Exchanging Thought,* 1995-6 (Kester 2004 p106)

sis on the ethical aspects of the process that really marks a substantial difference from the Modernist and formal precedents he cites, which have tended to be interpreted and received (if not caricatured) as existing somewhat in an ethical vacuum. I would argue that it is Kester's exploration of the effects of dialogical practice on subjectivity that form the more exciting and interesting parts of the book rather than the slightly forced comparisons with twentieth-century Modernist aesthetics.

Models of dialogue in "Conversation Pieces"

The artists that Kester writes about "conceive of the relationship between the viewer and the work of art quite differently; not simply as an instantaneous, pre-discursive flash of insight, but as a decentering, a movement outside the self (and self-interest) through dialogue extended over time" (Kester 2004 p84). In search of philosophical models that might illuminate this transformative process, he draws upon three major writers who have tackled the area of intersubjectivity: Habermas, Mikhail Bakhtin and Emmanuel Levinas. Jürgen Habermas is important because of the influential model of the public sphere that I described above and the types of communication and transaction that he sees as operating throughout it. Although subject to strong critiques (which Kester recognises) for his tendency to bracket out the realities of power relationships in the social world in favour of constructing a workable abstract system, his work provides a convincing underpinning to the idea of a dialogical aesthetics in three ways.

Firstly, the conception of the public sphere as being primarily a space of discussion and debate provides a convincing context for dialogical art. Secondly, the "provisional authority" (Kester 2004 p110) that discursive interactions generate is likened to the way that dialogical projects generate their own shared "local consensual knowledge" that, rather than relying on some outside justification, "is grounded instead at the level of collective interaction" (Kester 2004 p112). This has some interesting implications with regard to art criticism that I will explore shortly. Finally, Habermas suggests that in the complex processes of communicating with other individuals we undergo periods of distancing, understanding and change that mould our subjectivities in an ongoing manner. Kester relates this directly to the transformations that ideally take place in those involved with this kind of art.

> Subjectivity is formed *through* discourse and intersubjective exchange itself. Discourse is not simply a tool to be used to communicate an a priori "content" with other already formed subjects but is itself intended to model subjectivity. (Kester 2004 p112)

His core theoretical thesis, that extended dialogical art practices should be recognised as part of an avant-garde tradition, rests firstly on the idea that they provide transformative opportunities for the participants, and secondly that it is this transformation that has always been the key defining quality of modern and contemporary art.

Kester draws on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Emmanuel Levinas to deepen this analysis of intersubjective relations. Both are used to find ways of transcending an apparent dichotomy evident in the necessity of using language to reach other people, "an unforgiving instrumentalization (defined by rhetorical manipulation) on the one hand and the total proscription of intersubjective exchange on the other" (Kester 2004 p122). Levinas is praised for his emphasis on the corporeal face-to-face encounter with the other but ultimately his focus on strict ethical responsibility seems to rule out any meaningful communication in case of perpetrating unwitting instrumental violence.[1] Kester finds a more pragmatic and productive compromise in Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism through which "we author ourselves in dialogue with others and subject to the reinterpretations they give us" (Honderich 1995 p76). Initially based on a close analysis of Dostoevsky's writing,[2] Bakhtin developed his model into a wider theory of subjectivity in which

> the very capacity to have consciousness is based on otherness … in dialogism consciousness is otherness. More accurately, it is the differential relation between a center and all that is not that center. (Holquist 1990 p18)

This is seen as a mutually formative situation where both parties gain from participating in the act of exchange. Anticipating later developments such as Structuralism's intertextuality, Bakhtin writes that it is through "polyphony that the combination of several individual wills occurs and that the bounds of an individual will are fundamentally exceeded" (Bakhtin 1973 p17). Dostoevsky's novels suggest this, according to Bakhtin, because of their lack of an overarching narrative voice, use of characters to embody different viewpoints or opinions, and collaging of reported, fragmentary and discordant modes of speech and writing (Vice 1997 p60), although it should be noted that some have questioned the very possibility of real dialogue within a written work, preferring terms such as "citation" (Hirschkop 1992 p109). Kester's arguments for the progressive power of dialogical art practice are essentially founded on the philosophical model of an open and receptive subjectivity that he finds in Bakhtin, and its reflection in the discursive public spaces of Habermas.

There is one other small piece of theoretical writing Kester uses in the development of his argument that is relevant to the conceptual framework I am

constructing through this research. As described above, he places great importance on the mutual opening up of artist and participants' subjectivities in the process of a project. This mutually open relationship is greatly facilitated by what Kester, in relation to Jay Koh's work, calls an "aesthetics of listening" (Kester 2004 p106). Essentially this means being receptive to what the nominal other has to say. The Italian philosopher Gemma Corradi Fiumara's book *The Other Side of Language* (1990) is invoked here, which juxtaposes the idea of listening as an active practice against what she identifies as Western culture's "assertive tradition of saying" (Kester 2004 p107). She characterises Western art and philosophy as being logocentric and language as instrumental in the sense that it is always involved in processes of doing, making or defining. This argument is obviously part of the wider postmodern critique of logocentrism (pursued by Jacques Derrida et al) and is meant to be read, as Kester indeed reads it, as a criticism. I shall return to the idea of assertive artworks, in particular as a counterpoint to more dialogical practices, at a later point (see p82).

Collaboration and its discontents

A significant critique of Kester's *Conversation Pieces* appeared in the February 2006 issue of *Artforum*, written by the British critic and curator Claire Bishop under the title "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents". In many ways this essay followed on from Bishop's earlier engagement with Relational Aesthetics in the pages of *October* magazine, which I will explore in more detail below, but the point here is simpler. Bishop concedes that socially engaged art

> rehumanizes – or at least de-alienates – a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalism. But the urgency of this *political* task has led to a situation in which such collaborative practices are automatically perceived to be equally important *artistic* gestures of resistance; there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved or boring works of collaborative art because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bond. (Bishop 2006*a* p180)

Any art criticism that attempts to deal with relational or dialogical work ends up operating in terms of ethical judgements, while "accusations of mastery and egocentrism are leveled at artists who work with participants to realize a project instead of allowing it to emerge through consensual collaboration" (Bishop 2006*a* p180). It becomes almost impossible to construct any meaningful criticism of this work

because to do so is seen as speaking against liberal values such as equality and democratic participation. Bishop notes that the withdrawal of clear authorship is one reason for this difficulty, as well as the way that "political, moral, and ethical judgements have come to fill the vacuum of aesthetic judgement in a way that was unthinkable forty years ago" (Bishop 2004 p77). As I noted above in relation to Habermas, the ability of conversational practices to generate their own evaluative frameworks, rules and norms (albeit on a provisional basis) also means that it is difficult to bring any exterior apparatus of criticism to bear on them. Ultimately, Bishop advocates self-reflective critical practices that incorporate both the autonomy of the aesthetic and the urge to social intervention in their structure, processes and reception.

Grant Kester's reply in the May 2006 issue accuses Bishop of exhibiting "an unseemly enthusiasm for policing the boundaries of legitimate art practice" and "naturalizing deconstructive rhetoric as the only appropriate metric for aesthetic experience" in order to seek an art practice that will "continually reaffirm and flatter her self-perception as an acute critic" (Kester 2006 p22). In his book, Kester specifically brackets out visual and aesthetic modes of criticism (Kester 2004 p189) the better to focus his argument for bringing dialogue under the aesthetic banner. But Bishop is surely right to want an art that is in some sense experiential as well as ethical. In her reply to his comments she notes that individual authorship is sometimes necessary to bring about disruption "as a form of resistance to instrumental rationality", and that "without artistic gestures that shuttle between sense and nonsense … that allow multiple interpretations … that have a life beyond an immediate social goal, we are left with pleasantly innocuous art. Not non-art, just bland art" (Bishop 2006*c* p24).

Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics

Nicolas Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics* differs in many significant ways from Grant Kester's. It sketches out a propositional idea of 1990s art rather than carefully constructing an art historical thesis. It is far shorter, at just over a hundred pages, and consists mostly of previously printed essays tackling subjects including participation, exchange, cinema and VCRs, the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and the psychoanalytic philosophy of Félix Guattari. There is a thread running through all these subjects, however, and that is the idea of an aesthetic paradigm that concerns itself with real-world relationships between people, of "an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space" (Bourriaud

2002 p14). Art history is retrospectively redefined in terms of "successive external relational fields" (Bourriaud 2002 p28) that, dating from a period prior to the Renaissance, progress gradually from relations between mankind and the deity, through mankind and the world (the Renaissance), man and his objects (Cubism and Modernism) and finally to inter-human relations themselves. The artists and artworks used as examples of this latter tendency are impressively varied although markedly more involved in the international commercial artworld that Kester's community activist-style cast. Names such as Gabriel Orozco, Douglas Gordon, Gordon Matta-Clarke, Jens Hanning, Sophie Calle, On Kawara, Daniel Spoerri, George Brecht, Stephen Willats and Franz West (Bourriaud 2002 p30) give an idea of the historical and stylistic breadth that Bourriaud involves in his argument. However, there is also frequent mention of a generational grouping of artists who have come to be regarded as emblematic of Relational Aesthetics as a tendency: Rirkrit Tiravanija, Liam Gillick, Phillipe Parreno, Pierre Huyge, Dominique Gonzales-Foerster, Jorge Pardo. Bourriaud worked with all these artists as a curator during the 1990s, and it was the need to generate some kind of theoretical framework around their practices that led to these essays.

The specific forms that a relational art practice might construct are heterogeneous but typically would include "meetings, encounters, events, various types of collaboration between people, games, festivals, and places of conviviality" (Bour-

Rirkrit Tiravanija *Bichy Bar* 2001-2 (Henry Moore Institute 2002 p63)

riaud 2002 p28). Rirkrit Tiravanija's installation of soup and somewhere to sit and eat at the 1993 Venice Biennale is given as one example, but more interestingly so are the *passtücke* of Franz West (which date back to 1974 and are normally considered in terms of interactive sculpture). A word that crops up regularly in the book is "conviviality", and certainly the reductive manner in which it has been received in the English-speaking artworld has emphasised an aesthetics of reading rooms, crash pads, food, drink and sociability.[3] This type of interpretation has led to some of the criticisms that I shall explore below. But no matter what physical form the projects might take, Bourriaud insists that they "actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real" (Bourriaud 2002 p13) rather than depicting or merely representing them. This is located within a broadly oppositional model that accords with Habermas's critique of contemporary capitalist culture, through which "the artists fill in the cracks in the social bond" (Bourriaud 2002 p36) by presenting micro-utopias and alternative models of social relationships. In comparison with Grant Kester's examples which deal directly with specific communities and their problems, Relational Aesthetics appears conceptual, abstract, idealistic and gallery-bound. The inverse of this is that it also appears more formally coherent, often visually appealing, and recognisably artistic (opening itself up to a range of ethical criticisms on the basis of its links to commercial or institutional business-as-usual).

It will be apparent that there are no straightforward definitions of a "rela-

Franz West *Passtücke* 1974 (Gagosian 2001 p9)

tional aesthetics" per se. Although artistic practice is seen as a "rich loam for social experiments, like a space partly protected from the uniformity of behavioural patterns" (Bourriaud 2002 p9), it is a long way from a complete disavowal of the formal autonomous art object itself. In fact the way that social relations are brought to the foreground by or through sets of seemingly decorative objects (I am thinking of the work of Liam Gillick here) may be exactly what is interesting. Bourriaud advocates a combination of formal aesthetic values which are animated by and in turn catalyse social relationships.[4]

Depending on the degree of participation required of the onlooker by the artist, along with the nature of the works and the models of sociability proposed and represented, an exhibition will give rise to a specific "arena of exchange". And this

Liam Gillick *The Wood Way* (detail of installation) 2002 (Whitechapel Gallery 2002 p34)

"arena of exchange" must be judged on the basis of aesthetic criteria, in other words by analysing the coherence of its form, and then the symbolic value of the "world" it suggests to us, and of the image of human relations reflected by it. (Bourriaud 2002 p18) It could not be more clear here that he is advocating a combination of visual, formal and social aesthetics, and not the reductive aesthetics of conviviality that his critics have sometimes tried to make him represent.

Models of dialogue in "Relational Aesthetics"

For all the importance of the idea of dialogue in the book, a sustained theoretical analysis of intersubjectivity is left until the last half of the final essay. There are just a couple of brief references in earlier chapters that suggest the kind of approach Bourriaud is thinking of in relation to this work. In the first essay, film theorist Serge Daney is quoted as writing "all form is a face looking at us", which is related (as with Kester) to the ethics of Emmanuel Lévinas (Bourriaud 2002 p23). Daney's interest in form allows Bourriaud to make the intersubjective transaction more concrete.

> Form is the *representative* of desire in the image. It is the horizon based on which the image may have a meaning, by pointing to a desired world, which the beholder thus becomes capable of discussing, and based on which his own desire can rebound. This exchange can be summed up by a binomial: someone shows something to someone who returns it as he sees fit. (Bourriaud 2002 p23)

The artwork is put up for discussion in this analysis, presented propositionally with the intention of allowing the viewer to respond however they see fit. The implication being that the artist would then respond again, offering up a slightly modified situation for more discussion and so on until a point of agreement is reached. This particular description of how a relational or dialogical artwork might operate is the closest I have found to some of the metaphors based on negotiation that I will go on to make in this body of research.[5] It is, however, fairly simplistic and unnuanced in its details. Later on I hope to both make the connections with my research clear and suggest ways of going far beyond this "binomial" model.

The final twenty pages of *Relational Aesthetics* delve into the work of the radical French psychoanalyst and philosopher Félix Guattari to provide a background theory for subject formation through interaction. Better known in the art world for his collaborative writings with Gilles Deleuze, especially *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), Guattari operated with the particular perspective of his role as a

practitioner in a psychiatric clinic. It is not necessary to give a detailed exegesis of his writing here, but merely to note that he provides a post-structuralist model of subjectivity as being fragmented, even kaleidoscopic, and always in the process of being formed through interactions with other people, things, ideas, ideologies and so on (what Guattari calls "machines"). Beyond the seductive jargon of machines, territories, tectonic planes and subjectivisation, the way that Bourriaud mobilises Guattari's writing to suggest a framework for Relational Aesthetics is fairly straightforward. There is nothing "less natural than subjectivity. There is also nothing more constructed, formulated and worked on" (Bourriaud 2002 p88), writes Bourriaud, describing the standard postmodern, post-structuralist view. The traditional model of a coherent, autonomous subjectivity that relates to a separate object called the world is a fantasy. Guattari defines subjectivity as "the set of relations that are created between the individual and the vehicles of subjectivity he comes across, be they individual or collective, human or inhuman" (Bourriaud 2002 p91). Several examples of these vehicles are given, including family, education, environment, religion, sport, cultural artefacts like films, novels, ideological gadgets and ideas. All these are processed, rejected or assimilated and are used as tools to create new relationships, which are themselves part of the newly evolved temporary singularisation.

> Otherwise put, subjectivity can only be defined by the presence of a second subjectivity. It does not form a "territory" except on the basis of the other territories it comes across; as an evolving formation, it is modelled on the difference which forms it itself, on the principle of otherness. It is in this plural, polyphonic definition of subjectivity that we find the perspective tremor that Guattari inflicts on philosophical economy. (Bourriaud 2002 p91)

It is quite obvious from this that Bourriaud imagines relational artworks, with their convivial mingling of people and audiences in different and unusual situations, to be producing the same sort of subjectivising processes. It is ultimately a very similar sort of model to that proposed by Grant Kester with his fusion of Habermas and Bakhtin, although Bourriaud was perhaps more willing to attach himself to contemporary "French theory". In addition to its more familiar agenda of repairing alienated social relationships, relational or dialogical art practices might in fact be seen as a kind of rhetorical acting out of this broad theoretical viewpoint, not just reflecting the intersection of various subjectivising machines but actively forcing them together at bars, kitchens and designated social spaces.

Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics

A little less than two years after its translation into English, the Fall 2004 issue of *October* magazine published a long critique of Bourriaud's book written by Claire Bishop in which she first aired some of the criticisms that would resurface in relation to *Conversation Pieces*. Her main argument in a thirty-page critique of Relational Aesthetics as both book and practice is that the much trumpeted "conviviality" of dialogue and intersubjective relations was a feel-good panacea that played to the jaded tastes of weary art-world insiders on the biennale circuit.

> The *quality* of the relationships in "relational aesthetics" are never examined or called into question … all relations that permit "dialogue" are automatically assumed to be democratic and therefore good. But what does "democracy" mean in this context? If relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what *types* of relations are being produced, for whom, and why? (Bishop 2004 p65)

Bishop's claim that "for Bourriaud, the structure is the subject matter – and in this he is far more formalist than he acknowledges" (Bishop 2004 p64) – seems to ignore the specific references to visual and aesthetic formalism that do in fact occur in his book, as I mentioned above. However she *is* correct to point out that the specific qualities of relationship generated by artworks are given little attention beyond general statements about repairing an alienated society. Bishop's response to this apparent blind spot is to draw in the work of the political theorist Chantal Mouffe, who proposes a specific kind of relationship that might be appropriate or necessary in contemporary society. The next section introduces some of Mouffe's main propositions, after which I will return to Claire Bishop's critique of Relational Aesthetics.

Chantal Mouffe's agonistic model

Published in 1985 in collaboration with Ernesto Laclau, the first substantial statement of Chantal Mouffe's political project was the book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). In very brief summary, this is an analysis of globalised neoliberal capitalism in terms of Gramscian hegemony, that discursive framework that is a necessary precursor to ideological change. As post-Marxists, their project is to revive the idea of hegemonic struggle and create a "chain of equivalence among the various democratic struggles against different forms of subordination" (Laclau & Mouffe 1985 pxviii). They argue that Habermasian deliberative democracy is unable to counter the neutering forces of centre-right consensus. "Political questions

are not mere technical issues to be solved by experts. Properly political questions always involve decisions which require making a choice between conflicting alternatives" (Mouffe 2008 p8). Thus neither political dialogue in the public sphere, nor the technocratic administered society that Habermas warns against, is able to handle truly political conflicts, conflicts "for which no rational solution could ever exist" (Mouffe 2008 p8). These ideas were put more concisely for a wider audience in Mouffe's *On The Political* (2005).

It is this acceptance, even embrace, of conflict at the heart of democratic society that is relevant to my research here, and it is this aspect of Mouffe's writing that has come to influence the artworld through interviews, commentaries by other writers, and her own appearance at conferences and seminars convened in European art galleries.[6] Mouffe has coined the term *agonism* to identify a kind of lesser antagonism, between adversaries rather than enemies, a struggle between "different interpretations of shared principles, a conflictual consensus: consensus on the principles, disagreement about their interpretation" (Miessen 2007 p3). This agonism takes place constantly between many different combinations of parties, in a plurality of public spaces or "discursive surfaces" (Mouffe 2008 p10). Conflict is a necessity since all parties "desperately need that 'other' as a constitutive outside stabilizing their own identity" (Carpentier & Spinoy 2008 p10). The aim is not to seek an end to this conflict, but to see it as a healthy and necessary part of a truly participatory democracy[7], Claire Bishop writes that

> a fully functioning democracy is not one in which all antagonisms have disappeared, but one in which new political frontiers are constantly being brought into debate – in other words, a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are *sustained*, not erased. (Bishop 2004 p 65)

This is the basis on which Bishop and others have mounted an effective critique of dialogical and relational artworks. There is no doubt that, for the most part, Bourriaud considers relational work to be emancipatory, positive in effect, and against the dehumanising effects of global capital and bureaucratic instrumentalism. These claims might appear relatively uncontroversial. However in her 2004 article "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", Bishop proceeds to deconstruct the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija and Liam Gillick at some length on the basis of the concept of antagonism. Tiravanija's performances and installations are held to be "microtopian" in the extreme, operating primarily for those already in the know and not truly open to meaningful participation by a wider public.[8] Harmony can only

prevail, she claims, because those taking part already have so much in common in terms of social background, education and interests. An invisible process of self-selection filters out anyone truly different who might pose a threat to this temporary community within the gallery. Liam Gillick's practice is dismissed as "an abandonment or failure of ideals; his work is the demonstration of a compromise, rather than an articulation of a problem" (Bishop 2004 p69). His various architectural interventions and places for discussion are seen as embracing a vacuous middle ground where real debate and engagement are forever forestalled.[9]

Bishop provides two clear examples of artists who successfully incorporate antagonism within the models of social relationships that their practices imply. Santiago Sierra's projects and gallery installations employ or make use of certain segments of society (often marginal, such as drug addicts or illegal immigrants) in order that "the outcome or unfolding of his action forms an indexical trace of the economic and social reality of the place in which he works" (Bishop 2004 p70). The antagonistic tensions within a society are brought to the surface by, for instance, paying a group of (mostly black) street vendors in Venice to have their hair bleached blond so that their physical presence in the city was literally highlighted during the 2001 Biennale. Bishop's other example in this essay is Thomas Hirschhorn's *Bataille Monument* (2002) made for *Documenta XI* in an outlying suburb of Kassel with a high immigrant Turkish population. Well-heeled international visitors to the festival were put in the awkward position of having to take a minicab ride out of town to see the work, where they inevitably felt like "hapless intruders" (Bishop 2004 p76) in unfamiliar surroundings. Such feelings of awkwardness signify, for Bishop at least, some of the real antagonisms at play within contemporary Western

Thomas Hirschhorn *Bataille Monument (Exhibition)* 2002 (Doherty 2005 p133)

societies, and it is no coincidence that both her main examples draw their power from racial politics. It should be noted however that Hirschhorn himself refutes this commentary, saying "I reject this 'zoo' criticism, because it is only a question of over-sensitivity and bad conscience. It is a matter for the individual, and the over-sensitivity of a certain kind of art-audience" (Doherty 2005 p145). Hirchhorn's enthusiasm for community involvement in this project in particular (where local residents ran a makeshift café, borrowed videos from the reading room and hung out at the exhibition over several months) seems to place him quite firmly in the relational camp in spite of Bishop's alternative reading.

Some two years later Liam Gillick responded to this long critique with a withering and sometimes personal eleven-page attack on Claire Bishop in *October* magazine. Gillick does, however, make some good points in relation to Bishop's use of the concept of antagonism. Her examples, he writes, "fail to be useful subjects in this instance. All are more or less working in a tradition of individual production and reception that is presented within an established art context" (Gillick 2006 p101). To simply present antagonistic relationships as a neatly commodified art project is to miss the point being made by Mouffe and Laclau, who do not call for more friction within the art world, but rather argue "against the kind of social structuring that would produce a recognizable art 'world' in the first place" (Gillick 2006 p101). Gillick contends that the various social models constructed through "relational" practices do in fact serve adequately antagonistic purposes simply by challenging and offering alternatives to existing hierarchical practices of production.

The precise manner in which antagonism might be represented by contemporary art is something that I will return to in chapter six (p72), but Mouffe herself

Thomas Hirschhorn *Bataille Monument (Taxi service)* 2002 (Doherty 2005 p138)

recently seemed to come down in favour of creating "agonistic public spaces, where the objective is to unveil all that is repressed by the dominant consensus" (Mouffe 2008 p12), which might seem to put her closer to Bishop's advocacy of an artist like Santiago Sierra. She has also said that in the creation of

> what I call an agonistic public space, there are many different voices and kinds of people that all play a role. For instance, I think that this is definitely an area where artists, architects, or people who are engaged in the entire field of culture at large, play an incredibly important role, because they provide different forms of subjectivities from the ones that exist at the moment. (Miessen 2007 p9)

Commenting on the *Art as a "Public" Issue* symposium in 2008 where Chantal Mouffe spoke, the critic Mark Hutchinson noted that she seemed to display an uncomplicated opinion that "art is fundamentally and unproblematically about identity and representation. In other words, for her, art fosters identification and gives voice to different groups or individuals" (Hutchinson 2008 p8). She also spoke against the idea of applying the notion of agonism at too small a scale, suggesting that it acted at a more macro level. It is clear that these complications demonstrate the difficulties that occur when disciplines collide, and uncomprehending experts stray outside their usual fields. Nevertheless it can be productive and provocative to attempt such interdisciplinary forays, and the practice of contemporary art is flexible (or perhaps loose) enough to generate its own interpretations.

This argument around antagonism has been the main critique to surface around *Relational Aesthetics* since its appearance in English in 2002,[10] although it is interesting to note that Bourriaud does in fact flag up the concept himself, albeit briefly, when he talks about artists such as Douglas Gordon "emerging in the social fabric in a more aggressive way … acting parasitically and paradoxically in the social space" (Bourriaud 2002 p32). The bulk of *Relational Aesthetics* concerns itself with more convivial models, but more importantly it is the idea of conviviality, with its connotations of repairing the gaps in the social fabric, that has taken hold among artists and arts commissioners and become the new orthodoxy for publicly funded projects. Critics of relational aesthetics are often in fact rather critics of the way that the book itself has been interpreted by some as a handbook to socially engaged practice. Thus, artists working collaboratively are "cast as deluded, politically naïve idealists who ignore the brute realities of democracy in action" (Wilson 2007 p115), while there is frequently a conflation of critique and intellectual cynicism. To reread Bourriaud's original essays is to see that his position is rather

more flexible and open to discussion than subsequent writers might allow, perhaps because he grounds relationality in the psychoanalytic theory of Guattari rather than an explicitly political model.[11]

Equally, Jürgen Habermas later tackled the problem of real conflict in society, and has explicitly advocated the use of non-violent, but certainly 'agonistic' protest. In a 1986 interview he said that

> the exclusively symbolic breaking of rules – which furthermore is only a last resort, when all other possibilities have been exhausted – is only a particularly urgent appeal to the capacity and willingness for insight of the majority. (Dews 1992 p225)

This may be an effort to reframe physical protest as a plea for civilized debate, certainly, but it does at least indicate that Habermas was aware of its occasional necessity, and suggests that it might be possible to see Mouffe's agonism as sitting within a still generally discursive framework.

Interpretations

In this and the previous chapter I have been discussing three influential ways of describing the public realm, those of Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas and Chantal Mouffe. Of the three, it is probably Habermas who has had the most effect on contemporary discourse. The political philosophy of these writers is picked up and used by art critics like Grant Kester and Nicolas Bourriaud to identify tendencies in work that they see. In the process philosophy is somewhat simplified to make rhetorical arguments. There is a third layer of artists and practitioners who interpret and apply these ideas for their own ends, and in the process subtly qualified arguments can be transformed further into labels or even slogans.

These introductory chapters have focused on a particular group of practices that operate in relation to the public realm. "Social engagement" is a loose term that describes work interacting with its audiences, while Relational Aesthetics and dialogical practice have been much more tightly defined in terms of Guattari's subject formation and Bakhtinian polyphony respectively. There are implicit and often assumed connections between this kind of art making and the political philosophy I have introduced above. Models of subject formation in the manner of Bakhtin or Guattari are equated or perhaps conflated with the discursive public sphere in order to create progressive social models that might patch over some of the gaps in today's alienated society. However, there have also been criticisms that such practices implicitly affirm contemporary capitalist models such as the experience

economy through the use of immersive participation, or that they act purely symbolically and in fact exclude or repress those they profess to help. I shall return to some of these criticisms in chapter six.

1 Additionally, Levinas's insistence on the radical difference of otherness throughout his work precludes the possibility of stable interrelationships (Lechte 1994 p117).

2 Bakhtin identified Dostoevsky's style as one in which many narrative voices were combined to form a polyphonic novel, rather than making use of a main character or disembodied authorial voice to give one final and complete position (Bakhtin 1973).

3 In the light of Kester's use of Bakhtin, it is interesting to view the emphasis on food, drink and conviviality within relational aesthetics in terms of the carnivalesque. Bakhtin's work on Rabelais describes carnival as offering an inverted view of existing power structures, with no clear division between performers and spectators (Vice 1997 p152).

4 At the panel discussion on Relational Aesthetics held at the Whitechapel Gallery on 22 May 2004, Nicolas Bourriaud perplexed a very critical panel by repeatedly calling himself a "formalist" when they questioned his advocacy of aesthetics over purely ethical content. See Beech 2004 for further discussion of this event.

5 It is almost a classic example of two-party positional bargaining, like a shopkeeper and customer haggling over a price.

6 For instance, the *Art as a 'Public' Issue* symposium organised by Situations at the Goethe Institute, London, on 7 November 2008 (Hutchinson 2008).

7 This idea is prefigured in Georg Simmel's book *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations* (1955). The modern state "bears the struggles of its political parties" in order to allow their forces to dissipate and "even exploits these struggles to the advantage of its equilibrium and growth" (Simmel 1955 p67).

8 This is a line of criticism I have pursued myself in a review of Tiravanija's work and in an article on participatory projects titled "Plywood Utopias" (Wilsher 2004 & 2006).

9 This criticism is very close to Gillick's own interpretation of his work discussed in the next chapter.

10 Other related critiques have questioned its political effectiveness (Downey 2007) and ability to really disengage from the circuits of capitalist exchange (Martin 2007), although I would suggest these are questions better addressed to individual artworks rather than the overall interpretive framework of relational aesthetics.

11 Another possible reason for the criticism of relational aesthetics was given by Bourriaud recently as "the political turn resulting from 9/11, which has generated a climate of inter-societal distrust. There was an inter-communitarian and inter-individual openness that has been partly darkened – which also explains why this 'participative' aspect of relational aesthetics has been recently attacked as naïve" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p38).

4. Case Study and Related Artists

The notion of participation and dialogue in contemporary art is now so widespread that it would be impractical to examine the entirety of such a broad field in the appropriate depth.[1] Exhibitions such as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's *The Art of Participation* in 2008 have begun to establish genealogies that link contemporary work back to Fluxus and international conceptual artists. My specific argument is that contemporary artists too often use the rhetoric of dialogue and participation in a received and unexamined manner, simply assuming that taking part equates with the audience's emancipation, and that dialogue is a transparent mechanism. As suggested earlier in my discussion of Kester and Bourriaud's writing, it is common for artists to declare that their work employs a generalised sense of dialogue, conversation or negotiation in the loose sense of "operating in relation to".[2] But for all the published interviews, round tables and discussions that have taken place in recent years, there has been little specific analysis of the way that such interactions take place. The *Art and the Social* conference at Tate Britain in April 2010 looked at socially engaged exhibitions from the early 1990s but not a single speaker dealt with the mechanics of participation or dialogue. Surprisingly few publications touch on this in any level of detail. Reiss and Butler's *Art of Negotiation* (2007) is an interesting attempt to capture some of the conversations and negotiations that occur during socially engaged projects, but no attempt at building a theoretical model is made beyond references to Lacy and Kester (Reiss & Butler 2007 p184). The Belgrade-based curator and artist Stevan Vukovic spoke at the *Collective Curating* symposium at Aarhus in 2006 on figuring the relationships between collaborators in terms of the well-known game theory model of the Prisoner's Dilemma (and other less academic models, such as playing chicken),

but his contribution unfortunately remains unpublished (Billing, Lind & Nilsson 2007 p34). Marsha Bradfield's PhD work on dialogical art in a Bakhtinian context is also currently unpublished with work in progress available online (Bradfield 2010). Eduardo Kac's essay on dialogue in online art is fairly typical in advocating interpersonal exchange (which he links back correctly to early performance artists and even Dada) but, despite his claim that "dialogical telepresence events combine self and other in an ongoing interchange, dissolving the rigidity of these positions as projected remote subjects", his definition of the dialogic process itself is limited to "active forms of communication" (Kac 1999).

The collective known as Freee [*sic*] (Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt & Mel Jordan) make mostly textual interventions and call their work "counter-hegemonic art" because it stands in opposition to the hegemony of the Habermasian Bourgeois Public Sphere.

> In place of the old bourgeois public sphere, with its false universalism and hegemonic distortion of the concept and functioning of the public, we shall have a counter-hegemonic culture in which the free development of each counter-public sphere is the condition for the development of a universal public sphere. (Freee Art Collective 2006 p20)

Typically presented as deadpan photo documentation or textual posters, their manifesto-style sloganeering usually points out the hypocrisies and contradictions of the contemporary discursive public sphere (see illustration p73). In terms of method, though, they simply assert the importance of producing counter-public spheres through their own presence within the work without any analysis of the dialogical process. The content of their mostly text-based pieces is meant to constitute (or at least suggest) a counter-public sphere.

"The Fifth Floor: Ideas Taking Space" Tate Liverpool 2008–9

At the end of 2008 Tate Liverpool staged the exhibition *The Fifth Floor: Ideas Taking Space* as an experiment in opening curation up to input from local residents and community groups. Based on the 138-page exhibition catalogue, which features contextual essays alongside images and interviews with each of the twelve artists featured,[3] I will examine this project as a typical example of the way that ideas about relationality and dialogue have filtered through into the mainstream to affect institutional programming. To be more specific, I shall highlight the different ways in which the artists theorise the use of dialogue and participation in their work in

relation to the theoretical frameworks of the previous chapters. My contention is that this recent exhibition at a major public venue accurately represents the current artistic application of these concepts.

The exhibition catalogue is divided into two parts, the first with texts from Tate curators, an essay by Lars Bang Larsen, an interview with Nicolas Bourriaud, and reprints of the exchanges between Claire Bishop and Grant Kester from *Artforum*. This clearly sets the whole curatorial project within the scope of my research here. The ethical responsibility of the institution is heavily stressed, with the introduction stating "over the course of the project we have spoken to and consulted with hundreds of people and further hundreds were involved in the realisation of the exhibition and related events" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p5). The unusual sharing of curatorial responsibility between programming and education departments is explained, together with the way that local artists were employed as researchers to conduct initial soundings of local groups. A reflective essay with quotes from Tate

Dan Perjovschi *Drawingdrawing* 2008 (Tate Liverpool 2009 p110)

Liverpool staff about the process concludes “there is a real need to listen and be open to the importance of public opinion in democratizing gallery practice” (Tate Liverpool 2009 p62). Bourriaud, Kester and Bishop’s texts introduce the ideas of relational aesthetics, shared authorship and the problems with dialogical approaches that I discussed in the previous chapter. Finally, there is an essay by the curator and critic Lars Bang Larsen that situates socially engaged work in relation to the notion of an experience economy, that commodifies the experience of the audience as a result of “discourses for how artistic creativity can be made operative vis-à-vis the societal economy” (Tate Liverpool 2009 p46). The theoretical framework behind the exhibition is explained and problematised to an unusually extensive degree in this first section.[4]

The second part of the catalogue consists of installation images and interviews with each of the artists in which they are asked, among other things, in what way their work is “relational” or “socially engaged”. Out of the twelve artists and groups interviewed, only seven actually touch on the mechanisms for participation behind their work, however briefly. Paul Rooney and Dan Perjovschi simply declare that all art is socially engaged and participatory, the latter saying “You laugh you participate, you draw you participate, you refuse to do all that

tenantspin *tenantspin on tour* 2008 (Tate Liverpool 2009 p127)

you participate" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p109). His trademark wall cartoons were presented at the exhibition as a large-scale blackboard that people were invited to contribute to.

The concept of shared authorship was raised by, unsurprisingly, the three artists groups included: tenantspin, Xijing Men and International Festival. Tenantspin, a community/artist based television channel operating in Liverpool since 1999, write that "the principles that the piece explored centred around the shifting role of audience and artist" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p123), and that "there is nothing more important than involving people. Without the drive from the communities with which we work, we do not have a project. Without their stories, voice and opinion, we do not have a direction" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p124). Xijing Men's translation of Chinese, Japanese and Korean folk stories to Liverpudlian puppet theatre performance requires that the local audience "complete the process and produce our work through their experience" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p129). The Swedish architectural group International Festival hope that "questions about authorship, ownership and accountability are pushed to the fore in order to change that way that things change" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p90).

International Festival's contribution of a flexible event space also typifies the second main trope of relationality that emerges in the artists's interviews, the construction of social spaces. "With simple building blocks we propose a transforming and constantly shifting space which will accommodate performances,

International Festival *Start Me Up* 2008 (Tate Liverpool 2009 p92)

production, conversations and other more meaningful and meaningless activities" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p90). Their colourful event space is highly typical of what I have called the "plywood utopias" that characterise much socially engaged art, replete as it is with soft seating, beanbags, music equipment, colourful lighting and materials for educational workshops. Although Olivier Bardin's gallery of leather armchairs appears highly formal by contrast, the interactions between audience members as they enter the room and sit down "contribute to the development of a community, bound together through the use of the gaze, which goes beyond considerations of class, social group, generation and language" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p73). His comments also suggest the third and final theoretical quality that is brought out by the remarks of Nina Edge in relation to her game of *5 Dimensional Everything*: "The shared participation in agreed structures and rules in games reflects other collective systems, providing commonly known frameworks within which there is temporary equality" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p189).

To summarise, then, the three qualities of dialogical practice that are held to be important by the seven artists who speak about them in the catalogue are: shared authorship, the creation of social space, and temporary equality of relationships. These relate quite directly to the theoretical writing of Kester and Bourriaud (and through them to the Habermasian notion of the public sphere and Bakhtin's model

Nina Edge *5 Dimensional Everything* 2008 (Tate Liverpool 2009 p84)

of the dialogic subject) although it is striking from the interviews that these qualities are assumed to flow directly from participation and there is no deeper theorisation present. There is certainly no critical examination of the term "dialogue" from any of the artists and little consideration of the dynamics of interactions between artist and audience beyond this valorisation of participation. If this large exhibition at a major institutional venue can be said to represent a typical group of socially engaged dialogical projects, then the theoretical notions of the artists themselves as documented in the catalogue are equally typical.

Artists using negotiation

As I have previously outlined, my research proposes negotiation theory as a better model for thinking about dialogical work, especially when it comes to unequal and antagonistic relationships. The detailed tactics and manoeuvres of negotiation theory shed light on the internal dynamics of some dialogues, and offer possible models for artistic practice as I shall explain in the next chapter.

One of the very few artists working in this area is Carey Young, whose work makes use of the conceptual and formal crossover between historic Conceptual Art and the rhetoric and practice of contemporary business (in the sense that business has become increasingly dematerialised and distributed, with intangible qualities like creativity, experience and performance assuming greater importance).[5] For an exhibition in 2002 at the Kunstverein München she made a work titled *Win-Win*, which was later remade for the *British Art Show 6* in 2005 (Farquharson 2005

Carey Young *Win-Win* 2002 (Farquharson 2005 p244)

p244). In both instances gallery staff including the curators were given a short commercial course in negotiation techniques prior to the exhibition.[6] The work was said to exist in the difference that undertaking the course made to the performance of the staff, in terms of the resulting exhibitions but also more widely in their lives and ongoing professional careers. On her website Young is quite clear about the way she employed negotiation skills in this piece:

> I intended that, as with many of my other works, the work displaces a process more often seen in business or in workplaces in general, into a cultural dimension as a form of "readymade" or found process. With this piece the readymade has become incorporated into the lives and relationships of four people, and occurs in a space of interpersonal relationships, attitudes, beliefs and memories. (Young 2009)

Negotiation theory is being used here as a kind of found object that is held within the conceptual structure of the work itself. It is used in an unknowable number of ways by the newly trained staff, some of which are captured in written documentation, but it operates primarily as material and subject matter. Young has made use of a wide range of tools and techniques from business in her work including motivational speakers and consultants, but they are always carefully framed within a conceptual fine art context, and the work takes standard forms such as photos, texts and videos. This is very different to the structural and generative manner in which I intend to apply principled negotiation.

Liam Gillick's model of discursivity

I want to turn now to one of the most well-known figures of Relational Aesthetics, the British artist Liam Gillick, who might be expected to engage more explicitly with negotiation as a tool with which to make artwork. His prolific collaborations with artists and professionals from a host of disciplines are framed in a bureaucratic and managerial style of language that references "issues of compromise, strategy, negotiation and renovation" (Whitechapel Art Gallery 2002 p81). Nevertheless, his output is still most commonly understood by critics and the artist himself in terms of dialogue, Gillick recently saying that:

> I think this is a better way of describing relational practice than talking about some kind of interactive or social component. The idea that art comes out through negotiation, not through sitting at home with a piece of paper and how this discursive potential can be sustained over time. (Slyce 2009 p3)

While his artworks often take managerial techniques as their inspiration or subject matter, this is most often employed rhetorically in the form of a title or written phrase that might appear in relation to an object in the gallery space. His series of *Discussion Platforms*, ongoing since 1996, propose a vacant space in which discussion might happen, for instance. *Negotiated Double*, 2001, was a seating and viewing area at Kunstwerk in Berlin, while *Negotiated/Doubled*, 2003, consists of aluminium signage of a quite traditional form (the text is a corrupted quotation from Pierre Bourdieu). Despite the amount of highly abstract managerial rhetoric that surrounds his work, specific tactics like negotiation only tend to appear at the level of representation. They form the subject matter of his work, rather than necessarily informing his working processes.

However, as indicated in the previous chapter, Gillick is an active writer and theorist in his own right, and in 2006 he gave an improvised series of lectures at

Liam Gillick *Negotiated Double* 2001 (Gillick & Haberer 2007 p45)

the free art school *unitednationsplaza* in Berlin on the subject of "the discursive". These were formalised into the 2008 Hermes lecture given in 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands, in November 2008, which was later published as a booklet and in an expanded form in the online journal *e-Flux* (Jan & Feb 2009). This text is significant not just because it is an extended theoretical statement from one of the foremost practitioners of relational art, but because it explores the importance of discursivity in art practice in far greater depth than either of Kester or Bourriaud's publications. It is to my knowledge the only extensive consideration of the qualities and ramifications of discussion in this field, and at the very least sheds much light on Gillick's intentions for his own artworks and exhibition projects in this vein. His choice of the word "discursive" is subtly different to the idea of dialogue, as I shall show below. It attempts to signal a particular type of quality that work might have, rather than referring to an activity between people.

Maybe it would be better if we worked in groups of three? (Gillick 2008) relates the rise of the discursive in the art of the past twenty years to the phenomenon of self-regulating social groups such as playgroups, management away-days, team work exercises and so on. "The discursive is wedded to the notion of group work, but also more generally to the idea of post-war social democracy" (Gillick 2008 p17) he writes, making a clear connection to historically specific socio-political structures. But he is equally clear that his definition departs radically from "the notion of discursive democracy as posited by Habermas and others" (Gillick 2008 p13). This is because his model is primarily seen as an alternative structure for generating cultural products, that reflects or feeds on established social practices parasitically but is ultimately always in opposition to their agendas. Discursive art makes use of one key tactic, that of deferral or displacement, and it is this quality that Gillick makes central to his argument.

> The permanent displacement and projection of the critical moment is the political potential of the discursive. The opposite of performance, it is not a location for action but instead provides an infinite suspension of critical moments. (Gillick 2008 p28)

Ideas, objects and artworks appear as speculative proposals, works in progress, temporary models or tentative realisations of what is yet to come. But of course it is the temporary proposition, rather than the hypothetical final outcome, that is the important element here. Artworks in this mode can be "a location for refusal and collective ennui" (Gillick 2008 p28), while the individual artist hides within the group, permitted to

> develop a set of arguments and individual positions without having to conform to an established model of artistic or educational quality. Incomplete projects and partial contributions are central to an effectively progressive, critical environment. (Gillick 2008 p30)

This is the key quality of discursive art practice, its provisionality and speculative potential, which are seen as opposing the instrumentalising certainties of institutional and capitalist society even as they make use of their own tactics. This is an altogether new analysis of dialogical art practice, with an artist's appreciation of the qualitative effects that such an approach is capable of generating. Gillick's text relates particularly closely to his recent body of work based on the radical organising principles of Volvo factories in the 1970s,[7] with archival images used as illustrations in both published versions. The idea of discussion as a strategy for deferring resolution, and the qualities of shared ownership, common authorship and propositionality serve to contextualise and explain the thinking behind his own oeuvre.

It is clear that this subtle reading of the dialogical could be applied to the work of some other artists too, although its sources in post-war socio-political and industrial theory tie it in very closely to Gillick's own interests in Modernism and temporary utopias. The fact that the text derives from a series of talks given at the *unitednationsplaza* free art school, and have subsequently been published twice, indicates that there is a current interest in greater theorisation of this subject. I suspect, however, that this interpretation may be too closely tied in with his own practices to be more widely applicable, simply does not apply to finished work, and still doesn't offer much detail with respect to the internal dynamics and processes that dialogue might encompass.

Dialogue, the relational and discursivity

To recap briefly then, I have examined three alternative but related ways of thinking about certain contemporary art practices, together with their philosophical roots in twentieth-century European thought. My examination of the *The Fifth Floor* exhibition at Tate Liverpool illustrates the way that these models have been to some extent internalised by artists and promoted by institutions in the name of social responsibility. Grant Kester's notion of the dialogical emerges from his interest in activism and socially engaged projects, and as a consequence emphasises the way that dialogue can lead to shared authorship and greater understanding between individuals. This is rooted in Mikhail Bakhtin's notion that subjectivity itself can be formed through a kind of free and open communication with others, because "it is

only the other's categories that will let me be an object for my own perception. I see my self as I conceive others might see it. In order to forge a self, I must do so from the outside" (Holquist 1990 p28). Echoing the questioning of authorial assertion that emerged in the 1960s and was institutionalised in postmodernism, Kester draws a parallel between the mutual construction of subjectivity and the shared creation of a discursive public sphere where contemporary society fails to create one.

Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* is perhaps a more abstract model, offering micro-utopias as examples of possible ways of living, and relationality (derived in part from Guattari's psychoanalysis) as the way to construct new subjectivities. This has been critiqued for both its formalism and its perceived idealism. Liam Gillick's use of discursivity, however, shifts the emphasis away from the individual or group subject and describes a quality that the artworks themselves might have. This quality, something like openness or unfinishedness, is held to be a critique of contemporary capitalist society.[8] Each method of analysis could clearly be applied more or less successfully to particular works, and they have much in common. They are all far removed from aesthetic, semiotic or biographical approaches to art criticism, for example, and they attempt to describe recent practices operating in close proximity to the public realm.

My research is concerned with this approach to contemporary art practice too, but as a practitioner I find these models of the "dialogical paradigm" unhelpful when it comes to making new work. None of them seems to deal with the problems of unequal power or real difference, and they are each lacking when it comes to defining the real-world transactions within a relationship. The next chapter introduces the concept of negotiation as a possible alternative model that I subsequently explore through four distinct projects relating to the public realm.

1 Just a few of the exhibition press releases that have come into my inbox recently include, by way of example, *Random Acts of Art* at Spacex, during which the artists will be "facilitating collaborative encounters and conversations with people who live in Fore Street and the surrounding area" (Spacex 2010) and *Artschool UK* at Cell Project Space, which promises "daily seminars, workshops, tutorials, visiting presentations and reading groups" (Cell 2010), all delivered on a purpose-built architectural support structure. *Parade: public modes of assembly and forms of address* at Chelsea College of Art & Design invites us to "come assemble and address in a spectacular bespoke temporary structure assembled in public" (Critical Practice 2010).

2 A recent review of the artist Yoshua Okón is typical: "With well-defined strategies (which involve the artist as a participant rather than as an observer), Okón has gone through many processes of negotiation in order to produce his work and present the particular perspective the people he approaches have on the world" (Berlanga Taylor 2010 p132).

3 The exhibition ran from 16 December 2008 to 1 February 2009, and featured Pawel Althamer, Olivier Bardin, Rineke Dijkstra, Nina Edge, International Festival, Peter Liversidge, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Dan Perjovschi, Paul Rooney, Tino Seghal, tenantspin and Xijing Men.

4 Perhaps to ensure that the end results could not be mistaken for an ordinary education project, but seen as a theoretically unassailable exhibition of conceptual art.

5 Young writes that "most corporations now operate in the realm of the dematerialised and the transient, their value gauged by intangible assets such as brand equity and intellectual property." (Institute of Contemporary Art 2003*b* Unpaginated) See also Bode 2002 for more on her work.

6 Although Young does not say what specific model was used, the work's title *Win-Win* indicates that it was an integrative approach as described in chapter 5.

7 *Mirrored Image: A "Volvo" Bar* was an eight-act play performed at the Kunstverein Munich in 2008, and Eastside Projects, Birmingham, in 2010.

8 It is interesting to compare this quality with what Umberto Eco termed the "open work" (Eco 1989), in relation to critiques of authorship made by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault.

5. Methodology

This project is based upon the analysis and critique of dialogue in contemporary art practice. The literature review is therefore focused on the key theoretical texts that set out to define this area, together with the main critiques that have emerged and an examination of the philosophical sources that the authors brought into play. Taking my lead from the examples employed by these writers, I have also discussed some of the artists and artworks commonly described as dialogical or relational, and in the previous chapter sought to show how the concepts of Habermasian discursive democracy and Bakhtinian polyphony have migrated in somewhat attenuated forms into everyday art practice. The social sciences have developed many different approaches to analysing dialogue and conversation that are described as discourse theory (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates 2001; Jaworski & Coupland 2006), which range from Foucault's epistemological archaeology to the study of actual conversations at an almost phonetic level. My critique, however, relates to the same sources of dialogism that I have discussed in earlier chapters, since the values of shared authorship, public discursive spaces and temporary equality come through so frequently in the works under discussion. My research also incorporates some political theory relating to New Labour's concept of social exclusion, and a dominant model of negotiation theory taken from the business world. I have previously noted that some critics have positioned relational aesthetics (and participatory art more generally) in relation to modern business models of the service sector and the experience economy. This is, I believe, an additional and very interesting rationale for my construction of this multi-disciplinary mixture.

Dialogue as a structure

Before discussing the application of negotiation theory to art practice, it is worth considering the way that the notion of dialogue is currently applied and understood. As noted earlier, relational and dialogical practices routinely require the participation of their audiences to create the work. In many cases there is a convivial event or perhaps a pseudo-political forum where people are invited and encouraged to speak. Is it the presence of people talking, then, that makes work dialogical? This is manifestly not the case since there are also many works labelled "relational" which do not require such participation. Grant Kester identifies the way that dialogue takes place during the creation of the work specifically in opposition to assertion (which he identifies with a phallic violence directed at the audience). Dialogical work, then, is that which has been created by the decisions of at least two people, so that the role of the author is subsumed a little within the social interaction. It is not necessary for "dialogue" *per se* to appear in the finished work. It is not necessary for a work of relational art to have social relationships as its subject matter. The important point is that dialogue is used as a tool or as a structure to determine the form that the final work takes.

This is the approach that I take with the application of the idea of negotiation. It is not a matter of engaging in explicit negotiations with galleries or the public (this would simply confirm that negotiation theory works to describe or assist the process of reaching agreement in social interactions). It may not be necessary for the idea of negotiation to appear in the finished work at all. Negotiation theory is used, rather, as a *structuring metaphor* to affect the way that a project is conceived or carried out. The visible and conceptual content that an audience encounters may be something altogether different. I intend to use this written commentary to make plain the aspects of negotiation theory that each project is driven by, the idea being that a picture is constructed of a viable alternative metaphor for thinking about our relationship to the public realm through art. This can be used to analyse my own work and the work of others, but more importantly from the point of view of a practitioner, I aim to show that it can be used to model relationships within a project with more accuracy than the dialogical approach. This will enable the maintenance and highlighting of existing tensions within an agonistic public realm.

My use of the term "metaphor" here reflects my understanding of contemporary art as often operating rhetorically. Although there are real differences between the abstract structure of a disagreement and the situations used as the subject matter for my artistic projects, relating them through metaphor brings out important resemblances. By characterising them as negotiation situations I aim to clarify the

differences between those involved, their divergent objectives and worldviews, and the ongoing process of trying to reach a resolution. This use of negotiation also reflects the metaphorical way in which the quite specific term *dialogue* has come to be used in a wider sense by artists and art critics.

Theories of negotiation

The concept of negotiation emerged over several years in the course of my studio practice as a possible model for social encounters. I quickly discovered that there is a large and rich body of existing research on the theory and practice of negotiation which is particularly relevant to the modelling of often antagonistic dialogues across power differentials. With its roots in the business-oriented American sociology of the 1950s, it is based on a combination of behaviourism, psychology and game theory. A detailed review of the various approaches to conflict in general published by Lewicki, Weiss & Lewin in 1992 identified forty-four distinct models even after narrowing their view of the available literature. This study noted that the models tended to be derived from economics, labour relations and diplomacy, and divided its subjects into either descriptive or normative categories. As this might suggest, the descriptive models tended to analyse the processes that had occurred during a negotiation from a detached viewpoint, while normative models attempted to prescribe actions with a view to reaching agreement. The study notes that empirical testing of theories is severely lacking across the field, and that there is a tendency to apply models from one area of application to others after the fact (Lewicki, Weiss & Lewin 1992 p243). Negotiation theory itself is just one sub-category within their study (the others being psychological and sociological conflict, economic analysis, labour relations and third-party dispute resolution) and might be defined, in opposition to these alternative categories, as the process by which two or more parties actively attempt to reach agreement about the terms of their relationship. It therefore specifically excludes mediation, arbitration, violent conflict and even to an extent the structural factors that lie behind different positions. The process of negotiation as outlined in this study, then, has much in common with the notion of *agonistic* relations that Chantal Mouffe so clearly separates out from the merely *antagonistic*. "This is how I envisage the agonistic struggle," she stated in an interview in 2007, "a struggle between different interpretations of shared principles, a conflictual consensus: consensus on the principles, disagreement about their interpretation" (Miessen 2007 p3). If the optimistic embracing of "dialogue" as a structuring principle of socially engaged art echoes the apparently overly-idealistic Habermasian model of the bourgeois public sphere, then I am suggesting that the

tensions inherent within Mouffe's agonistic public realm (and in postmodern "post-publics" more generally) can be usefully modelled using theories of negotiation. These theories offer tactics for taking negotiations forward, for maintaining communication, for sustaining ongoing relationships within an agonistic situation.

The study by Lewicki, Weiss & Lewin goes on to break models of negotiation down further into either distributive or integrative, depending on whether the issue at stake is the simple distribution of scarce and fixed resources (the division of a pie being the classic example), or a wider and more flexible problem that has potential for finding creative solutions. Within the context of a fine art practice that is attempting to handle complex social and human themes, it is surely obvious that an integrative approach is more suitable than the merely distributive. My research, then, is based on an integrative and normative theory of negotiation that proposes specific tactics and approaches to dealing with conflicting demands. It is particularly suited to being applied across disciplines as a generative model because it is forward-looking and suggests tactics to follow rather than analysing a process that has already happened.

Within this more closely defined area of negotiation theory I have selected one of the most enduring and influential models, the Harvard Negotiation Project's notion of *principled negotiation* originating from Harvard Law School's Professor Roger Fisher in 1979. Employing a mixture of theory building, pedagogic activity and action research, faculty members from the project have been involved with high-profile events in world politics over the past thirty years including the Camp David negotiations between President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin (at which the newly defined "single text" process was employed). Since first being published in 1981, the key book on principled negotiation, *Getting to Yes* (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991), has sold over two million copies and been translated into twenty different languages. My project transfers key elements of the Harvard Negotiation Project's system of principled negotiation to the context of contemporary fine art, demonstrating the application of a new metaphor for the analysis and production of art that operates in relation to the public realm. As its name suggests, principled negotiation is founded on the idea that it is possible to achieve satisfactory agreements if they are based on principles and values, rather than being narrowly concerned with short-term wins and underhand tactics.

The main criticism of this model is that in order to propose constructive behaviour it brackets out issues of strength and resources through the concept of BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement),[1] it "offers no direct analysis of the role of power" and generally assumes a negotiating situation which is "rational

and high minded" (McCarthy 1985 p64). Real life is often more heated, angry and irrational than principled negotiation allows. However, it could be argued that by using BATNA issues of power and hierarchy are in fact defused rather than ignored, so that the process of negotiation can be begun regardless of current inequalities or even, indeed, willingness to participate. The criticism that the model is unrealistic is also less important in the current context, as the aim is to position the theoretical model as a structuring metaphor for artistic projects.

Principled negotiation is a pragmatic system or method which was designed to be used under stressful conditions in real time. Such an empirical system is naturally very different from the highly theoretical bodies of work produced by philosophers like Habermas and Arendt (it has more in common with Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life* (1988) in the way it offers hands-on advice for dealing with the world). The roots of negotiation theory in labour relations and behaviourist sociology tend to make it rather reductive and instrumental, but that element of concreteness acts as a welcome corrective to the woolly manner in which dialogue is usually invoked to underpin socially engaged art projects. However, it should not be thought that such a "common sense" analysis of negotiation is somehow ideology-free. Ostensibly neutral business models implicitly reflect the values of a capitalist market place, conservative politics and perhaps even something of American pragmatist philosophy, which contends that philosophy cannot deal with issues such as reality or truth (Rorty 1982). My project turns this ideological basis around, drawing explicit connections between negotiation theory's modelling of conflicts and the left-wing political model of an agonistic society.

It is also interesting to bring a business model to bear on art practices that, as I discussed above, themselves reflect aspects of current business philosophy such as the experience economy and the "third spirit of capitalism" based on temporary teams working on transient projects through highly networked outsourced resources (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005 p73). Its application to contemporary art as a generative method, where the parties in conflict might be as intangible as "normative pressure" or as wide-ranging as "the public sphere", is an entirely new exercise. The resulting artworks address not only the interpersonal dialogues typical of recent socially engaged art, but also the transactions that occur between individuals and the very idea of publicness itself. Rosalyn Deutsche has noted that "publicness emerges as a quality that constitutes, inhabits, and also breaches the interior of social subjects. It is a condition of exposure to an outside that is also an instability within" (Deutsche 1996 p303), and is an abstraction that can play the same role in subject formation through dialogue that other people are understood to play by Bakhtin or Guattari.

Taken from the key articulation of the model first published in 1981, *Getting to Yes* (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991), the four central principles that characterise principled negotiation are as follows:

- Separate the people from the problem
- Focus on interests, not positions
- Invent options for mutual gain
- Insist on using objective criteria

These headline principles (which all give titles to chapters in *Getting to Yes*), together with their associated theoretical devices and tactics, form the basis for four different artistic projects that I describe in part two of this commentary. These are a mixture of commissions and self-initiated projects that use the model of principled negotiation to describe and display agonistic relationships. Rather than the overarching dialogical model, using different parts of the Harvard Negotiation Project approach means that more detailed aspects of relationships between people, institutions and paradigms can be drawn out. This model of negotiation breaks tense relationships down into component parts, resulting in a level of detail and articulation that a generalised "dialogue" is unable to control adequately.

Approach to practice

My overall artistic practice is broadly conceptual, led by ideas and themes rather than media or technique. I do not have a trademark process or medium that I am involved with refining, but move between a large variety of materials, techniques and processes. Consequently the way that I approach making a piece may be as important as the final object itself. I also consider writing and publishing to be important parts of my practice that affect the reading of my studio works. This should become clear in the commentaries on my projects below. By making a series of different bodies of work on different scales and in different modes, dealing with different subject matter in each instance, I plan to demonstrate that the Harvard Negotiation Project's model of principled negotiation can be used to describe aspects of art that addresses the idea of the public realm. The particular characteristics of each body of work suggest different ways in which the homogeneous term "dialogue" might be nuanced in terms of negotiation theory. As each project touches upon the particular bodies of writing I have referred to above, I expand upon the relevant theory and context to explain the connections I am making. In this way, the application of a systematic method to a particular area results in the generation of new artistic

practices that engage with and add to the existing field.

Theory and practice

Since the "textual turn" that contemporary art took in the 1960s, it has been common for artists to write about their work in essays and magazine articles, and also to operate as critics and art historians in their own right. Some artists such as Lawrence Weiner moved their entire practices into the realm of the written word. This is not the place to expand more comprehensively on the role of text and writing in contemporary art, but I do want to just note the crucial importance of writing for many artists, and also the many modes and registers that texts produced by artists can take. It is hardly ever a straightforward matter of written *theory* and material *practice* with no overlap between the two. Ideas and contexts inevitably appear in the physical work, just as words, texts and language emanate from the studio. All of this is available to be used; to locate the work, to nuance its meanings, to suggest ways of approaching and interpreting it. Written texts, in turn, are illustrated and to a certain extent affected by readings of associated artworks.

The form of the PhD thesis has changed, of course, and is still changing. But nevertheless the researcher is required to submit two distinct objects for examination: the practice in the form of artwork documented, and the written commentary with its traditional academic apparatus of literature review, methodology and conclusion. This inevitably leads to questions of the relationship between the two. Does the writing contextualise the work or attempt to explain it? Does it launch a thesis which the artwork tests or illustrates? One is assumed to precede the other and their hierarchy must be made clear. Katy MacLeod is an influential academic who has identified three approaches to clarifying this relationship: the written submission may be seen as positioning, theorising, or revealing a practice (MacLeod 2000), which all modify the way that artwork is approached in subtly different ways.

My position is that artwork produced in the studio or on location is not necessarily distinct from writing that I produce. It is normal practice for me to write an essay or a short text to accompany a piece of work that is presented in the gallery alongside it as another part of the overall experience I am aiming to construct. These texts might take the form of the traditional press release or catalogue essay (although often they do not) and play an important role in presenting additional information or pushing the audience in one particular interpretive direction. In a broader context, the writing that I publish in *Art Monthly* or other outlets has the effect of altering the perception of my gallery work and inevitably situates it in a slightly different manner. All of this is important when it comes to the audience's reading of an

exhibition project. In each of the four projects described in the following chapters I presented written or spoken texts alongside the ostensible "artwork" to nuance its reception (in the form of adjusted text, two interviews, two essays, email-as-press release, and spoken introduction). I do not believe that there is a strong division between "theory and practice", and the writing here in this commentary is meant to act as context, argument and clarification in parallel to the four gallery projects. One is not meant to only "explain" but rather to colour the interpretation of the other, and vice versa. The two elements always work together.

I have said that I intend addressing the unexamined notion of dialogue that underpins the socially engaged and relational artworks that are currently so widespread. This is just one aspect of my project that seems particularly pressing in the light of the frequently unquestioning acceptance of the dialogical paradigm. I am also interested in practices that specifically take the public realm as their subject matter, examining its constitution and the relationships between social forces and individual agents. The notion of public art is predicated on an understanding of what makes up the public realm itself; the two are intimately related. Critiques of the public realm (for instance, Mitchell 1990; Robbins 1993; Sheikh 2008) offer an expanded notion of publicness that can incorporate the mass media, discursivity, identity and even the notion of subjectivity itself. A contemporary definition of public art must allow for all of these permutations.[2] Writing about his own work in 1990, the artist Vito Acconci suggested that

> the end is public, but the means of public art might be private. The end is people, but the means might be individual persons. The end is space, but the means might be fragments and bits. (Mitchell 1990 p173)

And more recently, Nicolas Bourriaud writes:

> It is the *socius* i.e. all the channels that distribute information and products, that is the true exhibition site for artists of the current generation. The art centre and the gallery are particular cases but form an integral part of a vaster ensemble: public space. (Bourriaud 2005 p71)

My new application of the negotiation theory model is meant to have relevance to all these possible artistic modes, and not be limited to an analysis of one particular level of transaction. So to assume that negotiation would only apply to the pragmatics of the conversation between an artist and a commissioning agency, for example, would be to exclude several other strata of possible application. My artwork will involve

relationships between participants (as in Relational Aesthetics) and between artist and institutions, and will also look at the individual's relationship with more abstract or metaphorical concepts such as art history. Art may "address the public realm" in a whole variety of modes, from simply appearing in public space, to inhabiting the media, making use of public processes, offering alternative definitions and so on. As outlined above, I intend using principled negotiation as a structuring metaphor in the generation of new artwork. The results of its application appear in the final projects, though the process itself may be legibly revealed only in this commentary (which exists for academic, rather than artistic, purposes).

1 The concept of BATNA allows issues of power and inequality to be extracted from the processes of negotiation itself by always keeping the negotiator's alternative options separate. Rather than an artificial "bottom line", a negotiator should bear in mind what they could end up with *without* an agreement. That is the real alternative to reaching agreement. In order to strengthen one's hand, then, it is necessary to develop and improve one's BATNA so that a bad agreement becomes less attractive. (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 pp97–106).

2 I have made the case for a wider understanding of "public art" in the article "Beyond Public Art" (Wilsher 2009). See appendix E.

6. Analysis

Homogeneity and the inclusion agenda

This chapter expands on some of the implications of using principled negotiation as a structuring device in art, and analyses existing critiques of dialogical practice. It clarifies some of the arguments that I aim to demonstrate through my four projects. These can be seen both as specific examples of how integrative negotiation theory may be applied, and as suggestive indications for wider research into negotiation as a model.

With my analysis of *The Fifth Floor* exhibition at Tate Liverpool in chapter four, I demonstrated the implicit connection between the Habermasian public sphere and the artists's interest in creating spaces for dialogue between people "disregarding status altogether" (Habermas 1992 p36). The conception of the exhibition as a project that would "open the galleries to the participation of people from the city and region" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p5) and the use of such language throughout the whole catalogue clearly show the internalisation of the Habermasian ideal.[1] This is also true of dialogical practices more widely, and I discussed Grant Kester's explicit use of Habermas and Bakhtin to theorise them in chapter three (p30).

My argument is that the dialogical paradigm is inadequate when it comes to making work that addresses the complexities of the public realm. In bracketing out difference the better to facilitate free exchange, dialogue homogenises the people it claims to respect. All types of gender, economic, ethnic and cultural difference are cast aside in this utopia. But surely these differences also reflect real histories and desires that should be the very basis of political discussion? In her extensive and influential study of current site-specific practice *One Place After Another* (2004),

Miwon Kwon writes that "the field continues to covet images of coherence, unity and wholeness as the ideal representation of a community" (Kwon 2004 p152), and the curator of Tate Modern's *Common Wealth* exhibition, Jessica Morgan, also notes that "what is missing from a theory of relational aesthetics based entirely in the social is an acknowledgement of the role of context" (Tate Modern 2003 p25). The utilisation of the dialogical paradigm can be an oppressive and destructive act when homogeneity is imposed from the outside.

This homogenising tendency in part derives from the way that dialogue has become an established orthodoxy and is accepted without being challenged by many artists in the belief that it is necessarily a progressive strategy. The term itself and what processes it might actually entail are not subject to much scrutiny. In the hands of local government agencies and arts funders, dialogue is a one-size-fits-all panacea that can be thrown at any problem. The artists group BAVO note that there has been a

> shift in emphasis from classical art criteria such as meaning or form to criteria such as results, performativity or even utility value. For a growing group of artists, art has long since ceased to be about what it says, represents or reflects, but is about what the work "does", effects or generates in the social context in which it operates. (BAVO 2008 p109)

The emphasis on what the work "does" reveals a prioritising of ends over means, and reflects the political changes that have coincided with and created an expanding market for participatory projects. Liam Gillick writes that the notions of inclusive participation and continual education are

> used in different cultures in order to escape what are actually clear political differences related to class, situation and power … Working situations are not changed; the idea is that *you* have to change. (Gillick 2008 p20)

This was correctly predicted a decade earlier at the start of New Labour's government when Ruth Levitas described "employability" as becoming an obligation for all individuals: "inclusion becomes a duty rather than a right, and something which requires active performance" (Levitas 1998 p128). My argument here is that the neo-liberal ideological framework that constitutes all of us as potential employees rather than members of a common society performs the same sleight of hand as the dialogical paradigm in contemporary art. By bracketing out context and real

difference in the name of free exchange (or the free movement of the markets), too much of substance is lost. In order to be constituted as individual "participants" we must be removed from the group identifications that inform our subjectivities. This shared operation is another reason for the apparent congruence of participatory art and government policy. As one might expect, Dave Beech and Freee (the group to which he contributes) phrase their critique in strongly class-based political terms:

> Culture-led regeneration attains adequate expression when, and only when, it neutralizes the threat of working class youth by inculcating the aspirations of the good worker. Thus, culture-led regeneration puts art's cultural hegemony into the service of social hegemony pure and simple. (Freee Art Collective 2006 p27)

But Julia Svetlichnaja takes a wider perspective in a conference paper titled "Relational Paradise as a Delusional Democracy" (2005). Referring to *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005) by sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello which describes networked relationships as the basis for a third wave of capitalist wealth creation (after patriarchal business empires and managerial bureaucracies), she writes that "relational art contributes to the imaginary of the third spirit of capitalism" (Svetlichnaja 2005 p19). Artists are the paradigmatic entrepreneurial figures, good at organising and motivating people, networking and creating new relationships as they move across different sites[2]. Reiss and Butler's *Art of Negotiation* (which actually emerged from Arts Council research into policy development around socially engaged work) also proudly declares that "the innovative approaches and strategies artists use to make their work offer up models for ways of working in the commercial and business sector" (Reiss & Butler 2007 p11). It would be easy on this basis for a critique that employs these techniques to slip into simple affirmation, and indeed this is one of the criticisms often levelled at the Relational Aesthetics tendency (Stallabrass 2004; Martin 2007).[3]

The agonistic critique

As I discussed in chapter three, the major critique of relational art that has emerged is based around Chantal Mouffe's model of agonism, with Claire Bishop putting forward a succinct argument through *Artforum* and *October* magazines (Bishop 2004; 2006*a*; 2006*c*). This critique is in effect an attack on the perceived naivety of the Habermasian public sphere as an idealised place of equitable discussion. To briefly look at just two of Bishop's examples once again, in contrast to what she portrays as relational aesthetics' universalising conviviality, the work

> does not offer an experience of transcendent human empathy that smoothes over the awkward situation before us, but a pointed racial and economic nonidentification: "this is not me". The persistence of this friction, its awkwardness and discomfort, alerts us to the relational antagonism. (Bishop 2004 p79)

She describes several pieces of work by Santiago Sierra, who is her primary example, including *Persons Paid To Have Their Hair Dyed Blond* (2001), *Line Tattooed on Six Paid People* (1999) and *Workers Who Cannot Be Paid, Remunerated to Remain Inside Cardboard Boxes* (2000) which employed a rotating cast of Chechnyan refugees seeking asylum in Germany concealed within large boxes in the gallery. The crucial thing for Bishop is that these works are all located within real cultural formations (she lists immigration, the minimum wage, illegal street commerce and homelessness, to which one might add drug addiction and unemployment) rather than the abstract open-ended pseudo-spaces of a typically relational work. Sierra's artificially contrived situations serve to "highlight the divisions enforced by these contexts" (Bishop 2004 p72), and it is from the limits and exclusions caused by these divisions that agonism grows.

The Polish artist Artur Zmijewski is another example that Bishop gives in her articles. Like Sierra, he orchestrates "difficult – sometimes excruciating – situations" (Bishop 2006*a* p182) which are filmed and presented in the gallery. *The Singing Lesson I* (2001) featured a choir of deaf students singing a cacophonous mass in a Warsaw church; *Them* (2007) follows four politically opposed groups as they paint banners, are invited to interact, and ultimately set fire to each others' work. *Repetition* (2005) was a re-enactment of the infamous 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment, with volunteer "jailors" overseeing volunteer "prisoners" within a fake prison environment. For Bishop, these works demonstrate that "we can only ever have limited access to others' emotional and social experiences" and, once again, it is the articulation of these very differences that makes the work "troubling" (Bishop 2004 p182). As an art historian and occasional curator, she is obviously limited to identifying existing work by other people that might fit her category of relational antagonism – she has not been able to make her own examples. It is clear that the works she has chosen are those that highlight social divisions, that create awkward, difficult situations, and which might prove provocative or shocking to their audience.[4] She has argued that

> such discomfort and frustration – along with absurdity, eccentricity, doubt, or sheer pleasure – can, on the contrary, be crucial elements *of*

a work's aesthetic impact. (Bishop 2006*a* p181) [My emphasis]

This is a revealing statement, in that it is clear that she sees the uncomfortable subject matter of these works as just that – subject matter or content. Bishop's version of agonistic artwork is one in which agonism is *represented* in order to be aesthetically appreciated by the audience.

Two immediate problems derive from this. Firstly, there is the issue of art's century-old relationship to avant-garde shock tactics. "Provocation can easily enough slide over into titillation," argues Grant Kester:

> and one might argue that, at this late stage, art audiences expect, even anticipate, the shock, dislocation, and discomfort that avant-garde art delivers. Seldom has a population been so relentlessly "disrupted", "challenged", and "destabilised" as the community of art cognoscenti who frequent biennials. (Wilson 2007 p116)

So there is the likelihood that what sets out to be disturbing is simply reified and consumed by critics and audiences in search of the latest thrill, affirming cultural hegemony rather than genuinely promoting dissensus. Kester goes on to posit the figure of the critic as the "ideal viewer" (Wilson 2007 p116) for this type of work, who performs the shock or disgust that we are supposed to feel.

Secondly, by simply *representing* agonism within the work the standard processes and practices of making art remain unaffected and intact. This is particularly relevant since, it should be remembered, one of the key manifestations of the dialogical principle operates at the level of authorship in a work, as the artist/author is decentred through dialogical exchanges with other participants and collaborators. A truly agonistic approach would need to incorporate disagreement and dissensus during the processes of its formulation in order to be an adequate answer to relational art's homogenising conviviality. Mere representation of conflict is too safely contained. This line of criticism is pursued by Dave Beech when he writes that Bishop

> promotes antagonism and censures conviviality insofar as they are present *in the work itself*. In other words, she presupposes that the politics of the encounter has to be resolved formally in the work … But why would the antagonism have to appear in the work? Does Bishop not neglect the variety of possible ways in which hegemony can be challenged and the variety of ways in which art can contribute to that process? (Beech 2009*b* p4)

The measured and somewhat academic work of Freee is a good example of this. It doesn't appear immediately confrontational or disturbing because the concept of dissensus contributes to their approach to its making rather than its formal content. However, it can still be read as agonistic because of the way in which it demands and demonstrates the possibility of forming counter-public spheres.

Principled negotiation as structuring device

This is the approach that I have taken with my use of negotiation theory to conceptualise the tensions inherent within my projects' contexts. Agonistic negotiations between people do not appear directly as my subject matter, but tensions between different agendas are brought out and foregrounded in most of the works. This reflects my understanding of the public realm as a place of ongoing tension and dispute as much as continuity. It could be said that my projects enact or embody agonistic processes rather than represent them.

The main benefit of enacting agonism through negotiation theory rather than dialogism is that negotiation theory sustains rather than elides differences. Negotiation "presides over much of the change that occurs in human society" (Pruitt & Carnevale 1993 pxv) and its study and theorisation over the last fifty years has opened up its various internal dynamics to scrutiny. My approach in this research, the use of principled negotiation's four guiding maxims to structure four example

Freee *The economic function of public art is to increase the value of private property* 2005
(International Project Space 2007 p20)

projects, is intended to give greater clarity to the processes that lie behind the work, and hence greater control over its direction and outcome. This is achieved because the four maxims are designed to tease out various aspects of a disagreement in order that each might be tackled individually. It is not the blunt instrument of an overtly shocking agonistic approach, nor the homogenising panacea of dialogue between rational parties. Each part of the model highlights a different aspect of the tensions that exist in the agonistic public realm.

As I have tried to emphasise in the individual chapters on these four projects, they each take their direction and tone from specific aspects of principled negotiation. Even in being able to identify and discuss these four approaches it is evident that negotiation offers a more explicitly articulated map than the catch-all dialogical paradigm. Individual positions are respected and tensions maintained rather than artificially smoothed out. The agonistic relationships between different parties are not simply expressed as cynical disruption (as in Santiago Sierra's work), but find various forms of articulation in the final artworks themselves without necessarily appearing troubled or disturbing. The use of negotiation theory as a structuring model articulates aspects of the projects' contexts that would not necessarily have become apparent through a more generalised dialogical approach. The role of individual personalities, for instance, longer-term agendas and interests, wider contexts and future possibilities are all brought into play. These already exist within the context of an agonistic discursive public realm but dialogue is not able to differentiate between them systematically. Integrative negotiation suggests a plurality of possible outcomes.

I have aimed to make the artwork do more than illustrate my academic thesis, but also incorporate a richness of allusion and complexity in relation to my interests in publicness and public art in the broadest sense. If there are elements that appear superfluous or contradictory then this may be a reflection of the idea that

> the political dimension of art is realized not in simply creating more upsetting work but in accepting antagonism and impossibility of final reconciliation as the very condition for society's existence. (Svetlichnaja 2005 p18)

In contrast to the tendency to present hopeful models of a well-integrated society, my "socially engaged" projects present problems and conflicts within society that remain unresolved. The various texts, gallery discussions and interpretive materials that accompany them have helped to put these conflicts into public consciousness. The success of each piece can be gauged by the extent to which problematic

relationships and tensions were made visible to the audience. I also take the support of several well-known gallery spaces to indicate a certain level of acceptance and validation.

Agreement and resolution?

The political theory of agonistic democracy as discussed by Laclau and Mouffe is predicated on an ongoing set of disagreements between social groups which are never fully resolved because a "consensus without exclusion" (Miessen 2007 p2) is impossible. Irreconcilable differences are central to this philosophy as they reflect the possibility of taking real political positions (i.e. not the pseudo-politics of neo-liberalism). Negotiation theory as a whole, however, is constructed on the notion that agreement is a tangible end that can be actively sought for. Integrative negotiation in particular takes as a starting assumption the idea that it will be possible to find enough points of agreement to build a satisfactory resolution to the problem. How do these two positions fit together?

Firstly, it should be remembered that Mouffe's neologism "agonism" is meant to signify a lesser antagonism that she has described as adversarial.

> The major difference between enemies and adversaries is that adversaries are, so to speak, "friendly enemies" in the sense that they have got something in common: they share a symbolic space. (Miessen 2007 p3)

Mouffe gives the example of shared ethical principles, but different interpretations of those principles. The two parties may differ on the interpretation but agree on many other things: they are not entirely at odds with one another. This is the basis for her version of a pluralistic agonistic democracy. Yes agonism is said to be ongoing and irreconcilable, but there are also many other shared points of contact and agreement between the different groups involved. It seems to me that the agonistic aspect of her writing has been emphasised in the contemporary art context mainly in order to provide contrast to the idealism of the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere. In reality, an agonistic democracy would entail as many agreements as disagreements, occurring simultaneously at many levels of detail and importance. So it would not be impossible to sometimes find agreement, even if those agreements were sometimes limited or temporary.

The other solution for this apparent mismatch between agonism's endless disagreement and negotiation theory's desire for resolution lies in the application of negotiation theory itself. The strength of the integrative approach is that it downplays

the traditional model of negotiation as a matter of "convergence through incremental concessions from specific initial positions" (Zartman 2008 p59) in favour of a wider conception of potential positive outcomes. Straightforward agreement over a single issue is not the only objective. The four components of principled negotiation enable a methodical analysis of the circumstances surrounding a disagreement, and can lead to a greater understanding of the situation even if no agreement is eventually reached. When applied to the generation of artistic projects in the manner that I will demonstrate, it is not necessary to come to some kind of notional agreement in order to end up with a successful body of work. Rather, negotiation theory provides a conceptual framework within which various tensions and relationships can be analysed and discussed with greater clarity. Negotiation theory is a process-based model that can be mapped onto agonistic relationships in order to highlight their internal dynamics, without necessarily expecting to find final agreement. This also means that the model does not need to be used in its entirety but may be applied in parts in order to pick out single elements of a given situation.

1 "There is a real need to listen and be open to the importance of public opinion in democratising gallery practice" (Tate Liverpool 2009 p62).

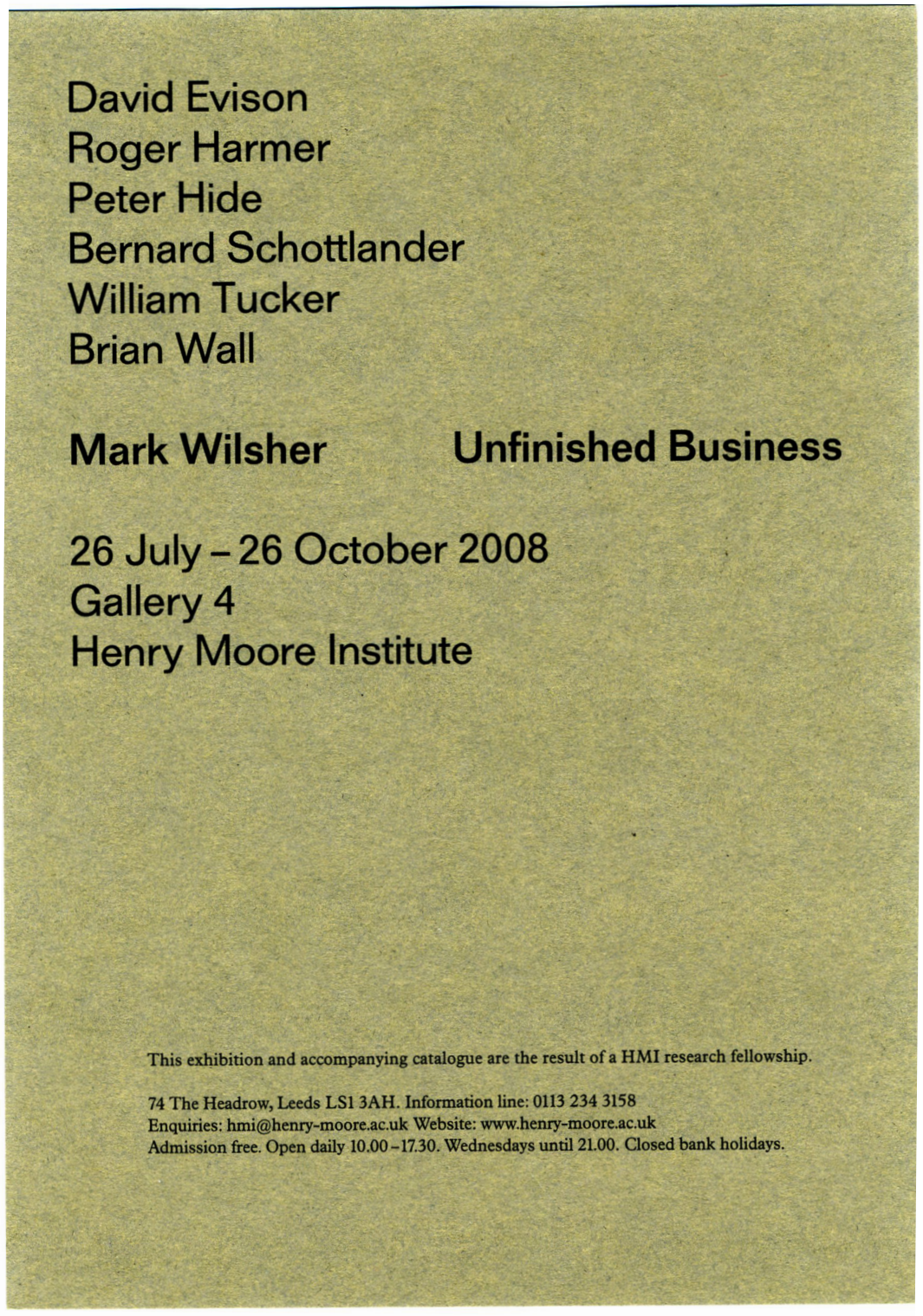
2 Liam Gillick has recently written about the idea that "artists are at best the ultimate freelance knowledge workers and at worst barely capable of distinguishing themselves from the consuming desire to work at all times" (Gillick 2010 unpaginated).

3 Neil Mulholland goes further in an essay for Tate Papers, claiming that the UK's rather late embracing of relational aesthetics is just an attempt to make its "neo-colonial ambitions more palatable by wrapping them in rhetoric about the need to protect the interests of the disadvantaged and the downtrodden" (Mulholland 2004 unpaginated).

4 Some other examples she gives include Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), Phil Collins's *they shoot horses* (2004), Carsten Höller's *Baudouin Experiment* (2001), Alexandra Mir's *Cinema for the Unemployed* (1998), and various pieces by Thomas Hirchhorn.

Part II

7. Separate the People from the Problem: *Unfinished Business*



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Press Release

Unfinished Business:
A fellowship project by Mark Wilsher

Gallery 4, Henry Moore Institute
26 July – 26 October 2008

Unfinished Business, the culmination of a fellowship at the Henry Moore Institute,* sees artist, writer and curator Mark Wilsher experimenting with images and texts relating to abstract sculpture of the 1960s and 70s. Taking photographic reproductions of sculptures from the magazines of their time, Wilsher has created a series of 'photo-drawings', which modify and recontextualise works by artists including Peter Hide, Bernard Schottlander and William Tucker. The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue which features Wilsher's adaptations of art historical texts from the period.

The 'unfinished business' Wilsher explores is the playing out of the modernist sculpture canon in the contemporary art world. He is interested in the ways in which these works sit within the contemporary, neo-conceptual environment that has framed his own artistic experience, and in some way is seeking to re-learn what modernism was and what it stands for. In the interview in the exhibition catalogue, he describes his student experience of modernist sculptures of the 1960s within anonymous public spaces, wondering how they might have influenced his own tastes, despite being deeply unfashionable some thirty years later.

Whilst Wilsher's doctoring of photographs and amendments to texts could be seen as wilful misinterpretation, his trawl through the archives has served to increase his respect for the artists concerned. Many of them achieved considerable success in their time and Wilsher is interested in the sense that this knowledge is lost somewhere in the archives, languishing in the pages of long forgotten art magazines. *Unfinished Business* can thus be seen as a complex but positive act of retrieval and recuperation.

*Mark Wilsher was a Henry Moore Institute Fellow in 2006/7. Each year the Institute offers four fellows the opportunity to spend a month in Leeds to develop their own research. With access to the Institute's resources and an ongoing dialogue with two research co-ordinators, fellows are free to pursue their own projects in a supportive and stimulating environment. As an integral part of the research programme the fellowships present fresh perspectives on the Leeds collections, open up new collaborative possibilities and further research into sculpture. Find out more at www.henry-moore-fdn.co.uk

Image: Unfinished Business (Harmer) 2008, Ink on photograph

For further information and images, please contact: Rebecca Land, Henry Moore Institute,
tel: 0113 233 7653 or 0113 246 7467 / e-mail: rebecca@henry-moore.ac.uk

Note to editors: The **Henry Moore Institute** is a centre dedicated to the study of sculpture and is located in the heart of Leeds. Its programming comprises three integrated elements dedicated to sculpture: collections, exhibitions and research. The Henry Moore Institute is part of The Henry Moore Foundation.

The Henry Moore Foundation
in partnership with Leeds City Council

Unfinished Business (Installation image) at Henry Moore Institute, Leeds 2008

Installation image at CHELSEA Space, London 2009 with Brian Wall's *Three Circles II* 1966

Installation image at CHELSEA Space, London 2009 with Brian Wall's *Three Circles II* 1966

CHELSEA space **# 24**

Mark Wilsher

Unfinished Business

January 21st – February 28th 2009
Tuesday to Friday 11.00am – 5.00pm, Saturday 10.00am – 4.00pm

Private View
Saturday January 24th 1.00 - 4.00pm

A Henry Moore Institute fellowship project by Mark Wilsher

University of the Arts London Chelsea

Arts Council Collection
Southbank Centre, London

Henry Moore Institute

CHELSEA space
Chelsea College of Art and Design
16 John Islip Street London SW1P 4JU
www.chelseaspace.org
Part of the **CHELSEA** programme

Separate the People from the Problem: Unfinished Business

This chapter describes how the principled negotiation tactic of *separating the people from the problem* (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p17) contributed to the conception and development of my *Unfinished Business* project. This culminated in a body of new drawings, two adjusted text pieces, a colour catalogue and two exhibitions at the Henry Moore Institute in 2008 and CHELSEA Space in London in 2009, with three pictures also being selected for a year-long exhibition at Leeds Art Gallery in 2009/10. Images and installation photos are included in this chapter, while the catalogue featuring an interview between Dr Jon Wood and myself and various press coverage is included as appendix A.

Assertion

I briefly touched on the idea of traditional Modernist art as fundamentally assertive in chapter three (p32), drawing on Gemma Corradi Fiumara's book *The Other Side of Language* (1990) that Grant Kester references in order to construct his dialogical aesthetic. Fiurama sees this assertion in the decidedly un-dialogical presentation of autonomous artworks to an audience. The high modernism of Clement Greenberg makes a good example, with self-contained, self-referential paintings and sculptures ostensibly claiming their place in the world purely on their own merits.[1] I also mentioned in my discussion of Hannah Arendt's work that sculptor William Tucker had explicitly credited her writing on the public realm as a space of appearance and action as being a key influence on his thinking.

The *Unfinished Business* project is based on seeing the assertive presentation of art before an audience as performing the same kind of transaction as positional

bargaining in a negotiation situation. When modern art, in particular public art, is viewed as a kind of inflexible position-taking, it comes as no surprise that the audience reaction is so often negative – artwork and audience fail to reach an agreement, in other words.[2]

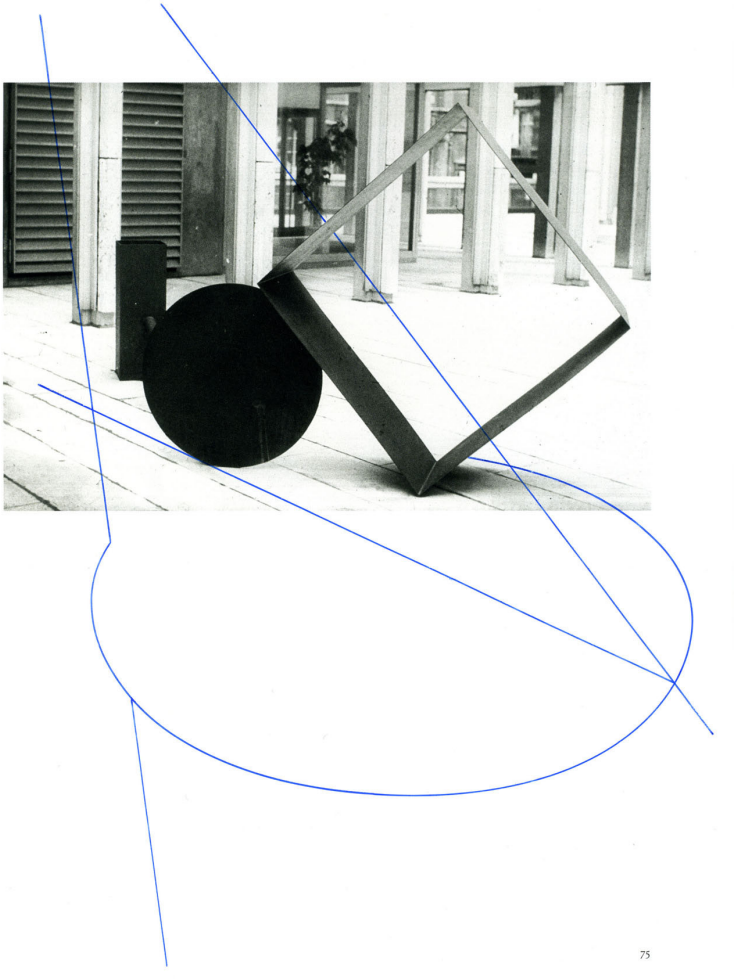
This is particularly so in the case of the largely neglected genre of large-scale outdoor sculpture that this project addresses (notwithstanding the recent revival of large-scale work such as Gormley's *Angel of the North* and Mark Wallinger's proposed 50m horse at Ebbsfleet International station in Kent, which are reliant on visual spectacle). The influential British sculptor Anthony Caro, who taught all the artists whose work I engage with in this project, sums up the classic stance of autonomy as follows: "if the artwork is to be *seen* as an artwork then it must be isolated from external relationships" (Caro 1984 p41).[3] When it came to the idea of public art or even "the public" generally, other artists of this generation were equally sceptical. In an article for *Studio International* magazine in 1969, William Tucker wrote that "there is no public realm in our time to which a public sculpture might give visual purpose" (Tucker 1969 p13), while the slightly older sculptor William Turnbull remarked that "the problem of public sculpture is largely with the public" (Davidson 2005 p61). These comments illustrate the extent to which formalist abstract sculpture in Britain in the mid 1960s was inward-looking and assertive. This is clearly in direct contrast to the entire principle of artistic practice as dialogue and reflects the older generation's conception of the public realm as a space of appearance rather than discussion. It is also noteworthy that this grouping of sculptors around Caro and Saint Martins was almost exclusively male, again reflecting Arendt's view of public space.

My project first of all reconceptualises the placing of artworks in the public realm in terms of negotiation. The artist makes a claim on the public realm in exactly the same way that anyone seeking to construct a building, plant a tree or put up a poster makes a claim.[4] The artists make strong, unambiguous aesthetic statements that are not shaped or affected by their context. It is positional bargaining *par excellence*. The public, in the shape of audience members, only have the option of accepting or rejecting the artistic assertion – there is no middle ground. It is particularly appropriate to consider Modernist sculpture in my first project here, because this kind of assertive sculpture became the orthodox model of public art that so many subsequent practices are reactions against. The works described in Suzanne Lacy's *Mapping The Terrain* (1995) are all direct or indirect reactions against that kind of formal object, which Dave Beech recently described as "old genre public art" (Beech 2009*a* p4), and James Wines memorably called "the turd in the plaza"

as early as 1978 (Sleeman 1995 p3). The projects that I describe in subsequent chapters expand outwards into social engagement, interpersonal relationships, and a wider notion of what might be considered as "public" art at all.

Integrative negotiation

As I described in the previous chapter, principled negotiation is an integrative approach to reaching agreement that works from an assumption that both parties will have at least some objectives in common. It is in direct opposition to the positional bargaining that might be encountered as shopkeeper and customer haggle over a price. In that model, the two parties take turns to state their positions (i.e. the minimum and maximum price that each is prepared to make the transaction at), with the hope that they will be prepared to make enough concessions to find a point of agreement somewhere between the two. It is perhaps the archetypal negotiation but it is also inefficient, and where it does produce agreement tends to result in an unsatisfactory outcome on both sides.



Wilsher *Unfinished Business (Wall)* 2008

> As more attention is paid to positions, less attention is devoted to meeting the underlying concerns of the parties. Agreement becomes less likely. Any agreement reached may reflect a mechanical splitting of the difference between final positions rather than a solution carefully crafted to meet the legitimate interests of the parties. (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p5)

Positional bargaining only allows for two approaches, both of which are unsatisfactory. You either play hard, stick to your demands and run a higher risk of not reaching agreement at all, or alternatively play soft and concede more than you intended. Rather than engaging in a reductive tit for tat over positions, which more than likely will have an inadequate result and in addition frequently damages the relationships between the two parties, principled negotiation seeks to find common ground in their underlying interests in the hope that alternative solutions might be developed. My four projects aim to demonstrate how this approach can be applied to artistic practice in order to define tensions within relationships more clearly, and depict "a vibrant 'agonistic' public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic projects can be confronted" (Mouffe 2005 p3).

This body of work, using photographs of this genre of public sculpture, began as a critique and developed as time went on into something of a critical homage. The *Unfinished Business* project is a real attempt to reframe these historical public sculptures (with all the aesthetic debates about form and technique that underpinned them) in terms of a postmodern, conceptually based practice, operating within a discursive and sometimes agonistic public sphere rather than Arendt's arena of heroic action.

Separate the People from the Problem

By reframing the presentation of public sculpture as a process of negotiation in this way, I was able to apply the first maxim of principled negotiation, which is to separate out the people involved from the problem or issue at stake. In this instance, a generational clash of artistic paradigms (perceptual sculpture against conceptual and contextual concerns) could be analysed through a closer involvement with the histories and interests of the individual artists themselves. The catalogue interview describes how, as I discovered more about the works and the artists behind them, I perhaps inevitably moved from a position of strong critique to one of greater understanding.

> The ability to see the situation as the other side sees it, as difficult as it

> may be, is one of the most important skills a negotiator can possess. It is not enough to know that they see things differently. If you want to influence them, you also need to understand empathetically the power of their point of view and to feel the emotional force with which they believe in it… you should be prepared to withhold judgement for a while as you "try on" their views. (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p24)

This level-headed separation is essential to take the heat out of sometimes fraught argument, to ensure that both sides are really talking about issues rather than personalities, and to maintain clear channels of communication both in the present and for future encounters. In this case the "problem" at stake is the relationship between a historic mode of art making, and the contemporary paradigm, which also reflects two different conceptions of the public realm. As I describe in the catalogue, the "hands on" style of perceptual making that was taught and advocated at Saint Martins under Anthony Caro was undermined and quickly superseded by the rise of conceptual art in the late 1960s. My project was a reinvestigation of this mode of making from a contemporary perspective, and aimed to create a relationship between the two different paradigms.

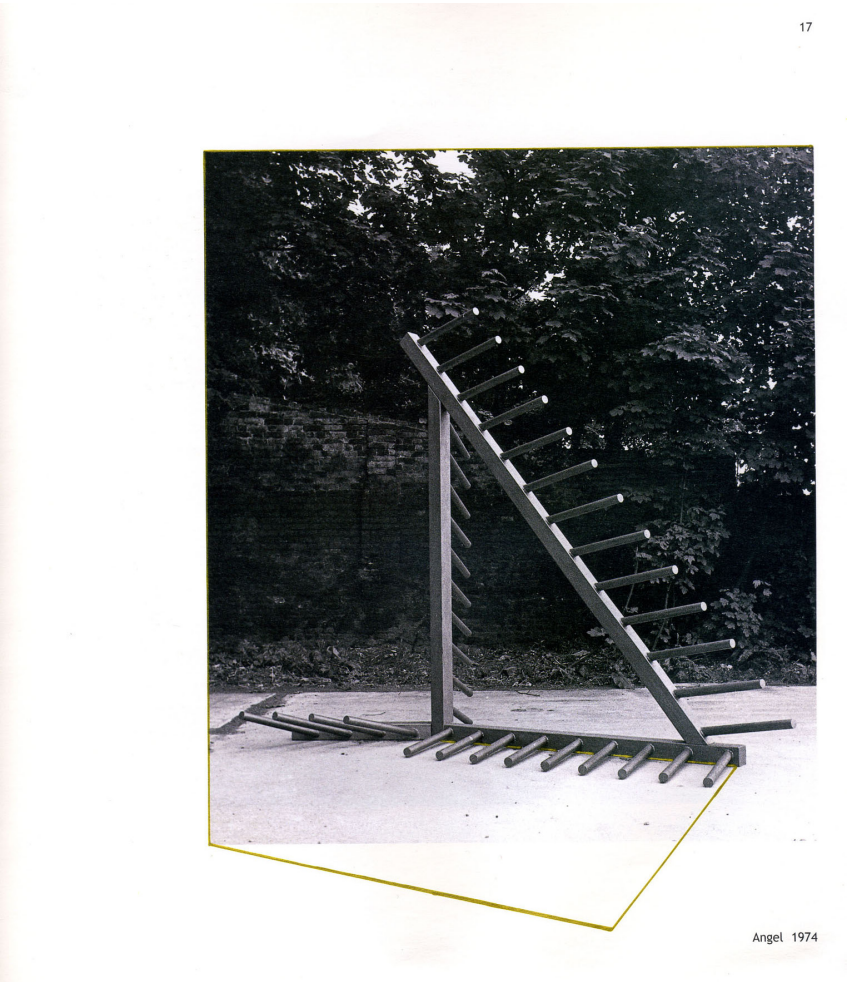
I will briefly point out a few of the formal devices that I have used.[5] Primarily, there is the act of drawing on original archive images, pages from old catalogues and archive photos taken by the artists themselves. This is what signals my appropriation of them, but my minimal alterations do not obscure the originals and signify an engagement rather than defacement. Then there is the way in which the images are reinvigorated by the very act of my artistic curation, which offers up a set of historical artworks to a contemporary audience for reappraisal. The adjusted text pieces in the exhibition, and also in the catalogue, make explicit the kind of close reading and reworking I have undertaken, specifically my transformation of dogmatic texts into more propositional ones. Finally, the recontextualisation of an original sculpture (Brian Wall's *Three Circles II* from 1966) within the exhibition context sets up a conceptual framework around the object that modifies its meaning, while simultaneously presenting the artist's original intentions. In each case there is a balance between intervention and source material that avoids a purely assertive propositionality.

In order for me to add my drawn elements to the images, it was necessary to really understand how the sculptures I had chosen operated and what their important features were, so that my contributions were meaningful additions rather than just unrelated doodles. I researched the era in some depth, reading interviews with the artists as well as catalogues and magazine reviews, so that I began to understand

their aesthetic concerns as well as their more intangible attitudes to making art. I immersed myself in the arguments of the era, and was able to conduct face-to-face interviews with Peter Hide and Robin Greenwood, which really fleshed out the historical facts.

> Understanding the other side's thinking is not simply a useful activity that will help you solve your problem. Their thinking is the problem. Whether you are making a deal or settling a dispute, differences are defined by the difference between your thinking and theirs. (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p22)

This research was hugely helpful when it came to making my own drawings because I was able to engage with the photographic images from a position of real in-depth knowledge. In some cases I was able to discover the intentions behind the actual pieces that I was planning to draw upon. In others I was at least able to build up a picture of the artist's practice as a whole. Whatever I was able to discover went on to inform the specific choice of drawn additions that I made. For instance, my addition



Wilsher *Unfinished Business (Tucker)*, 2008

of flat planes emanating from William Tucker's *Angel* derived from an interview in which he suggested that the form itself created such (imagined) energies.

My interview with Peter Hide gave me plenty of background detail and a sense of the concerns of the era, and I was also able to ask him specifically about *Untitled,* 1969, which I planned to make a work around.

> When I left St Martins and for a couple of years I was a minimalist, or at least an extreme reductionist verging on minimalism. I think the English minimalists were actually more interested in engineering structure. Once you start talking about structure you get into an opposition of forces and you start to get into composition. I had made a lot of sculptures about cantilevers. I think the foothills of abstract sculpture are in literal structure, cantilevers, how things stand up. I'm at a crossover point here where I'm mixing illusion and cantilever together. […] It has this curve, that suggests a horizon. It has a kind of illusionism about it, a perspectival thing about it. So it hovers somewhere between minimalism and illusion. At this stage I was trying to leave minimalism behind, reduction. (P. Hide Personal communication 10 June 2008)

This direct information enabled me to generate drawn additions that were sympathetic to the original sculptures, in this case leading to a series of horizontal lines like horizons that rotate around to duplicate a tipping motion. My intention was that this would echo Peter Hide's mixture of perspective and illusionism.

Because I was lucky enough to have access to the archives at the Henry Moore Institute through a short fellowship, I was able to source original photographs of several Bernard Schottlander sculptures that the artist himself had printed in order to apply for future commissions. These original documents, complete with the artist's stamp and notes on the reverse, helped to add a depth of historical authenticity to the project and emphasised that these works had actually been made by a living person. The "perceptual" formal making of this generation of sculptors was mirrored by the one-off, handmade quality of my own pen on photograph artworks.

Throughout the project I was able to clear a conceptual space in which to engage with a more perceptual way of making, bracketing out other social, political and historical factors in order to concentrate on processes that are put into question by normal postmodern narratives. Through this attention to the people responsible for individual artworks my practice established a more nuanced relationship between historical periods, collapsing the gulf between them into a multilayered

photographic space.

> Don't attack their position, look behind it. When the other side sets forth their position, neither reject or accept it. Treat it as one possible option. Look for the interests behind it, seek out the principles it reflects, and think about ways to improve it. (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p114)

By the end of the project I had come to change my views of this type of abstract outdoor sculpture. Yes, it was perhaps outdated and did not engage with its social situation. Gravity, mass and three dimensionality seem like very limited concerns compared to the world of content that neo-conceptual art has available. But I understood the artists' original intentions and, more importantly, had found a way to make new works that were equally *conceptual* and *perceptual*. This solution had been greatly helped by getting to understand the artists as people and seeing beyond the apparent dichotomy between the art of then and now.

This whole body of work might have been described in terms of "dialogue", as a conversation between generations about the role and possibility of public art. But that description would miss out on important qualities of the finished work: the whole approach of integrating common interests, and the role of individual personalities. Breaking the process down like this allows these aspects to become

Front and reverse of original Bernard Schottlander archive photograph (Date unknown)

visible, but more importantly from the point of view of the artist it shows possible routes forwards into new work. Formalising what would previously have been subsumed under the umbrella concept of dialogue allows these qualities of the project to become visible objects in their own right.

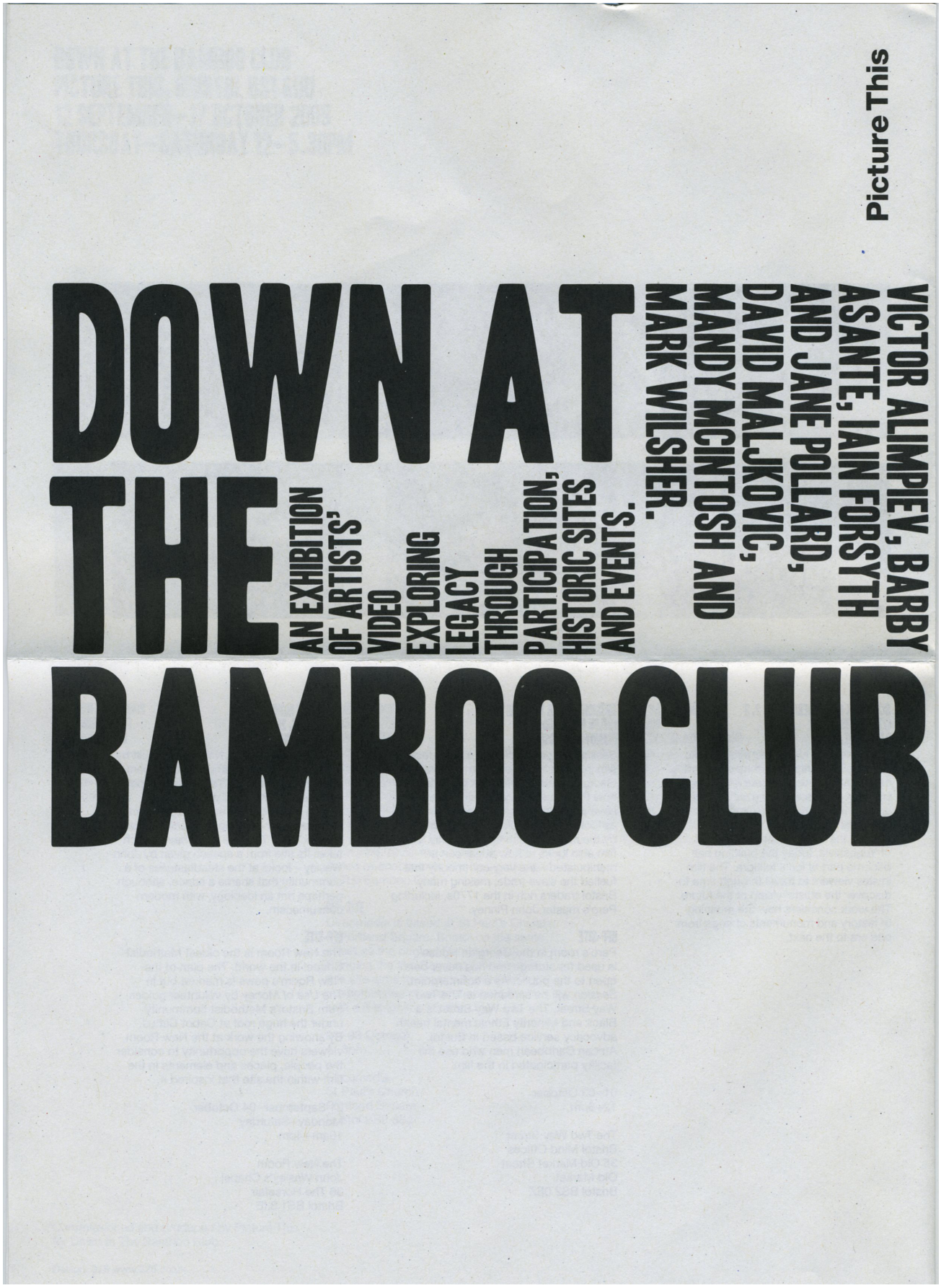
1 Ostensible because, aside from its clandestine international promotion by the CIA as cold war propaganda, the rhetoric of inward-looking autonomous art depends ultimately on all sorts of ideological apparatus that sit well beyond the picture plane.

2 Dialogical art is in many ways a response to the failure of traditional public art to find an audience in the late twentieth century, that failure itself reflecting a change in the conception of public space from Arendt's unified space of appearance to a fractured, polyphonic space of many publics.

3 For a more extensive discussion of Caro's influence and the rationale behind these sculptures, please see the *Unfinished Business* exhibition catalogue interview.

4 The French post-Marxist writer Henri Lefebvre calls this kind of activity "appropriation", and he positions it in opposition to "dominated" space which is "usually closed, sterilized, emptied out" and "invariably the realisation of a master's project" (Lefebvre 1991 p165). Space is *appropriated* by individuals when they seek to turn it to their own uses.

5 This commentary focuses on the way that my projects make use of negotiation theory. Please see the various catalogues, press releases, essays and exhibition texts included in the appendices for fuller information that space constraints prevent me from including here.


Picture This
VICTOR ALIMPIEV, BARBY ASANTE, IAIN FORSYTH AND JANE POLLARD, DAVID MALJKOVIC, MANDY MCINTOSH AND MARK WILSHER.
DOWN AT THE BAMBOO CLUB
AN EXHIBITION OF ARTISTS' VIDEO EXPLORING LEGACY THROUGH PARTICIPATION, HISTORIC SITES AND EVENTS.

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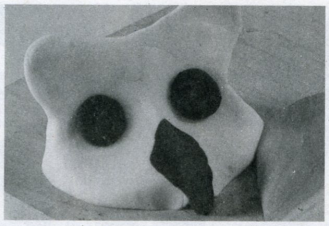



SCENE FOR A NEW HERITAGE 1, 2, 3
(21.20 MINS, 2006)
DAVID MALJKOVIC

Set in the near future, the trilogy looks at our relationship to historic sites and memorials. In each part we are shown a vision of people engaging with a tower erected in Petrova Gora, Croatia – a memorial for victims of World War II. Built by the Communist government of Yugoslavia, today the building has become part of local folklore. The film invites viewers to travel through time to discover the artists' vision of the future. The work considers how the meaning of history and monuments change from one era to the next.

SESSION (SUGAR VERSION)*
(27.05 MINS, 2009)
MANDY MCINTOSH

Session (Sugar Version) is a multi-faceted film inspired by Pero's room in Bristol's Georgian House. The work considers how Pero's experiences as a slave might have affected his mental health, as well as looking at how black men are treated by the mental health system today. The film also looks at how sugar can be manipulated – the very commodity that fuelled the slave trade, making many Bristol traders rich in the 1770s, including Pero's master John Pinney.

OFF-SITE

Pero's room in the Georgian House is used for storage and has never been open to the public. As a counterpoint, *Session* will be screened at The Two Way Street. The Two Way Street is a Black and Minority Ethnic mental health advocacy service based in Bristol. African Caribbean men who use the facility participated in the film.

01–03 October
12–6pm

The Two Way Street
Bristol Mind Offices
35 Old Market Street
Old Market
Bristol BS2 0EZ

THE USE OF MONEY*
(12.38 MINS, 2009)
MARK WILSHER

Bristol is home to the New Room, built by the founder of the Methodist movement John Wesley in 1739. Today, the chapel and the city's Methodist community remain active but are surrounded by an ever developing shopping precinct. Mark Wilsher's film *The Use of Money* – which takes its title from a speech given by John Wesley – looks at the steadfastness of a community that shares a space, although perhaps not an ideology, with modern consumerism.

OFF-SITE

The New Room is the oldest Methodist Chapel in the world. The plan of the New Room's pews is marked out in *The Use of Money* by volunteer guides from Bristol's Methodist community under the huge roof at Cabot Circus. By showing the work at the New Room, viewers have the opportunity to consider the people, places and elements in the film within the site that inspired it.

21 September–04 October
Monday–Saturday
10am–4pm

The New Room
John Wesley's Chapel
36 The Horsefair
Bristol BS1 3JE

DOWN AT THE BAMBOO CLUB

'Down at the Bamboo Club' was conceived in the context of Bristol's celebration of the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery. It coheres around a suite of three newly commissioned films by artists Barby Asante, Mandy McIntosh and Mark Wilsher. Selected by artist and curator Harold Offeh, the three works each revisit a particular aspect of Bristol's socio-political past through the device of filmic recreation. Three further works by Victor Alimpiev, Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard and David Maljkovic expand on the principal ideas of the exhibition through an investigation of historiography itself, the writing and re-writing of history's scripts, and the continual repositioning of the past in relation to the present.

The title of the exhibition, 'Down at the Bamboo Club', refers to the legendary Bristol social club and music venue, the Bamboo Club. The club, which ran during the 1960s and 1970s in St Pauls, has acquired symbolic value today for its role in the social scene of the time. As a venue that encouraged social interaction between communities, it was unique at a time when racial prejudices still prevented the employment of non-white drivers or conductors on Bristol buses.[1] The Bamboo Club closed in 1977, but continues to hold powerful resonance today for the ongoing friendships it fostered and the positive affirmation of community relations it represented.

The scene having been set in a decidedly local environment then, the three new commissions each recreate a scenario from Bristol's past. Asante's *Bamboo Memories*, deals directly with the history of the Bamboo Club; McIntosh's *Session (Sugar Version)* reaches further back into history to focus on the legacy of Bristol's position in the eighteenth-century Slave Trade; while Wilsher concentrates on the history of Bristol's Methodist community. Rather than focusing on verisimilitude or an accurate reconstruction of an historical event, however, the works each create a vision of the past through the prism of the present moment, acknowledging that to 're-member' (to re-assemble, to re-construct) history is to engage in a creative act of personal interpretation.

The works do this primarily through the involvement of individuals and communities whose connection with the issues at hand is real and direct. Asante, for example, arranged a reunion with those who frequented the Bamboo Club during the 1970s. Scenes from the reunion are shown alongside a theatrical recreation of the club staged with the use of props and costumes and actors hired for the occasion. McIntosh invited participants from The Two Way Street, a Bristol-based black and minority ethnic mental health advocacy service, to undertake art therapy sessions, setting their present-day experiences against those of 'Pero', a slave brought to Bristol in 1783 from the Caribbean Islands. Wilsher's *The Use of Money*, takes its title from the Methodist preacher John

[1] The 'Bristol Bus Boycott' took place in 1963, a campaign against racial discrimination on buses triggered by the Bristol Omnibus Company's open refusal to employ black bus conductors or drivers.

Wesley's famous eighteenth-century speech of the same name, in which he decries the excesses of materialism. In this work, members of Bristol's Methodist community stand in rows ordered by the pews of Bristol's New Room chapel, the oldest Methodist chapel in the world. The silent congregation implies a eulogy for lost values that is both incongruous and poignant, standing as it does against the backdrop of Cabot Circus, Bristol's primary shopping precinct. Wilsher overlays the film with the ambient sounds of birdsong and traffic recorded on Hanham mount, the site of Wesley's open-air sermons.

What links the three works, then, is the way each uses the past as a trigger to rethink the present moment, prompting fresh perspectives and new meanings from the narratives of the past. McIntosh's work does this through an act of catharsis, an engagement with the past that attempts a coming to terms with repressed histories and their ongoing repercussions in the present. Asante and Wilsher's works, on the other hand, modulate between critique and nostalgia: nostalgia for – or perhaps homage to – a past moment of conciliation and harmony whilst critically assessing the situation in the present.

'Down at the Bamboo Club' expands on the principal ideas of the exhibition with three further works that open out beyond the context of Bristol and its particular socio-political histories. In Russian artist Victor Alimpiev's work, *Summer Lightnings*, 2004, reenactment takes on private meanings and personal significance in a scene in which schoolgirls drum rhythmically on wooden desks, bringing to mind the intimate sound of summer rain pounding on a roof. For *File under Sacred Music*, 2003, British artists Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard recreated a legendary 1978 performance by The Cramps for the patients at Napa Mental Institute, California. A meticulous recreation of the video documentation of this performance – rather than the original performance itself – the work puts into question the possibility of an authentic 'lived' experience in today's media-saturated environment.

Working against a tendency to fix the events of the past, Croatian artist David Maljkovic's *Scenes for a New Heritage*, 2004/6, offers an apt note on which to conclude. The films, conceived in a set of three, follow a group of heritage-seekers to Petrova Gora, an historical monument from Communist-era Yugoslavia. Whilst retaining the historical location, Maljkovic sets the year decades in the future, constructing a temporal overlay that shakes down and rearranges an understanding of past events in the creation of a 'new heritage', a new historical narrative. In the creation of mythical legacies for a future age, the artist renders the past an impermanent and uncertain terrain, one that may be endlessly remade, and as a consequence holds infinite potentiality.

Following the exhibition at Picture This, the three new commissions will each temporarily be screened in locations that bear direct relation to the scenarios they reference. McIntosh's Session (Sugar Version) *will be exhibited at the Two Way Street; Wilsher's* The Use of Money *at the The New Room; and Asante's* Bamboo Memories *at Circomedia, a circus school housed at St Pauls church in Portland Square, the street on which the Bamboo Club once stood.*

Picture This would like to thank the following individuals and organisations without whom 'Down at the Bamboo Club' would not have been possible: Harold Offeh; Kat Anderson; all those who took part in the filming; staff at the Two Way Street; the Georgian House and the New Room; the artists; Audiences South West; and Heritage Lottery Fund.

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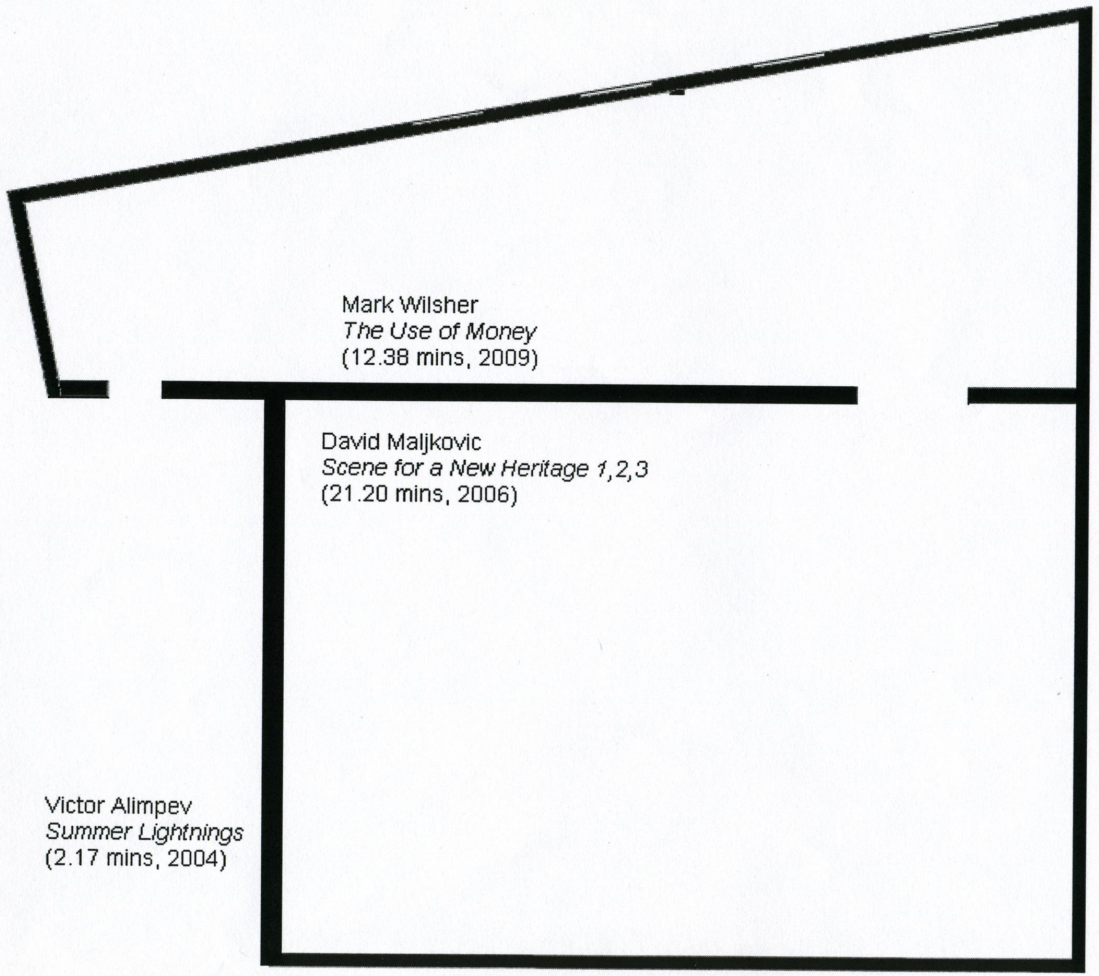

Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard
File Under Sacred Music
(23mins, 2003)
Mark Wilsher
The Use of Money
(12.38 mins, 2009)
David Maljkovic
Scene for a New Heritage 1,2,3
(21.20 mins, 2006)
Barby Asante
Bamboo Memories
(8.55 mins, 2009)
Victor Alimpev
Summer Lightnings
(2.17 mins, 2004)
Mandy McIntosh
Session (Sugar Version)
(27.05 min, 2009)

Focus on interests, not positions: The Use of Money

This project is significant within my research for two reasons. Firstly, it came about because of a commission that was very typical of the social-engagement agenda I have written about, and is representative of the assumed values that commissioning agencies have absorbed as a result of these social and theoretical discourses. The circumstances of the project, then, are significant. Secondly, the work that I finally made was based on the central and most important idea behind principled negotiation, which is to focus on the deeper interests of the parties rather than their stated positions (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p40). It is this approach that underlies and defines the whole concept of integrative negotiation. I was initially approached by the artists' moving image agency Picture This in January 2008 and the resulting short film was exhibited at two locations in Bristol in September 2009, accompanied by a short essay, and subsequently shown in Norwich in February 2010.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the commission was one of three that were to make up the final exhibition *Down at the Bamboo Club*, broadly based on the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery. The project overview document states that the works

> will use re-enactments to enable participants to explore subjects such as community relations, the legacy of slave trading on the city's economy and communities, histories of division and solidarity, and the heritage of their own roles in the city today. (Picture This 2007 p1)

The text, which was intended for funders and potential project partners, suggests that participatory re-enactments and "other community events" have similarities with oral traditions of storytelling and would offer a sympathetic way of linking

"diverse communities" (Picture This 2007 p1). The emphasis is clearly on the positive social impact that the project might have and there is little description of any specific artistic qualities. This is in line with Claire Bishop's observations about the social turn in art criticism and the weight given to social outcomes rather than aesthetic or conceptual qualities. Some allowance should be made for the intended audience for these statements, who would be more concerned with these instrumental effects; however, the surrender of aesthetic to social objectives is nonetheless striking. A subsequent briefing document for the artists lists the key objectives as follows: "to engage a range of citizens … to draw upon local people to participate in recorded events … to harness the pooled knowledge, expertise of Bristol" (Picture This 2008 p1). It is taken for granted that such participation will be beneficial for those involved.

Three historic sites in Bristol relating to the city's role in the slave trade had already been identified and each of the participating artists was allocated one, in my case John Wesley's New Room. This is an extremely important Methodist chapel, the first in the world, that John and Charles Wesley had constructed in the heart of Bristol in 1739 and where John Wesley had written his crucial essay "Thoughts on Slavery" in 1774. The chapel survives largely as it was, and whereas it was originally surrounded by shops, victuallers and tradesmen on the Broadmead, it is now surrounded by the budget postmodern architecture of the Broadmead shopping

The Railway Mission stand at the launch of the Bristol & South Gloucester Methodist Circuit (Research image) 2008

centre. Other than the objectives noted above, I was told that the New Room staff were particularly keen to strengthen their connections with the busy shopping area that surrounds them.

As is normal practice for such commissions, I made several research trips to Bristol, met with the staff, attended the launch of the Bristol & South Gloucester Methodist Circuit and read up on Wesley's history. There was considerable pressure on me to stage events and workshops for members of the congregation in order to make audio recordings of them in conversation, which I resisted. While I had agreed to involve local people in a piece of work, I was of course suspicious of this casual curatorial acceptance of dialogue, and planned to make a piece based on negotiation, specifically *focusing on interests, not positions*. During this research I also discovered the approaching completion of a mammoth £500 million shopping centre connected to Broadmead that had been given the name Cabot Circus.[1] A joint venture between property developers Land Securities and Hammerson PLC, it was emblematic of the phenomenon of a privatised public space, even more striking in this instance since the three newly created avenues and plazas are actually open to the elements under a floating glass roof and are accessible 24 hours a day. Broadmead itself had been heavily bombed during World War II and Cabot Circus was just the latest in a long line of twentieth-century developments in the area among

Bedminster Methodist Church display (Research image) 2008

which Wesley's New Room had found itself. The Methodist chapel and the brand new shopping complex appeared to represent diametrically opposed values. They represented the two sides of a dispute that I hoped to explore with the commission, based on divergent attitudes to wealth and the importance of paid work.

The concept of integrating common interests is what lies behind the whole philosophy of integrative negotiation (of which principled negotiation is one example). It assumes that, by examining what each side in a dispute values and desires, a basis for some sort of agreement can be found. This is a very different approach to starting from opposed positions and aiming for a middle-ground compromise. "Your position is something you have decided upon. Your interests are what caused you to so decide" (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p41). In research which looks at the individual's role in negotiation processes, it has been noted that heuristics often have a negative impact. These are "mental shortcuts and simplifying strategies that people use to help manage information" (Pruitt & Carnevale 1993 p83), such as assuming only one possible positive outcome, or that two sides are necessarily in conflict.[2]

> For example, one may make inferences about the target based on the mere observation that one is in a bargaining situation and the other party is an opponent. The terms bargaining, negotiation, conflict, and opponent all imply opposition. Such beliefs are rooted in social norms that lead individuals to interpret competitive situations as win/lose. (Kramer & Messick 1995 p16).

Integrative negotiation assumes the opposite, that the "pie" can be expanded by the incorporation of external factors to such an extent that both sides are able to take what they want from the available situation. Fisher, Ury & Patton give the example of a typical landlord and tenant dispute over the appropriate level to set monthly rent (1991 p42). In actuality, the two have many aims in common: stability of occupation, good maintenance of the property, a good relationship. Taking account of these factors sets the problem in a wider context and makes finding an agreement more likely.

The first step in understanding how I might be able to structure the project in terms of integrative negotiation was my discovery of a sermon by John Wesley titled "The Use of Money", which had been regularly paraphrased by Margaret Thatcher because of its advice to "earn all you can" in order to "save all you can" (Global Ministries 2010). This initially seems to be somewhat at odds with the Christian message, until the third part of the sermon is read which tells us to then

"give all you can" in order to pursue good works.[3] I had been struck on my research visits by the amount of charitable work that the Methodist community undertook, and their down-to-earth engagement with the contemporary world around them. The members of the congregation whom I met had given up careers in the commercial world in order to work on charitable initiatives, and they were fully aware of the need to raise and spend money on reaching these aims. The New Room itself had recently launched a campaign to raise funding for a new garden in its paved rear courtyard. So it seemed that Methodism had incorporated a pragmatic approach to money right from the start that enabled the church's social mission.

I had identified the sermon as an interesting starting point, and had been told that the New Room were interested in developing their relationship with the surrounding shopping areas. These factors seemed to be moving the spiritual concerns of Methodism towards an involvement with the capitalist world. I found the complementary interest of Cabot Circus through the notion of Corporate Social Responsibility. Almost every large modern business has a CSR department that covers issues such as environmental impact, charitable giving and social integration in its geographic areas of operation. These are not just ethical fig leaves for global corporations, but actively help the business by pre-empting consumer criticism, helping deliver good public relations, and easing the planning processes in major developments. In this instance, Land Securities and Hammerson had provided free training for local unemployed people in order to create a workforce for hundreds

Wilsher *The Use of Money* (Installation view at the New Room showing DVD on monitor) 2009

of new shops, as well as nominating a local charity as the focus of staff fundraising, and incorporating the latest green standards in the build.[4] Another aspect of CSR was the inclusion of an art trail within the shopping centre in order to improve the physical environment. These might be small initiatives in relation to the multi-million pound building project but they do represent something like a moral or ethical conscience operating within the structure of the capitalist system. Between Wesley's *Use of Money* sermon and the concept of corporate social responsibility there seemed to be various overlapping interests between the New Room and Cabot Circus that might form the basis for my project.

The commission had been based on a lot of assumptions about participation as a mode of social inclusion, which I questioned. These were implicitly based in the model of a Habermasian deliberative democracy and neo-Liberalism's strategy of social inclusion through participation. Mouffe's agonistic public realm, on the other hand, is more subtle in allowing that

> adversaries do fight – even fiercely – but according to a set of shared rules, and their positions, despite being ultimately irreconcilable, are accepted as legitimate perspectives. (Mouffe 2005 p52)

This adversarial conflict informed the way in I intended to make the artwork "focus on interests, not positions", since it is clear that even opponents might share under-

Wilsher *The Use of Money* (Production photograph showing Cabot Circus) 2009

lying interests. I had met many of the individuals identified as possible participants, but had decided to base my project on the institution they belonged to rather than on the individuals themselves. The church (the "body of the church" is often said to consist of its congregation) juxtaposed with the forces of capitalism as represented by Cabot Circus, Hammerson and Land Securities. These appeared to be diametrically opposed institutions, which nevertheless seemed to share more than was immediately apparent. Taking into consideration the New Room's desire to relate more strongly to their commercial neighbours, my film project would aim to bring out the common interests shared by this incongruous pairing. The notion of shared interests, which might have been explored more generally through dialogue, was explicitly articulated through the use of negotiation theory.

This was done in a number of ways. Firstly, the core concept of the film was to establish a relationship between the physical spaces of church and shopping centre. Not only were the congregation shown colonising the commercial space of Cabot Circus, but their arrangement marked out the dimensions of the pews in the New Room, enabling a direct comparison between their different scales. Importantly, the final film was shown both in the gallery and within the New Room itself. The new architecture of the shopping centre was cleared of pedestrians and filmed in long motionless shots to impose a more contemplative atmosphere, often framed symmetrically to recall the neo-Georgian architecture of Wesley's New Room. The vaulting glass ceiling was shot to suggest the domes and towers of sacred buildings, and the single tree made to represent nature or creation through tight close-ups. Finally, the soundtrack of birdsong and ambient noise was a field recording made

Wilsher *The Use of Money* (Still from video) 2009

at Hanham Mount on the outskirts of Bristol, where John Wesley had famously preached to thousands of people prior to the founding of Methodism. Through these formal devices I aimed to conflate the three significant physical spaces of Cabot Circus, Wesley's New Room and Hanham Mount in order to suggest their connectedness.

It would have been easy to mount a moral critique of capitalism and big business, but that was by no means my objective for this piece of work. My intention was to bring out the complexities of the two institutional agendas. The very fact that we had been able to gain permission to film in the centre, disrupting the normal early morning activities and taking up management time with meetings, phone calls and emails, was as a consequence of the corporate desire to interact responsibly with the community. The camera's slow steady gaze at the congregation makes it possible for the audience to see that these individuals of course shop, buy clothes, jewellery, and are caught up to an extent in the flows of consumerism. The whole film was intended to be composed and shot in an even-handed, non-judgemental way in order to bring out the overlaps and similarities of the two groupings, and create ambiguity and complexity rather than a didactic message.

The third way in which common interests were highlighted was through an accompanying essay which was available on paper and to read on the *Down at the Bamboo Club* exhibition website (see appendix B). This described the various

Commemorative pulpit at Hanham Mount with text reading "All the world is my parish" (Research image) 2008

sources of inspiration for the film, the historical context, and the role of the sermon as a point of connection between religion and money. It also clarified the way that different physical spaces were conflated and revealed the important symbolic location of the audio recording. The essay was an important part of the framework by which to read the final film, and helped mediate a quite abstract piece to a wide general audience.

By these three means my intention was to create a film piece that suggested the shared interests of the New Room and Cabot Circus in early twenty-first century Bristol. By building the work around one aspect of the principled negotiation model I was able to control its subject matter quite tightly, and hopefully bring a certain amount of self-consciousness and criticality to the whole process as well as the final film. The wider metaphor of negotiation meant that I was able to "engage a range of citizens", link diverse communities, and "draw upon local people to participate in recorded events" (Picture This 2008 p1) in a way that highlighted and maintained some of the actual tensions inherent in their situation rather than a bland dialogue meant to paper over social problems.

One additional aspect of the film worth noting is the way that layering three different physical spaces within Bristol also meant layering three paradigmatic types of public spaces, which added extra richness to possible readings of the piece. Cabot Circus is the archetypal contemporary public space, that is in actuality privately owned and managed to a high degree. Although its three public streets are

Sign showing forbidden activities at Cabot Circus (Research image) 2008

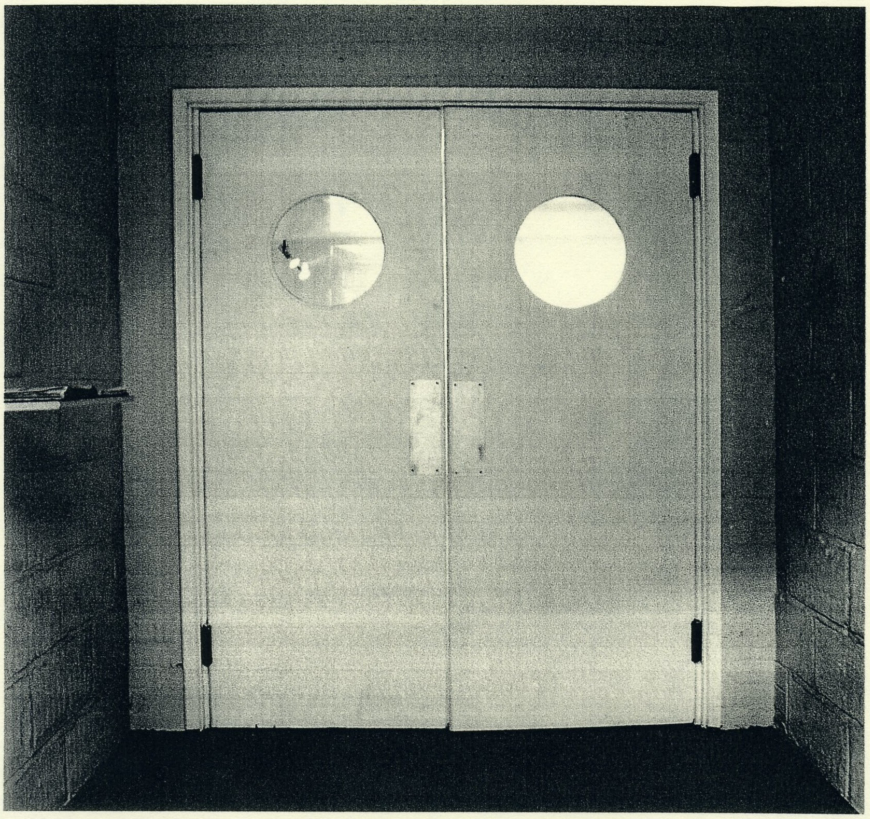
open twenty-four hours a day and the roof allows some rain and frequent pigeons to enter unhindered, the illusion of true freedom or publicness is undermined by the positioning of bollards at its perimeter announcing the proscription of everything from smoking to roller-skating, and security guards roam in pairs at all times under the watchful eye of CCTV. The New Room was built in order to allow Methodists in the eighteenth century to meet and talk in freedom, exactly the kind of public space that Habermas described as necessary to the construction of a bourgeois public sphere. Finally, the natural pulpit on Hanham Mount where Wesley preached every morning to up to five thousand people away from the strictures of the city represents an ideal of free association without boundaries or limitation beyond common desire. It is in relation to this that my work *did* offer an implicit critique of Cabot Circus and the erosion of the public realm.

1 There had been public protests over the first proposed name "Merchant's Quarter" because of perceived links to the slave trade.

2 Pruit and Carnevale give many other examples of problematic heuristics, for instance fixed-pie assumptions, reactive devaluation, negotiation scripts, rigid thinking, overconfidence, availability, anchoring and mood states (Pruit & Carnevale 1993 p85).

3 Thatcher was less fond of quoting this third part of the triumvirate.

4 Cabot Circus was awarded Overall Green Development of 2009 in the *Estates Gazette* Green Awards.



#65

MARK WILSHER

The Yesable Proposition

2 April to 21 April
Opening View 1 April 6 to 9pm
Open to public admission free
12 noon to 6pm daily

Artist Talk: Monday 19 April

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MARK WILSHER
The Yesable Proposition

OUTPOST

Opening view: Thursday 1 April, 6 - 9pm
On view: 2nd to 21st March
12noon to 6pm daily
Open to public – admission free
Artist Talk: Monday 19 April, 6pm

From: Mark Wilsher (markwilsher@hotmail.com)
Sent: 22 January 2010 13:43:41
To: Ellie (ellie@norwichoutpost.org)
Cc: questions@norwichoutpost.org

Hi OUTPOST guys,

I have been thinking about what sort of an exhibition I'd like to do, and I think I want to make some alterations to the fabric of the gallery, putting elements that I take from the entrance foyer onto the gallery walls as little gestural sculptures and replacing them with bigger, fancier fittings. It's based on the idea of constructing a "win-win" scenario, where we all get something out of it (rather than you guys just spending money for me to put on a show) so that the gallery would benefit as well. The specific elements that I want to replace or work with would probably include

- Door handles on inside front doors
- Finger plates and steel kick plates on inner doors
- Cabin hooks, letterbox and a new estucheon for the external doors
- A new doormat
- Maybe a new toilet seat or a new kettle for the kitchen
- New external padlock for the gate
- Any money left over from the budget could be spent on some magazine subscriptions for the office, or maybe paying a utility bill

I'm going to put together a booklet to go with it with images, essay etc – we could put the interview in there as well. Also I'm happy to do a gallery talk and Carl said can we do another seminar for the fine art students which would be great as well. The talk would probably have to be on Monday 19th so there's enough time to get the catalogue done. Anyway, let me know what you think of all this.

Cheers for now,
Mark

Mark Wilsher studied at the University of Westminster and Central Saint Martins. Recent exhibitions include Unfinished Business at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds & CHELSEA Space, London (2008/9), Down at the Bamboo Club at Picture This, Bristol (2009), Talk Show at ICA London (2009), and A Staged Dissent at RADAR, Loughborough (2008). He recently published the article Beyond Public Art in Art Monthly Nov 2009 and is currently completing his PhD at Norwich University College of Art.

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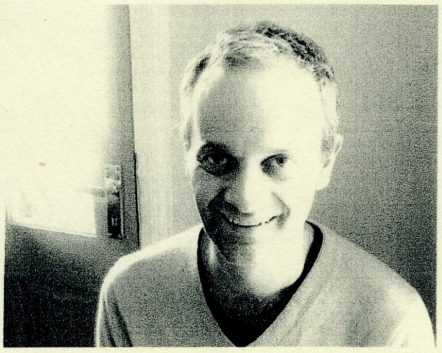

Mark Wilsher was born in Croydon, Surrey.
He is currently completing his PhD at Norwich University College of Art.

Wilsher lives and works in Norwich, England.

A conversation between Ellie Morgan and Mark Wilsher late March 2010

Ellie Morgan: By replacing and presenting elements of the gallery's make-up your show interrogates a chain of institutional relationships and a series of dependencies and communication. Have the re-presented elements become symbols of funding and discussion?
Mark Wilsher: Not just symbols exactly. But certainly they are used to indicate the parameters of what's been permitted, or the extent to which you have trusted me. I think I would like to de-emphasise the role of the physical objects presented on the wall (which are after all just one part of a larger set of tangible and intangible aspects that go together to make up the exhibition). I knew I wanted to end up with something in the gallery, and these displaced bits and pieces seemed to do the job.
EM:You could have chosen more practical elements though; in a way you chose objects which are visually interesting or may be imbued with something- the finger plates for example. You have spoken of these objects potentially traveling elsewhere to represent the show or OUTPOST...
MW: I'm not averse to people reading them as imbued with history. That might be one way into thinking about the overall project for some sections of the audience, and I'm happy to provide some element of narrative or "content" that people feel comfortable with immediately. After all, if I have picked this set of visually interesting hardware because of how the parts look then it's likely that other people will find some purely aesthetic pleasure in them too. As for traveling elsewhere... I think it would work, although that would become a very different kind of exhibition.
EM: Although your recent research has focused on the importance of antagonistic negotiation in the presentation of public art, your show was proposed as a 'win-win' scenario. Could you discuss how The Yesable Proposition relates to your proposition of negotiation over dialogue?
MW: The concept of negotiation is really contained within the concept of antagonism (or to use Chantal Mouffe's neologism "agonism", meaning a kind of lesser friction). Dialogue is dependent on the idea of a pleasant situation where everyone is happy to talk and share their views. This might happen at a social event among equals but most of the time out in the world there are a lot of vested interests and subtle hierarchies going on. My recent work has been questioning the notion of dialogue as a panacea in contemporary art. Many artists who make work with other people or in the public realm will say that they are engaged in a process of dialogue, indeed it has become a kind of orthodoxy in the world of socially-engaged art in the last fifteen years or so. But I feel that this glosses over a whole load of issues.
I have been using negotiation theory borrowed from the world of business to set up a different kind of model. It offers a more detailed analysis of the processes and 'moves' that might take place within a relationship, especially where the two parties are unequal and they are both trying to push for their preferred outcome. Rather than the old idea of starting with high demands and conceding until you reach some sort of a midpoint, modern negotiation theory (specifically the branch labeled 'integrative') suggests that it is often possible to find agreements that both parties find satisfactory. Hence the concept of a win-win proposition that forms the basis for this project.
EM:So your show directly enters into the model you have set; your proposal directly uses integrative negotiation to explore the relationship between you, the artist, and OUTPOST, the gallery. Through this win-win model, are you indirectly engaging other groups in negotiation through the reallocation of funds, or do you see your actions as more of a commentary?
MW: Absolutely. It's typical of my broader working methods which often borrow or inhabit a way of operating, from which I can then produce a set of artworks that are shaped by that approach. It's a kind of meta-method... where I'm experimenting with different vocabularies and ways of being an artist. Right now it's all about negotiation and relationships, seeing if I am able to formalise those in any kind of constructive way. The result will be a real consequence of real relationships, something that really happened at a particular time and place rather than just me making it up.
EM: The Yesable Proposition is the fourth project of your PhD. Do you think that undertaking a PhD has altered your methods and practice?
MW: When I was a student I used to move very quickly from one thing to another, never sticking with one approach for longer than a single piece. Then, about seven years ago I had a rethink of my practice and as a consequence began to produce work in series that allowed me to develop an idea in more depth and also release some of the pressure that can fall upon a singular statement. I guess the PhD has extended this trajectory even further as I have spent three years essentially elaborating one theoretical model, even though this has been manifested as four distinct projects. But I wouldn't say it has changed the essential way that I operate. There is a bit of a tendency in practice-led art research to make the work illustrate the theory, or else to become paralysed completely by anxiety, but hopefully I have managed to keep some rough edges and random elements to undermine a completely illustrative reading. At least I hope so.
EM: I was wondering if you thought there was one object in OUTPOST which you wouldn't dare to replace, or that you think is irreplaceable?
MW: I wouldn't mess with the compûter, that always leads to trouble. Mind you, the keyboard could really do with a clean.
EM: Be my guest.

Mark Wilsher — ***The Yesable Proposition***

OUTPOST — 2 April to 21 April

10b Wensum Street, Tombland, Norwich, Norfolk NR3 1HR, England
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LOTTERY FUNDED

Norfolk County Council

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Invent options for mutual gain: The Yesable Proposition

The basis for this project was the relationship between a gallery and the artist who is staging an exhibition within it. The work consisted of a site-specific installation at OUTPOST gallery in Norwich together with various alterations to the fabric of the gallery building and the use of text from a private email as the exhibition press release. A colour catalogue was also produced containing images as well as an essay and interview to further communicate the intentions of the project.[1] The whole body of work was based around the injunction to *invent options for mutual gain* (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p56), the third major aspect of principled negotiation according to the Harvard Negotiation Project. This concept encourages the parties to think more widely about different dimensions of their problem, in order to expand the possible range of options that might make up a successful agreement between them. This is clearly distinct from the stereotypical approach of narrowing down solutions from between a single pair of divergent demands.

> If the first impediment to creative thinking is premature criticism, the second is premature closure. By looking from the outset for the single best answer, you are likely to short-circuit a wiser decision-making process in which you select from a large number of possible answers. (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p59)

After separating the people from the problem in order to create a conducive atmosphere for negotiations, and trying to identify shared interests underlying the already divergent positions, this third principle is where the creative work of solving a negotiation really gets done. Fisher et al. recommend brainstorming and generating options without being critical in order to come up with possible points

of agreement, while Pruit and Carnevale break down ways of reaching a win-win solution (mutual gain) into three categories: "expanding the pie, exchanging concessions on different issues, and solving underlying concerns" (Pruit & Carnevale 1993 p47). In both cases the principle is to identify shared outcomes which can be factored into the discussion in order to reframe the initial disagreement as just one among a whole set of relevant factors. Coming up with creative options also means that a previously unsuspected solution might emerge that suits both parties while not necessarily being close to their initial demands. This approach goes beyond the "fixed pie assumption" and assumes that it is in fact possible to find a way to make all sides happy with the outcome.

> For a negotiator to reach an agreement that meets his own self-interest he needs to develop a solution which also appeals to the self-interest of the other. (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p59)

This might seem obvious when spelled out so plainly, yet it can often be forgotten when approaching an acrimonious dispute without a set of analytical tools like these to hand. In a sense any negotiation that is resolved must be able to be conceptualised as what is called a "win-win" negotiation, even if the only win for one side is the end of the dispute in question. Both ongoing conflict and failure to reach agreement at all are negative outcomes.

Wilsher *The Yesable Proposition* (Installation view) 2010

After my earlier projects which had been situated within the history of public sculpture and then the processes of a socially engaged commission, I was keen to make a piece of work that involved myself more directly as a participant. The *Unfinished Business* project had taken a fairly distanced and abstracted stance in relation to public art, which I had tried to lessen through my involvement with the archives and personalities of the artists. *The Use of Money* had been involved in creating points of agreement between two very different sets of beliefs, but in that instance I had acted very much as an outside influence without revealing myself in the finished film. My intention here was to make a set of work that related to the real relationships between the gallery, the gallery's various stakeholders and myself. This would represent a specific and identifiable community of people with a complex and sometimes conflicting network of interrelationships within the public realm. As I wrote in chapter five, however, I felt that simply using negotiation theory to analyse our personal relationships as they occurred would be to miss out on its potentially more creative applications. I took the primary relationship between gallery and artist as the issue here: the gallery spends money and effort on producing an exhibition for the artist, who reaps the majority of the benefits from having work shown and validated in the credible gallery setting. This seemed to be a rather one-sided outcome.[2] By applying the principle of inventing options for mutual gain to the content of the exhibition itself, I hoped to create a win-win situation for the gallery and myself that would provoke reflection on the dynamics of the relationships that flow around a contemporary gallery space. I also wanted to create a certain awkwardness by putting some of the internal political processes that occur prior to an exhibition into the public eye.

My solution was to propose an exhibition that offered benefits to the gallery in a variety of physical and symbolic ways, some invented by myself and others in response to the desires of the gallery committee. These benefits, together with an indication of the discussion and thinking behind them, would form the content of my exhibition project. In order to make the structural use of negotiation theory more explicit as a theme, my initial email was made public as the exhibition press release, showing my proposal to the gallery that had obviously been accepted. This was the "yesable proposition" that gave the exhibition its title. As I wrote above, in order for an agreement to be reached there have to be benefits to the self-interest of both parties. Considering the idea of mutual gain shifts the emphasis onto the opposing party's position and interests. A yesable proposition is one in which the other party's interests have been taken into account to such an extent that all they need do to move the agreement forward is say "yes". If it is possible to come up with

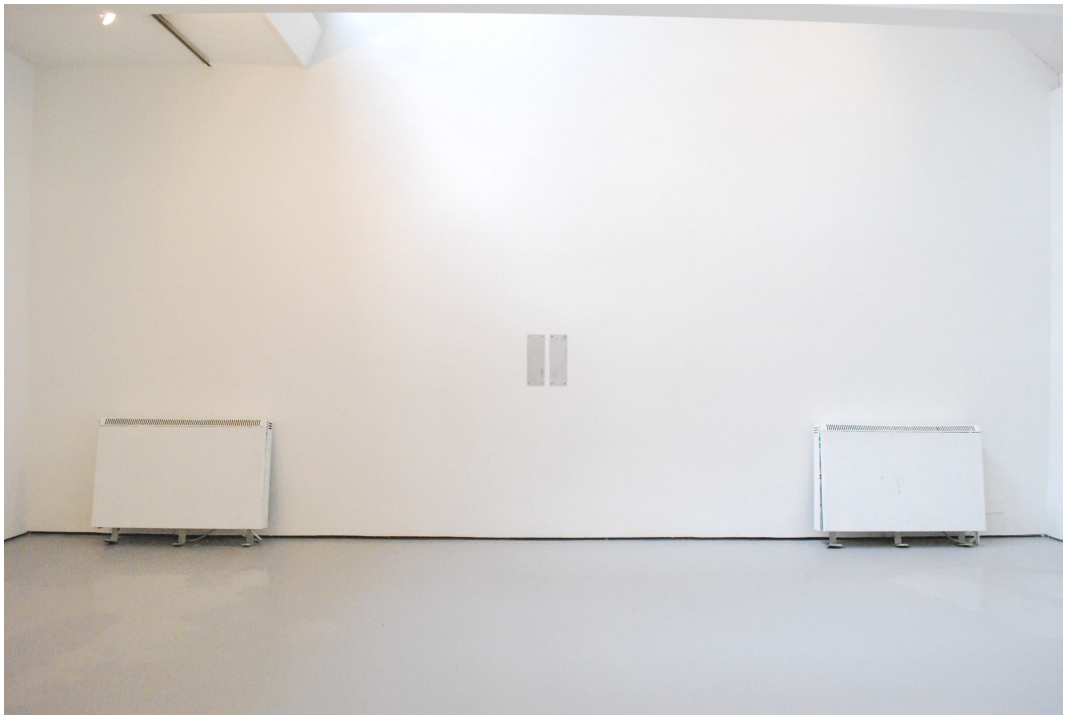
such a proposition, "you have reduced the risk that your immediate self-interest has blinded you to the necessity of meeting concerns of the other side" (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p79).

My initial proposal concentrated on the physical aspects of the gallery space that I could easily and visually improve. Rather than spending the gallery's £350 exhibition budget on transport or art materials, I ordered hardware and various fittings. I removed and replaced old door metalwork, redundant hooks and worn fingerplates. The gallery doors were given fresh coats of paint while new handles, escutcheons, finger- and kick-plates were fitted. In the process I made many small

Gallery doors before and after renovations (Research images) 2010

repairs, filled holes, cleaned windows and eased a sticking door. After talking with the gallery committee, I also made improvements to the toilet (a new sign, indicator lock, light switch and seat) and removed two redundant storage heaters which had made one wall of the gallery difficult to hang work on since it opened. Many of these improvements were largely symbolic (such as the replacement of the doormat with a newer, but inferior one while the original was hung on the wall), but others were very real and much desired. The disconnection and removal of the heaters, for instance, had been a subject of discussion for at least two years. The walls were replastered and painted and are now smooth and uninterrupted hanging areas. Until my addition of a pair of cabin hooks to the exterior doors, they had been held open by a judiciously placed brick or whatever came to hand. This is no longer necessary. In addition to all this, I was also able to spend some of the budget on annual subscriptions to two art magazines, which will benefit OUTPOST members for a full year to come.[3]

The gallery benefitted in all these practical ways from staging my exhibition. In addition, my benefit was to have a solo exhibition in the gallery space including sculptural arrangements of some of the redundant fixtures and fittings, as well as the conceptual framework of the win-win situation as a whole. In an accompanying essay and interview made available at the gallery, I related this to the set of interpersonal relationships that surround a gallery and tried to draw attention to the more intangible aspects of my project. The objects on the gallery walls were in a



Wilsher, *The Yesable Proposition* (Installation view) 2010

sense pointers which were meant to direct the audience back to the alterations I had made to the fabric of the building, and from there back again to the relationships between a gallery and an exhibiting artist. This was true of the more rhetorical or symbolic alterations as much as the genuinely helpful ones.

In one sense this kind of project is firmly in the tradition of institutional critique as purveyed by artists as formally varied as Michael Asher, Daniel Buren and Robert Smithson. "Artists themselves are not confined," wrote Robert Smithson in 1972:

> but their output is. Museums, like asylums and jails, have wards and cells – in other words, neutral rooms called "galleries". A work of art when placed in a gallery loses its charge, and becomes a portable object or surface disengaged from the outside world. (Harrison & Wood 1992 p947)

In his seminal essay "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions" Benjamin Buchloh (1990) makes the points that "these institutions, which determine the conditions of cultural consumption, are the very ones in which artistic production is transformed into a tool of ideological control and cultural legitimation" (Buchloh 1990 p143). My project here operates site-specifically and exists outside as well as inside the white cube space of the gallery. Its very basis calls for a consideration of the institution of the gallery and draws attention to the support structures that surround it. This kind of work is easily accepted nowadays, and the idea of the site-specific has become absorbed to such an extent that all work is expected to relate to its context to some degree. My project, however, is perhaps a little different in being in favour of the (artist-run) institution rather than attacking it. I raised the issue of the gallery's relationship of patronage towards its artists in order to highlight the relational side of the work rather than propose a specifically critical agenda. It was the nuances of these relationships that interested me, and which I attempted to take control of and highlight through my use of negotiation theory.

By making my working method explicit through the press release and the catalogue essay, I contextualised the work in terms of a negotiation between gallery and artist (and by implication also the audience and the regional funders). This was further discussed at a well-attended gallery talk and a seminar for undergraduate students on the final day of exhibition. The idea that I had made a "yesable proposition" to the gallery which they had accepted emphasised the processes of transaction between us, and my invention of an option which presents gains for

us both directs attention to the aims and agendas of everyone involved, and their potentially agonistic dimensions. These specific aspects of our relationship are not brought out by the general label of institutional critique, nor by the more recent notion of dialogue. If the gallery and I had alternatively been said to have sustained a dialogue during the course of making the exhibition then our individual agendas would have been lost behind a mask of generalised convivial exchange.

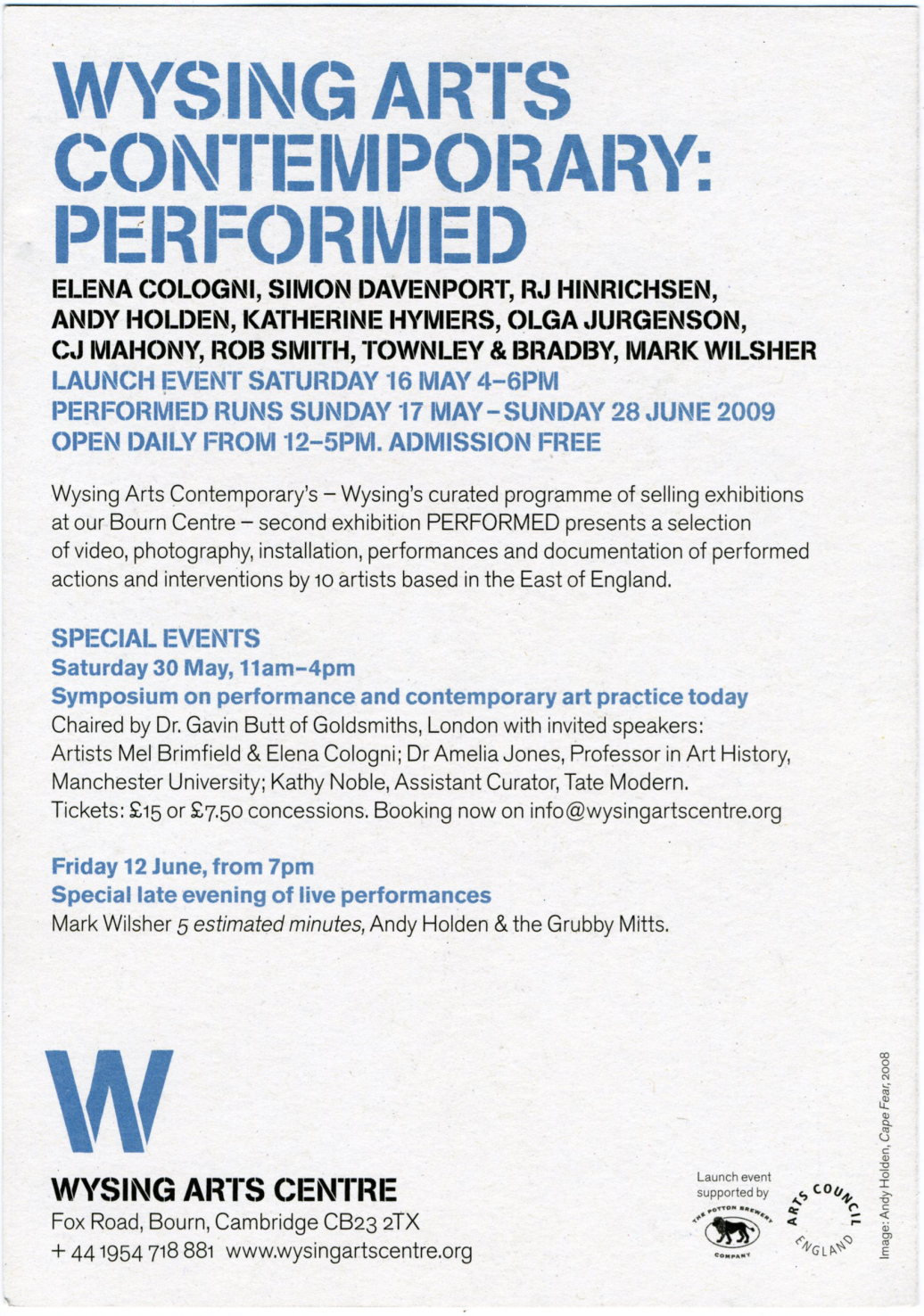
I mentioned above that some of the many alterations and additions were symbolic or rhetorical rather than purely functional, and operated visually in order to stress the nature of the transaction that had taken place in order to construct the exhibition. It is true also that there was never a huge "problem" in the relationship between artist and gallery that needed to be dealt with. Artist-run spaces tend to give plenty of freedom to the artists that they invite to show work. Nevertheless, by positioning the project in this manner, certain relationships between gallery, funder and artist were highlighted and the process of generating the exhibition was opened out and articulated to a greater than normal degree. Even the simple juxtaposition of the initial email and the final show allowed the audience to see the relationship between intention and resolution more clearly. This was possible because of the structuring device of negotiation, and the concept of inventing options for mutual gain.

1 See appendix C for press review and catalogue.

2 Of course, the gallery always reaps some rewards from this transaction. It has an exhibition programme to fill, and it may benefit itself from a wise choice of artists that cumulatively make up a credible curatorial stance.

3 The committee requested *a-n* and *Art Monthly*.

10. Insist on Using Objective Criteria: *Estimations*



WYSING ARTS CONTEMPORARY: PERFORMED

In Wysing Arts Contemporary's second curated selling exhibition we present a selection of video, photography, installation, performances and documentation of performed actions and interventions by 10 artists based in the East of England. In all the works, the key elements that form performance; time, space, the performer's body, the relationship between performer and audience, occur and re-occur throughout the exhibition.

Elena Cologni works in meditated performances and installation. Through real-time performance and image manipulation she raises questions about the nature of perception, memory and our awareness of time. For 'Performed', she reprises the 'document' of a work she created and performed at Tournai Cathedral, Belgium in 2008, entitled *Il Soffio (at the back of the mind)*. In this work, Cologni 'performed' the black and white tile pattern of the dramatic floor of the cathedral, and transformed it with pencil drawings. Cologni exhibits in both the UK and internationally and recently published *Mnemonic Present, Shifting Meaning*.

Simon Davenport describes his projects as imagined or projected sequences of events that present unexpected encounters. In MISTEEQ BASH RAZIONALE, bullion bars made of gold leafed clay rotate above a plinth. In AN KEVRINEK WARBYDN AN RESONEK, a short video loop of characters speaking in Cornish is overlaid with Cornish text and animated abstractions. Simon Davenport is an active member of artist-run space OUTPOST in Norwich and he has shown in the UK, USA and Europe.

RJ Hinrichsen's practice is centred primarily in video, sound and installation and her works capture intense moments of interplay between fiction and reality. *Melville Road* 2008 shows a video still of a street in London where a choir can be heard but not seen, rehearsing repeatedly. Her works intensify moments from everyday encounters and daily routines. Hinrichsen has shown widely in the UK, including the AURORA in Norwich, 2008.

Andy Holden's performative approach to art-making uses unlikely materials; he created an enormous knitted replica of a piece of rock that he stole from the Pyramids in Egypt as a boy. In 'Performed' Holden presents his work *Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will (Nobody's Perfect)* 2008-9; a series of 78rpm records painted and collaged, morphed into bowls and hung like baskets. Holden has exhibited in the UK and internationally, most recently at Frankfurt Kunstverein.

Katherine Hymers is a film and performance artist who uses her own body pointedly in her work, both as a presence and to address the viewer. For 'Performed' Hymers presents a new video work *Untitled (Auburn)* 2009 which was filmed in the Cambridgeshire landscape. Her work has a charged intensity of vulnerability and intimacy. Hymers has exhibited in the UK and is currently completing a residency at the highly respected Platform Garanti in Istanbul.

Olga Jurgenson works in a variety of media, exploring the economic and social realities of the EU and providing an insight into the lives of those who travel from east to west in search of new opportunities. For 'Performed' she presents work from her series entitled *New Workwear Fashion* 2009 where she gives instruction on how to change and transform ones working factory uniform (a job often undertaken by Eastern Europeans), with an imaginary and playful energy. Jurgenson has exhibited internationally including the 'Wind Art' Festival in Seoul and in the Liverpool Biennial.

CJ Mahony's practice explores the psychologies of time and space. Through fully immersive installations that combine art and architecture, she utilises visual triggers to arouse reaction and create an individual viewing experience. In her new text-based works *Untitled (unsaid)* 2009, Mahony has created unsettling, intimate and humorous experiences in quirky and surprising locations. CJ Mahony has exhibited in the UK including a large scale installation commissioned for the AURORA, Norwich 2007.

Rob Smith's work *Rollercoaster* 2009 takes the form of a generic theme park rollercoaster accompanied by an animated film in which the viewer is taken speedily for a ride around the loops and dips of the rollercoaster itself. In creating the animated film, the artist mounted a camera onto the rollercoaster and moved it steadily along the track taking an image with each short movement forward then animating it to provide the experience of riding the rollercoaster. Rob Smith trained in sculpture at the Royal Academy Schools, London and has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally.

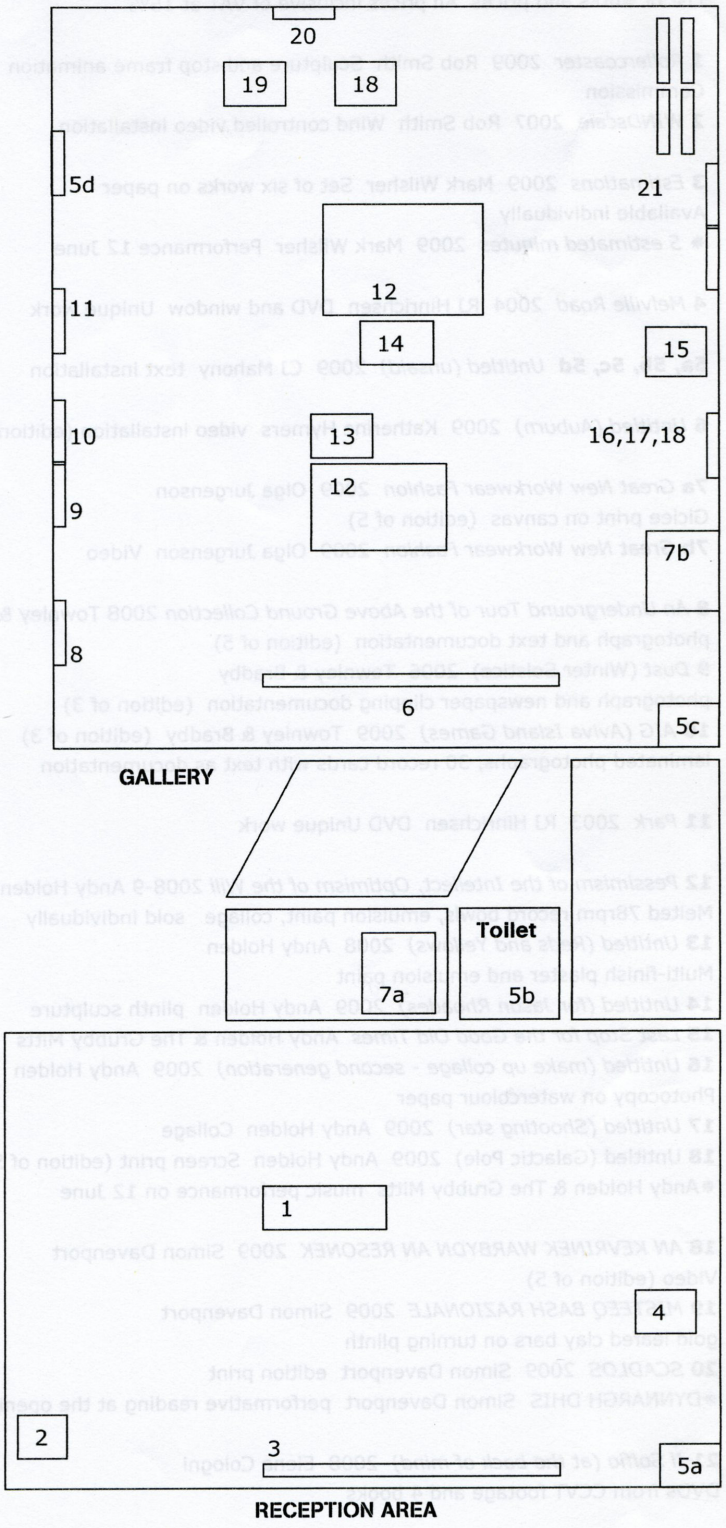
Townley & Bradby's work functions primarily as a framework which the audience can use to reflect on their surroundings. This reflection is often playful and invites participation. In their performance work *An Underground Tour of the Above Ground Collection* 2008-09, the artists invited visitors at an arts centre to accompany the artists for a behind-the-scenes tour, viewing the collection from an alternative perspective. The documentation of that work is featured here. Townley & Bradby are in residency at Wysing Arts Centre under the programme Communities under Construction and will present a work at the Live Art Festival at the Junction, Cambridge from 24-25 May 2009.

Mark Wilsher's new series of drawings entitled *Estimations* 2009 is accompanied by a live performance entitled *5 estimated minutes* which will take place at Wysing on 12 June. The drawings and performance present estimates of lengths in both centimetres and time. His work places the audience in subtle, humorous and challenging situations. Wilsher is currently researching his practice-based PhD at the Norwich School of Art and Design and recently completed a research fellowship at the Henry Moore Institute.

WYSING ARTS CONTEMPORARY is our approach to the collection and sale of contemporary visual art and presents a new platform for artists working at the forefront of contemporary art practice in the Eastern region. Wysing Arts Contemporary is run on not-for-profit principles, with income re-invested back into the centre. Wysing Arts Centre is a research and development centre that practically tests out new ways of thinking in contemporary visual art. At Wysing, artists working from studios or undertaking international residencies are encouraged, alongside visitors, to take creative risks in a supportive environment in which the exploration of process and collaborative ways of working are paramount. Wysing Arts Centre was established in 1989 and is a registered charity (no.1039555.)

The launch of Performed has been generously supported by Potton Brewery, a specialist brewery in the region. With thanks to Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge, Paul Hunt, Solitech and Stew Gallery, Norwich

EXHIBITION MAP



OUTSIDE AREA

Semi-permanent installation by Simon and Tom Bloor

Not part of Performed

WYSING ARTS CONTEMPORARY: PERFORMED

List of works and prices All prices inclusive of VAT at 15%

1 *Rollercoaster* 2009 Rob Smith Sculpture and stop frame animation	from £3,000
Commission	
2 *WINDscale* 2007 Rob Smith Wind controlled video installation	free download
3 *Estimations* 2009 Mark Wilsher Set of six works on paper	£1500
Available individually	£200 / £300 each
✱ *5 estimated minutes* 2009 Mark Wilsher Performance 12 June	POA
4 *Melville Road* 2004 RJ Hinrichsen DVD and window Unique work	£1200
5a, 5b, 5c, 5d *Untitled (unsaid)* 2009 CJ Mahony text installation	£250 each
6 *Untitled (Auburn)* 2009 Katherine Hymers video installation (edition of 5)	£1500
7a *Great New Workwear Fashion* 2009 Olga Jurgenson	
Giclee print on canvas (edition of 5)	£300
7b *Great New Workwear Fashion* 2009 Olga Jurgenson Video	£350
8 *An Underground Tour of the Above Ground Collection* 2008 Townley & Bradby	£230
photograph and text documentation (edition of 5)	
9 *Dust* (Winter Solstice) 2006 Townley & Bradby	£230
photograph and newspaper clipping documentation (edition of 3)	
10 *AIG (Aviva Island Games)* 2009 Townley & Bradby (edition of 3)	£230
laminated photographs, 30 record cards with text as documentation	
11 *Park* 2003 RJ Hinrichsen DVD Unique work	£1200
12 *Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will* 2008-9 Andy Holden	£480 unique
Melted 78rpm record bowls, emulsion paint, collage sold individually	£170 edition
13 *Untitled (Reds and Yellows)* 2008 Andy Holden	£3200
Multi-finish plaster and emulsion paint	
14 *Untitled (for Jason Rhoades)* 2009 Andy Holden plinth sculpture	£695
15 *Last Stop for the Good Old Times* Andy Holden & The Grubby Mitts	NFS
16 *Untitled (make up collage - second generation)* 2009 Andy Holden	£890
Photocopy on watercolour paper	
17 *Untitled (Shooting star)* 2009 Andy Holden Collage	£790
18 Untitled (Galactic Pole) 2009 Andy Holden Screen print (edition of 5)	£570
✱Andy Holden & The Grubby Mitts music performance on 12 June	POA
18 *AN KEVRINEK WARBYDN AN RESONEK* 2009 Simon Davenport	£500
Video (edition of 5)	
19 *MISTEEQ BASH RAZIONALE* 2009 Simon Davenport	£1800
gold leafed clay bars on turning plinth	
20 *SCADLOS* 2009 Simon Davenport edition print	£150
✱DYNNARGH DHIS Simon Davenport performative reading at the opening	POA
21 *Il Soffio (at the back of mind)* 2008 Elena Cologni	POA
DVDs from CCVT footage and 4 books	

Insist on using objective criteria: Estimations

The fourth body of work demonstrating my approach to applying negotiation has the general title *Estimations*, and consists of a set of framed drawings and a short live performance. The drawings were exhibited in a group exhibition at Wysing Arts Centre, and the live performance took place in two slightly different forms at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts and then later at Wysing (all during 2009). All works derived from the advice to "insist on using objective criteria" during a negotiation (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p81). As I have explained in earlier chapters, principled negotiation sets out to create mutually beneficial agreements by taking the emphasis off finding one notional solution to a fixed problem, and reframing the negotiation in terms of the underlying interests of the parties. When it comes to establishing a specific cost, expense, or other firm commitment, Fisher et al. recommend referring to "some basis *independent* of the will of either side – that is, on the basis of objective criteria" (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p82). In most cases this would mean appealing to similar precedents, previous agreements or industry standards – some third-party evidence that it would be possible to consider fair.

> Among the most important norms are principles of fairness (also called "distributive justice" norms), which govern the distribution of resources and obligations among people. These principles are very general in conception, and hence can be used to determine correct behaviour in myriads of specific settings. (Pruit & Carnevale 1993 p119)

Without such input from outside the negotiation, the conversation might as well be happening "on a desert island, with no history, no custom and no moral standard"

(Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p81) where the only factor at play is the strength or weakness of each party's willpower. As the quotation from Pruit and Carnevale above suggests, the principle of fairness permeates almost all models of negotiation since it is a deeply rooted social norm that parties can refer to when considering various offers and concessions. Even in crucial matters of international diplomacy, "details are resolved most frequently in terms of the referents that justify them" (Zartman 2008 p59). However, in principled negotiation the abstract notion of fairness is brought directly into play in the form of specific "objective criteria" that can be used as the basis for new agreements that do not unduly favour either side. Some examples might include: market value, precedent, scientific judgement, professional standards, efficiency, moral standards, equal treatment, tradition, reciprocity and so on (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p85). Appeals to objective criteria of this kind, it is claimed, are especially helpful where a large number of people are trying to reach agreement, and tend to be more successful because they actually incorporate the distilled wisdom of previous settlements.

> A constant battle for dominance threatens a relationship; principled negotiation protects it. It is far easier to deal with people when both of you are discussing objective standards for settling a problem instead of trying to force each other to back down. (Fisher, Ury & Patton 1991 p83)

As we have previously seen with the principled negotiation model, the aim is to reach a fair agreement and preserve or even improve relationships in the long term by shifting the emphasis of the process away from subjective positions and setting the negotiation within a larger framework that can provide the resources for better solutions. By insisting on using objective criteria, the negotiator assumes the moral authority of wider society. It is thus easier for one side to propose an acceptable solution based on evidence of some sort, and also easier for the other to accept without feeling that they have given too many concessions or lost face in the process. The assumption that some sort of objective precedents exist reflects principled negotiation's ostensibly ideology-free position. This is in fact, as I have suggested, often a mask covering an appeal to market forces and capitalist logic as the natural state of things. This body of work uses the idea of objective criteria to emphasise the differences between subjects, as well as their common ground.

The *Estimations* performance and drawings operate in the space between artist and audience that could be considered public or at least social space. They draw on commonly accepted norms and stimulate the audience to become conscious

This piece is based on the way that we all share common reference points in our culture. These are external to us, but we internalise them and they go on to shape the way that we think and understand the world.

I'm going to try to estimate a five minute period of time. I'm not going to count in my head, I'm just going to try and *feel* the duration.

I need to concentrate so I'd be grateful for your silence.

If you want to time me, please be careful *not to* make any noises or gestures to show when the 5 minutes is up, as I may well still be waiting.

But, I would suggest anyway that it might be more interesting for you not to look at your watches, but to do the same as me and attempt to just sense what two minutes feels like.

OK, I'm going to start … now.

Introductory text to be spoken before *Five Estimated Minutes* (Research image) 2009

Wilsher *Five estimated minutes* performance Wysing Arts Centre 12 June 2009

of these norms as well as to evaluate their own internalisation of and familiarity with them. The first piece was a live performance where I simply did my best to estimate a five-minute period of time. I had not practised this, but I reckoned that our familiarity with the feeling of time passing meant that I would be fairly accurate. In any case my accuracy or inaccuracy was not the issue. What mattered was one person's genuine attempt to align their own perception with standards of objectivity that are accepted around the world, the "objective criteria" of the Harvard model. My performance was marked with the straightforward action of clicking my fingers at the start and end, and was introduced with a short speech I had memorised that provided context and warned the audience not to make any gestures that would alert me to the correct end point. I also invited them not to look at their watches, but to join with me and make their own personal attempt to judge exactly five minutes.

The performance resulted in a number of interesting effects. There was a mutual engagement with the notion of a fixed and definite conception of objective time. The audience were able to judge their own efforts against mine, each other's, and in some cases the objective accuracy of a watch. But the strength of the performance lay in the uncertainty of feeling the seconds passing, and having to trust one's instincts based only on years of experience. This uncertainty had the effect of emphasising the actual differences between everybody taking part, as each

Wilsher *Estimations* (Installation view) 2009

and every person was engaged with their own perception of the feeling of time passing. The near impossibility of synchronising those perceptions reflected real differences between individuals.

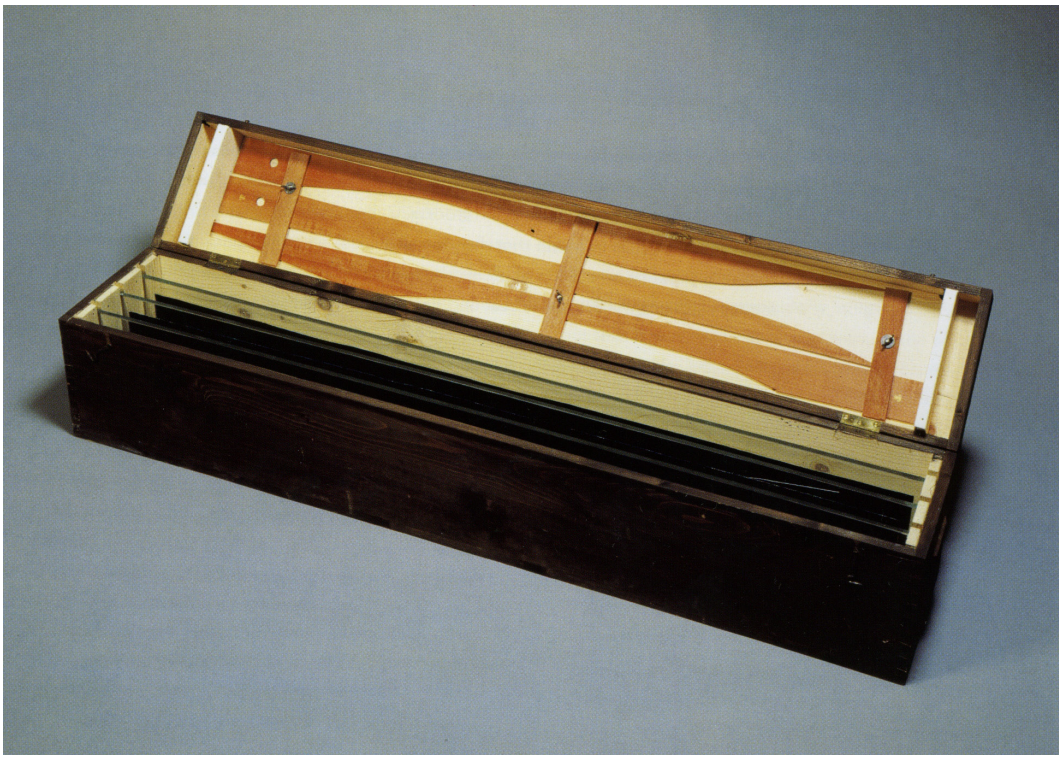
In parallel to this piece, I also presented a set of framed drawings at Wysing in the context of an exhibition themed around ideas of performance. These were ruled ink lines that I had drawn in the studio without measuring, that each captured an attempt to estimate a particular distance (from 20cm to 120cm). Each line was individually framed behind glass in order to preserve the instance of each estimation. Fetishising a set of specific attempts like this was meant to visibly materialise my subjective internal scale. Once again, these works operated by destabilising the relationship between artist and audience and stressing differences. Viewers inevitably attempted to gauge the accuracy of my measurements, but without any objective standard available to them.[1] The drawings were each labelled with the distance I was aiming for, and hung in such a way as to encourage comparisons between different lengths: 120cm was hung directly above a 100cm and a 20cm, for instance. However, the bulk and distraction of the frames meant that any direct measurement was impossible, and I provided no information about their accuracy or otherwise apart from the suggestive title *Estimations*. As with the performance, the audience was consequently forced to rely only on their internalised subjective estimations of distance. They were in effect being asked to perform the same task I had performed when making the drawings in the first place.

Wilsher *Estimations* 2009

There are some historical artworks that look at first very similar to my estimated drawings, but I hope that a brief examination of them will make both their and my own intentions more clear. One of the most famous instances of an artist playing with fixed and objective measures is of course Marcel Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages*, which was originally made in 1913–14. He describes the initial act in a note:

> A straight horizontal thread one meter in length falls from a height of one metre on to a horizontal plane while twisting at will and gives a new form to the unit of length. (Arts Council of Great Britain 1966 p48)

The threads were dropped onto long thin blue canvases and fixed in their chance dispositions with varnish, the canvases later being mounted on sheets of glass. This deformation or adjustment to the standard metre measure was the original state of the work. A few months later Duchamp had decided to use these randomly generated shapes as elements in his masterpiece, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1916), and three wooden rulers were cut to conform to the contours of the three threads. The chance fall of thread was captured and turned into a new set of standards, which eventually provided a visual link from the malic moulds to the

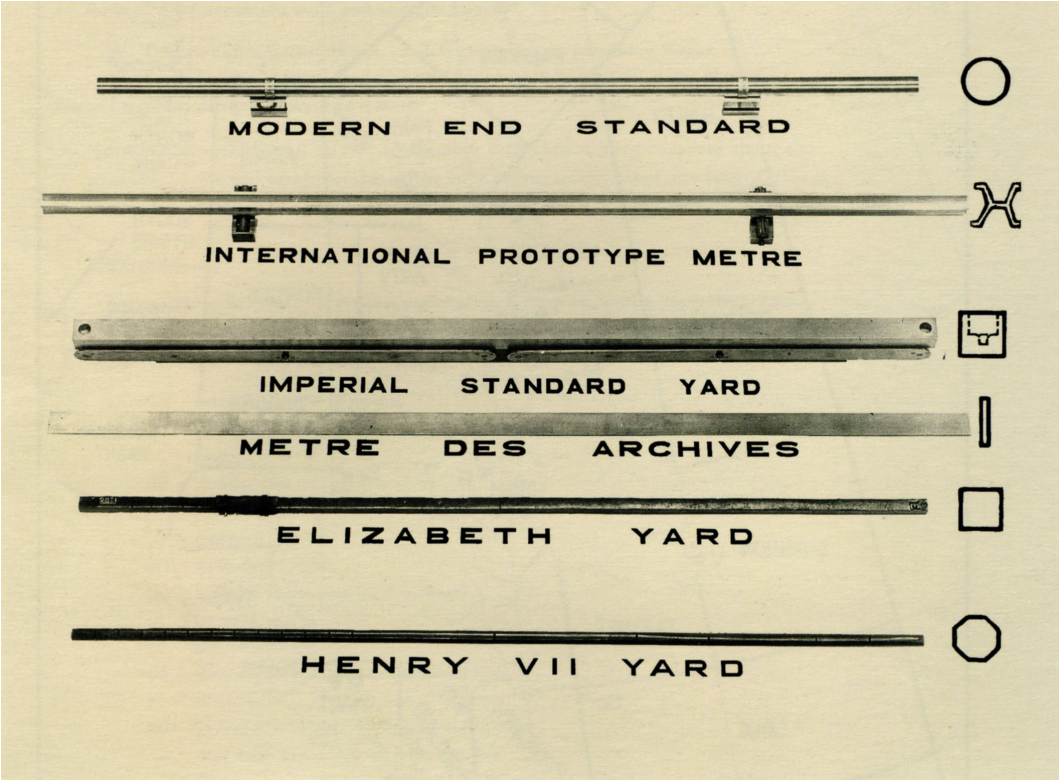


Marcel Duchamp, *Three Standard Stoppages* (1964) Replica edition produced for Galleria Schwarz, Milan (Naumann 1999 p243)

first sieve in the lower half of the large glass (Arts Council of Great Britain 1966 p48–9). The glass panels and rulers were eventually assembled into a boxed set in 1936, which is the way that they are displayed today.

Duchamp's predilection for reproductions and editions of his work meant that the fixing of three chance events carried on to an even greater degree as further copies of the original piece were made. Francis Naumann's 1999 book shows two different replica sets made by Ulf Linde and David Hayes in 1963, and a 1964 edition for Galleria Schwarz, Milan. There are also miniature versions included in all editions of the *Box in a Valise* (1941–68), where the contours are replicated but not of course the dimensions.

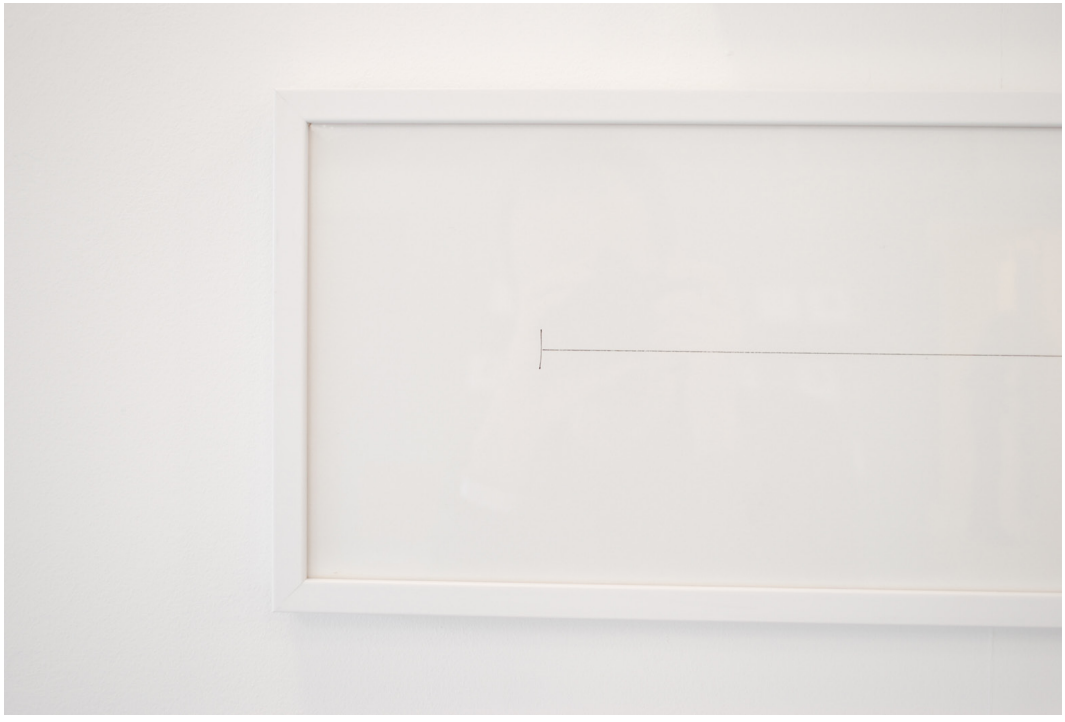
Each one of these replicas and reproductions takes its lead from the initial act of dropping thread onto canvas carried out back in 1913, and is a manifestation of Duchamp's lifelong interest in chance and the intentional. *Three Standard Stoppages* distorts the standard metre measure and replaces a straight edge with a random curve. The wooden rulers enable these curves to be reproduced accurately as a new standard measure, challenging the authority of the original and asserting the artist's own equally contingent intention, as with his famous readymades. With this piece there is a clear challenge to the objective authority of the metre.



Modern illustration of historical progression of standard lengths from the Henry VIII yard to a modern end standard (Hayward Gallery 1998 p25)

Measurement in general has also been important to a number of conceptual artists, notably Mel Bochner, as a means of both ordering work and introducing an element of cool objectivity. When Richard Wentworth was invited to curate a touring exhibition for the Arts Council in 1998, he included many works by artists that involved standardised systems and measurements (Hayward Gallery 1998), as well as an illustration in the catalogue comparing the various standard British and European measurements going back as far as Henry VII. These depictions of the metal bars that subsequent measurements were actually taken from relate to Wentworth's interest in the way that even the most abstract ideas sometimes have to take on physical form. The metre is today determined by a certain number of electromagnetic waves and therefore resists depiction in this form.

I hope with my discussion of Marcel Duchamp's piece in particular that I have been able to emphasise the difference between his work and my *Estimations*. His objects were concerned with capturing chance events and making a new, arbitrary, standard. In this they relate very much to his more well-known readymades such as the bottle rack and the snow shovel which have been widely interpreted as being critiques of subjective expression. My work, both drawings and live performances, documents an individual's genuine attempt to align subjective with objective criteria. There is no desire to challenge or depose the accepted minute or centimetre. Artist and audience are brought into a relationship through their mutual recognition



Wilsher *Estimations* (Detail) 2009

or misrecognition. If this series of work can be said to operate successfully at all, then it must rely on the existence and activation of mutual criteria that the Harvard model would propose as a set of value-free norms. In contrast, my use of these norms within an agonistic framework emphasises the differences between people that are made evident when we are asked to attempt our own estimations. The following chapter discusses resituating principled negotiation in agonistic terms which stresses its ability to describe the parts of a problem rather than necessarily reach agreement.

1 One frustrated viewer at the opening resorted to using sheets of A4 paper to help her measure one piece. The drawings really rely on the viewer not knowing their accuracy and being held in a perpetual state of suspense. I was lucky enough to sell two pieces and later had to warn the buyer to resist taking a tape measure to the lines in private in case he ruined his experience of the work. I have so far also managed to resist the temptation to check them, although when editing the video documentation I did discover that I was just fifteen seconds off five minutes in the performance.

11. Conclusions

When examining individual examples and discussing fine points of differentiation between theoretical models it is easy to forget the bigger picture. The fundamental reason that artists use dialogical processes is that they desire tangible interaction with their audiences, which is thought to be lacking from the "glacial isolation" (Kester 2004 p49) of the gallery-based object. All relational and dialogical practices stem from a political urge to locate art within the context of social interaction, and an ethical belief in the value of participation. The aim – whether through the mutual construction of subjectivity, the creation of a shared forum for free discussion, or the cooperative authorship of a work of art – is to demonstrate how life may be lived differently (and by implication, in a better way). "Participation in art projects could be seen as a strategy to ultimately produce more politicised citizens, as people are engaged and included" (Carrington 2004 p26). Even work that appears agonistic and negative is an attempt to show the reality of social relations, and consequently teach us a moral or political lesson. These are contemporary manifestations of the same urge to blend "art" and "life" that motivated early Modernism, the avant-garde and the neo avant-garde, and which will doubtless continue for generations.

The strategy of participation, though flowering in the 1960s with Happenings and performance art, has its roots at least as far back as DADA.[1] Dialogue is the key term that has emerged to theorise how participation operates. My research offers a critique of this usage, and suggests that a more appropriate metaphor may be found in negotiation.

The theorisation of dialogue

I initially set out to examine and critique the notion of dialogue that underpins Relational Aesthetics and dialogical art. The progressive nature of dialogue is accepted

relatively unquestioningly by the majority of artists working in this area as my examination of *The Fifth Floor* in chapter four suggests, the assumption being that dialogue enables ethical relations and leads to a greater level of participation in democratic society. Where it is theorised, most notably in the writing of Grant Kester, a Bakhtinian model of subject formation through "an utterance, a reply, and a relation between the two" (Holquist 1990 p38) is conflated with the formation of a discursive public sphere in the manner of Habermas, though without his detailed historical specificity. Nicolas Bourriaud draws on Guattari's psychoanalytic model of subjectivisation, but in practice and in his own writing it is clear that he has a wider interest in "art's capacities of resistance within the overall social arena" (Bourriaud 2002 p31). Beyond such references it is very rare to come across any explicit engagement with the actual operation of dialogue and there is a great deal of slippage between what might be called relational, dialogical, participatory and socially engaged art. The prevailing climate of political instrumentality has overtaken public arts policy and led to an "almost unconscious adoption of Reithian values – the mission to educate, entertain and instruct – which have permeated from outreach projects to the galleries and museums" (Wallinger & Warnock 2000 p11). Dialogue is equated with participation and both are thought to be self-evidently good things[2]. This has coincided with a great growth in gallery attendance, the rise of the blockbuster exhibition and the transformation of exhibitions into spectacular experiences that in their combination of immersion and participation exactly reflect the rise of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore 1998).[3] The figure of the artist as community organiser and social catalyst has been recuperated and transformed into an entrepreneurial networker and project manager. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) suggest that the figure of the adaptable, networked manager has emerged as a result of capitalism's cooption of the various social critiques of the 1960s, as industry has taken on board once radical management models.

It is clear that one effect of such a consensus about dialogue is to "demote not just dissenting culture but also aesthetic integrity" (Wallinger & Warnock 2000 p40), and the agonistic critique has been an attempt to reintroduce both to participatory practices. I discussed the limits of simply representing agonism in the way Claire Bishop advocates in chapter six (p72), and noted the need for an approach that maintains and articulates the tensions and real differences within society without falling back on the empty rhetoric of shock aesthetics. My argument has been that the model of negotiation may offer just such a conceptual framework, since negotiation theory offers models and approaches for analysing and describing agonistic relationships. In contrast, the mechanics of dialogue and interpersonal

transactions remain vague despite occasional appeals to Bakhtinian concepts such as heteroglossia and polyphony (Vice 1997 p46).

Dialogical projects offer participation but on someone else's terms. They enforce homogenisation and exclude real difference. This has a provocative correlation with free market forces, as Bakhtin outlines in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

> The polyphonic novel could, indeed, have come into being only in the capitalist epoch. The most favourable soil for its development was, moreover, precisely in Russia, where capitalism's near-catastrophic arrival found an untouched variety of social worlds and groupings which had not, as was the case in the west, had their individual self-enclosedness weakened in the process of the gradual advent of capitalism. (Bakhtin 1973 p16)

The sudden imposition of market forces on a traditional society, Bakhtin suggests, had the effect of radically equalising what had been quite different social groups. All things, not just commodities but social relations as well, were suddenly redefined as alike and interchangeable. The polyphonic novel actually reflects the cacophony of a newly created marketplace where everything is judged in terms of money, the *medium of exchange*. No other means of qualitative judgement is permitted – there are no fundamental differences.

Applications of negotiation theory

The normative and integrative model of the Harvard Negotiation Project's principled negotiation provides concise guidelines that I have used to generate a set of examples. These are meant to suggest different strategies and approaches to the application of negotiation theory in this context. Each project is described above through different aspects of the model, and I have demonstrated not only how the model can enable the generation of new artworks, but also how it can be brought into play as an interpretive framework. Used in this new way within the context of fine art practice, the guidelines of principled negotiation articulate different processes and relationships that would be lost or obscured by the generalised application of dialogue as interpretational metaphor. Dialogue that assumes equal partners tends to homogenise as it aims for consensus. Negotiation is based on difference.[4] It is an entirely new approach to considering participatory and relational work that takes into account the tensions inherent within an agonistic worldview.

Unfinished Business was based on a generational conflict between "old genre

public art" (Beech 2009*a* p4) and the art of today. Rather than perform some Oedipal act of destruction or denial, my use of negotiation theory led to a body of work that engaged with the older generation and made their allegiance to quite formal, perceptual abstraction relate to a postmodern paradigm. Separating the people from the problem allowed me to discover individual differences and agendas within a seemingly homogenous genre that would not have emerged without developing an interest in the people behind the works.

The Use of Money started with the opposed positions of faith and big business, but uncovered shared interests in generating income and acting responsibly within the wider social context. Negotiation theory enabled me to unpick a complex set of relationships that ranged from the personal decisions of individuals to corporate policy and evolving attitudes towards the public realm. Focusing on interests, not positions, emphasised the participants' situations and agendas and made me position what had seemed like a simple conflict within a wider perspective.

The Yesable Proposition was quite explicit in its attempt to create a win-win situation for the gallery and myself. Rather than just engaging in a "dialogue" with the gallery and seeing what emerged, I set out consciously to generate options for mutual gain. This directed attention towards the social structures surrounding the gallery and raised questions about the real beneficiaries of the situation. The potentially agonistic side of our relationship was drawn out.

Estimations operated through a set of conceptual standards shared by artist and audience. In estimating the accuracy of my drawings, or waiting silently for a performance to come to an end, the audience was put in the position of having to assess their own objective standards. In destabilising our agreed units of measurement, a gap was opened up between us and our differences emphasised.

Negotiation theory is generally presented as a value-free social science that only seeks to understand existing processes in order to improve future settlements. However, as I noted in chapter five (p63) it is in fact intimately tied to the world of business and the kind of "rationalist and individualist approach which is unable to adequately grasp the pluralistic nature of the social world, with the conflicts that pluralism implies" (Mouffe 2008 p8). My research resituates this ostensibly ideology-free model within Chantal Mouffe's agonistic public realm. I do not claim that negotiation theory provides an accurate "map" of agonistic struggle in its entirety, only that it permits the identification and description of some relationships within it. It is possible to envisage many avenues for further research in this vein, including reframing temporary public art commissions in terms of "weak agreements" (see

Wilsher 2009 in appendix E).

This repositioning of negotiation theory also has the effect of emphasising the agonistic aspects of market forces and, more interestingly, negotiation theory ironically emerges as a mechanism by which real qualitative differences within the contemporary public realm can be preserved.

The end of thirteen years of New Labour government with the 2010 general election is unlikely to see a radical abandonment of instrumentalised arts policies, and the language of social inclusion and democratic participation will most probably linger for some time (David Cameron's "Big Society" seems to share something of the same rhetoric). In the UK's new political context it is arguably even more important to examine the progressive claims made for dialogical art, and to construct alternative critical practices that are able to communicate the real differences at the heart of agonistic relationships.

1 Man Ray's *Object to be Destroyed* 1923 was intended to be smashed with a hammer (Short 1980 p53).

2 The question of whether participation itself is a good thing is also very rarely tackled and to even raise the issue risks accusations of elitism (Beech 2008).

3 Tate Modern's series of Turbine Hall Commissions is only the most obvious example of this trend. Artists who create large-scale immersive installations such as Doug Aitken, Yayoi Kusama or Jason Rhoades, have effectively commodified the counter-cultural Happening.

4 Indeed it is often noted that, counter-intuitively, a negotiated agreement actually depends on difference: difference between one person's strength of desire for a product and the other's valuation of its worth. Their difference enables the agreement.

Appendices

A. Unfinished Business

Exhibition catalogue (included)
METRO interview
METRO review
Guardian Guide preview

B. The Use of Money

The Use of Money DVD 2009 (to be presented on a monitor, looped)
Text available at gallery & the New Room

C. The Yesable Proposition

Exhibition catalogue (included)
Guardian Guide preview

D. Estimations

DVD documentation of *Five Estimated Minutes* 2009

E. Beyond Public Art

Art Monthly no.331 Nov 2009

F. Additional exhibitions and professional activity

RADAR *A Staged Dissent* 18 June 2008, Loughborough University
ICA *Talk Show* 6–31 May 2009
Chaired Aurora festival discussion 'From moving image to social action' Norwich Arts Centre, Nov 15 2009
Plenary presentation at the Association of Art Historians conference *Art & Authenticity* Newnham College, Cambridge, 1 November 2008

Drawing out new life lines

ART

Mark Wilsher has some Unfinished Business with unloved public sculptures

Public sculptures should grab the attention. Some have such presence that it's impossible not to notice them, whether they're on a plinth or in a shopping centre. Others merge into the background.

In Unfinished Business, Mark Wilsher has taken some of the public sculptures of the 1960s and 1970s as the starting point for an exhibition that plays with ideas of linking works that were very much of their time with contemporary practice.

▶At first, I wasn't sure if I liked the sculptures, but I have much more respect for them now◀

The project was sparked by wondering how much the public sculptures he took for granted as a child may have influenced his ideas. 'I was interested in things I might have seen myself, just walking around, that might later have influenced my taste.'

The pieces he considered for this project were abstract works made during the 1960s and 1970s. 'There were a lot of them, but many were ignored and left to rot,' says Wilsher amiably. 'At first, I wasn't sure if I liked them, but I have much more respect for them now. I deliberately didn't go for the good ones, or the famous ones.'

The sculptures which now look like sad reminders of an experiment in abstraction that didn't quite work, came out of a development that sought radical new ways of expression. 'The sculptors were trying to get away from the ideas of the 1940s and 1950s: the geometry of fear. The new generation saw that as conceptual, and to get rid of that idea, they wanted something that was formal and abstract. They called it perceptual; the idea was that the making of it was key, and that was the exciting part.'

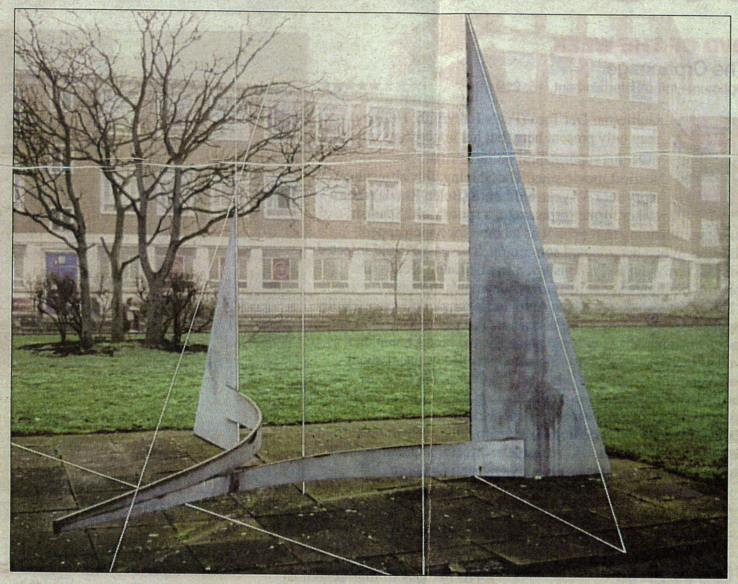
The construction of the pieces may have been filled with drama but with no sense of narrative or human interest, the angular, geometric forms feel oddly lifeless. At the time, though, they represented new possibilities in art and architecture. 'In the 1960s, there was a new style of architecture with plazas and office blocks, so these pieces were used to add a sense of identity.'

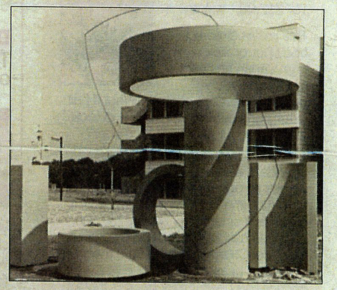
The contemporary part of Wilsher's project involves a kind of intervention: he has drawn on original magazine copies of photographs taken of the pieces at the time. 'I wanted to make something that was visual, so I took the ideas of these sculptors, and I wanted to put myself in their shoes. But the only way I could do it was by drawing on the prints.'

The original magazine pages were pivotal to Wilsher's thinking. 'I didn't want to see them as images, but as thin sculptures. It was important to use the original print or piece of paper, to give it a sculptural quality. Then I had to bite the bullet and do it, with rulers, compasses and geometry tools. If I got it wrong, I threw it away.'

Superimposed on the pages, Wilsher's drawings are angular, linear forms that add a sense not just that the works are 3D but, in some instances, that he's extended them beyond the boundaries of the original. In doing so, the pieces are somehow brought back to life. 'I think those sculptors succeeded at the time, but what they did had a time limit. They don't fit into today's neo-conceptual framework, but for a lot of people they're what you think of when you say modern art.' *Tina Jackson*

Sat to Oct 26, Gallery 4, Henry Moore Institute, 74 The Headrow, Leeds, Mon, Tue and Thu to Sun 10am to 5.30pm, Weds 10am to 9pm, free. Tel: 0113 246 7476. www.markwilsher.com





Of their time: Wilsher collects photographs of sculptures from the 1960s and 1970s, pictured, and modifies them for his latest exhibition

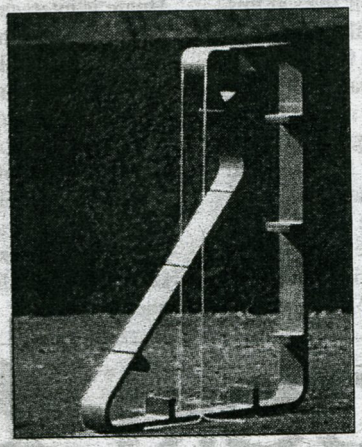
METRO 22 JULY 08

A

ART REVIEW

Unfinished Business ★★★★☆

Brutally modernist and uncompromisingly abstract, some public sculptures from the 1960s and 1970s are as unloved as the concrete tower blocks and car parks they decorate. The creators of these designs believed the future lay in pure exploration of geometric form, yet for many, they just evoke bad memories of trigonometry lessons at school.



In Unfinished Business, Mark Wilsher presents ten photographs of such sculptures from old books and magazines, over which he has sketched lines in black, white or gold ink. These connect the sculptures' edges and break up empty spaces within and around them with new shapes, which soften or transform their original form.

Wilsher also uses the two-dimensional format to play with perceptions of planes and perspective. One of the works from the series, Unfinished Business (Tucker) 2008, draws a line from William Tucker's 1974 work Angel and extends it to run along the picture's edge, drawing the photo itself into the sculpture. Other pieces create an impossible geometry, where apparently straight lines pass behind and in front of the sculptures.

It's possible that, by adding shapes to intentionally empty spaces, Wilsher is smoothing away some of these sculptures' jarring, awkward boldness. But mostly his small-scale interpretations are an inventive way of coaxing those oft-maligned lumps of steel and concrete to share their secrets.

Abi Bliss

Until Oct 26, Gallery 4, Henry Moore Institute, 74 The Headrow, Leeds, Mon, Tue and Thu to Sun 10am to 5.30pm, Wed 10am to 9pm, free. Tel: 0113 246 7467. www.henry-moore-fdn.co.uk

exhibitions

The Big Chill Art Trail Ledbury

The ultimate festival for the art-school band this year, and not just because of their inspired collaboration with the ICA. Also onsite is an Art Trail featuring works by (among others) Francis Upritchard, Gavin Turk, Simon Faithfull and Juneau Projects. Turk and Deborah Curtis have built a house of fairy tales in homage to the Eastnor landscape. Faithfull is taking steps to ensure festival-goers get a full moon every night with his glowing sculpture, while the ICA's mixed media tent will be a haven of dissonance, bad jokes and childish animation. With performance artist Doug Fishbone (pictured) ready to make you cringe, Jeffrey Lewis doing his lo-fi cinema and Jamie Shovlin's spoof krautrock band, it's the only festival where it will be totally acceptable to stand and stare. **JESSICA LACK**

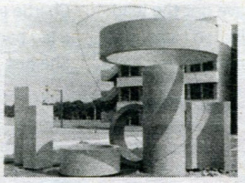
Eastnor Castle Deer Park, Fri 1 to Aug 3

James Coleman Dublin

Coleman uses sequences of slide projections, fading into each other with synchronised sound, to suggest the subjective particularity and peculiarity of individual experience. While the stills, having the full convincing presence of photography, might pretend to be some kind of documentary reality, their sequencing can trip up one's confidence. The real and the fictional mix to produce an uneasy bewilderment. Coleman's imagery over the years has ranged from feature film stills to police mugshots. The cumulative effect tends to stress the various forms by which our experience is constantly reconditioned through the filter of the images we have been subjected to. This is the first showing in his native Ireland of the acclaimed installation Background, 1991-94. **ROBERT CLARK**

Irish Museum of Modern Art, Fri 1 to Aug 31

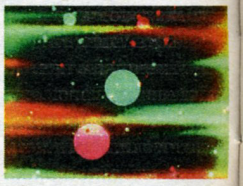
Mark Wilsher Leeds



Not so long ago the roles of artist, curator and critic were separate, but these days things aren't so simple. For this show, Wilsher creates art through curating and commenting on other artists' past work. His main focus is photographic and critical documentation of abstract sculpture of the 1960s and 70s. Does such thoroughly formal and modernistic art now appear, from our more theoretically complicated postmodernist perspective, to be somewhat stilted and aesthetically simplistic? So Wilsher presents his selections of doctored art mag photographs and texts to question what he calls the "unfinished business" of such a mystifyingly outmoded genre. **RC**

Henry Moore Institute, Wed 26 to Oct 26

Mary Ellen Bute London



For any budding animator, this retrospective of the little-known film-maker Mary Ellen Bute, who died in 1977, is not to be missed. The Texas-born artist began making animated films in the early 1930s after studying stage lighting at Yale. The results are a wondrous collection of playful abstract patterns, from her early 1936 short Dada – a sophisticated play of light and shade – to the frenetic Tarantella in 1940, a boisterous Kandinsky-inspired film set to the music of Edwin Gerschefski. Like many animators, Bute's obscurity is partly down to print damage, making many of her films unwatchable, but it is hoped this rare opportunity to see so many of her early shorts might resurrect her reputation as one of the leading pioneers of animation in America. **JL**

The Gallery At Sketch, W1, Sat 26 to Sep 13

B

The Use of Money

Mark Wilsher, 2009

Wilsher's *The Use of Money*, takes it title from the Methodist preacher John Wesley's famous eighteenth-century speech of the same name, in which he decries the excesses of materialism. In this work, members of Bristol's Methodist community stand in rows ordered by the pews of Bristol's New Room chapel, the oldest Methodist chapel in the world. The silent congregation implies a eulogy for lost values that is both incongruous and poignant, standing as it does against the backdrop of Cabot Circus, Bristol's primary shopping precinct. Wilsher overlays the film with the ambient sounds of birdsong and traffic recorded on Hanham mount, the site of Wesley's open-air sermons.

"Having first gained all you can, and secondly saved all you can, then give all you can" – John Wesley

"The £500 million Cabot Circus development has been just another in a long succession of changes to the heart of Bristol. John and Charles Wesley chose the central location of The Horsefair among shops and businesses precisely because they wanted to reach the working man, after initially being brought to the area in order continue the practice of "field preaching" to large crowds at Hanham Mount. The active social mission of Methodism is an extension of this tradition that continues to this day, getting involved in the community rather than waiting for the community to walk in though the door on a Sunday.

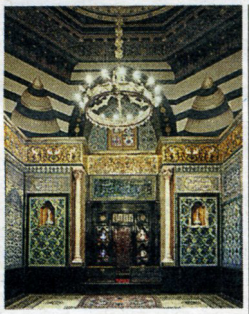
It would be all too easy to look at a glossy development like Cabot Circus and take a purely negative stance. Surely this great juggernaut of a shopping centre development is an example of speculative capitalism in its full glory? The controlled simulation of public space spread over newly created streets, complete with fully grown trees, open to the elements but carefully manicured and patrolled to eliminate undesirable activities. How different from the bird-filled trees and windswept grasses of Hanham Mount. It is a very contemporary "use of money". But equally contemporary is the rise of the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda that leads property developers like Hammerson and Land Securities plc to put time and money into the communities in which they operate, taking care to build up long term relationships with those who will, ultimately, be funding the whole operation with their spending power. In the case of the Bristol development the companies set up skills training programmes for unemployed people in order that the local pool of workers grows to match the new demand for staff, unknowingly following Wesley's injunction not to poach workers from other businesses

The New Room is kept open by volunteers who act as guides and welcome visitors. These people choose to give their labour freely because of their beliefs. But goodwill alone is not enough, there are always repairs to make, bills to pay. As the leader of a large international organisation, Wesley's journals are full of practical details of financial matters that are familiar to everyone. Wesley earned considerable sums in his lifetime through selling books and "penny tracts" and gave all of it to the church. He did not spurn money, but used it enthusiastically to pursue Christian aims. The relationships between commerce, religion, buildings and the public spaces we create are alive with contradictions that we must all learn to negotiate and live with as we follow our own ethical paths."

Mark Wilsher, 2009

C

exhibitions



Leighton House London

The Victorian artist Frederic Lord Leighton made his name mixing classicism with a swoonsome, pre-Raphaelite sensuality; an aesthetic that reached luscious perfection in his painting Flaming June. Perhaps the most outlandish example of his Romantic opulence, however, is Leighton House, created for the painter by the architect George Aitchison as a palace for art. Reopening after a multimillion pound facelift, this bijou Holland Park pad features 22 carat gold leaf domes, a silk-lined picture gallery and the Arab Hall, designed to flaunt Leighton's priceless Arab tiles. Though his art collection was auctioned off on his death, an exhibition including works by Delacroix, Corot, Constable and Tintoretto helps mark the occasion. **SKYE SHERWIN**

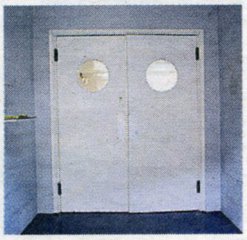
Leighton House, W1, from today

Paul Rooney Leeds

Filmed at Harewood House, Paul Rooney's Bellevue follows the disorientated ramblings of a character who, while attending an ad company's focus group, becomes possessed by the spirit of a 1930s failed jazz musician voluntarily incarcerated in a New York psychiatric institution due to his history of chronic alcoholism. The piece, also alluding to the novelist Malcolm Lowry's alcoholism treatment at New York's Bellevue Hospital in 1935, deals with themes of addictive indulgence and inspired escapism. As per usual, Rooney displays a knack for combining workaday banalities with hints of poignant psychological undertow. **ROBERT CLARK**

Harewood House, to 20 Jun

Mark Wilsher Norwich



You might say Mark Wilsher is all about team spirit. For his current project, The Yessable Proposition at the artist-run space Outpost, the artist, curator and writer has taken his exhibition budget and used it to make minor gallery improvements: a new toilet seat, a kettle, a magazine subscription for the staff. Meanwhile he'll be printing a book of essays, doing a gallery talk and organising an artist discussion group to spread the word. It's what he calls a "win-win" situation: he gets a "show" and the gallery gets new door handles. But there's a steelier critical edge to Wilsher's sense of fair play. This continues the artist's interest in applying business plans to art, a model all too familiar one might think, from arts-based regeneration schemes, where culture is forced to take the place of real government investment. **SS**

Outpost, to 21 Apr

Raqs Media Collective Gateshead

The Things That Happen When Falling In Love is a photo, film and text installation by the New Delhi-based, three-person collaborative group Raqs Media Collective. The Collective are known - as writers, researchers and curators as well as artists - for their evocative way of juxtaposing found and newly filmed footage, of combining the prosaic with the poetic, of assembling together photographs and text for free-association reverie. Matters of industrial global displacement are overlaid on intimations of emotional vulnerability. This installation - while dealing with love and loss, of ships-passing-in-the-night nocturnes - takes as its thematic anchor a series of photographs documenting the massive Swan Hunter shipbuilding cranes being transported down the River Tyne to be reused along the west coast of India. **RC**

Baltic, to 20 Jun

D

E

Late at Tate visitors

BEYOND PUBLIC ART

Mark Wilsher proposes redefining public art

IN HIS RECENT ARTICLE IN THESE PAGES (*AM329*) Dave Beech used the new 7/7 memorial in Hyde Park to highlight not just the way that outdoor monumental sculpture is increasingly becoming the professional domain of architects and planners but also the inadequacy of defining 'public art' as art that is simply located in a public place. A contemporary understanding of publicness must surely take its lead from writers like Henri Lefebvre and Jürgen Habermas who effectively demolished the idea of the physical agora as public space over 40 years ago. 'The public sphere is not public because of its spaces,' Beech writes, 'but because of its activities' and this is surely correct. However, I would like to push the argument further, beyond the call to see more radical activities in the public sphere that might reflect current critical practice, to expand

the notion of public art until it spills over into gallery or studio-based practice, and there is a wider idea of a kind of art that takes publicness as its subject without necessarily needing to expose itself to the weather.

If we follow Habermas and accept that the public sphere is defined as a discursive activity (which is at the root of the past decade's enthusiasm for socially engaged, relational or dialogical art) rather than a set of spaces, then we should look to see where that discussion about art takes place. Certainly since the millennium here in the UK there has been a massive increase in audiences and participation at the new generation of large public art galleries, of which Tate Modern is the prime example. The public funding of contemporary art, boosted for better or worse by New Labour's embrace of the instrumentalised creative economy, has seen venues filled with crowd pleasing live events, late night openings and screenings, as well as the more usual talks and panel debates that aim to generate public discussion. The programmers at these institutions have learned to be clever at funnelling money from educational pots into all sorts of activities that expand the discursive space around their buildings. This has all been assisted by the general turn towards spectacularisation and an 'event culture' that promises novel experiences to the consumers of art rather than fusty old paintings. Are these late night events really arenas in which ideas are discussed among a public? Perhaps. The crowds that massed and watched themselves in the mirrored ceiling of Olafur Eliasson's *Weather Project*, 2003-04, surely constituted some sort of a contemporary public sphere. But Habermas also described the way in which a commercial culture co-opts discussion for its own ends, staging debates that give the impression of enabling discussion while clandestinely using them to shore up established reputations and preserve the status quo. A lot of second- and third-rate relational art could be classed under this heading: tables, chairs and refreshments provided, and the audience told to make use of the space for discussion. But at how many of these events has something worthwhile really emerged? They are often purely rhetorical spectacles where we the audience are asked to affirm that we have been offered the possibility of participation. No thanks.

Away from the thronging public in these pseudo-agoras, then, where else does public discussion of contemporary art take place? The obvious answer is the traditional one: in the pages of daily newspapers and magazines. It could be argued that when any art enters the mainstream mass media it becomes public to an extent. The slightest conceptual gesture, dreamed up in the studio and quietly exhibited in a gallery, can become public property if the press decides it is a story worth following. This is public art that perhaps was never intended to be, but became public nonetheless (think of Martin Creed's light going on and off). When contemporary art features in the mainstream press, however, nine times out of ten the story is meant to mock the artist who is cast as an archetypal outsider engaging in some ridiculous or useless activity, and the art audience is cast as a bunch of pretentious dupes. Or else it is a question of public money: how much exactly is being wasted and

media coverage of Mark McGowan's *Running Tap* in 2005

DAILY MIRROR, Thursday, June 30, 2005 PAGE 27

WASTER

Artist to pour 15,000,000 litres of water down the drain .. to highlight waste of water

A TURNER: Gallery tap

STUNT: McGowan's nut-pushing

By ROBERT STANSFIELD

AN artist seeking to spotlight waste of water is leaving a cold tap on at full power for a year.

That will waste 15 million litres, at a time when Britain is facing its worst drought since 1976.

But Mark McGowan, 37, who calls himself an artist for the common man, is unrepentant over his "creation", titled The Running Tap.

McGowan, threatened with prosecution over his bizarre protest, said: "This will save water by highlighting the waste in homes when people brush their teeth, wash vegetables or shave with the tap running."

His tap is in a kitchen sink at the House Gallery in Camberwell, South London. It began running on Tuesday at two litres every 10 seconds, and the final bill could be £15,000.

Thames Water said it could issue an order to McGowan to stop waste. A breach would result in prosecution.

b.stansfield@mirror.co.uk

HIS OTHER WORKS OF 'ART'

COLLEGE lecturer McGowan is no stranger to stunts. He pushed a monkey nut along the road with his nose for seven miles to Downing Street in a protest over student fees.

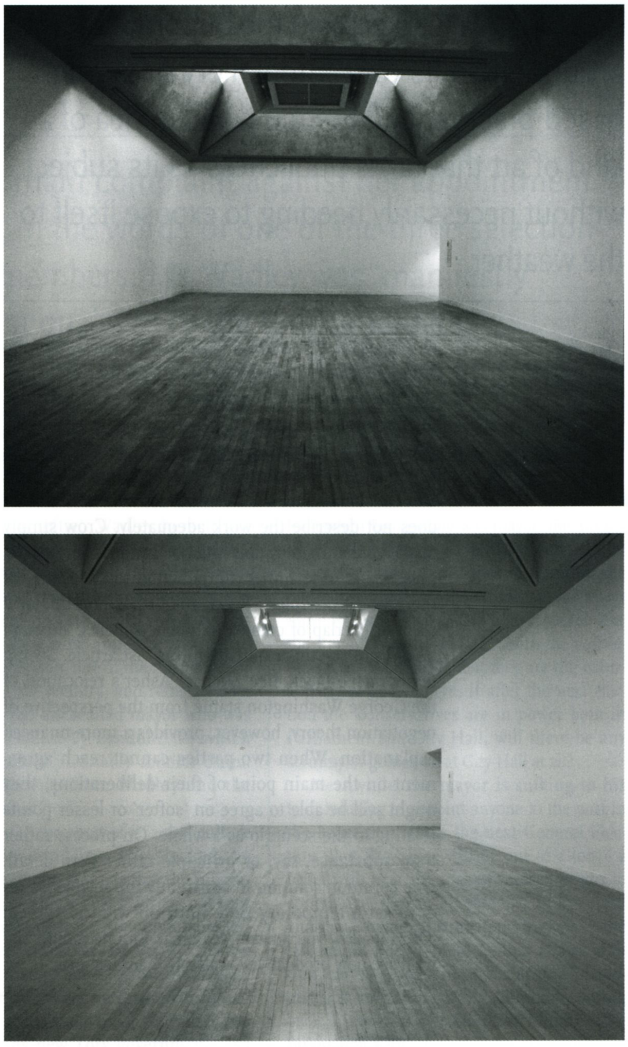
He walked backwards for 11 miles with a 27lb turkey on his head, shouting at fat people. And he ate a fox to focus on the plight of crack-heads.

how many hospital beds could have been paid for by an equivalent sum? Art is routinely misdescribed and misunderstood in the news pages, with serious coverage relegated to a weekly review page commissioned from a specialist critic. Real discussion is safely circumscribed. It often seems that the general public is just not prepared to take art seriously. The sculptor William Turnbull once wrote: 'the problem with public sculpture is not the sculpture, it's the public.' It is unlikely that Charles Saatchi's televised art talent contest will do much to foster engaged debate over yet more ephemeral trivia.

But it is possible to make work that operates within the discursive framework of the mass media, that is visible to a huge public and yet holds on to its radical potential. *The Running Tap*, 2005, by Mark McGowan was a simple project that left a domestic cold water tap running in a gallery kitchen for one year 'as a comment on how much water we all waste'. Coming after a long hot spell and droughts in some parts of the country, this was picked up by the media and caused a considerable furore. The *Guardian* ran a two-page spread on the artist and the story circulated right across the world in the form of syndicated reports. Journalists were solemnly led into the back room and shown the running tap. The BBC reported that Thames Water was considering legal action to get it turned off. By coming up with a strong, easily communicable image, McGowan lures the media into not just disseminating but actually performing his work for him (other pieces include *Artist Eats Fox*, 2004, and *Kick a Crackhead*, 2005). Whereas most performance artists produce their own documentation, he just tapes a three-minute segment of ITN news or buys the *Daily Mail*. At one point McGowan was even artist in residence on Richard & Judy's daily programme. Isn't that the very epitome of public art? First generation conceptual artists like Dan Graham may have inserted their work into national publications through the act of buying advertising space, but McGowan actually taps directly into the media itself to generate public discussion (as did Rod Dickinson with his crop circle works).

As I suggested above, socially engaged or dialogical practices have really emerged over the past decade as a more sophisticated model of public art than the old 'turd in the plaza' and are now taught on undergraduate courses and viewed as a viable career option. In the course of this wider popularisation it has become orthodox to base such activities on the notion of dialogue derived from Habermas's 'Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere', where power hierarchies are bracketed and every subject is able to play an equal part in the creation of a space for democratic conversation. Of course the real world is not so ideal, and taking their lead from a variety of philosophical and sociological critiques of Habermas we have seen critics, including Claire Bishop and Beech, highlight the role of counter public spheres and 'agonism', to use Chantal Mouffe's term that suggests a kind of lesser antagonism. It is this sense of antagonism that makes the example of Gordon Matta-Clark's *Window Blowout*, 1976, seem relevant today. But the concept of dialogue still stands as a structuring paradigm for many works that seek to engage with the public realm, even on agonistic terms. To me this model seems undefined and over-generalised. It is undoubtedly more suited to an optimistic view of the public sphere as an accessible discursive realm rather than one riven with inequality and conflict.

When it comes to describing the interactions between parties who fundamentally disagree, who are attempting to press their own concerns rather than create consensus, it may be that elements of the theory of negotiation are more appropriate than dialogue. Negotiation theories model differential power relationships within complex situations where there can be many problems and issues in need of resolution. Emerging largely from North American sociology, and with an



Martin Creed
Work No. 227: The lights going on and off 2000
5 seconds on, 5 seconds off
installation view at
Tate Britain in 2001

>> I would like to expand the notion of public art until it spills over into gallery or studio-based practice, and there is a wider idea of a kind of art that takes publicness as its subject without necessarily needing to expose itself to the weather.

emphasis on diplomatic and industrial issues, they are admittedly instrumental and can be rather reductive. But that element of concreteness acts as a corrective to the woolly manner in which dialogue is usually invoked to underpin social art projects. To take Thomas Crow's example of 'strong' site-specific art that Beech refers to, it is clear that convivial relationality does not describe the work adequately. Crow simply observes that its duration must be limited 'because its presence is in terminal contradiction to the nature of the space it occupies'. Beech might position this as a clash or overlap of competing public spheres, although he did not say this explicitly in his last article. Seeing temporary projects like Michael Asher's relocation of the George Washington statue from the perspective of negotiation theory, however, provides a more nuanced explanation. When two parties cannot reach agreement on the main point of their deliberations, they might still be able to agree on 'softer' or lesser points relating to the scenario as a whole. On process rather than substance, say, or principle rather than detail. One common solution to apparently intractable issues is to set a temporary time limit on what is agreed: 'OK, I'll allow you an extra tea break for one month and we'll see how productivity is affected,' for instance.

Rachel Whiteread
Monument 2001

In discussing public art, the two positions can be described as critical contemporary artist versus conservative guardians of the public realm. It is really no wonder that so much of what is permitted to be permanent is so unchallenging when the administrators and bureaucrats of local councils inevitably lag far behind what is printed in specialist publications like this one. A temporary work, however, is far more easily agreed upon. The possibility of achieving weaker-strength agreements about what is permissible in the public realm, in terms of time-limited projects, is what lies behind the rise in transient public art. Trafalgar Square's Fourth Plinth is a prime example, where even hugely expensive new commissions like Bill Woodrow's bronze tree and Rachel Whiteread's inverted resin plinth were only intended to remain in position for a span of months. Antony Gormley's recent attempt only makes this inherent defeatism more highly visible. The large institutions where a kind of public sphere is acted out would never allow experimental, genuinely untested art into their galleries on a permanent basis, but they are happy to permit it for an evening or over the weekend when it supports the culture of art as populist leisure activity.

Of course developments in art have been driven by many factors, and the rise of the temporary reflects a whole range of interests from commodity critique to the famously fleeting shapes of modernity itself. But it is noteworthy that, while challenging art within the gallery has for the most part held on to its permanent material status (aided by teams of conservators now struggling to save or replace decaying objects from as little as 20 years ago), art in the public realm really has developed into a whole 'new genre' defined to a large extent by transience and temporal-specificity. This surely reflects the pragmatism of artists' desires to locate work in the public sphere as much as the fragmentary and disputed nature of publicness itself.

I like Beech's phrase 'old genre public art' a lot because it collapses a whole multitude of what were once diverse and urgent practices into a single weather-resistant lump. We look back at the traditional public art of the 1950s, 60s and 70s now and perceive a striking homogeneity of forms and materials. This is the genre that is aped with much success by 'professional' public artists everywhere, who turn out vaguely organic forms carved in stone or interesting looking metal whatnots with little regard for the historical ideas that originally motivated these styles. It is unchallenging because it needs to be in order to be granted permanence by the guardians of traditional culture. Leave monumental bronzes to the self-appointed professionals, I suggest, and look elsewhere for today's genuinely public art. ▮

MARK WILSHER is a postdoctoral research student at Norwich University College of the Arts.

F


A STAGED DISSENT
Wednesday 18 June 2008
7.15pm
An evening of performances and films centred around the theme of protest, rebellion and revolt
Leonard Dixon Drama Studio
English and Drama Department
Loughborough University
Oreet Ashery
Tellervo Kalleinen and Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen
Gail Pickering
Pil and Galia Kollectiv
Oliver Ressler and Zanny Begg
Mark Wilsher
Radar
www.lboro.ac.uk/radar

A SEASON OF SPEECH-BASED ARTWORKS AND EVENTS

Talk show

To utter, "I'm too sad to tell you" is to excuse oneself from not telling whatever it is one could tell if only one weren't so incapacitated by the emotion accompanying the temporarily untellable; to title does so much more.

Talk show

Talk show

curated by Will Holder with Richard Birkett and Jennifer Thatcher

Talk show

Robert Ashley, Fia Backström, Pierre Bismuth, Ben Cain, Prof. Deborah Cameron, Stella Capes, Leandro Cardoso, castillo/corrales, Ann-James Chaton & Andy Moor, Steven Connor, Jeremiah Day, Paul Elliman, Chris Evans, Rachel Everard & Carolyn Cheasman, Robert Filliou, Simone Forti, William Furlong's Audio Arts, Beatrice Gibson & Jamie McCarthy, Melanie Gilligan, Sharon Hayes, Anne Karpf, Eve Karpf, Joan La Barbara, Chris Mann, Adam Pendleton, Falke Pisano, Oliver Pouliot, Seth Price, Plus Minus Ensemble, Jonathan Rée, Julian Rhind-Tutt, Jonnie Robinson, Prof. Sophie Scott, Dexter Sinister, Frances Stark, Louise Stern, Stephen Sutcliffe, Manuel Saiz, School of Sound, Terry Smith, The Thread, Alex Waterman, Jimmy Robert & Ian White, Mark Wilsher, Dr Laura Wright

Talk show

ha! was just struggling to concentrate on writing this and being in somewhat of a hurry while arlo in the background is describing in detail the drawing he is making, and that description also includes commands and questions to look and speculate about why this is drawn that way (why 9 tentacles/ because there's one crab hand, actually 11 cuz, no actually just ten because the mouth etc etc... and then suddenly he just blurts out: "do I talk too much?" anyway... the new powerpoint hasn't materialized yet... but that's not to say I might not make it work in the end. I would be perfectly happy to show the first one -- and if there's a new one next month I'll send it and you can decide which you'd prefer. "look! look! look how many guys are controlling the squid."

Talk show

We need to distinguish between *language-independent facts*, such as the fact that Mt.Everest has snow and ice at the summit, and *language-dependent facts*, such as the fact that "Mount Everest has snow and ice at the summit" is a sentence of English.

Talk show

ICA, THE MALL, LONDON
MAY 6th–31st, 2009

Talk show

Talk show

COMMON GROUND

AURORA is a unique festival based in Norwich which focuses on the moving image in the most diffuse sense. Never content with being just another 'film festival', AURORA this year goes further than ever before to argue for a broader moving image in which film programmes sit alongside live music, discussion, exhibitions, workshops and talks.

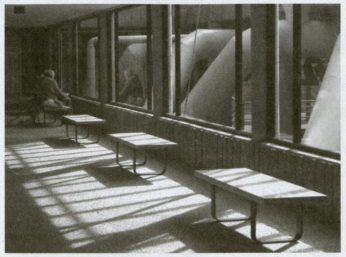
The festival will, for the first time, run over a ten-day period with two distinct parts — first, the FESTIVAL WEEK (5 - 12 November), a series of workshops, talks, screenings and music; and second, the FESTIVAL WEEKEND, from 13 - 15 November, where we create a 'temporary community' of our own to explore the theme in more depth in a uniquely intimate, focused setting where audience and guest artists alike watch, discuss, eat and drink together (with all meals included in the ticket, it makes for a easy weekend!).

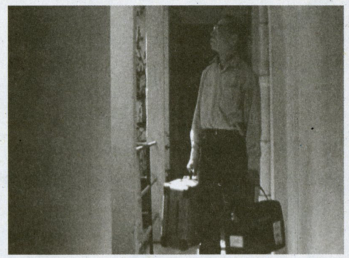
The new format will also inform this year's theme, 'Common Ground'. Straying from anthropological or ethnographic studies to oblique explorations of myth and the representation of reality, the theme leads to an entirely literal reading of the 'common ground' in which ecology collides with social history and direct action.

Featuring screenings of rarely-seen films alongside live music and performance; workshops on everything from 16mm filmmaking to video sniffin' (find out more inside…); discussion sessions and talks with artists, curators and activists; and exhibitions, the festival sets out to prove that neither making nor encountering art need be inaccessible, costly, or passive: it can act as a force for change.

This is the last ever edition of AURORA, so whether you're returning for another visit or have never before made it to the festival, and whether you drop in for a gig or stay for the weekend, now is the time to join us!

ADAM PUGH, FESTIVAL DIRECTOR





FESTIVAL WEEKEND £65 / £50 Includes all meals!

DISCUSSION

Discussion is at the heart of the festival—the chance for people to meet and find common ground. In discussion events as part of the Festival Weekend, artists including Shezad Dawood and Beatrice Gibson, together with Graeme Hogg (Cube Cinema, Bristol) and chair Mark Wilsher talk about how art can effect real change, whilst Richard Wright, Jamie King (*Steal This Film*), Jem Cohen, Andrew Kötting and Gareth Evans discuss networks and open-source ideals, from the social networks of Web 2.0 to the campfire of folk tradition.

BE PART OF IT

Come for the Festival Weekend (13 - 15 November) and get to experience a totally different type of festival… one at which everyone takes part equally, eats together, drinks together. All meals are included in the price of the Festival Weekend ticket—so you needn't worry about anything other than turning up. And we're laying on music each night, including Alasdair Roberts & Luke Fowler live and DJs Emma Pettit & Nick Luscombe of London's Roots & Shoots.

Clockwise from top left: *A Necessary Music* (Beatrice Gibson); *Destination Finale* (Philip Widmann); *Triangulum* (Melissa Dullius and Gustavo Jahn); and *Feature; production still* (Shezad Dawood, 2007-8; courtesy of the artist and Paradise Row, London)

AAH New Voices Postgraduate Symposium

University of Cambridge, Newnham College, Lucia Windsor Room

1st November 2008

ART AND AUTHENTICITY

Programme

9.00-9.30 Registration
9.30-9.40 Opening and Welcome

9.40-10.20 Special Event: Mark Wilsher (Henry Moore Institute/Norwich School of Art and Design) "Unfinished Business: appropriated authenticity"

10.20-10.40 Coffee

10.40-11.40 Panel 1 *Uses of Photography*
Rosemary Shirley (Sussex University) "*A Fortunate Man*: John Berger's Commitment to an Authentic Expression of the Non-metropolitan Everyday"
Leena Crasemann (Freie Universitat Berlin) "Orders and Disorders: Photography's Postcolonial Critique"
Chair: Olga Smith (University of Cambridge)

11.40-13.00 Gallery visit
13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.15 Panel 2 *Replica and Copy in the Museum and Institutions*
Greta Koppel (Estonian Academy of Art) "Priceless art in the collection of Kadriorg Art Museum in Tallinn"
Elisabeth Fritz (University of Vienna) "*To remove the work is to destroy the work*: Site-specificity as an Artistic Strategy of Authentification"
Isabelle Flour (Université Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne/Maison Français d'Oxford) "Reproducing Architecture: Architectural Cast Museums and the *effet du réel*"
Chair: Karolina Watras (University of Cambridge)

15.15-15.45 Coffee

15.45-16.45 Panel 3 *Authenticity in the Digital Age*
Seb Franklin (University of Sussex) "Digital Art and the Concept of Authenticity: Opening 'Closed Source' in Jodi and Cory Arcangel"
Fanny Singer (University of Cambridge) "An Immaculate Deception: Richard Hamilton's *The Annunciation*"
Chair: Louise Hughes (University of Bristol)

16.45-17.15 Roundtable chaired by Dr. Alyce Mahon (University of Cambridge)

17.15-18.00 Wine reception
19.00 Conference dinner (optional)

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