

# 1 PARTIAL SELF-PORTRAIT OF CRITICAL PRACTICE

INTRODUCED BY MARSHA BRADFIELD

Timelines are familiar but vexed. With great confidence they appear in museums, galleries, catalogues and artists' books, organizing their content in ways that seem obvious and hence irrefutable. This can make imagining alternatives difficult before we unmask the powerful ideas about progress and inevitability that timelines often convey (Lubar 2013). What or who has been left out – othered – and importantly, why? What histories have been made (im)possible by these technologies of time and space? What falls away when a timeline's central organizing principle is cause and effect? What about the failed experiments, roads not taken or feedback loops that are as vital as they are unacknowledged?

Worries like these have compelled Critical Practice Research Cluster to pursue other ways of organizing and sharing its activity. Witness the rhizomatic structure of its open-source wiki at [criticalpracticechelsea.org](http://criticalpracticechelsea.org) (2019a). A single page links to several others, confounding the linear development of this organic and heterogeneous online space. This helps to explain why the cluster has likened its wiki maintenance to gardening. Users of this co-authored platform are encouraged to weed out the spam, mend the dead links and sow new ideas, insights and reflections to grow this polyphonic expression of collaborative authorship.

Whilst in theory anyone with internet access can read the wiki, the website's followers tend to be niche. These readers are artists, designers, curators and other cultural producers with an interest in reflexive online platforms that straddle self-organization and community archives. Critical Practice has often discussed creating a parallel website to make its research and resources more accessible to diverse publics whilst opening up its community. In this vein, the partial self-portrait that follows experiments with a light social history of sorts. In addition to outputs (events, artworks, publications, etc.) what features here are outcomes (patterns of cooperation, decisions and turning points, knock-on effects – moments of collective accomplishment and loss).

This is Critical Practice in action, producing the body of research on evaluation that in 2015 culminated in *#Transacting: A Market of Values*. In the same way that local histories are part of history in general, the activity of Critical Practice is embedded in a larger context, spread across art, education and self-organization, especially as practice-based/led research. Against this backdrop, Critical Practice has been shaped by cultural, social, financial and other forces. These are indicated below through the spatial arrangement of text and image.

If this narrative takes its authority from Critical Practice as its collective author, it makes no claims to being definitive. The wiki features alternative stories that are also factually correct. Added to this, there may be forthcoming accounts written by different members (or critics or historians) that nuance, challenge or otherwise build on this one. Hence, readers should understand this telling as part of a much larger body of work and its emergent archives.

Cued by the call of actor-network theory to 'follow the actors' (Latour 2005), the narrative below follows Critical Practice as it negotiates a complex scene of people and materials, practices and processes. This dynamic picture chimes with Howard Becker's methodological trick for breaking the bad habit in social science of turning people into types, where they can get stuck. Their actions are taken for granted as stemming from their identity as a familiar type, for example, class or gender (Becker 1998: 66). Granted, self-organized cultural groups like Critical Practice are less at risk of being stereotyped. For those not directly involved, they can be mysterious to say the least. Even for those working collaboratively, collectively and cooperatively, there are few accounts of art-based

groups and even fewer compiled by the practitioners themselves in a spirit of practice-based/led research. (For two rare and useful examples that influenced the below, see *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* [2010] and Neil Cummings's various chronologies, including his edit of the meeting minutes of Critical Practice in the publication, *Parade: Public Modes of Assembly and Forms of Address* [Critical Practice and Cummings 2011]).

This gap in the research points to a key rationale for this partial self-portrait as a schematic expression of autoethnography. It uses the lived experience of a concrete example to raise awareness about the economies and ecologies of collaborative cultural production. It indicates the range of activity this entails, the values that organize it and why those involved would choose to pursue this kind of practice over more standard forms. Mindful that timelines are vexed for the reasons sketched above and others, this one assembles a combination of facts, images, impressions, attitudes, encounters, desires and more to present Critical Practice in the throes of change. This is not so much a picture of progress but of change as a way of adapting to circumstance and working through desire so the cluster can persist in its critical practice. At the heart of this process is an expanded sense of art: less as a social phenomenon that is exceptional or esoteric and more as a network of social cooperation and (in)formal innovation for evolving new systems of value. For Critical Practice, creativity is valuable when it troubles, complicates and extends art in ways that seek to take advantage of its mysterious power and disruptive potential.

# Critical Practice

## 2004: The beginnings

As Chelsea College of Arts prepares to move to its current home beside Tate Britain in Millbank (London, UK), a self-organized group of BA students works with tutor Neil Cummings to reuse industrial pallets and build a large outdoor temporary sculptural space. This draws attention to some of the structures that organize art school education, fuelling a discussion about the value of this type of learning.

Firefox and Wikipedia are beginning to show how large-scale, open and

collaborative practice can produce valuable knowledge. Cummings runs a six-week elective course bringing together emergent thinking on open-source software and gift economies as alternatives to the dominant market model. BA students Ian Drysdale, Trevor Giles, Tom Neill, Wei-Ho Ng and Darrel Stadlen set up *criticalpracticechelsea*. The open platform presents the practices of staff and students side by side with the aspiration of flattening this traditional hierarchy.

Figure 1.1: The student founders of Critical Practice at a record company on Old Street (London, c.2004). From the left: Trevor Giles, Ian Drysdale, Wei-Ho Ng and Darrel Stadlen. Photo credit Tom Neill, who is behind the camera and the fifth member of the group.



Neil Cummings submits a funding bid to Chelsea College for £18K to explore ideas emerging from open-source software development. The application states: 'The event [...] will not be invited experts on a podium with a passive listening audience but thoroughly collaborative and interactive. We see this research as valuable as the symposium itself' (Cummings 2004: n.pag.). Alongside growing interest in how culture – especially art – is owned, organized and disseminated, accessed and engaged with, authorship becomes a hot topic for the students working with Cummings. They adopt the shared authorial identity of Darrel\_Ian\_Tom\_Trevor\_Wei-Ho (or DITTW).

DITTW work with Cummings and other staff members at Chelsea College, including Mary Anne Francis and Corrado Morgana, to organize *Open Congress* as an unconference about the potential application of open-source software and its modes of self-organization for cultural production. At the project's heart is a wiki and a free suite of tools for opening up the unconference to a wider community on and offline.

Figure 1.2: *Open Congress* took place at Tate Britain, 7–8 October 2005. The main organizing and archival platform was a wiki. Once available at [opencongress.omweb.org](http://opencongress.omweb.org), aspects are now accessible via the Wayback Machine. Screen grab courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Open Congress website. The URL in the browser is <http://opencongress.omweb.org/modules/wakka/HomePage>. The page has a navigation menu on the left with links for Home, News, Wiki, Forum, FAQ, Events, Gallery, Headlines, Links, and Login. The main content area is titled "Welcome to the Open Congress Website" and includes a paragraph about the event: "Inspired by Free Software, software that challenges conventional practices of authorship, ownership and distribution, our innovative congress explored the implications of those developments for art, visual culture and cultural production in general." Below this, it states: "Open Congress took place at Tate Britain over the 7th-8th October 2005. It was structured through three themes of Governance, Creativity and Knowledge. Participants shaped the Congress through simultaneous presentations, discussion, workshops and events. These included..."

On the right side, there is a search bar and a "Who's Online" section showing 8 users are online. Below that is a "New Members" list with names and dates:

Name	Date
Kezinec	2006/6/17
editoren	2006/3/19
Claire	2006/2/28
AJE	2006/2/18
akinsrv	2006/2/17
almerst	2006/2/8
huchison	2006/1/17
Linselin	2006/1/4
m_sgrnt	2005/12/20
Grim	2005/12/17

At the bottom of the page, there is a list of participants: "Cory Doctorow: from the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Johanna Gibson, David Berry & Giles Moss - The Libre Society, McKenzie Wark, author of A Hacker Manifesto, Trevor Scholz- The Institute of Distributed Creativity, Toni Page of Open Organizations, Brenac Ferran with John Bywater, David Heath and Luke Nicholson, Richard Barbrook, Ben White with Eileen Simpson, Locarecords, Kelli Dimple, Monica Ross, Tiziana Terranova, Julian Priest, Christian Ahlert - Open Business, Neil Cummings, smTrokia, David Goldenberg, Jamie Kille, Sam Albert - Wireless London, Pete Maloney, Armin Meibohm and Shu Ica Cheung - Kingdom of Piracy, Paul B Davies, Max - Needs for Change, Jassia Krus with Grzesiek Szek, Mamiela Zechner, Corrado Morgana, Iize Black, Julian Priest, Mary Anne Francis - Part Art, Constant VZW, Linda Drew, Felix Stalder, Simon Yuill, Simon Pope, Ian IanDrusdale, Trevor Giles, Carles Guerra, Tom Neill, Wei-Ho Ng, Darrel Stadlen - chelsea2005 among many, many others".

## April

As DITTW enter their final months of BA study, the group wonders: 'What would a peer-led degree show look and feel like? That is, one that did not attempt to mask the informal and fluid exchange of ideas between students on the course, tutors, the building and the world at large (!)' (Critical Practice 2008: 3).

## June

DITTW's final artwork produced as students is a programme of events that activates Chelsea College as a network of social spaces with free internet access and activities for families, children and college staff. It is messy, frenzied, experimental and warmly received as an engaging alternative to the familiar format of graduating exhibitions.

Figure 1.3: Mary Anne Francis appears in the bottom right-hand corner, with Armin Mendosch behind her. Ilze Black is visible through the tripod and Pete Maloney is wearing a hat. *Open Congress* (Tate Britain, 7–8 October 2005). Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.



## July–September

The organizers of *Open Congress* research open-source democracy, 'open' law and knowledge projects, 'open' organizational models and Free/Libre and Open Source software (FLOSS), copyleft licensing and the Free Culture movement. Organizing a conference about issues arising from FLOSS without consistently and ethically embodying them would be disingenuous (Critical Practice 2008: 5). The website [openorganizations.org](http://openorganizations.org) offers guidelines for the coordination of activities: decision-making is based on 'rough consensus'; meetings are held in public spaces; agendas and minutes are published on the *Open Congress* wiki to build a collaborative record. These become the ethical foundations of Critical Practice.

## October

*Open Congress* is realized at Tate Britain in collaboration with Chelsea College, NODE. London, MUTE and others. The congress has no audience, only participants. These include Trebor Scholz, Tiziana Terranova and McKenzie Wark, who shape the event through simultaneous panels, workshops and stalls. We can recognize the latter retrospectively as a prototype for the market technology that will prove central in Critical Practice's repertoire of forms.

The cluster's long-term sustainability depends on further funding, which in turn depends on meeting certain criteria. Chelsea College requires greater formality. The cluster takes the name 'Critical Practice' (CP) and the Guidelines for Open Organizations help shape its aims and objectives. These suggest a fluid and horizontal structure that allows 'members' to form 'working groups' for specific activities.

Figure 1.4: Ruth Catlow presenting at *Open Congress* (Tate Britain, 7–8 October 2005). Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.



Figure 1.5: Marina Vishmidt appears on the right-hand side in a black dress. *Open Congress* (Tate Britain, 7–8 October 2005). Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.



## 2006 January

Critical Practice reflects on *Open Congress* in print in *Media Mutandis: A NODE.London Reader* (2006). Edited by Marina Vishmidt, with Mary Anne Francis, Jo Walsh and Lewis Sykes, it surveys current art, technologies and politics.

Figure 1.6: Elizabeth Neilson sits in the middle with Sophie von Olfers on the right. *Open Congress* (Tate Britain, 7–8 October 2005). Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.



Figure 1.7: McKenzie Wark presenting at *Open Congress* (Tate Britain, 7–8 October 2005). Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.



## November–December

Meanwhile, Critical Practice is invited to submit a text for a special issue of *Zehar* magazine titled 'The Open School' to be published as part of Documenta 12. Coordinated by Mary Anne Francis, the working group focuses on two issues,

The first is the threat of the instrumentalization of the artistic field by a wholesale internalization of corporate values, methods and models. [...] The second would be the return of a near hysterical 'market' as a disciplinary force within visual art education. (Critical Practice 2007a)

Critical Practice works with artist Stephan Shankland to realize an iteration of *Atelier-Trans-Pal (ATP)*, an ephemeral structure made from 2000 wooden pallets. The event questions how we practice and value art in the context of the mass exchange of goods and information. The working group *Beyond the Free Market*, coordinated by Eugenia Beirer, serves hot soup made with salvaged food from London's New Covent

Garden wholesale fruit and vegetable market. Critical Practice works with artist Stephanie Bourne to develop a protocol for facilitating collective exchange during a public workshop.

Ian Drysdale facilitates a series of workshops to foster Critical Practice's self-organization. These enable the cluster to better understand and implement guidelines suggested by Open Organizations. The Self-representation working group is formed and coordinated by Cinzia Cremona.

Figure 1.8: Building *Atelier Trans Pal (ATP)*, an ephemeral structure dedicated to facilitating art/critical and off-site practices. This iteration of *ATP* took place at Chelsea College of Art and Design (today Chelsea College of Arts) in November and December 2006. It was made of 2000 wooden pallets assembled to make up a space 20m long, 4m high, 7m wide. Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.





Figure 1.9: From the left: Neil Cummings, Darrel Stadlen and Ian Drysdale engage in a rocking exercise in one of the self-organization workshops facilitated by Drysdale for Critical Practice in the fall of 2006. Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.



## 2007 March

Cluster member Manuela Zechner develops *Future Archive* with Anja Kanngieser. This project is an audiovisual and performative-pedagogical experience based on interviews and encounters for projecting oneself into the future and then reverse engineering that present. Led by Zechner, Critical Practice imagines itself 30 years in a more desirable future and recollects the changes that brought us to this reality (Kanngieser and Zechner 2019).

Figure 1.10: Critical Practice at play in the Spying Room of the Morpeth Arms. 'M Block' as it was affectionately called is the local pub of staff and students of Chelsea College. It was built in 1845 to refresh wardens of the Millbank Prison. Once the largest in Europe, the prison's footprint is today home to Tate Britain and Chelsea College. From the left: Wei-Ho Ng, Neil Cummings, unknown, Trevor Giles. Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.



## April

At the South London Gallery, Critical Practice works with Barbara Steveni, Neal White and Board Furniture to realize a 'between' to respond to and explore the concept of value. A 'between' is a model of dialogue and discussion used by the Artists Placement Group (APG – subsequently Organization and Imagination [O+I] and Incidental Unit [IU]) after Joseph Beuys invited APG's member John Latham to discuss artist-with-government placements at Documenta 6 in Kassel in 1977. The 2007 event includes presentations, an archival

exhibition, conversations, disagreement, screenings, software, as well as the *Value Game* developed by Mary Anne Francis:

This is not so much about making the item more valuable economically, but enhancing it in a way that is meaningful to [the player/investor] – we're interested to find out what you value and why – as the basis for a discussion later on. (Critical Practice 2007b)

Figures 1.11, 1.12, 1.13 and 1.14: *BETWEEN* (South London Gallery, 21 April 2007) coordinated by Critical Practice and O + I (the second iteration of the Artist Placement Group). Top left: Mary Anne Francis (appearing centre) facilitates *Value Game*. Neal White stands on the left in the striped shirt. Top right: Barbara Steveni (co-founder of Artist Placement Group) is seated; Cinzia Cremona stands to the right. Bottom left: Manuela Zechner on the left and Jem MacKay on the right. Bottom right: Robin Bhattacharya addresses the gathering with Corrado Morgana on the left. Also around the table (left of Morgana) is Michaela Ross, Tatiana Orloff and Eugenia Beirer. Video stills courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.



May

Coordinated by Isobel Bowditch and Andrew Chesher, newly formed Thinking Through Practice (effectively a working group of Critical Practice) screens *N for Negri: Antonio Negri in Conversation with Carles Guerra* (see Guerra 2003) followed by a conversation with Carles Guerra. The film's glossary format will prove vital to Critical Practice's repertoire of forms, as evidenced by the one featured in this publication.

July

Robin Bhattacharya, Cinzia Cremona, Neil Cummings and Mary Anne Francis edit the first issue of the Critical Practice publication, designed by Trevor Giles (Critical Practice 2007c).

Figure 1.15: The front cover of *Issue 1* of the Critical Practice Publication (2007c). Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.



## 2008 March

Critical Practice works with European Alternatives to host *How to Make Europe Dream? A Cultural Congress* at Chelsea College. This culminates in the first of Critical Practice's markets, addressing the question: 'What is cultural about economics?'. Artists, anthropologists, economists and others activate 'stalls'.

Organizing this event makes Critical Practice increasingly aware of the divide between administrative and cognitive tasks and how they are valued. This variously affects members, contributing to the ebb and flow of participants with the surplus of energy, time and resources they can invest in Critical Practice.

Critical Practice convenes *ResourceCamp* as part of *Disclosures*, organized by Anna Colin and Maria Jankowicz of Gasworks, London. This is

the first of our many 'barcamps' (which will become a favoured method with seven taking place between 2008 and 2012). 'BarCamps, are an international network of self-organized, user-generated unconferences, often related to open source methods, social protocols, and open data formats' (Critical Practice 2008: 20). Everyone presents for 20 minutes with time for questions, observations and exchange. *ResourceCamp* examines the management of money in open and cultural organizations. Cinzia Cremona shares her inspirational Personal Balance Sheet where she considers 'what is a resource?', outlining less quantifiable investments and gains. At the end of the barcamp we publish 'Draft guidelines on Open Budget Management' on the wiki (Critical Practice 2019b).

Figures 1.16 and 1.17: Stalls at *The Market of Ideas*, which was commissioned by *The Festival of Europe* (16 March 2008, Chelsea College of Arts). On the left, a barber stall. On the right, Isobel Bowditch (wearing glasses) appears seated; Neal White (in a hat) can be seen behind. Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.



Figure 1.18: Cinzia Cremona's famous Personal Balance Sheet, originally presented at ResourceCamp, which Critical Practice realized for *Disclosures*, an event organized by Gasworks on Middlesex Street Estate, 30 March 2008.

3

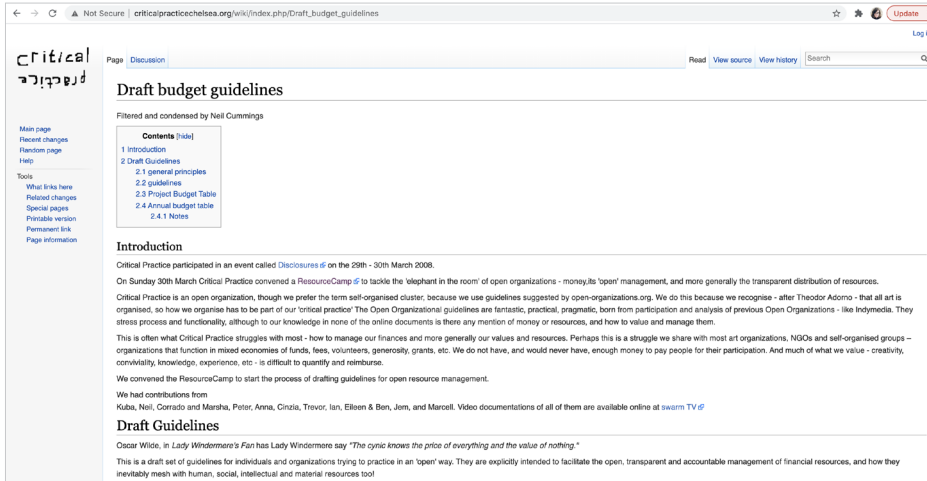
PERSONAL BALANCE SHEET FOR  
The Festival of Europe 40971604

INCOME	EXPENSES	LOSS	GAIN
Money: £200 <i>March Dinner</i>	Time: Travel 10 h phone/e-mail, 2 h meetings @ 6 h Stiegler talk + pizza 5 h	Time through boredom @ the congress ~ 4 h	Research to prepare the meeting Knowledge - Stiegler talk
Dinner £15	Market 2 h	Umbrella	Freedom - Did not have to be here → I could travel
Dinner & economist £10 IDSA = economic ideas	Set up 2 h Congress 5 h	Time & Chris	Experience - Presenting CP ↳ on my CV
	Money: £25 travel £100 Davina £0250 card DRINKS £10 Stationary		Visibility → Participation to making of culture Performativity - A chance to be active/productive
Energy → computer org.	Energy / Hard to quantify		Other connections / not remembered + not knowing someone came from another context phenomenon of seeing it realized
Input of others i.e.: ideas Neil suggested the market	Other connections Davina Ideas		Appreciation
Infrastructure Tools Organisation / label	Individuality / specificity Body / pliancality / <del>elasticity</del>		
Affection	Affection		
Motivation	Motivation		
Humour	Humour		
Power			
Appreciation			

RECIPROCALITY

INFLUENCE  
FORMATION  
DELETION  
FEEDBACK  
DEPENDENCE

Figure 1.19: The draft budget guidelines on the Critical Practice wiki (Critical Practice 2019b). The guidelines emerged from *ResourceCamp*, which Critical Practice realized for *Disclosures*, 30 March 2008.



## June

Critical Practice is invited to take part in the moving image programme *Visions in the Nunnery* at Bow Arts Trust in London and contributes to a forum that discusses relevant experiences of collaborative moving image practices.

Convening in St. James's Park for our annual picnic, the cluster reflects on its recent activities and considers some

self-initiated projects for the upcoming academic year. We anonymously propose Big Ideas and vote according to the Enthusiasm Index, devised by Trevor Giles, to evaluate our degree of commitment. 'A Market of Organizations' and 'testing our budget guidelines' are both chosen as projects to progress.

Figure 1.20: 2009 annual picnic, which traditionally takes place in St. James's Park, London. From left to right: Cinzia Cremona, Mike Knowlden, Jem MacKay, Michaela Ross, Neil Cummings and Trevor Giles. Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



2009

January–May

In conversation with Polish curator and CP member Kuba Szreder and Aneta Prasał-Wiśniewsk, the curator of the upcoming Polish Season in London, the emerging *Market of Organizations* shifts towards questioning how being in public is culturally constructed. We are invited to visit Poland and explore notions of public space. During our stay in Warsaw, we learn about gated communities, Polish hospitality, Jewish history, communist architecture and gain insight into some of the political, religious, financial, migratory and cultural forces at work (see Cummings and Critical Practice 2011).

Figure 1.21: Warsaw, Poland's magnificent Palace of Culture as seen from a hotel window during a research trip (2009). Photo credit Neil Cummings.



July

We convene our second barcamp in Kennington Park, formerly Kennington Common, where the Chartist meeting of 1848 demanded democratic reforms, to explore: What is 'public'? What are public goods, services, art and servants? How are we to balance private interests and public needs? What is the public domain? We come away determined to grow our inquiry into a large-scale event and call this *PARADE* as it will take place on the Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground at Chelsea College in the spring or summer of 2010 (see Cummings and Critical Practice 2011).

Figure 1.22: *PubliCamp* in Kennington Park, London (5 July 2009). Photo credit Neil Cummings.



Figure 1.23: Critical Practice tours Warsaw's Praga District to reflect on the horrors of the Holocaust and discuss the area's gentrification. From the left: Marsha Bradfield, Neil Cummings, Cinzia Cremona (from behind), Michaela Ross, Katarzyna Kuzko (tour guide) and Ken Wilder (side view). Photo credit Ewelina Warner.

## Autumn

Kuba Szreder secures £20k from our Polish partners to fund *PARADE* and Neil Cummings appeals to the newly formed Camberwell, Wimbledon, Chelsea Graduate School for financial and other kinds of support.

## 2010 January

A season of research events to prepare for *PARADE* includes open lectures by our Polish colleagues in collaboration with TrAIN, the Centre for Transnational Art, Identity and Nation (Chelsea College). We dialogue with Aleksandra Wasilkowska, the Polish architect who, with Michał Piasecki, will work with Critical Practice and Ken Wilder from Interior and Spatial Design at Chelsea College to create a bespoke structure for *PARADE*.

## March

We consider various possible building materials and elect to use black plastic milk crates. We spend a week workshoping possible configurations in the Triangle Space at Chelsea College (see Cummings and Critical Practice 2011).

## May

With a budget of £3k, we hire 4320 black plastic milk crates, buy 30k cable ties and, with the support of staff and students from Interior and Spatial Design, we spend a week building a striking structure that encompasses places to sit, lean on, display materials, converse and exchange.

On the first night we share a potluck of snacks, whilst Eileen Simpson and Ben White of the Open Music Archive play music from the commons. The next day we hold three barcamps and then a final *Barcamp of Barcamps* to highlight the key themes, issues and concerns explored during the day, in which roving reporters and contributors offer their reflections.

On the third day, the international stallholders occupy the structure and 'explore the distribution of public knowledge, embody peer-2-peer exchange, and build communal resources' (Cummings 2018: n.pag.). The late Chris Wainwright shares experiences about Cape Farewell; Joanna Rajkowska offers the opportunity to savour the obstacles and pleasures of the public realm from the position of helpless larvae by climbing into one of her human-sized cocoons; The People Speak host a *Talkaoke* – 'a pop up talk show where anyone can sit down and air their views around the table of chat' (2019).

Neil Cummings takes charge of deinstalling whilst others depart for Berlin to facilitate a barcamp on the theme of public presence on Tempelhof Field, on the grounds of the former airport. This takes place in *The Knot* (co-curated by Kuba Szreder), a mobile and inflatable structure traveling to Berlin, Warsaw and Bucharest, stopping for a few weeks in each city.



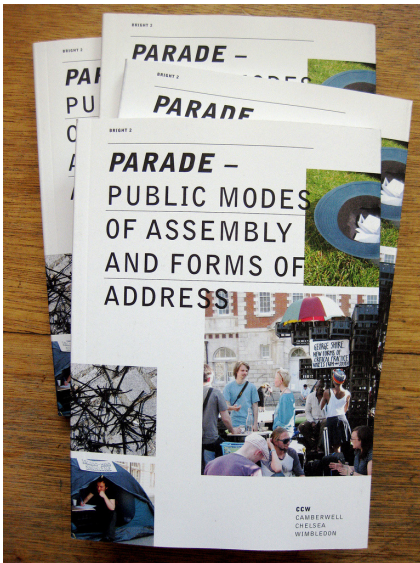
Figure 1.24: *PARADE* under construction. The bespoke structure was built in public from 4320 black milk crates lashed together with some 30,000 cable ties. This project about being in public was built in public on the Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground, Chelsea College of Arts (May 2010). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



Figure 1.25: A barcamp convened at *PARADE* on the Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground, Chelsea College of Arts (22 May 2010). Photo credit Neil Cummings.



Critical Practice begins to assemble a *PARADE* legacy publication to capture the processes that led to the event and showcase the project. The editorial process is complicated by trying to mesh the values of Critical Practice with those of the publisher, Camberwell, Chelsea, Wimbledon Graduate School and the publication's designers. Neil Cummings assumes responsibility for realizing *Parade: Public Modes of Assembly and Forms of Address* (Cummings and Critical Practice 2011). It is toasted as an exemplary instance of showing and sharing practice-based/led research. (The book is initially disseminated for free, but it is later available second-hand on Amazon for £9.95. By December 2018, the book is no longer on sale but Neil Cummings, formerly listed as the editor, appears as the author. To value the *PARADE* publication as collaboratively produced, it appears in our bibliographies as edited by Neil Cummings and Critical Practice).



Critical Practice attends *Critical Malfunction: On the Crooked Roads of Art Production* at the Instytut Sztuki Wyspa, Gdansk, Poland. The cluster facilitates a barcamp, creating space for 'discussion about too often denied aspects of cultural production. The malfunction, collapse, crash, breakdown – all these are simply avoided in typical art scene presentations, which are rather focused on developments, achievements, improvements and self-promotion' (Szreder cited in Critical Practice 2019c: n.pag.). Our preoccupation with value converges with others' at Free/Slow University's summit in Warsaw, *Creative Industries and Knowledge Factories: Analysis and Resistance* (also co-curated by Kuba Szreder). We question the value of the artwork and its significance to the lived experience of art workers. For instance, Valeria Graziano of Carrotworkers' Collective talks about 'value markers' as operating beyond either aesthetic beauty or the high prices paid at auctions.

Figure 1.26: Assembled by Critical Practice and edited by Neil Cummings, the *PARADE* legacy publication was launched in 2010 and has since been recognized as an exemplar for sharing collaborative practice-based/led research. Photo credit Neil Cummings.

## 2011 January

Critical Practice is invited to Matadero (Madrid, Spain) for a residency. It focuses on the fledgling operations of El Ranchito within Matadero, which at the time is slated to be Spain's flagship cultural centre. El Ranchito is responsible for establishing Matadero's critical context and local culture. Critical Practice operates both in and beyond Chelsea College, and El Ranchito is seeking a similar relationship with Matadero. There is much walking and workshopping as well as a barcamp, and we feel a deep sense of solidarity with colleagues in Spain who share similar values. Inspired by this experience, some of us spend

an intense day rewriting Critical Practice's own aims and objectives. Further to the residency, we are invited by El Ranchito to develop a proposal for a public project to help launch the art centre (Critical Practice 2019d).

Marsha Bradfield and Kuba Szreder meet with Polish artist Artur Żmijewski in London to discuss Critical Practice featuring in the 7th *Berlin Biennial (BB7)*. Curated by Żmijewski with Joanna Warsza (who held a stall in *The Market of Ideas* at *PARADE* in 2010), *BB7* considers 'What is the use/ effect of art?'

Figure 1.27: Critical Practice reflects on its membership guidelines while in residence at El Ranchito, part of Matadero Madrid (9 January 2011). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



Figure 1.28: Metod Blejec and Scott Schwager (pictured in the high vis vest) lead a walk in the area around Matadero Madrid. Part of Critical Practice's residency at El Ranchito (10 January 2011). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



## March

Further to the invitation to develop a proposal for a public project to help launch Matadero Madrid, a working group led by Metod Blejec experiments with the format of a scavenger hunt in London using digital cameras to capture sites, gestures, objects and more. Three hugely successful 'tester hunts' for what comes to be known as *Hunterama* prompt us to differently encounter and value our everyday environment by reframing it.

## April

Led by Marsha Bradfield and Kuba Szreder, the Art/Value working group develops a proposal for *Berlin Biennial 7*. We prioritize the evaluation of art as having plural and dynamic possibilities. We submit our application to facilitate a market of values with stalls by practitioners based in Berlin who would come together to trade as a temporary community of evaluation.

## May

Feeling disconnected from what matters to Critical Practice as a cluster, we hold an intense workshop on self-organization, during which we review our aims and objectives. One member storms out; others leave disheartened. Still others embrace this friction as an opportunity to recalibrate our priorities. This includes holding monthly meetings on the first Tuesday at Royal Festival Hall. Working groups continue to proliferate in response to projects.

## July

*BB7* declines our proposal for a market of values on the grounds Berlin already has many alternatives circuits of evaluation; moreover, evaluation departs from the biennial's interest in the 'result', 'effect' or 'outcome' of art.

## September

After further discussion, we submit a second proposal to *BB7*. *Critical Economic Practice* aims to intervene directly into the processes and practices of the biennial's evaluation and valuing, including the distribution of resources and labour. After a very warm reaction from the curators and staff, things become complicated. More and more information is requested but conversations are delayed.

## October

Sharon Bennett and Charlotte Webb key into circuits of art education by facilitating a workshop in Five Years Gallery's programme, *This is Not a School*. *Speed Tipping* invites the constituency gathered for the session to co-create a tip a minute for one hour on the theme of being resourceful, resulting in a 60-tip compilation.

We learn that *BB7* is unable to accommodate *Critical Economic Practice*. Although we understand the institutional dynamics that lead to this outcome, we are disappointed and we evaluate the painful hypocrisy of the institutionalized art world.

## November

El Ranchito decides not to realize *Hunterama* but to feature the idea as an outcome that was generated by their artist-in-residence instead of Critical Practice. A flurry of emails and a discussion if this value extraction is fair leads us to eventually agree.

## December

At Karem Ibrahim's magnificent Christmas party, we discuss the insights gained into certain art worlds and anticipate next year as one that prioritizes projects that Critical Practice will initiate and drive.

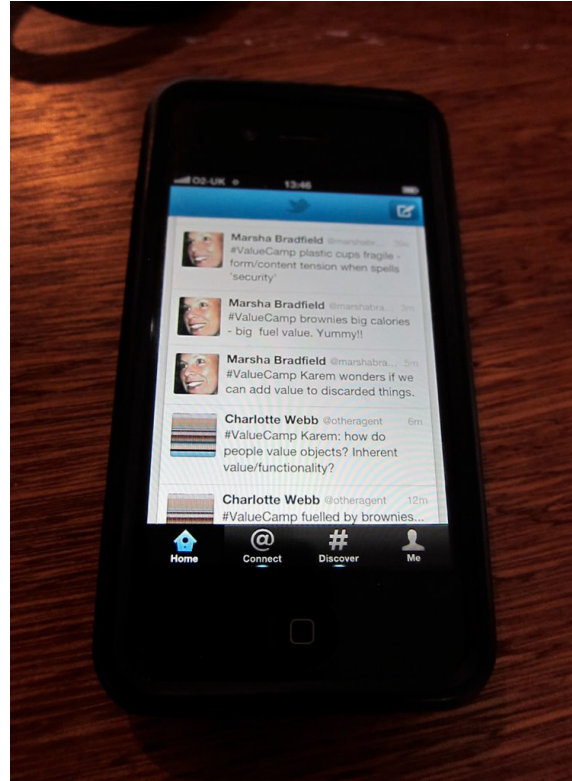
## 2012 January

Our wiki goes down. We work through email and Google Docs whilst it is being repaired over several months. We reflect on the complex economy of time, debts and favours that propel the informal worlds of cultural production.

## March

Critical Practice organizes a barcamp on value – *ValueCamp* – at the Royal College of Art. We become interested in how evaluation, and the values this generates, is relational, situated and specific in a context. Plans are hatched to develop a programme of events led by 'value brokers', people with expertise in particular value systems, especially those shaping Critical Practice's immediate reality in London.

Figure 1.29: Tweets about Karem Ibrahim's presentation at *ValueCamp*, convened by Critical Practice to enrich the cluster's understanding of value, values, evaluation and valorization (4 March 2012, the Royal College of Art). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



## April

The wiki is again up and running thanks to Ben White of Open Music Archive. We recommit to our values of transparency and accountability and to returning our research to the public domain.

## July

We are invited by the Hartware MedienKunstVerein (HMKV, a platform for the production, presentation, and communication of contemporary and experimental media art) to contribute to *Industrial Festival 2013* (later renamed *New Industries Festival*) in Dortmund, Germany. We propose a market of values to creatively explore and implement systems for producing, distributing and exchanging value in the shift from industrial to post-industrial work. Metod Blejec and Kuba Szreder meet with the curators who express great enthusiasm for the market, but mismatched institutional funding timelines make the project unviable.

Frustrated and disillusioned by the huge demands of securing public monies through grant-related bureaucracies, we wonder: Is investing our time and energy in these longshots good value? We investigate crowdfunding but many of us are dubious. We agree to break for August.

## September

We become preoccupied with how value circulates and is 'brokered' by particular people, events, conditions and more. We embark on our new programme; *Spaces and Value: How God, Law and Landed Interests are Situated in London's EC2* encompasses three back-to-back walks. Neil Cummings and Blanca Regina produce an experimental moving image document to capture the experience of moving through this super-saturated area of London.

As we walk past the relevant sites, we reflect on the proximity of British law to business and the City with artist and lawyer Jack Tan. With Warwick Hawkins (a civil servant working on inter faith), we question how the Church of England has served the needs and interests of its members. And finally with writer and journalist Owen Hatherley we explore the Barbican Estate, comparing the post-war values embodied in its brutalist architecture and cultural offering with those currently propelling London's property market.

Figure 1.30: Flyer for *Spaces & Value*, the first walk in the season of research on value preceding *TransActing* (8 September 2012). Image courtesy of the Critical Practice Archives.



Figure 1.31: Artist and lawyer Jack Tan talks about London's Courts of Justice as we stand in front of them. From left to right: Kuba Szreder, unknown, Neil Cummings (with camera), Eileen Simpson, Karem Ibrahim, Dan McDermott, Jack Tan, Michal Murawski, Veda Popovicl and unknown (8 September 2012). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



Evolving from the Art/Value working group, our experience of contributing to *Critical Malfunction* at Instytut Sztuki Wyspa (2011) and *Spaces & Value*, Critical Practice set up a working group to pursue the subject of value in earnest. We commit to collaborating with local and international partners on an inquiry into value as embedded, specific and localized. Going back to basics, the initial questions posted on the wiki for this research are as follows:

- What is 'value'?
- What distinguishes 'value' from 'worth'?
- Through what kinds of historical processes has value been produced?
- What's the relation between socially produced value and culturally produced value and is this a useful distinction? (Critical Practice 2019e)

Critical Practice organizes *P2P Exchange* in Graz, Austria, at the festival *Truth is Concrete*, a 24/7 marathon camp on artistic strategies in politics and political strategies in art as part of the *steirischer herbst* festival. Repurposing the technology of *The Market of Ideas*, Critical Practice uses a 'flea market' setup and invites contributions from 'stallholders'. The *P2P Exchange* reconfigures the festival's temporal succession into a distributed and spatial aggregate (i.e. simultaneous contributions).

## October

A postdoctoral fellowship in Critical Practice is advertised, thereby evidencing the value the cluster generates for the University of the Arts London. Marsha Bradfield successfully takes this up,

enabling her to be partially paid to research and write funding applications for Critical Practice. The post starts on 28 May 2013 and runs for two years.

## November

*HEDGE: Walking, Talking, Value, Geography and Social Organization* is jointly facilitated by Critical Practice and the Scottish Sculpture Workshop in Lumsden, Scotland. This weekend-long programme of participatory events considers modes of cultivating and harvesting values with reference to sculptural, social and geographical forms. We ask: What kind of spaces and values organize rural areas? Are they any different from those in urban metropolises? What are their distinctive characteristics?

Figure 1.32: Artist and economist Hans Abbing holds a stall on why artists are poor at the *P2P Exchange* convened by Critical Practice for *Truth is Concrete*, part of *steirischer herbst* (26 September 2012, Graz, Austria). Photo credit Neil Cummings.



Figure 1.33: A local of Aberdeenshire plays harmonica at the Crown Bar, Huntly when Critical Practice visits the Scottish Sculpture Workshop for *HEDGE* (23 November 2012, Scotland). From left: Kuba Szreder, unknown, Nuno Sacramento. Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.





# 2013

## January

At our New Year's party, we reflect on 2012. A flurry of successful but gruelling externally oriented events drives us to more effectively value our immediate network in Critical Practice and its self-organization. We refresh our knowledge of wiki usage, of making meeting agendas and minutes, etc. through an internal event called *CP Values vs CP Procedures: Re-engaging Open Organisational Guidelines*. Our future feels (more) transparent and accountable as a result.

## February

For our second value walk *WASTE*, environmental lawyer Rosie Oliver and economic geographer Angus Cameron walk with Critical Practice around the Isle of Dogs, Greenwich and Blackheath, unpicking notions of waste (Critical Practice 2019d).

Figure 1.34: Critical Practice during a workshop to refresh the cluster's processes and protocols. Neil Cummings (left) and Sharon Bennett (right) (23 January 2013, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



Figure 1.35: The *WASTE* walk led by environmental lawyer Rosie Oliver and economic geographer Angus Cameron. From left: Sharon Bennett, Rosie Oliver and Neil Cummings (16 February 2013, Isle of Dogs, Greenwich and Blackheath). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.





Figure 1.36: A lucky meeting with the extraordinary mudlark Lara Maiklem (featured) who was scavenging along the Greenwich foreshore. This was the destination of the *WASTE* walk, which was led by environmental lawyer Rosie Oliver and economic geographer Angus Cameron (16 February 2013, the walk spanned Isle of Dogs, Greenwich and Blackheath). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.

## March

We discuss our growing interest in value and how this meshes with Bradfield's post-doctoral fellowship. We grapple with how we value the assets at our disposal, especially those beyond money and the cluster's human resources: the people. Valuing the diversity and complexity of collaborative practice is an evergreen concern.

## April

German artist Folke Köbberling runs the workshop *One Person's Trash is Another's Treasure*, which sees Critical Practice building with found materials around Chelsea College's Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground. We tackle the lack of infrastructure in the central square by building tables and benches for all to use. The public furniture hosts our annual picnic and many other people in the years to come.

## May

Marsha Bradfield and Kuba Szreder publish their reflections on the experience of negotiating with the institutional structures of *Berlin Biennial 7* in the *ArtLeaks Gazette*. The account is pitched as a 'resource for mapping the apparatus of art, building solidarity amongst practitioners and identifying practices that deadlock critical cultural production' (Bradfield and Szreder 2013: 85–86).

## July

In a further example of Critical Practice's resourcefulness, cluster member and Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Graduate School administrator Claire Mokrauer-Madden uses old office equipment to 'green' the Graduate School offices at Chelsea College where the cluster is based. Wire desk tidies are repurposed as containers to grow plants in *The Terrace Project*.

## October

Dutch artist and economist Hans Abbing visits Critical Practice to talk about evaluation using the Socratic method.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) undertakes the *Cultural Value Project*, which 'seeks to establish a framework that will advance the way in which we talk about the value of cultural engagement and the methods by which we evaluate that value' (AHRC n.d.: n.pag.). The British Academy holds a discussion, *The Changing Face of Value*. Concerns include:

- The digital world: Is it shaping our social and cultural values, and if so, how?,
- The apparent rise in value of notions such as 'authenticity', 'openness' and 'connectivity'
- The value of objects and new forms of material culture
- The shift of values from the enduring to the ephemeral
- The future of value itself (British Academy 2013: n.pag.)

Critical Practice reflects on the nature of this growing debate on cultural value and its baseline assumption that art has intrinsic value.

We meet with Alanah Cullen of The Enterprise Collective based at Chelsea College about managing a farmer's market on the Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground to fund our research.

## November

We join forces again with Barbara Steveni of the Artist Placement Group, Josh Y'Barbo from Chelsea Salon and David Cross (reader at Chelsea College) to facilitate a day-long session on the value of 'not knowing'. This refusal to take anything for granted deeply influences Critical Practice.

Figure 1.37: The wiki archive of Critical Practice's session on evaluation with the artist and economist Hans Abbing (22 October 2013, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo courtesy of the Critical Practice archives.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a wiki page titled "Hans Abbing - EVALUATION". The page content includes:

- Text:** "Hans Abbing agrees to meet with CP for an informal chat about evaluation (22 October, 2013 5-7). The timing couldn't be better; we're contemplating making a funding bid to the AHRC Cultural Value Project."
- Image:** A photograph of Hans Abbing sitting at a desk with a laptop, a smartphone, and some papers.
- Text:** "Hans is staying at Marsha's place while Kuba and Natalia are in Warsaw. Hans and Marsha discuss Critical Practice on the Tube ride from Earls Court to Chelsea. Marsha outlines the development of CP's research—shifting from 'value' to 'evaluation'. (This is further elaborated by Neel at the beginning of our discussion with Hans.) Once on campus, there's talk of the Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground's @ History...and the Milbank area more generally. From prison to military hospital/research facility to art school. Tate Britain sits on one side of Chelsea and MI6 is just a stone's throw away. There's discussion about regimes of authority that permeate this site... CP congregates in the third-floor Lounge in E-Block. Those in attendance include Claire, Amy, Katherine, Neel, Marsha, Melod, Scott and, of course, Hans."
- QUESTIONS:**
  - A few questions to prime the discussion:
    - What is 'evaluation' from Hans' perspective as a classically trained economist/sociologist?
    - And how does Hans as a contemporary artist think about evaluation? About value?
    - How is CP thinking about evaluation? How aren't they thinking about evaluation?
- RESOURCES:**
  - Our discussion with Hans Abbing on values and evaluation led to thinking about ways of valuing that are not numerical. The research by Common Practice @ and the use of narrative was suggested. Download a pdf of their research on Value, Measure, Sustainability. @
  - For more on Value and Values see Bev Skeggs' "Values Beyond Value: Is there Anything Beyond the Logic of Capital?" @
- EXAMPLES and COMPARISONS**

Much of our discussion seemed to turn on examples and/or comparisons e.g.

  - Puritanism is a value of the Dutch.
  - Tolerance is a value of the Dutch.
  - Art is good.
  - Not stealing is good/not stealing is bad.
  - Clean air is good.
  - It could be good to advance the human race via culling.

comparison

  - On average, men are longer than women.
  - Art is better than...
  - The Dutch used to be more puritan than they used to be.
  - The Dutch are less tolerant than they used to be.

# 2014

## February

Members of the Evaluation working/learning group attend a Sotheby's Contemporary Art Auction. Auctioneer Oli Barker dances back and forth, persuading buyers to bid more than £88 million over the night. Gerhard Richter's monumental *Wand (Wall)* goes for £17.4 million. Debriefing in a nearby pub, we struggle to square the circulation of immense value through the auction houses with our impoverished public sphere.

Committed to creating very different tournaments of value, we apply to the Camberwell Chelsea and Wimbledon Graduate School for £40,610 to run a large-scale, international, public market of values. We soon learn this figure rivals the programme's entire budget. We eventually receive £8500 from the Graduate School in match funding and much more in-kind support.

## March

We launch the first event in our *Differently Screening* series. Inspired by our visit to Sotheby's Contemporary Art Auction we watch *The Great Contemporary Art Bubble* (2009) and marvel at the commercial art world as a circuit that excludes all but a very select few.

Some Critical Practice members collaborate with a group of utopographers (who envision, represent and critique imagined worlds), including Chelsea College's Dan Bryne-Smith. The three-day event *Utopographies: Evaluation, Consensus and Location* takes place in the Triangle Space at the college. The theme of evaluation enables Critical Practice to develop its research strand. Constructing a kind of infrastructure becomes a key part of the exhibition process. Coloured rope is

Figure 1.38: Constructing the canopy network for *Utopographies: Evaluation, Consensus and Location* (March 2014, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



threaded throughout the space, dividing it into sections and creating a habitat for the programme. One of the events includes the first version of *Utopoly* (in which players imagine a utopian alternative to the rules and form of Monopoly), which is played by different members of Critical Practice for years to come and features in Neil Farnan's Ph.D. research.

## April

For the second event in the *Differently Screening* series, we host Brussels-based artists Ronny Heiremans and Katleen Vermeer at Marsha Bradfield's flat in Earl's Court. The artists screen their recent works *The Good Life* (a guided tour) and *The Residence* (a wager for the afterlife) and discuss the value systems that organize them. We hatch plans for a more extensive collaboration in the fall of 2014 but because of budget constraints these go unrealized.

We continue developing alternative plans to raise money for *The Market of Values* through holding a farmer's market on the Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground. Chelsea College encourages us to develop a business plan; Karem Ibrahim, Neil Cummings and Marsha Bradfield work on various scenarios. After several meetings and heated discussions, it is revealed that Baxter Storey – the company running the canteen at Chelsea College – has a monopoly on selling any food and drink across the university's campuses.

## May

For the third event in *Differently Screening*, Amy McDonnell and Catherine Long curate *Textiles, Labour, Protest and Value* at the Bread and Roses Beer Workers' Union pub. They screen a documentary about predominantly female textile workers who self-organize and take over the running of a suit factory, *The Women of Brukman* (2007). Participants begin sewing a Critical Practice *Banner of Values* as they watch.



Figure 1.39: Performance by Stephanie Dickinson and former members of medieval folk rock band Circulus at *Utopographies: Evaluation, Consensus and Location* (28 March 2014, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo credit Neil Cummings.

Figure 1.40: Amy McDonnell and Catherine Long curate *Textiles, Labour, Protest and Value*, which includes a screening of *The Women of Brukman* and a banner-making workshop (24 May 2014, Bread and Roses Beer Workers' Union pub). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



## June

Marsha Bradfield and a friend of Critical Practice, Claire Heafford, run *Futurising the Curriculum*, two cycle tours around the studios and project spaces of London, looking at models for facing the emotional, financial and practical challenges of sustaining a professional art practice. Critical Practice is invited to join and document the alternative economics involved in these realms of cultural production.

On 20 June, there is an all-day workshop with Stephen Wright to discuss his critically acclaimed publication, *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*. Here he states:

Usership represents a radical challenge to at least three stalwart conceptual institutions in contemporary culture: spectatorship, expert culture, and ownership. Modernist

artistic conventions, remised on so-called disinterested spectatorship, dismiss usership (and use value, rights of usage) as inherently instrumental – and the mainstream artworld’s physical and conceptual architecture is entirely unprepared to even speak of usership, even as many contemporary artistic practices imply a regime of engagement and relationality entirely at odds with that described by spectatorship. (Wright 2013: 66–67)

Our discussions are electrified with thinking about value and use, value and misuse and economic diversity. There is growing commitment in Critical Practice to further explore heterogeneous value but also to create an event that would reflexively tap into this economic diversity by valuing values beyond the financial ones.

## July

Marsha Bradfield and Kuba Szreder meet with Andreas Lang of public works to discuss collaborating on the infrastructural aspect of what would become *TransActing*. We approach public works in light of their reputation for producing architectures and infrastructures that resource their local context via the thoughtful use of histories, knowledges and materials.

## Autumn

The Market of Values working group scrambles to prioritize some aspects of the project whilst others fall away. We worry about the diversity of our market stalls. We play with the idea of market-goers being allocated currency according to a starting status (either upper/middle/working class, socio-economic banding, 1% or 99%, or others such as celebrities). Participants could earn, trade, gamble, be rentiers depending on status to acquire high-value market goods or services.

## December

Amy McDonnell, Verina Gfader and Neil Cummings curate the fourth event for *Differently Screening – Sunlight: Energy Labour and Value* at Open School East.

Participants, fuelled by bread and beer, cycle. The cinema harnesses the energy of eight adults pedalling at any one time (continually and in rotation) on bikes connected to generators. This embodiment of energy and labour is reflected on screen with a series of excerpts from moving image work, such as Fischli and Weiss' *Der Lauf der Dinge* (1987) and Jacques Tati's *Jour de fête* (1949).

To celebrate Christmas and anticipate the new year, we convene to progress our Monopoly hack, *Utopoly* (started back in March at *Utopographies Evaluation, Consensus and Location*) and raise a glass in celebration of busy but successful 2014.

Figure 1.41: A film screening by pedal power. *Sunlight: Energy Labour and Value* was curated by Amy McDonnell, Verina Gfader and Neil Cummings (10 December 2014, Open School East). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



Figure 1.42: Critical Practice celebrates Christmas with a DIY game of *Utopoly*. From left: Marsha Bradfield, Metod Blejec, Claire Mokrauer-Madden, Karem Ibrahim and Verina Gfader (11 December 2014, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo credit Neil Cummings.





# 2015

## February

We are allocated the Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground at Chelsea College of Arts for 11 July 2015. Metod Blejec begins developing a publicity plan and an identity for *TransActing*. Our wiki falters again and we correspond through our email list.

In an exciting meeting, we provide one-minute pitches as to whom should be invited. We also decide to run an open call. Anyone with a practice or project that explicitly explores value, valorization or evaluation is invited to apply.

Marsha Bradfield, Neil Cummings and Kuba Szreder have spent several months developing an application to Arts Council England (ACE) for £15,000. Advised by Kelly Palmer of rentals at Chelsea College that the Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground has a commercial rent of £10,000/day, we are able to confirm £108,000 in in-kind support. After Bradfield completes the draft, Szreder and Claire Mokrauer-Madden adjust the budget and the bid is submitted.

## March

Critical Practice receives £15,000 from ACE. Most of the funding is allocated to paying people. Core cluster members are each given £500 to curate stallholders of their choice.

## April

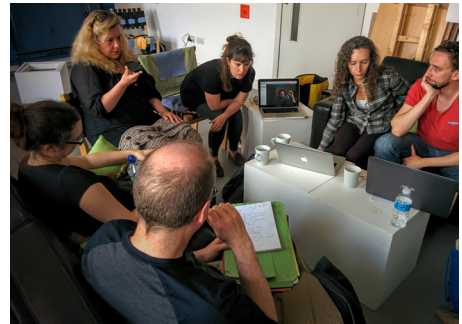
On 20 April, Ben White performs a software update on our wiki and Neil Cummings pays for more server space. We are back in business. Despite valuing the wiki's transparency and trying to move content trapped in emails onto our public platform, we feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume. Three months until market day.

## May

Recalling our 2013 workshop, *One Person's Trash is Another's Treasure*, plans are made with public works to upcycle materials collected in and around the college.

*TransActing* has pivoted Marsha Bradfield's two-year post-doctoral fellowship in Critical Practice. This ends on 28 May, but the work of coordinating the project continues.

Figure 1.43: Critical Practice in the throes of planning *TransActing*. From left: Claire Mokrauer-Madden, Neil Farnan, Marsha Bradfield, Amy McDonnell, Metod Blejec (on the computer), Cinzia Cremona and Kuba Szreder (16 June 2015, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo credit Neil Cummings.



## June

In a stall prototyping workshop, public works inspire us with an exquisite evaluation of materials and systems for assembling the market infrastructure. We brainstorm protection from the elements. We review and make a selection from the open call for stallholders with an impassioned debate.

Led by Neil Farnan, the Currency working group presents ideas to Critical Practice for a local currency in the market. There will be four icons: Wellbeing, Time, Knowledge and Creativity. We wonder how to get stallholders and market-goers to adopt it. The currency will facilitate transactions and act as a souvenir of the event. We plan to give people the currency as they arrive in exchange for something, for example, their contact details. Will people treat the currency as a commodity and value it?

Neil Farnan and Neil Cummings work with Machines Room to develop a currency whose aesthetic is designed by Metod Blejec. Wellbeing is represented by felt in honour of Joseph Beuys, fluorescent acrylic for Creativity, wood for Time and a leather-like material for Knowledge.

Karem Ibrahim, who runs the Southbank Centre Food Market, agrees to approach traders, offering them a pitch in the market in exchange for the affordable fare.

We struggle to keep up with the press schedule. Marsha Bradfield clashes with Metod Blejec regarding the poster and flyer image, resulting in two designs. As more stallholders are added, our organizational resources are stretched.

We spend late June and early July reclaiming as much material from the recent *BA Degree Show* as we can for our build.

Figure 1.44: The Currency working group led by Neil Farnan creates *TranActing's* bespoke tokens for exchange – Creativity (fluorescent acrylic), Knowledge (birch), Time (grey board) and Wellbeing (red felt). Co-authored by Metod Blejec, Neil Farnan and Neil Cummings. Photo credit Neil Farnan.



Figure 1.45: One of several stall workshops. From the left: Carlotta Novella, Karem Ibrahim, Claire Mokrauer-Madden and Andreas Lang (June 2021, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo credit Neil Cummings.



Figure 1.46: Italian designer Enzo Mari with maquettes of his *autoprogettazione*, DIY furniture designs. Photo courtesy of Creative Commons.

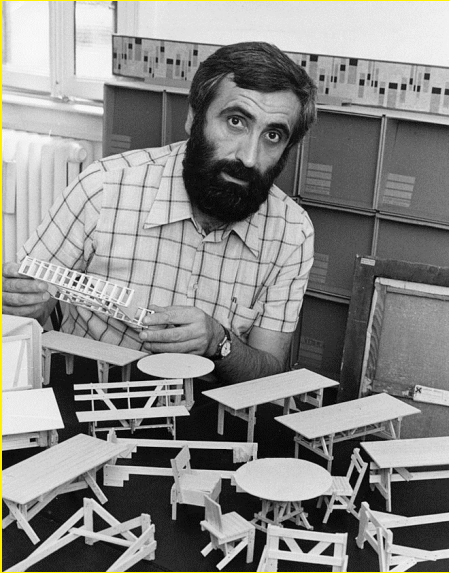


Figure 1.47: A balsa wood maquette of the stalls based on the designs of Enzo Mari. Developed by public works and Critical Practice (May and June 2015). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.

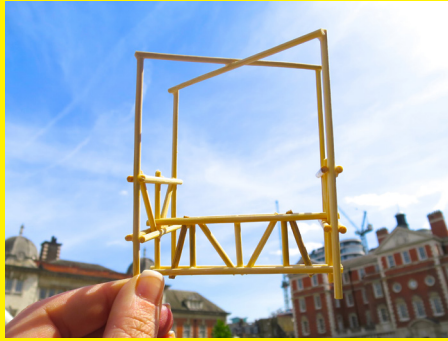


Figure 1.48: Building the stall infrastructure for *TransActing*. From left: Amy McDonnell, Silvia Krupinska, Natalia Romik and Clair Mokrauer-Madden (July 2015, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo credit Neil Cummings.



Figure 1.49: Neil Farnan (in the hat) works with members of Artists' Union England to create their stall for *TransActing* (July 2015, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



## July

In little more than a week, we make over 50 stalls from both salvaged materials and wood we order in. We use jigs so that people with different skill levels can take part in the process of building. An onsite facilitator helps newbies find their way around the

construction site. Stallholders, students and others work with Critical Practice in the warm sun. Amy McDonnell keeps the builders fed and watered with rounds of coffee and Middle Eastern-inspired lunches.

Figure 1.50: The build for *TransActing* (July 2015, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.



## Market day

The section 'Stallholders' reflections' that appears later in the publication offers a living portrait of *#TransActing: A Market of Values*.

PARTIAL SELF-PORTRAIT OF CRITICAL PRACTICE

Figure 1.51 and Figure 1.52: *TransActing* (11 July 2015, Chelsea College of Arts). Photo credit Marsha Bradfield.





# The day after

We are exhausted but manage to deinstall the market and clean up. Some stalls continue their life in a South London market, thanks to Karem Ibrahim, who manages to sell a few to market traders. We adapt the rest into tables and benches, distributing them in and around Chelsea College of Arts and other organizations such as Assembly in Deptford, a community programme against gentrification. The stalls' value far exceeds their significance at *TransActing*.

Figure 1.53: *TransActing* stalls enjoy an afterlife at Trade Deptford. Facilitated by public works and Assembly, this platform hosted events and discussions exploring the theme of local identity, gentrification and citizenship. Photo credit Maria Barnish.





# And ever after

In 2017, we are delighted to hear from curators Håkon Lillegraven and Cristina Vasilescu that *TransActing* has inspired their response to the question: 'Are non-hierarchical and collective modes of working possible within a structured organization such as the Institute of Contemporary Arts?'. The press release reads:

The public is invited on a tour of the ICA's lesser seen architectural history, and to collectively build a structure on-site, using wood from the material framework of the ICA itself and prior artist projects. Building and investigating the materials which constitute the institution itself together, this workshop thinks through collective labour and an open discussion in a democratic and 'borderless' space within the ICA's hierarchical structure. This workshop is inspired by *TransActing: A Market of Values*, previously tested by the research-based practice hub Chelsea Critical Practice in 2015 and artist Javier Chozas' work 'The Day of the Beast'. (ICA Student Forum 2017: n.pag.)

This recognition gives us pause. The ICA had approached Critical Practice about partnering on the *Market of Evaluation as TransActing* was called in 2014. For whatever reason, this never materialised. And yet, the ICA has welcomed *TransActing* in retrospect as a precedent for non-commercial markets to come.

Figure 1.54: *TransActing* inspires the ICA Public Marketplace (part of *In Formation*) (21 July 2017, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London). Photo credit Marsha Bradford.



# An incomplete list of significant people

We want to honour our debt to all the wonderful people who have at some time or other enriched Critical Practice. This list also acknowledges that authorship is never straightforward and that even where texts and projects are ascribed to one or more names, those have been influenced and enhanced by all those who have passed by and touched us in some way.

Please forgive us if your name is not here in print but should be. This is a sign of our limitations and of the intensity of activity and connectivity of the ten plus years represented in this publication. All those to the right appear on the attendance records of our meeting minutes.

Aaron McPeake  
Alexander Page  
Amy McDonnell  
Amy O'Neill  
Andrew Chesher  
Beatrice Schulz  
Blanca Regina  
Carlos Monleon  
Catherine Long  
Charlotte Webb  
Cinzia Cremona  
Claire  
Mokrauer-Madden  
Corrado Morgana  
Damian Taylor  
Daniel Gleadall  
Darrel Stadlen  
David Cross  
Deanne Tremlett  
Denise Ackerl  
Eugenia Beirer  
Eva Sajovic  
Ewelina Warner  
Fangli Cheng  
Gary Nash  
Helen Brewer  
Ian Drysdale  
Isobel Bowditch  
Jem Mackay  
Joe Balfour  
Karem Ibrahim

Katrine Hjelde  
Ken Wilder  
Kioka Williams  
Kuba Szreder  
Lawrence O'Sullivan  
Manuela Zechner  
Marsha Bradfield  
Mary Anne Francis  
Matthew Robinson  
Metod Blejec  
Michaela Ross  
Mike Knowlden  
Neal White  
Neil Cummings  
Neil Farnan  
Phil O'Shaughnessy  
Raquel Villar Pérez  
Robert Dingle  
Robin Bhattacharya  
Rory Pilgrim  
Sharon Bennett  
Scott Schwager  
Verina Gfader  
Tim O'Riley  
Tom Neill  
Tom Trevatt  
Trevor Giles  
Trish Scott  
Wayne Clements  
Wei-Ho Ng

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The background of the entire page is a dense collection of small, irregularly shaped wooden tokens. These tokens are in various colors: natural wood, red, yellow, and green. Many of the tokens have text and symbols embossed on them. Some of the visible text includes "Critical Practice", "#TransActing: Time", "#TransActing: Knowledge", and "TransActing". There are also symbols like a heart, a leaf, and a stylized infinity or loop symbol.

# TRANSACTING AS ART, DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

## A NON-COMMERCIAL MARKET

**Edited by**

Marsha Bradfield

Cinzia Cremona

Amy McDonnell

Eva Sajovic



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AS ART,  
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# CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	vii
<b>FOREWORD</b>	xi
<b>MALCOLM QUINN</b>	
<b>PREFACE</b>	xiii
<b>MARSHA BRADFIELD</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	01
<b>TRADING IN PUBLIC GOOD</b>	
<b>MARSHA BRADFIELD, CINZIA CREMONA AND VERINA GFADER</b>	
<b>PARTIAL SELF-PORTRAIT OF CRITICAL PRACTICE</b>	19
<b>INTRODUCED BY MARSHA BRADFIELD</b>	
<b>TAKING ENZO TO MARKET</b>	63
<b>OPEN STALLS</b>	
<b>NEIL CUMMINGS (and Critical Practice) and ANDREAS LANG (and public works)</b>	
<b>STALLHOLDERS' REFLECTIONS</b>	73
<b>INTRODUCED BY AMY McDONNELL</b>	
<b>HAPPY ANNIVERSARY CRITICAL PRACTICE</b>	159
<b>MARSHA BRADFIELD</b>	

<b>TRANSACTING AS AN ICEBERG</b>	179
<b>KUBA SZREDER</b>	
<b>REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING IN CONSUMERISM</b>	189
<b>NICHOLAS TEMPLE</b>	
<b>TECHNIQUES OF ABERRANT EXTRACTION TRANSACTING SURPLUS ACTS IN AN AGE OF SPECULATION</b>	203
<b>EMILY ROSAMOND</b>	
<b>A CONVERSATION ON VALUE WITH ANDREA PHILLIPS</b>	213
<b>VERINA GFADER AND ANDREA PHILLIPS</b>	
<b>MINOR COMPOSITIONS</b>	223
<b>NOTES TOWARDS A PUBLISHING RESONANCE</b>	
<b>STEPHEN SHUKAITIS</b>	
<b>PLATFORMS AND SHELTERS</b>	227
<b>A REFLECTION ON #TRANSACTING: A MARKET OF VALUES</b>	
<b>AMY McDONNELL AND EVA SAJOVIC</b>	
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	235
<b>CINZIA CREMONA</b>	
<b>LIST OF CHAPTER CONTRIBUTORS</b>	247

# TRANSACTING AS ART, DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

## A NON-COMMERCIAL MARKET

**An interdisciplinary anthology exploring alternatives to the principles of commercial markets that dominate contemporary life.**

This book applies an experimental ethos to collaborative cultural production. Expanding the fields of art, design and architectural research, contributors provide critical reflections on collaborative practice-based/led research. The volume builds on a pop-up market hosted by the London-based arts cluster Critical Practice that sought to creatively explore existing structures of evaluation and actively produce new ones. Assembled by lead editor Marsha Bradfield, with help from other members of Critical Practice, the chapters contextualize the event within a long history of marketplaces, offer reflections from the stallholders and celebrate its value system, particularly its critique of econometrics.

**Marsha Bradfield** rides the hyphen as an archivist-artist-curator-educator-researcher-writer. She has been affiliated with Chelsea College of Arts at University of the Arts London since 2006. **Cinzia Cremona** is a Sydney-based artist, researcher, writer and curator who works with video, performance and digital technologies from networked practices to expanded reality. **Amy McDonnell** is a London-based curator in socially engaged art practice and an environmental campaigner. **Eva Sajovic** is an artist and a senior lecturer at University of the Arts London.

