

WHY PRACTICE?

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The individual consumption of the worker, whether it occurs inside or outside the workshop, inside or outside the labour process, remains an aspect of the production and reproduction of capital, just as the cleaning of machinery does, whether it is done during the labour process, or when intervals in that process permit [...] The maintenance and reproduction of the working class remains a necessary condition for the reproduction of capital. —Karl Marx¹

[C]apitalist economy relies on—one might say, free rides on— activities of provisioning, care-giving and interaction that produce and maintain social bonds, although it accords them no monetized value and treats them as if they were free. —Nancy Fraser²

Not very long ago, in April 2015, the Welsh government passed into law the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The idea is to use ecological thinking for questions of governance; that is, to consider the long-term effects of any policy decision, planning initiative, service or legislation on both humans and non-humans. The principles are significant: What does it mean to move the planning horizon from, for example, an election cycle to one that includes the lives and livelihoods of people not yet born, in a world we can't imagine? What does 'wellbeing' mean for services or organizations that don't think in those terms? And how does anyone define a benefit, and really consider on whom or what it may have an effect? In April 2018 a planning application was filed for a 'wellbeing village.' What would that be? It is interesting to wonder about all this. The Act has also bolstered a long-running campaign against a highway extension, the argument made more forcefully this time in terms of the debt borne by those who have no voice in the decision. With this ecological mindset, the

Act foregrounds certain gestures: identifying short-term thinking, factoring in the cost of keeping and maintaining, inquiring about who benefits, and promoting 'decent work.' Future Generations Commissioner Sophie Howe describes herself as both *coach* and *referee*. She has said that doing what is right is sometimes not doing anything at all, but at other times an organization will need to

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, translated by Ben Fowkes, Vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1990 [1867]) pp. 717-18.

² Nancy Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care," *New Left Review*, No. 100, July-August 2016, p. 101.

redefine what it is responsible for.³ It is an ambitious project, possibly even a sign of a progressive remodeling of governance. It is notable, because it is taking place in a region of the United Kingdom that regained certain powers from central government (London) in the late 1990s. It also has the worst area of poverty in all of Northern Europe. It is a place with a strong sense of cultural identity and great geographical beauty, but it is also somewhere that has suffered a disproportionate impact of industrial exploitation. A majority in Wales cast their vote for leaving the European Union in 2016.

What does this remodeling suggest is possible from the perspective of a critical curatorial or artistic practice? Does Wales's new framework shift priorities toward ones being discussed in artistic and activist communities, and can this recalibration set in motion changes in institutional practice itself? I am interested in how shifts from products to processes, from things to activities, or—in a larger frame—a generalized interest in 'practice' might reflect or relate to long-term thinking. I am also interested in how discussions of 'care' and 'love' relate to those of work and labor and could themselves trigger the undoing of structured inequalities. To do this thinking out loud, I am going to discuss the work of two artists who work in ways that seem aligned with questions of wellbeing: American artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles, and the Cardiff-based artist Rabab Ghazoul.

The question that is difficult to work out is whether Acts are one thing and art another, and whether art's behavior can model better institutions, or if we should insist institutions find their own tools to reform themselves.

WHY PRACTICE?

Practice signifies in certain ways against other ways of naming cultural labor such as work, project, product, etc. But what is identified or claimed by calling cultural activity a *practice* or, more pointedly, *practice*? We can point to shifts in artistic work moving from the studio to exhibition and other types of spaces, for example in socially engaged art practices, and what comes along with shifting what is thought of as art and how people are involved with it. There are also questions of knowledge and acknowledgment; what kinds of expertise are granted and maintained through institutions and what types of activity remain hard to see or difficult to represent? Pierre Bourdieu argued that the notion of 'practice' is key to understanding human actions, and that actions are never abstract but manifest themselves through practices. His term *habitus*, "the principle that negotiates between objective structures and practices," is aimed at understanding how actions turn into symbolic capital, or power.⁴ But while his approach identifies rules of human relations, and he argues that practice reveals these through its forms—through conventions, habits, customs and training—he is also quite precisely concerned with things that are difficult to catch in abstract and synoptic theories, or

³Sophie Howe was keynote speaker at "The Future of Well Being," Culture & Enterprise Presents..., Central Saint Martins, London, March 2018, an event I co-organized with Dr. Jamie Brassett and Dr. John O'Reilly. See also "Sophie Howe and Michael Sheen Q&A," Well Being in Wales: Planning for a Better Tomorrow, July 2017, available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKk6qcy66ZU> (accessed April 27, 2018).

⁴Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

build into institutions. Habitus is a response to existing conditions, he argues, different from theory, and that it is “immediately inscribed into the present, things to do or not to do, to say or not to say, in relation to a *forthcoming* reality which... puts itself forward with an urgency and a claim to existence excluding all deliberation.”⁵ Habitus, for my purpose, is like an angle, or a leaning, that refocuses on the activity over the form, with an understanding of their interrelations.

Bernard Stiegler also writes about practice, or practitioners, as a means to talk about motivations for doing work aside from the constant pressures to be producing and consuming. His “empowered amateur” points to a different kind of activity or mode, one based on love, tenacity, know-how, belief and doing things voluntarily. Stiegler links up a critique of political economy, current challenges to what he calls individuation, and a long-time interest in tools, or forms of mediation. His concern is, in his words, the “human problem of life on earth, and the responsibility that we have not to evade this problem, which is constantly being remade by technical invention.”⁶ He focuses on the subject, a heteronomous subject set against what he calls “hyper-industrialised societies” that have created a “third stage of proletarianism.”⁷ He writes, by way of explaining his concept organology: “The subject’ doesn’t interest me... The ‘psychic subject’ doesn’t interest me. The ‘national subject’ doesn’t interest me. Even the ‘technical subject’ doesn’t interest me, if it exists. However, the manner in which processes constitute themselves interests me.”⁸

Stiegler thinks about humans as individuated on several levels: psychic, technical and social, and, later, biological and geo-physical. He writes forcefully about the general condition of malaise, misery, and ill-being (*mal-être*, in French), produced by a loss of these positive senses of individuation. The impact of technologies and economies on humans is decisive in disabling or deferring the processes of being human.⁹ Practice, then, is a process of accessing knowledge, connecting sense to participation, activating desire. As Stiegler’s opposite mode to *mal-être*, are these processes akin to what might establish, and maintain, wellbeing?

CARING + ACTIVISM

It is worth revisiting here American artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles and her 1973 work *Hartford Wash* as a signature act of feminist critique, social practice and a project to counter misery. Ukeles’s first retrospective was held in 2016 at the Queens Museum in New York, giving her much belated attention, especially around her concept of ‘maintenance.’ In the late 1960s, when Ukeles was a young artist and a new mother, she wrote a proposal for an exhibition titled *CARE* that she also

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76. Italics are in the original. ⁶ Bernard Stiegler, “Automatic society, Londres, février 2015,” *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, Vol. 15, Nos. 2-3, 2016, p. 193.

⁶ Bernard Stiegler, “Automatic society, Londres, février 2015,” *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, Vol. 15, Nos. 2-3, 2016, p. 193.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁸ Ben Roberts, Jeremy Gilbert and Mark Hayward, “Bernard Stiegler: ‘A Rational theory of Miracles: On Pharmacology and Transindividuation,’” *New Formations*, October 2012, p. 166.

⁹ See Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998 [1994]), and *The Re-Enchantment of the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

described as a “manifesto for maintenance.”¹⁰ She suggested she would live in a museum and do there the things she ordinarily did in her life, that is, as an artist and as a woman. In the manifesto she wrote,

“I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also, (up to now separately) I ‘do’ Art.”¹¹ She proposed she would sweep the floors of the museum, dust the artworks and cook food for visitors. In other words, she would exhibit work, necessary but usually unseen work. The conjoining of political and cultural forms speaks to art practices understood in activist terms, and these multiple valences were played out in how Ukeles eventually, at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, placed herself in the museum, what she did there and decided how these were represented. Her working body occupied certain spaces on the edges of visibility, reproducing the social conditions that value some work over others. The best-known images—of Ukeles on her knees washing the floor or walking with a mop and bucket—mark these acts as performative, thereby connecting work as labor to work as form. Ukeles makes this explicit in the manifesto, arguing that the traits associated with cultural value, such as change, progress and individuality—she sardonically uses the swinging argot of the 1960s to “do your own thing”—are directly dependent upon the unacknowledged labor of others. Ukeles names unwaged housework as the basis for the difference between herself and her male artist counterparts; ‘maintenance’ is part of the ‘art.’ This doubling of the social and the aesthetic is emblematic of the need to see a fuller picture of cultural work, but, perhaps more pointedly, she models how to refigure it.

The topic of care has emerged widely in discussions of art, curatorial and institutional practices, in part signaling issues around the gendered nature of work, in part as a way of naming the impacts of destructive budget cuts and efficiency drives in the wake of the 2008 economic crash.¹² In the reduced-state economic models that followed, care appears as both the lowest valued and the dearest, definitively returned to migrants, women, the voluntary sector, those seeking work, and to the ‘self,’ via the relentless logic of self-optimization, so-called flexibility and digital platforms that shift paid, professional work to ‘self-service.’ Feminist discourse highlights a critical link between caring and labor that needs to be seen as structured by class, race and gender. Marina Vishmidt reminds us to pay attention to the work that is made invisible, abjected and moralized about.¹³ In her essay “Support Acts,” Helena Reckitt points out how much the expansions of curatorial and artistic work includes a whole range of supportive and infrastructural activities and how dependent these are

¹⁰Mierle Laderman Ukeles, “Maintenance Art Manifesto: Proposal for an Exhibition ‘CARE’ (1969),” published in part in *Artforum*, January 1971; here quoted in Lucy Steeds (ed.) *Exhibition* (London: The MIT Press/Whitechapel Gallery, 2014).

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 125. *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Maintenance Art* took place at the Queens Museum in New York from September 18, 2016 until February 19, 2017.

¹² See, among others, Angela Dimitrakaki and Kirsten Lloyd (eds.) *Economy: Art, Production and the Subject in the 21st Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015); Kate Fowle, “Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today,” in *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating* edited by Stephen Rand and Heather Kouris (New York, NY: apexart, 2007) pp. 10-19; Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, “Value, Measure, Sustainability: Ideas Towards the Future of the Small-scale Visual Arts Sector” (London: Common Practice, 2014), available online at <http://www.commonpractice.org.uk/> (accessed September 11, 2018); Anthony Huberman, “Take Care,” in *Circular Facts*, edited by Mai Abu El Dahab, Binna Choi, Emily Pethick (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011) pp. 9-17.

¹³Marina Vishmidt, “The Two Reproductions in (Feminist) Art and Theory since the 1970s,” *Third Text*, Vol. 31, No. 1, Autumn 2017, pp. 49-66.

on “sacrificial labour.”¹⁴ While such expansions of practice are promoted and received in many quarters as marks of free agency and self-fulfillment, Reckitt focuses on their dependencies: on other people’s work and on the structured flows of post-industrial capital. Citing the writing of Maurizio Lazzarato, she writes, “[he] stresses the central role of communication within immaterial labour, describing how, even in heavy industry, ‘prior to being manufactured, a product must be sold.’”¹⁵ In this instance Reckitt describes a performance-installation by artist Scott Lyall at Toronto’s The Power Plant. She names its dependency upon an all-female group of patrons whose voluntary labor and private financial support, conceived as a ‘partner-ship’ with the art, made it happen. Far from a unique example of art put to economic ends, Lyall’s installation, *The Power/Color Ball* (2008), nonetheless lay intentionally unproductive and unperformed, communicating ambivalence about its role within the museum’s annual fundraising event. The point can be returned to the dynamics already revealed in Ukeles’s practice: between visibility and invisibility, work-as-labor and work-as-art. But here the admixture and inter-relations of artist, patrons, art, museum, and public are made specific, not left abstract. In fact, as Reckitt points out, the whole thing was dependent on something beyond any of their control, which occurred a week before the exhibition opened: the global financial crisis triggered in September 2008, which led to what is now called The Great Recession. Lyall’s non-action could be seen as both symbol and process, a form of labor withdrawal, aka a strike, as well as performance-as-art.

Acknowledging the dependencies of any kind of production presses questions of what comes into the balance sheet and what is left out. In part, Reckitt argues that the work of culture needs a reframing of what it costs. This, she writes,

[...] would look at how cultural projects deploy human, economic and material resources, and at what cost. Such an approach would question the sustainability of activities that, for example, rely on shipping objects around the world at vast environmental cost, or in the carbon footprint left by people keeping up with the art world’s itinerant calendar. Recognizing that the art world is unsustainable if those working in it cannot reproduce their livelihoods, it would prioritize the need for support systems that sustain cultural production, from childcare, parental leave and provisions for people with disabilities, to fair pay and employment practices.¹⁶

On the face of it these resonate with activist or critical practices in the name of feminism, environmentalism, diversity and decolonization. We are in an odd moment, however. There are initiatives such Canada’s Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice, Wales’s Happy Museum project and campaigns in a number of countries for fair pay—such as the Paying Artists campaign in the UK and W.A.G.E. in New York—but elsewhere signs point to a different state of affairs. In the first half of 2018, five women in museum leadership roles lost their jobs over ‘lack of confidence’ but

¹⁴ Helena Reckitt, “Support Acts,” *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, February 2016.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

their stories all suggest conflicts over values.¹⁷ One of them is Laura Raicovich, who, as Director of the Queens Museum, hosted Ukeles's retrospective; she was fired for being 'too political.' In Los Angeles, Helen Molesworth used her role to diversify the exhibition program of the Museum of Contemporary Art, showing more women artists and artists of color. According to news reports she was seen to be sidelining blue-chip artists and their collectors, but it should be explained (again) that Molesworth was precisely implementing 'positive action.' The hidden hand that was revealed through her attempt to shift MOCA's institutional practice was the art market.¹⁸ The museum revealed its reliance on a model of capitalism in its most obscene form: offering its prizes and solo exhibitions to the highest earners. We know this already: capitalism, left to its own logic, converges its resources toward the few. In Nancy Fraser's words: "money [is] the primary medium of power."¹⁹

SOCIAL PRACTICE?

For some time, we have focused on socially engaged curatorial and art practices, or other types of post-object, post-studio work, to critique market-oriented art, institutional power, and produce different relations around art. In his concept of *dialogic art*, Grant Kester explains it in now familiar terms:

We typically view the artist as a kind of exemplary bourgeois subject, actualizing his or her will through the heroic transformation of nature or the assimilation of cultural difference—alchemically elevating the primitive, the degraded, and the vernacular into great art. Throughout, the locus of expressive meaning remains the radically autonomous figure of the individual artist. A dialogical aesthetic suggests a very different image of the artist; one defined in terms of open-ness, of listening and a willingness to accept dependence and intersubjective vulnerability. The semantic productivity of these works occurs in the interstices between the artist and the collaborator.²⁰

We can return to Ukeles, citing not her actions that redefined the work of artists, but ones that revalued work by non-artists. For *Touch Sanitation* (1979-1980), she spent eleven months shadowing sanitation workers in New York City. Two years prior, the city had been on the brink of bankruptcy; unpaid, Ukeles sometimes stuck with them for sixteen-hour shifts. Quite literally based on dialog, Ukeles's work signals an embedding of art into the world and putting it to the task of solving practical problems precisely through establishing social relations. Maintenance art, here, becomes a way of understanding the small scale of touch and gesture and the large scale of a system. "See these numbers—feel them," Ukeles wrote in 1977. She continues:

¹⁷They are: Catherine de Zegher, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent; María Inés Rodríguez, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (CAPC) in Bordeaux; Laura Raicovich, Director of New York's Queens Museum; Helen Molesworth, Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and Anna Coliva, Director of the Borghese Gallery in Rome.

¹⁸Julia Halperin, "Clashing Visions, Simmering Tensions: How a Confluence of Forces Led to MOCA's Firing of Helen Molesworth," *Artnet News*, March 16, 2018, available online at <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/moca-helen-molesworth-tension-1246358> (accessed July 31, 2018).

¹⁹Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

²⁰Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005) p. 81.

18,000 collection trips/week; 27,000 paths (different) from origins to different disposal sites; 5,835 miles of streets to clean + remove snow... My favorite: 23,000 Tons of garbage created every day in NYC. 10,000 sanitation men to collect + dispose of it.²¹

Ukeles's labor mirrors, and therefore represents the invisible labors of human beings looking after what human beings abject and disavow. Stiegler's idea of the (artist) amateur obtains here: love, tenacity, know-how, belief, and doing things voluntarily. Ukeles's longest running project is on a landfill on Staten Island, which is slowly being transformed into a park and nature reserve. Of course, this takes a long time.

FACING CONFLICT/HUMAN WORK/RADICAL IMAGINATION

I want to return to Wales and take up the work of Rabab Ghazoul, who has been working in Cardiff on socially oriented projects since the early 2000s. Originally trained in theater, she developed a visual arts practice while working in experimental performance. Her most recent project, *Gentle/Radical*, is the continuation of her activities as an activist and community organizer, which included establishing and running a BAME women's film club for nearly fifteen years.²² Ghazoul describes *Gentle/Radical* as a social change organization that works through culture and community. It is based on what she calls "radical access," that is, providing both true accessibility and longevity. As a networking and exploratory platform, *Gentle/Radical* holds "Imagination Forums" where people are encouraged to think imaginatively and critically about the futures they want. A recent one hosted cultural activists from Museum Detox and Sound Connections, organizations that work with young creatives to diversify culture. Ghazoul explains that setting up a company came out of thinking about where her practice sits in relation to making art, working with others and activating change. The company creates a different frame, not definable as or by any individual. It is important that this also dispenses with the frame of art. The work, as she describes it, entails shifting institutional practice in order to enact systemic change. She thinks that any organization not doing this won't be part of any future worth being around for. But the work is also overly dependent on sacrificial labor; even with funding, really paying for everyone's work, the real extent of all the work, is impossible.²³

In 2015, Ghazoul's three-channel video installation *It's a Long Way Back (Chilcot/Part 1)* was shown at the 56th Venice Biennale in the exhibition at the Iraq Pavilion, *Invisible Beauty*, which later traveled to S.M.A.K. in Ghent and Erbil in Northern Iraq. *It's a Long Way Back* used the evidence produced for The Iraq Inquiry, the commission which investigated the United Kingdom's invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2009. The inquiry took nearly seven years, produced more than 150,000 documents and published the so-called Chilcot Report in 2016. For her work, Ghazoul used the very public testimony made by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair to the

²¹ Mierle Laderman Ukeles, "Maintenance Art Meets the NYC Department of Sanitation," (1977), reproduced in Patricia C. Phillips (ed.) *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Maintenance Art* (New York, NY: Queens Museum, 2016) p. 93. Punctuation as in original.

²² BAME stands for "Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic," and is widely used in the UK arts policy and funding frameworks.

²³ Author's interview with the artist, September 25, 2018.

committee, explaining how he took the steps to proceed with the invasion. In three different channels the video installation structures three types of engagement: in one she filmed people simply listening to Blair giving his testimony; in another she filmed them listening to and repeating his words verbatim, in real time; and in the third they were watching the footage with the sound turned down and describing what they saw with the request that they didn't say his name. She was interested in her participants exploring the nuance of what Blair was saying and not simply complaining about corrupt politicians; being unable to reply on his proper name revealed more about what they thought, although indirectly.²⁴ In Ghent, where the work was projected on large screens in the museum space, visitors were confronted first with the expressions flickering across the faces of people as they silently listened to the justifications and explanations Blair made. The work is deeply political; as someone born in Iraq, Ghazoul's interest in Iraq matters more than most regarding the devastating consequences of that war, the corrupt rationale that led to it, and its ongoing aftermath. In *It's a Long Way Back*, however, she displaced those interests by taking the role of facilitator. She explained that she wanted to see how people put themselves in relation to political experience. The work doesn't direct a reading: instead it sets into practice forms of attention-giving—focusing, listening, responding. It presents people and re-presents them together. We can turn to Stiegler's thinking about technics here and reflect on the way Ghazoul's videos make, through their depiction of individuals engaging with recorded memory, interior experiences into ones that are exterior. According to Stiegler's argument, this is already fundamental to the way human beings develop themselves ever since the invention of tools. The point for Stiegler is to be able to understand the consequences of this individuation in a contemporary moment of intense technological change, whether the effect is to produce knowledge or engineer its loss. I'd argue that in these terms the purpose of *It's a Long Way Back* is clear: for participants the experience produces understanding, for viewers it models it.

“FOR ME, IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME QUESTION— WHO IS SHAPING THE WORLD, AND WHOSE VOICES ARE BEING HEARD?”

Does it matter what we call these things? Ghazoul was instrumental in a successful campaign, Cardiff Without Culture, against proposed cuts to cultural funding in the name of 'austerity.' Over a six-week period in 2016 and through a whole lot of activities, a group of people managed to reverse the local government's plans to cut GBP 700,000 from their arts budget; Ghazoul describes that what they did was to “practice creativity and togetherness.” She explains, “you can't enforce it, you have to practice it.”²⁵ An example of a work Ghazoul did in the community is *It's Art But It's Not*, in which she worked with young people living in Penygraig, a village in the Rhondda Valley, half an hour's drive from Cardiff. Ghazoul and the young people, members of the youth organization Valleys Kids, made and posted signs throughout the village with phrases that captured particular voices or spoke to a sense of the place and people who live there. Like many such projects, the art forms a gesture to take hold of a shared space and use it to foreground thoughts, ideas, voices that

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Author's interview with the artist, May 10, 2018.

otherwise aren't there— whether because the space is regulated through ownership, bought and sold for advertising, or favors certain voices over others. With great support from her partner organizations, Ghazoul nonetheless saw that the real value of this project was that it legitimated young people's voices and allowed them to challenge adult-supremacist behavior and genuinely be heard.²⁶ We can draw links here through social-reproduction theories between women's labor, working-class men's labor and the rearing of children to be future workers, and what is represented in public space—or not.²⁷ That this was a project undertaken by a woman and children powerfully brought together class, age and gender to speak out loud about the struggle to live well and fully, in their own terms.

Perhaps the power of this kind of work is the resilience of the gesture to do the intended work. I am thinking of Braco Dimitrijević's *Casual Passers-By* posters, of huge photographs of anonymous individuals, people he met by chance, hung on the facades of buildings in cities such as Paris, Naples and Düsseldorf in the early 1970s. The people were made important by the fact of the presence of the images. It is the same gesture Group Material took with their *Da Zi Baos* in New York in the early 1980s, with hand-made signs illicitly posted on hoardings that inserted a certain voice into the political narrative of that moment. Group Material often used a strategy of turning something inward outward. In its own way, the gesture is there in the fly-posting of the Guerilla Girls, forcibly speaking out to the art world about gender representation.²⁸ In these cases, the gestures are oppositional; this is where they draw their power and this is the condition under which they were made. Space was taken rather than asked for; voices were aggressive in the face of other aggressive forms. In Dimitrijević's case, playful and anarchic nihilism was aimed at radically undermining matters of artistic authorship. The elevation of anonymous people was equaled by a demotion of any notion of authority.

WHICH CAME FIRST? WHO COMES LAST?

The American critical theorist Nancy Fraser, known for her writings critical of neoliberalism, wrote recently about the “crisis of care” in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis. She explains:

My claim is that every form of capitalist society harbours a deep-seated social-reproductive ‘crisis tendency’ or contradiction: on the one hand, social reproduction is a condition of possibility for sustained capital accumulation; on the other, capitalism's orientation to unlimited accumulation

²⁶ Author's interview, September 25, 2018.

²⁷ While writing this essay I learned about the 1974 film, *Women of the Rhonda*, directed by the London Women's Film Group (Mary Capps, Margaret Dickinson, Esther Ronay, and Bridget Segrave) and drew some of my thinking from Siona Wilson's essay “From Women's Work to the Umbilical Lens: Mary Kelly's Early Films,” *Art History*, Vol. 31, No. 1, February 2008, pp. 79-102. Two artworks made by Kelly in 1975, her film *Night Cleaners* and the photo-text installation, *Women and Work* (with Kay Hunt and Margaret Harrison) could be compared to Ukeles's work of the same decade and after.

²⁸ The Guerilla Girls was formed in a moment on activism, in response to the 1984 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*, in which more than 90% of the artists were men. The trigger was a quip made by the curator, Kynaston McShine, “any artist who wasn't in the show should rethink his [sic.] career.” See Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism* (London and New York, NY: Thames & Hudson, 2018) p. 217.

tends to destabilize the very processes of social reproduction on which it relies. This social-reproductive contradiction of capitalism lies at the root of the so-called crisis of care.²⁹

The problem, Fraser argues, is only made more extreme by the current form of ‘financialized’ capitalism, although she points at the likelihood that this is morphing into a new form already. The solution she proposes is to push, with gender in mind, for a rebalancing of production (for economic value) and reproduction (for social and human value). On the face of it, the Welsh Future Generations Act does this, because it requires ‘care’ to be costed in.

Can we identify some forms or actions that either follow from or produce different ways of creating wellbeing, through ‘feminized’ cultural work? To conclude, I have gathered some voices. Curator Koyo Kouoh advocates for the power of knowledge sharing; citing Jacques Rancière she writes that “what matters most is not so much the ‘transition from ignorance to knowledge,’ as the way in which one might cross a border like moving between the opposite ends of a binary.”³⁰ Border-crossing is a key tactic in social practices that foreground diversity. Helen Molesworth talks about “holding space”—if it is yours to give—as a means of structuring opportunities for difference and dialogue. This describes what she did at LA MOCA. Alternatively, laying claim to space is necessary if it needs to be taken.³¹ In a public talk in 2011, Ukeles asked pointedly, “what is the relationship between ‘maintenance’ and life’s dreams?” She equates the workers of maintenance with the workers of survival. “Look around,” she said, “that’s most of the people in the whole world.”³² Ghazoul argues that certain things are crucial for the kind of work she does: you have to make systemic changes; you need to do what she calls “human work.”³³ She also says you have to be able to imagine, and believe in, a future which is radically different.

Fig 1 Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance (Outside)*, 1973. Part of Maintenance Art performance series, 1973-1974. Performance at Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT

Fig 2 Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Maintenance Art* installation shot, 2016

Fig 3 Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Proposal for 1 Million People to Participate in a Public Artwork: Public Offerings: Made By All, Redeemed By All*, 2001-2002 Proposal for Freshkills Park, Staten Island, NY

Fig 4 Rabab Ghazoul, *It's a Long Way Back (Chilcot/Part 1)*, 2015, still

Fig 5 Rabab Ghazoul, *If I could Speak*, 2016, Penygraig, Wales. Artes Mundi, Ideas People Places, Arts Council of Wales funded regeneration program

²⁹ Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

³⁰ Koyo Kouoh, “Being Africa: Contextual Narratives of Artistic Environments,” in *The Curatorial Conundrum*, edited by Paul O’Neill, Lucy Steeds and Mick Wilson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016) p. 186.

³¹ Helen Molesworth wrote eloquently on these issues just before her firing. See “Art as Medicine: Helen Molesworth on the Work of Simone Leigh,” *Artforum*, March 2018. Available online at <https://www.artforum.com/print/201803/helen-molesworth-on-the-work-of-simone-leigh-74304>

³² Creative Time Summit 2011: “Living as Form”. Available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y38PjCYSaQM> (accessed July 31, 2018).

³³ Author’s interview, May 10, 2018.