

What Happened to the Institutional Critique?

By James Meyer

I just want to be conscious of where I am, in relationship to all these different parameters. Robert Smithson.¹

Prologue: The Whitney Biennial: Generalization of the Political

In the past few years, the dominant topic in the "New York art world" has been its collapse--the collapse, that is, of the structure of expansion of the previous decades: the constant addition of new galleries, the conversion of loft buildings, the founding of another magazine, all accompanied, as a mark of Soho's "arrival", by new restaurants, boutiques, gourmet shops. With the recession, and the reduction of arts funding by a besieged NEA, the material support for visual culture contracted. Every month it seemed brought word of another gallery closing, yet another magazine folding. While many mourn these losses - whether those who remember the smaller, more coherent situation of the postwar years and the 60's and 70's, or those who long for the profit-driven 80's - this fracturing, in conjunction with political and theoretical developments, has resulted in a new multiculturalism; other voices, other communities are supposedly being heard. This was, at least, one of the claims behind the recent Biennial--the Biennial that canonized the integration of "political correctness" into contemporary practice. Indeed, making the rounds of Breuer's austere interiors this spring, one became aware of how the political was being transformed, before one's eyes, into the dominant "theme" or "content" of new work. The political, in other words, had become generalized.

What to make of this generalization of the political, apotheosized by the Biennial? How to distinguish one practice from the other, each, we have been told, a figuration of political content? Whether Matthew Barney's homoerotic video-narratives or Cindy Sherman's shredded, Bellmeresque mannequins; Karen Kilimnick's drawings of Kate Moss or Leone and Macdonald's row of branding irons; Lari Pittman's image-laden paintings or Byron Kim's "body abstraction"; Janine Antoni's lard cubes, lipstick, and chocolate boxes or Charles Ray's family and firetruck satirizing "American life"; Kiki Smith's tears and Nan Goldin's photos of drag queens. What are the political claims of these practices? What are the forms of political expression in the 90's? Is it enough to image the fragment of a body or a model's face, enough to appropriate the monochrome to a discourse of race? Is it enough to lay glass tears on the floor? Does studio work, produced for display in the gallery, sufficiently question its situation?² Much current work, ignoring the conditions of its production and

reception, renders its content ripe for consumption; the buyer is encouraged to identify with a particular theme. Is it coincidental that, in a lackluster market, metaphorical "body" work sells comparatively well? For all its good intentions, the "multicultural", "grunge" Biennial canonized the emergence of the political as a style, the latest trend in high cultural consumption.

Stationed at the entrance, barely visible, was a rack of audiotapes produced by Andrea Fraser. Walking around the galleries, the visitor listened to the museum's curators and director discuss the show--or rather their personal investments in it. How was the show selected? (By a single curator). What were the criteria for selecting the work? What was the basis for the show's "politicization?" (A liberal desire for "multicultural" representation; a desire to "keep up" with new trends: this is, after all, the Biennial's function). Confronted with this continuous overlap of voices, the listener was made aware of the heterogeneous desires of the museum's staff, and of the institution they serve. Yet the tape left another, less resolvable question: what is my role here? As we shall see, Fraser's practice is not traditional critique, which posits an analytical distance; on the contrary, the spectator is as much caught in the museum's web of relations as the curator.

Upstairs, Zoe Leonard's photographs of young girls gazing at vitrines (beneath the gaze of towering, male guards) invited reflection on the museum's role in the production of gender. Nearby, shots of medieval chastity belts in an anthropological museum reminded one that the fight for abortion rights is only the latest chapter in a history of opposition to patriarchal control of women's bodies. While other practices in the show, nodding to the surrealist legacy, produced a metaphorical displacement on the body, isolating its parts, enlarging them and recasting them in unfamiliar materials, Leonard's work presented the body as an institutional construction.³ Renée Green's Import/Export Funk Office, with its racks of books on African American culture - the simulated library of a German music critic - commented on the processes of cultural translation performed by intellectuals, the media, institutions: the very process of inscription of the other's culture performed by this, the "multicultural" Biennial, on Green herself.

Instead of metaphorizing political content, instead of displacing the political into a thematic expression, each of these projects attempted to render one conscious of where one was, "in relationship to all these different parameters" (Smithson). Each was a demystifying practice.

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It is February 1989. I am a student, living in Baltimore, and my friend, Bret, has just been diagnosed with AIDS. I have heard of a newly formed activist group in New York for people with AIDS, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), but I don't know anything about it. Someone has told me of a conference in Columbus, Ohio, on cultural practices responding to the epidemic. I drive out to see what it's all about.

There are many producers there, but one speaks with a particular intensity: Gregg Bordowitz. He describes a practice of video activism that would at once represent the interests of people with AIDS, and rally a coalition. He asked us to imagine

in a local community center a consumer VCR deck and a TV set sit on a table. Representatives from the various communities affected by AIDS sit in front of the TV. They watch a video composed of interviews with each of them. They see themselves pictured in relation to one another... The AIDS movement, like other radical movements, creates itself as it attempts to represent itself... Video has the potential to render the concerted efforts--as yet unimagined--between groups. The most significant challenge to the movement is coalition building.⁴

How to describe the flash of recognition I felt as I listened to Bordowitz's outline for a cultural activism? The pleasure of becoming aware, for the first time, of the concept of coalition building (so foreign to my graduate school discussions) and the possibility of an art, collectively produced, that would end the epidemic, that would save my friend? (Such were the feelings of optimism that buoyed the early years of AIDS activism; we did not want to recognize the virus's intractability: Bret died the following year). As I listened to Bordowitz, to Douglas Crimp, and to others describe these strategies of organization, I was determined to return to Baltimore to start a local ACT UP. At the same time it became apparent to me that the posters, videos, and t-shirts of ACT UP were not "just politics", as certain established critics claimed. On the contrary, they seemed to demand the kind of analysis that the practices of Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman, and Jenny Holzer were then receiving. The organizational and educational work of collectives like Gran Fury, Testing the Limits, DIVA-TV, and of individuals like Bordowitz, Jean Carlomusto, Tom Kalin, Bob Huff, Catherine Saalfield, Ray Navarro, Donald Moffett, Adam Rolston, Robert

Hilferty, and Ellen Spiro, I was convinced, had consolidated a new model of activist representation: the representation of a postmodern political movement of different subjects joining together to fight a specific cause, a representation at once denotative yet critical of its rhetoric, that marked a break with classic Marxist propaganda, rooted in the essentialist, teleological narrative of proletarian hegemony.⁵ Bordowitz in particular, a student of the Soviet avant-garde of the 20's and 30's, had reconceived the constructivist program of those years for the contemporary situation, hanging a video monitor in the upper corner of 303 Gallery in 1987, the year of ACT UP's founding.⁶ Tatlin's *Corner Counter-Relief* and Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) both accessed the corner in order to dynamize the phenomenological relation of the spectator and the work. The activation of the spectator thus became a goal of early Soviet practice: the dynamism of Tatlin's spiraling *Monument to the Third International*, Popova's mechanical stage sets, Lissitzky's *Prouns*, etc., it was hoped, would facilitate the transformation of the contemplative viewer into a revolutionary worker. During the 60's, the corner was recuperated by Flavin and Morris for its phenomenological effect; Beuys's felt corner was metaphorical. In his work at 303, Bordowitz, replacing painting and sculpture with a video monitor showing ACT UP demonstrations, surrounding this monitor with ACT UP posters (which, it has been pointed out, recall suprematist and constructivist graphics) restored, at the height of the Reagan era, the radical political function of the corner.⁷

Now the straw man of this argument was the institutional critique of the previous generation. Developing out of the "minimal" investigations of the formal conditions of the gallery, and the conceptual critiques of this apparatus, the analytical work of the late 70's and the 80's shared the reflexive bias of these practices.⁸ Even Hans Haacke's activity, which had extended its purview to consider the "real world" conditions of slumlord profiteering or the militaristic policies of the Reagan administration, had come to seem refined. While I recognized the historical importance of these practices, I could not but feel their irrelevance to the concerns of the present. In the face of an epidemic, and the destruction of my community, a collective art of action was more convincing than the analyses of individual authors. Moreover, this work had disappointed on another score. When Kruger and Sherrie Levine, held up as "resistant" (i.e. politically aware) postmodernists by critics like Hal Foster, chose to show at the gallery that had launched Julian Schnabel and David Salle, the "neoconservative" postmodernists of Foster's account - the political claims of their work became problematic.⁹ Of course, the supplemental relation these practices

set up to the gallery apparatus was part of their "deconstructive" strategy. "I don't think there's a blameless place where work can function. One has to work within the confines of the system", Kruger said.¹⁰ As for Haacke, Louise Lawler, and Martha Rosler, who maintained a more critical relationship to their material situations, preferring to work for foundations and museums (an admittedly problematic move, as they themselves have shown) the political effect of their interventions seemed impotent in comparison with militant practice. And Bordowitz, at the time, felt the same way. "*What happened to the institutional critique?*" he asked.

The notion of art having to embody an institutional critique was something that I dealt with when I was in art school. When we got out of art school, this was the question that my peers and I addressed in our work. The kind of work that I do now doesn't necessarily address issues of institutional critique directly but it does indirectly... I have no more questions about gallery walls. The kind of academic understanding I used to have about institutional critique led to a dead end. It ate its own tail in its formalism. What seems useful to me now is to go out and do work that is directly engaged, that is productive - to produce work that enables people to see what they are doing, that enables them to criticize what they are doing, and moves on.¹¹

Now, in the years since I attended the Columbus conference, ACT UP has expanded (there are chapters all over the world, it is a household word) and contracted (many of the original members have died or are no longer involved, the production of activist posters and video has diminished). To be sure, it is the nature of coalitions to come together to address a cause, and disperse (this is the sign of their democratic character). Moreover, ACT UP's work continues in other venues, as its members join the "AIDS establishment" in positions at the American Foundation for AIDS Research, Gay Men's Health Crisis, and other organizations. ACT UP has inspired the formation of other groups (Women's Action Coalition, breast cancer activists, to name two). Reflecting these shifts the strategies of AIDS cultural work have altered, as producers increasingly explore the personal effects of HIV. Bordowitz's activity is emblematic, alternating between educational videos (produced at GMHC with Jean Carlomusto) and, of late, a series of Portraits that contest the dominant media's simplistic representations of people with AIDS.¹² He is also engaged in producing a feature tape that combines autobiography, narration, and television clips to reflect on his own experience as a person living with HIV.

But what *did* happen to the institutional critique? What is its position in the field of a generalized political? Time and again we are told that "content" has replaced "form", that the "political" late 80's and 90's have supplanted the "formalist" 60's and 70's. "Today", one of the Biennial's curators observes, "everybody's talking about gender, identity, and power the way they talked about the grid in the late 60's and early 70's. The issues of context and presentation are paramount and formal invention has taken a backseat to the interpretative function of art and the priorities of content".¹³ Not only does this construction - "formalist" 60's/70's vs. "political" late 80's/early 90's - conveniently forget the extraordinary politicization of artists in the earlier period, it seems to suggest one can, at this moment, speak of "issues of context and presentation" *apart* from formal decisions. But how can one separate the work's form (which surely includes its relationship to its context) from its interpretation? As Haacke has said, "the context in which a work is exhibited... is a material for me like canvas and paint".¹⁴ The current cliché that content has triumphed *at the expense* of formal decision-making fails to explain how one installation or photograph reads differently from another's. It fails to respect the producer's role in establishing a set of formal and conceptual boundaries that would constitute her or his practice (this is just as true for collective work). It fails to secure the *specificity* of the practice - *distinctions* within the field of contemporary production, a field in which every practice claims (is claimed) to function politically. And the result of this incapacity to look carefully at practice, to assess how content is negotiated, and the kinds of relations the practice sets up, is the kind of free-floating discussions that make up much of the Biennial catalogue, and fill the few remaining art magazines.

To describe the state of institutional critique it would be necessary to look closely at its forms, its operations.¹⁵ Rather than laud these practices for seeming, in some unspecific way, engagé, rather than say they "deal with issues of gender, sexuality, race, class..." and leave it at that (as in the usual, run of the mill, "politically correct" criticism) we need to describe *how* these practices function, the readings they produce, *how* they situate themselves discursively and materially. Such a functionalist criticism, derived from Russian formalism,¹⁶ would secure the specificity of these practices at this moment of a generalized political - the transmutation of engaged content into the latest commodity-type in a contracting commercial art apparatus. To paraphrase Brecht: how does the work comprehend its subject matter? How does it shape the new relations?

There have developed, simultaneously with the activism of recent years, and partly in response to activism, a number of practices

that have extended and displaced the terms of previous institutional analysis. (It would, therefore, be inaccurate to speak of a "new" institutional critique: dialogues among artists are inter- and intra-generational). Connected yet specific, internally heterogeneous yet overlapping in strategies and contents, they are presented here not under the frame of a stylistic label or "theme" (which would be to perpetrate an unnecessary confinement upon them, though this may be inevitable: already the label "contextualism" has been coined).¹⁷ Rather, these practices are shown as a set of replies to a question. Here are some of the terms around which current institutional analysis may be discussed:

The Expanded Site (Beyond Reflexivity)

For artists in my general category, working with institutions is infinitely more exciting than working in a modernist white cube.
Mark Dion¹⁸

From the late 50's through the 70's artists pushed open the boundaries of traditional media to explore an expanded site.¹⁹ Happenings, performance, Oldenburg's Store, earth art, and situationism brought visual practice outside the physical and conceptual constraints of the gallery. In contrast, institutional analysis required the gallery site to launch its critique, to question the epistemological and material situation of the art apparatus by means of a corrosive supplementarity. By the mid 80's this mode of critique had become institutionalized, had itself become a tradition. Yet, at the moment of its attenuation, institutional analysis began to interrogate an expanded site: other institutions (natural history museums, historical societies, zoos, parks), other sites, were explored. In a sense, the institutional critique has turned its sight backwards, to the museum's origins. As Eugenio Donato has observed, the natural history museum preceded the art museum; naturalist strategies of taxonomization were adopted by early art history.²⁰ At the same time, it must be said that the art institution has hardly been abandoned. The gallery has become one of many sites of investigation, a site positioned at the intersection of discursive fields, *an institution among institutions*. Indeed, these producers analyze institutionality itself: classificatory systems and their modes of presentation

(architecture, display cases, the media) and the knowledges, identities, and relations these systems produce.²¹ Michel Foucault described this mode of analysis as genealogical. "Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments... Genealogy does not oppose itself to history as the lofty and profound gaze of the philosopher might compare to the mole-like perspective of the scholar; on the contrary, it rejects the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies".²² The "work" is not a product of the studio to be displayed in a gallery; rather, it is a meeting of the demands of the site and the methods of the producer.²³ Hence the supposed lack of "clarity" of these practices at times, the looseness of presentation some critics have complained of, the elaborate narratives and overlaps in the projects of Müller, Green, Dion, and Fraser. "I make shapes or set up situations that are kind of open", Green explains. "My work has a lot to do with a sort of fluidity, a movement back and forth, not making a claim to any specific or essential way of being".²⁴ Insofar as they foreclose the possibility of a "whole" work (and its implications of an essential meaning), a work knowable and comprehensible to the "eye", these artists build on the Duchampian and conceptual legacies. Broodthaers's vitrine displays and Warhol's *Raiding the Icebox* (1970) a presentation of objects in the collection of the Rhode Island School of Design, are also important precedents for current institutional analysis. A more immediate impact, however, was the postmodernist theory and practice of the late 70's and early 80's. Craig Owens - who taught Bordowitz, Burr, Dion, and Fraser at the School of Visual Arts and in the Whitney Independent Study Program - was a singular influence; his famous essay, "The Allegorical Impulse", was the clearest articulation of the postmodernist work as fragmented, insufficient, confounding wholeness.²⁶ This text, along with Rosalind Krauss's "Notes on the Index", Douglas Crimp's "Pictures", and Benjamin Buchloh's "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art" (to name only some of the most influential essays of those years), provided the initial intellectual terrain for many of these artists. Whereas early postmodernists branched into an allegorical or indexical mode in reaction to late modernism's ideology of wholeness and self-presence, this generation of artists *started out* with an allegorical understanding of practice. On the other hand, unlike the practices referred to in Owens's essay, which located their critiques within an object, "picture", or stage performance, the practices in this show, as institutional critique, refer to an earlier, emerging postmodernism: the site-specific activity of the 60's and 70's.²⁷ "Difference" operates not merely on the level of the sign, but in the overlap between the practice and the site (this is the "work"). This shift from an allegorical

work to a site-specific critique, it could be said, is the transition marked by Owens's text and Cornel West's "The New Cultural Politics of Difference". According to West, contemporary cultural practice tends to "trash the monolithic and homogenous in the name of diversity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity". This description is similar to Owens's line that "when the postmodernist work speaks of itself, it is no longer to proclaim its autonomy, its self-sufficiency, its transcendence; rather, it is to narrate its own contingency, insufficiency, lack of transcendence". It is the second part of West's description that moves beyond the allegorical, proposing a practice that is specific, historical, contingent. The "new cultural politics of difference...", he continues, seeks to "reject the abstract, general, and universal in light of the concrete, specific and particular; and to historicize, contextualize and pluralize by highlighting the contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting, and changing".²⁸

In her recent show at the Berkeley University Art Museum, Fraser presented the personal belongings of one of the museum's benefactors along with some of the works she had donated. Fred Wilson's installation at the Baltimore Historical Society, *Mining the Museum*, and Green's Bequest, at Worcester, displayed the museum's objects in combinations that explored the racist foundations of East Coast culture. Müller, at Biel, Switzerland, placed the collections of art books of the town's schools in buses parked at the buildings' entrances, inviting meditation on the pedagogical function of art. At last year's Documenta, Leonard displayed 18th century family portraits in the collection of the Kassel Neue Museum interspersed with photographs of vaginas. The paintings, displaced from the "neutral" setting of the old master gallery, became the object of a feminist critique of constructions of gender and sexuality; at the same time, the museum's ideological function was exposed. Tom Burr explores *liminal* sites (parks, public bathrooms, closets), sites between or adjacent to "proper" sites (museums, official buildings). As we shall see, by focusing on the marginal site Burr produces a deconstruction of the wholeness and discreteness of each term, and the identities and relations they affix.

The expanded site is mobile: just as AIDS activists could intervene on the side of a bus, a billboard, or in the Biennale, so these producers move in between contexts. The "high/low" opposition canonized by the recent show at the Museum of Modern Art has little meaning to artists engaged in a critical activity: the traditional, hierarchical view of practice, which considers the great museum a work's highest destination, the pinnacle of an artist's achievement, has given way to a horizontal movement between sites. The project is less a demonstration of the artist's

"vision" or talent than an intervention in an institution, a critical outreach to a community.

Performance is an important strategy for articulating a mobile site. In her talk at the Wadsworth Atheneum in the present show, Fraser walks around the museum, commenting on its physical, historical, and economic links with the city around it. Müller, in a gallery talk at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in 1986, clarified the connections between the school and the art market by leading the spectators from the studios to galleries of graduate work (the tour was conducted during "open house" week, when art dealers from around Germany descend on the Academy). At a certain point, mobilization leaves the physical site behind. The docent played by Fraser in her gallery talks, Jane Castleton, is as much a site of institutional discourse as a gallery wall, a display case, or a public relations pamphlet: each produces the spectator's expectations, and experience of, the museum. Dion's performance at American Fine Arts last year, the three-part *Department of Marine Animal Identification of the City of New York (Chinatown Division), Upper West Side Plant Project, and New York State Bureau of Tropical Conservation*, foregrounded the scientist's function in the production of knowledge. It is the scientist who organizes natural materials into taxonomical systems; the museum literalizes, in its displays, the architecture of these constructions. "I'm taking on and enacting a portion of the museum's task of collecting, displaying, and archivally classifying," Dion explains.²⁹ In other words, in this work Dion "became" the museum itself.

Critical Practice

What seems useful to me now is to go out and do work that is directly engaged, that is productive - to produce work that enables people to see what they are doing, that enables them to criticize what they are doing, and moves on.

Gregg Bordowitz³⁰

As students in the mid 80's, Dion and Bordowitz conducted a series of interviews with artists who seemed to embody a notion of a critical practice, a practice that dissolved traditional distinctions between the work of art and its production, or between the artists's "proper" activity of making work and other activities, such as activism or teaching. The artists they interviewed were Thomas Lawson, Dan Graham, Martha Rosler, Yvonne Rainer, and Joseph Kosuth. "What could a practice be beyond the discrete production of art?" Dion recalled. "We wanted to define

this for ourselves. We thought these artists were supporting models". For them Lawson's publication activity could not be separated from his painting, Kosuth's gallery projects and his pedagogy were inextricably linked. In fact, Dion and Bordowitz discovered, each of the artists wanted to *shore up* a distinction between their art and other activities. ("They didn't see it the way we did"). Only Rosler "made little separation between what she was doing as an artist and what she was doing as a professor", though in the end even she considered these slightly distinct.³¹

Another influence in this direction was Owens, who spoke of a "critical activity" that would "challenge... the division of labor - artist/critic, theoretician/historian".³² For Owens, the practices of Rosler, Allan Sekula, Carl Beveridge, and Mary Kelly exemplified this model.³³ While the productivist critique of the division of labor, based in historical materialist analysis, sought to end the distinction between the artist and worker, postmodernist critical activity, in Owens's sense, challenged the discursive order (what Barthes called the *doxa*) and the fixed professional roles, and relations, it affirmed.³⁴ If 60's artists had begun to write criticism, infusing textuality into visual practice, a textuality that broke down the discrete boundaries of the "work",³⁵ by the 80's the artist who wrote criticism had developed into the *critical practitioner*. Even so, these producers still made a distinction between their practices and other activities, the younger artists found. In contrast Dion's and Bordowitz's idea of a critical practice demanded a complete dehierarchization of professional roles. Bordowitz's work for ACT UP, educational tapes, portraits of people living with HIV, and other works are understood to comprise a *single practice*:

By "practice" I mean an ensemble of activities unified by the goals of the practitioner. These goals are defined by her or his interests and are motivated by her or his direct experiences. The ensemble of activities constituting a practice can, and, I argue, must transgress the established divisions of cultural labor between the art world and the rest of society. Art is no longer, and perhaps never was, a categorically autonomous entity.³⁶

Likewise, Dion stresses the need to move *between* communities. "To get a call from the World Wildlife Fund, from the Museum of Contemporary Art in Santa Fe, from a gallery in Tokyo, and a letter from a primatologist in South America: that's where the practice is located for me".³⁷ "Critical practice" is a model of production appropriate to a mobile site; it the model of contemporary activism - the attitude that you can just as well do a billboard or a poster as an installation at the Whitney Museum.³⁸ As Dion suggests, it

is a model appropriate for ecological work. "I feel there are already too many things in the world as it is, so I never actually produce anything myself".³⁹ The signage he designed for a zoo in Belize is paradigmatic: instead of making a critical "work" "about" the presentation of animals by zoos, Dion intervened in this presentation. Not surprisingly, Gran Fury has also developed a critical signage protesting New York City's careless treatment of homeless people with AIDS.

In her letter to the curator of the Wadsworth, Fraser speaks of "efforts by contemporary artists to move away from art making as the specialized activity of talented individuals and toward a practical engagement with everyday relations and social representations".⁴⁰ In other words, Fraser also considers her work a "practice", though of a specific kind: she would hope that her critiques result in a psychoanalytic intervention. The radicality of Fraser's activity is its use of psychoanalytic theory not merely as an analogy - a means for describing the desire- relations of the museum, its trustees, docents, and visitors. The radicality, and difficulty of her project is its attempt to use psychoanalysis as a *therapeutic* model:

I have come to see art museums as compromise formations set up to protect the interests of one class while responding, in a displaced way, to the demands of another. In this way they're like symptoms; they cover over conflict with displaced representations. Such representations then exist as seams into which I, in my work, would introduce a crack.⁴¹

When Fraser embarked on this project in the mid 80's, she had been frustrated by the lack of practical engagement of previous institutional critique (here, her position overlaps with Bordowitz's). It seemed necessary "to go back to the early 1970's to get beyond the repression of activism of the critical work of the early 80's".⁴² For Fraser, too, the paradigm of "deconstructive" complicitousness, the "unavoidable necessity of participating in the very activity that is being denounced,"⁴³ lacked force. Her adoption of psychoanalysis as a therapeutic model arose from a specific episode, a tour led by a docent at the Whitney Museum. Standing in front of one of the *Woman* series, the (female) docent repeated a misogynist statement of De Kooning ("I like women but they irritate me"). To Fraser's surprise, this was delivered without irony. The docent, Fraser realized, is merely a mouthpiece of the museum's ideological, class, and racial agenda (including the "politically correct" agenda of 1993). And this

agenda could be characterized, in psychoanalytic terms, as the "desire of the museum":

Jane Castleton is neither a character nor an individual, but rather an object, a site determined by a function. As a docent she is the museum's representative, and her function is, quite simply, to tell visitors what the museum wants - that is, to tell them what they can give to satisfy the desire of the museum. The desire of the subject who attends the gallery talk is thus the desire of the museum.⁴⁴

Fraser's intervention, then, would be to render the docent conscious of her speech, of the institutional discourses that speak through her. Indeed, this came full circle when Fraser recently had to present her Biennial piece to the Whitney docents. This intervention was straightforward enough. But insofar as it grafts a Lacanian model of subjectivity onto the museum and its constituents, Fraser's practice, at its most complex, produces a dizzying circuit of relations: it is sometimes difficult to identify who is positioned as the "analyst", and who is the "analysand". The transposition of the psychoanalytic relation from the therapist's office to an institutional network is a problematic move, yet this deployment has resulted in one of the most trenchant practices currently being produced. For as Fraser maps the desire-relations of the museum, our anxieties are exposed. In both her gallery talks (where the guide's speech alternates among a number of voices) and her recent projects for the Biennial and Biennale (which record the voices of art professionals and visitors) Fraser presents a montage or cacophony of conflicting desires, a situation she calls *grotesque*.⁴⁵ In the ancient paintings in the grottoes beneath Rome discovered by Raphael and his followers, animals and plants intertwined in a bizarre decorative pattern that invited this description. So too Fraser's voices line up in a circuit of grotesquerie, a daisy chain of wishes that compete, displace, yet sustain one another. "I go to St. Mark's to get my theory every few months" a curator says on the Biennial tape. We laugh, fantasizing we are in a position of exteriority, of masterful objectivity, that Fraser equates with traditional critique.⁴⁶ But Fraser does not let us off so easily. What produces your laughter, she would ask? Don't you "go to St. Mark's"? What are the standards of competence, the cultural capital required to function in the "art world" of the 1990's?⁴⁷ What are the anxieties art professionals (much less the public) feel in order to "keep up"? How are they relieved? Or is relief impossible? Fraser exposes how the contemporary apparatus of high culture, the pressure for

"new ideas" disseminated by academic journals and progressive-minded institutions like the Whitney Museum, backed up by the art commodity system (in which the present show participates) inscribes us, exerts its demands, marking and affixing class positions.

Pedagogy

We all started looking at critical practice, a practice that was going to move beyond the rules of the gallery. And pedagogy, along with activism, were the two models of critical activity that moved into the world.

Andrea Fraser⁴⁸

As Fraser suggests, pedagogy has become an important site of critical practice. Teaching in this sense is distinct from traditional art instruction in the crafts of painting, sculpture, filmmaking, etc., and the promotion of talent. Rather, these artists are engaged in a critical pedagogy: students are encouraged to think carefully about the conditions of the production of knowledge; about their own situations; and to consider, in the teacher's example, the strategic choices a producer makes to explore a field of concerns. This was, indeed, the model of instruction at the School of Visual Arts and the Whitney Program in the mid 80's. Going "beyond a traditional notion of teaching", the pedagogy of Owens, Lawson, Rainer, Kosuth, Kelly, Lawler, and others extended beyond the classroom to include dinner, drinks, gallery visits, and constant discussion.⁴⁹ At SVA, two scholars made a particularly strong impression. The classes of Benjamin Buchloh, focusing on historical moments of political art, threw up questions not conclusions. Owens's pedagogical style was looser, a reflection of the topic he was working on. Encouraged to respond to his arguments, students had the feeling of participating in the evolution of his work.⁵⁰

It is important to distinguish critical pedagogy in this sense from the influential model of Henry Giroux, which would understand pedagogy as "a form of cultural production rather than as the transmission of a particular skill, body of knowledge, or set of values... A cultural practice engaged in the production of knowledge, identities, and desires".⁵¹ While these models are nearly identical (for both pedagogy is a critical practice: a facilitation of inquiry, an activation of the student) they differ in that the latter would dissolve the borders between disciplines entirely, denying the specificity of competences and "bodies of

knowledge". According to this view, to situate a practice in any field or discursive tradition is to ally that practice with the ideologies, and power relations, that a priori accrue to disciplines and disciplinarianism. "Instead of mastering and refining the use of methodologies", Giroux recommends, "teachers and administrators should approach education by examining their own perspectives about society, schools, and emancipation".⁵² Why either/or? Why is methodological competence necessarily at odds with engaged critique? Moreover, what is the force of a critique (much less a pedagogy) that would ignore the tradition it would dislodge? Would it not leave its ideologies intact? On the contrary, critical pedagogy in the present sense suggests an intense engagement with the field under scrutiny. The most powerful critiques surely devolve from a competence in a discourse, a discourse the practice would problematize, displace.⁵³ Dion's collaboration with a group of high school students this past year, the Chicago Urban Ecology Action Group (C.U.E.A.G.) has involved a rigorous engagement with ecological literature. Such readings have provided a theoretical foundation for the group's practical interventions, whether in downtown Chicago, where they have built an ecological station in Lincoln Park, or in the B elizean rain forest, which they studied in consultation with local naturalists. In other words, their studies reflect the methodologies and concerns of the professor: "Who represents nature, and how?" Dion asks. Dion's inquiry seeks to debunk the ideology of an idealized nature, an ideology with ecologically destructive and classist implications:

In this country we think of nature as wilderness. This isn't productive. In this project [C.U.E.A.G.] we're looking at urban spaces as 'ecological'. There is no other model that's functional or has been for the past 10,000 years. Any construction of nature as wilderness in this country has been ideological, and has excluded people from having a dialogue with nature. Nature is something we produce not just as representation, but as a physical realm.⁵⁴

The nature/culture binarism forecloses an understanding of the urban environment as ecological (hence requiring ecological attention) at the same time it shores up the ideology of an untouchable wilderness, beyond human intervention. In this respect, Dion's analysis builds on Smithson's critique of the idealist view of nature.⁵⁵ Unlike Smithson's entropic model, however, situated in the geological understanding of nature as "this force which, despite our impositions, is larger than us: all is futile compared to the process of time and the power of nature",

Dion's model is biological: the perception of nature as an ecosystem comprised of all species and environments, urban and "natural", a system for which human beings are responsible. His pedagogy is perfectly consistent with this interactive schema: students are encouraged to critically engage their surroundings, whether the rain forest, a suburban yard, or a downtown park. "We need eco-awareness groups, especially for young people in Chicago... Through our activities we will try to improve the ecology of Chicago. We want to be a productive group" - Naomi Beckwith, a member of C.U.E.A.G.⁵⁶ In contrast to groups like Tim Rollins and K.O.S., engaged in a collaborative self-expression, Dion and C.U.E.A.G. are involved in a critical activity intended to foster "intellectual tools that can be used for cultural production beyond visual art".⁵⁷ As Dion notes, these students hope to enter a variety of professions: medicine, art, ecology.

Bordowitz's works perform a variety of pedagogical functions: his documentaries of ACT UP demonstrations, produced with Testing the Limits and Jean Carlomusto, record the movement's history while providing critiques of the U.S. health care system (such as the FDA's slow drug approval process), pharmaceutical company profiteering, and the homophobic, racist, sexist, and generally incendiary media coverage of the epidemic during the 80's. Work Your Body and PWA Power, produced with Carlomusto for GMHC, "seek to empower people living with HIV. Other projects teaches HIV prevention. Often bilingual, employing narrative and "actors", these works effectively target specific, disenfranchised communities at risk for HIV, such as teenagers (whose health seems to matter little to ignorant parents, the Catholic and fundamentalist churches, or the New York City School Board), intravenous drug users, the poor, women, and gay men and lesbians (the Helms Amendment continues to forbid federal spending on safer sex materials for gay people). GMHC's pornography videos, which seek to eroticize safer sex, are also targeted to specific audiences.⁵⁸ A scenario between women illustrates the uses, and potential pleasures, of the dental dam; another, directed to the leather community, eroticizes the condom for sado-masochistic practice. Each of Bordowitz's tapes performs the heuristic function of reaching out to different audiences to educate, activate, raise esteem, and most important, to save lives.

The Artist-Researcher

I read a lot and I see what strikes me as really odd, funny,

or just weird. I mark my books up like crazy... I do research at the library and trace footnotes like academics do.

Renee Green⁵⁹

One of Foucault's formulations is that of the "local intellectual" who intervenes in specific sites. Whereas the traditional "left, intellectual spoke and was acknowledged to have the right of speaking in the capacity of master of truth and justice", was "the representative of the universal", now the intellectual works "in specific sectors, at precise points where they are situated".⁶⁰ These artists work locally, as we have seen; in this respect, their practices can be compared to contemporary scholarship that applies economic, anthropological, and ecological methodologies to the analysis of institutions and public spaces. Yet they are not academics. "I do research at the library and trace footnotes *like academics do*", Green says [my italics]. Burr's analysis of the Central Park Ramble as a material and discursive site is comparable with recent scholarly discussions of the park,⁶¹ yet he situates this analysis in a phenomenological experience of the site. In his recent installation of a miniature Ramble at Sonsbeek, Burr stationed placards along the winding paths; the texts, which described different moments in the Ramble's history, were excerpted from a recent guidebook. As the spectator moved through the site s/he took on, metaphorically, the identities of the park's different constituencies from the 19th century to the present, described in the texts. His catalogue entry was a compilation of quotations from this discursive history: Frederick Law Olmstead on his design; an early commentator praising the park's artificially created "delicate flavor of wildness"; testimony from a park director complaining that, by the 1880's, the Ramble had already suffered a decline; Smithsonian's 1972 account discussing the present uses, and users of the Ramble including "'hoods, hobos, husters, homosexuals, and other estranged creatures of the city"; a park report of 1983 indicating the Ramble was now home to "the criminal element"; and, finally, Burr's impressions of Sonsbeek Park, site of his displaced Ramble.⁶² The present show continues this narrative: transporting an already-transported "Ramble" back from the Netherlands to New York - in the form of photo-documentation and a model - Burr represents the Ramble again: his intervention is another moment of the park's discursive history. Burr's dialectical method of site displacement, and his understanding of the site as a palimpsest or strata of historical formations is Smithsonian. But, insofar as his concern is less the impact of the entropic forces of nature and industry on the site than the interventions of the Park's designers and users, Burr's model is archaeological not geological.⁶³ Burr's site is peopled,

territorial, contested, a site in which identities are negotiated, produced. The inclusion of this work in an "institutional critique" show is a recognition of the discursive orientation of his site analyses.

The artist-researcher builds on artistic tradition: Haacke's investigations of the patronage histories of modernist master works, or the links between corporate sponsorship of art and exploitation, transformed the conceptual analysis of the specular and ideological conditions of the gallery into a materialist critique of the museum apparatus. Lawler's photo-analyses of museal archives, storages, and display techniques exposed the practical operations and epistemological systems of the museum. Fraser's critiques of the material, racial, and gendered conditions of production of the Philadelphia Museum and Wadsworth Atheneum builds on these precedents. Another important influence - for Dion and Bordowitz - was Kosuth's formulation of the artist-anthropologist, "the idea that the artist could go out and study culture while at the same time questioning the methods and competences of those engaged in this study".⁶⁴ Research, a positivist analysis of facts, Kosuth taught, is hardly pure, but betrays the biases of the researcher and the institutions that support his or her research. The narratives and exclusions these institutions make to present a coherent realm of knowledge can easily collapse into absurdity. Dion's *Department of Marine Animal Identification of the City of New York (Chinatown Division)*, *Upper West Side Plant Project*, and *New York State Bureau of Tropical Conservation* thematized these observations. For the first project he gathered, identified, and preserved a sampling of fish purchased in Chinatown; the second involved identifying fruits and vegetables collected in stands on the Upper West Side; in the latter, he organized and identified materials gathered in a site in Venezuela. Dion worked at the three stations alternately, completing the process of identification by the show's end. Like Bouvard and Pécuchet, Flaubert's pair of bachelors who seek to map the knowledge of the world, Dion's "research" was self-perpetuating, pointless, throwing up to question the absolute truth claims of scientific research and its methods.⁶⁵ "A part of this project is about how arbitrary these collections really are", Dion commented.

"The process of constructing a collection remains tied to subjective circumstances. If it had rained one day that Charles Darwin's ship, *The Beagle*, landed on a particular island, then that would have affected his collections which eventually went to the British Museum".⁶⁶ Yet Dion's is ultimately not an absurdist gesture (as the Broodthaersian title *Department of Marine Animal Identification...* would seem to suggest). However bizarre, western museological practice can have destructive ends; Dion's

Counter-practice would expose and reverse these effects. "There is a problem with a system that emphasizes categorization more than analysis and interrelation... Our Western rational system is more concerned with placing things in the proper location than in studying their interrelations, and that's one of the reasons why we're in such trouble ecologically".⁶⁷

Broodthaersian irony infuses the work of Christian Philipp Müller. Müller's project for the Maison de la Culture et de la Communication in St. Etienne, France, in 1989, *Porte Bonheur*, focused on Malraux's role as cultural minister in cold war France. It was Malraux who commissioned these "Maisons" to be built throughout France to disseminate modern culture; Le Corbusier, modernist master, was responsible for some (St. Etienne copies late Corbusian style). Like an ancien régime minister, Malraux ran a personal empire, and it was fitting that his photograph appeared at the entrance to Müller's show. He is shown sitting at a Louis XIV desk in his chambers at the Palais Royal. Malraux's model of the musée imaginaire reflected this universalist view of culture. It proposed an art history known through photomechanical reproduction, in which masterpieces from different countries and periods, reproduced in interchangeable, close-up shots, were reduced to an economy of exchangeability. In the catalogue, Müller includes an image of Malraux with his photographs scattered on the floor before him, awaiting arrangement; on the next page, he has arranged the masterpieces in careless disorder in a modernist grid (quattrocento portraits next to Egyptian sculpture, etc.) So too Broodthaers, in a work of 1968 protesting the closing down of the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, pasted postcards of different masterpieces on boxes and called it a "museum", undercutting the totalizing model of photo-reproducible art history (initiated in 19th century Germany) through an ironic reframing.

Research uncovers hidden knowledges, the "things in the collection [that] aren't supposed to be seen by the public for security reasons" or don't conform to the "image [the museum] must uphold".⁶⁸ Leonard, who has stealthily explored dusty science museums and anatomical cabinets in Europe, has referred to her activity as a "spy routine". It is not easy photographing an anatomical model:

After being told to stop photographing in one of the outer rooms, I walked down a hallway and came to the suite of rooms she was in... I waited until the room was empty and the guard was gone, and I hauled his chair over, and stood on it to photograph [the model]. I'd listen for people's footsteps on the marble floors. I'd get down, pretend like

nothing was going on, then jump back on the chair.⁶⁹

During her research for *Bequest* at the Worcester Art Museum, Green was also told certain objects were off-limits, a discovery that affected the project's outcome. Portraits of the Salisbury family, founders and patrons of the museum, lined one wall; their personal belongings - watches, jewelry - appeared in a display case. Entering the installation, the spectator passed through a large, golden frame hung with a black curtain. On either side, white, clapboard, miniature walls - New England walls - bore texts by Melville, Hawthorne, Du Bois, and others loaded with color allusions. Some of these excerpts were stereotypical; others were critical (e.g. Moby Dick's whiteness as a figuration of "evil"). Proceeding on a surface of white slats, memory of the "homey" picket fence ("Good walls make good neighbors"), the spectator reached a locked door. A meditation on the metaphorical pairs inside/outside, here/there, white/black, Green's installation implies how the discursive system "New England" shores up identity and social difference. In her letter to the Wadsworth curator Fraser also notes omissions in the museum's archives (local controversies are rarely covered), or the invisibility of Hartford's black and hispanic populations to the wealthy, white denizens of West Hartford. Both Green and Fraser reveal how the Puritan metaphors of silence and "restraint" collude with an ideology of exclusion.

Identity

It has become a cliché to say contemporary practice explores "issues of identity". What has this meant in a practical sense? The push for multicultural representation at the Biennial, in public institutions and grant funding, while a welcome redress to years of exclusion of disenfranchised groups, at its worst risks a reification of practice to "identity". The gay producer is invited to explore "gay themes", black women are expected to provide "black women's work". As Gayatri Spivak warns, the emergence of the "other" in cultural production of recent years can be a mixed blessing:

Can men theorize feminism, can whites theorize racism, can the bourgeois theorize revolution... It is when only the former groups theorize that the situation is politically intolerable. The position that only the subaltern can know the subaltern, only women can know women and so on, cannot

be held as a theoretical supposition either, for it predicates the possibility of knowledge on identity. Whatever the political necessity for holding the position, and whatever the advisability of attempting to "identify" [with] the other as subject in order to know her, knowledge is made possible and is sustained by irreducible difference, not identity.⁷⁰

Each of the producers in this show problematize this tautologizing of identity to practice. For to confine the subject to an essential identity or stereotype, they understand, is to leave traditional relations intact. Rather, these artists seek the kind of mobile positionality figured by Trinh T. Minh-ha's "Inappropriate/d Other":

[The] Inappropriat/d Other... moves about with always at least two/four gestures: that of affirming "I am like you" while pointing insistently to the difference; and that of reminding "I am different" while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at.⁷¹

Green, all too conscious of being taken up as the "next Adrian Piper", seeks to dodge this tautologizing of identity to practice. "I won't play other to your same", as she put it so well.⁷² She elaborates on this confining situation: "Shows in major art institutions are including artists of color - even if in some cases they're required that the artists of color show some visual evidence of their 'cultural roots', a passport of their difference, so that the periphery and the center can be easily distinguished, yet have a dialogue".⁷³ Green likens the new multiculturalism to previous moments of mania, within the West, for African diasporic culture, the "black culture boom times (the 1920's and 1960's)" when "countercultural 'white' America enjoyed heydays which were largely fed by their exposure to, and in some cases consumption of, art forms introduced by African Americans".⁷⁴ Understandably suspicious of the current "celebration of the 'other'", Green has, from quite early in her career, evaded this kind of inscription. Her *Color* series (1990) reinflected strategies of textual displacement of early conceptual practice to dislodge color stereotypes. In *No Color/Colored!* she painted *The Absence of All Color* in white on a black ground; beneath, in a discrete, white square, *No Color* appeared in black. The other half of the panel reversed this formula: *All the Colors Combined* was painted black on a white ground; *Colored*, in white, floated on the dark lower square. Dismantling the "natural" relations of colors and their linguistic signs, Green conducted these abstract analyses in the pictorial format of Johns and LeWitt.⁷⁵ She now turned to

installation in order to situate her investigation in specific historical conjunctures. In *Sa Main Charmante* (1990), the spectator, peering into a peephole at the buttocks of the "Hottentot Venus" (an African woman, Sarah Bartman, whose anatomical difference made her a spectacle in 19th century Europe) simultaneously identifies with the voyeuristic white public and with Bartman herself (one stands in "her" footprints on the platform). Identity, in Green, is discursive, relational, continually negotiated, "an exploration of Western history and the way in which African diasporic subjects have been configured into this history"; her work is "not just about black people but about the projections of white Western people and their desires onto other cultures". Instead of pointing fingers, or supporting a particular side, Green hopes to make people aware of their own positionality.⁷⁶ Her critique is terribly relevant:

This projection of desire is persistent even for those with Politically-correct stances today. There are well-meaning white people who talk about multiculturalism, but they still have a particular way in which they'd like to see it through... They decide how it is going to be achieved and which people of color will fit into the slots for the kind of results they would like to produce. It's not complicated enough. From what I've seen so far, multiculturalism doesn't reflect the complexity of the situation as I face it daily.⁷⁷

The practices of Fraser and Müller have, over the years, centered upon a rigorous critique of authorial identity. The performer's identity in Fraser's gallery talks has continually fluctuated. In her first talk at the New Museum in 1986, she presented herself as Jane Castleton, the fictive docent who would appear in her *Museum Highlights* talk at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1989. Castleton's speech alternated between subject positions and institutional discourses, undermining her identity as a fixed "character". Yet the theatricalization of Castleton - that she became, for the audience, an object of amusement and distance - caused her to be abandoned.⁷⁸ In *May I Help You?*, at American Fine Arts in 1991, the talk was performed by professional actors: the theatrical effect was more complete (the actors sat at the front desk, simulating gallery staff). And the effect of this increased theatricalization was a reduction of distance between the performer and spectator: one was all the more caught in this breakdown of distinctions between subject and object, artist and audience. In her recent project for the Austrian Pavilion in Venice, Fraser has dropped out further: the performer (the author's surrogate) has been replaced by the voices of curators, politicians, and Biennale

visitors: the mark of her authorship is merely the arrangement, or montages, of these voices.

Müller's work in the present show presents a divided subject, a subject on the fold of a contestation. That neither Müller nor Fraser, two of Austria's representatives at the Biennial, were Austrian, caused a controversy in the local press. Swiss born, German educated, living in America: who is Christian Philipp Müller? In the present installation, two images of the artist - dressed in traditional Austrian garb in one photograph, in hiking clothes in another - frame a curtained corner, theatrical backdrop for "self" presentation. How is "Austrian" identity determined, Müller asks? What is the validity of the notion of a "national expression" in the late twentieth century, particularly in Austria, formerly the Austro-Hungarian Empire that embraced multiple countries and identities; Austria, positioned as the site of porous exchange between East and West? Of course, it is precisely in response to current migration movements from the East and former colonies that western European countries, pressured by internal right-wing elements, are closing their borders in a last ditch effort to shore up the fiction of an essential national identity. To thematize the current situation, Müller, as part of his Biennale piece, traveled back and forth between Austria and its eight contiguous countries (many once part of its empire). His tour was illegal: crossing borders without visas, on foot, Müller simulated the real risk faced by refugees trying to get into the West. Reaching the other side of the border, he wrote a post card stating that, on a certain date, he had "passed the green border" between Austria and the other country, "and is still alive". The postcards are presented here, framed, á la On Kawara. Müller's reference to On Kawara's project, since the 60's, of sending postcards from around the world indicating he "got up" and/or is "still alive", performs a destabilization of authorial identity. Unlike the appropriations of Levine, however, which reproduce the original with meticulous care, Müller displaces canonized strategies for the given context. "I always use a given aesthetic, but I reinflect it with a new content", he says.⁷⁹ Style is foregrounded both as an object of analysis and as a vehicle for analyzing broader concerns. Hence, on one level, Müller's appropriation functions as a critique of the signaturization and commodification of early conceptual practice (On Kawara's postcards are prized by collectors). On another, if On Kawara's project has been ongoing for decades - a strategy that bespeaks the 60's investigation of repetition and "real time" - then Müller's postcards were made for a specific context, his commission for the Austrian Pavilion at the 1993 Biennale. Moreover, while On Kawara sent his postcards from famous hotels and resorts from around the world (a memory of the high

moderns: Matisse, Hemingway, Maugham), Müller posted his from snack bars on different points of the Austrian frontier - a fitting image of contemporary transitivity and displacement.

Leonard's exploration of feminine identity builds on postmodernist precedent; unlike Sherman for example, who sets up theatrical mise-en-scènes, Leonard situates her analysis in institutions. In this respect, her work overlaps with Louise Lawler's and Thomas Struth's photographs of museum interiors. In the present show are two images taken in museums in Los Angeles: fragments of a female nude in an Old Master painting at the Getty appear next to a "Beauty Calibrator" - an instrument for determining the "ideal" standards of feminine appearance - in the collection of a Beauty Museum. In each example, the female body is presented as an object of intense scrutiny and delectation as it matches an archetype of perfection. (Another work of Leonard's, *The Bearded Woman*, transgressed this ideal). As this juxtaposition makes clear, the canon of classical Greek beauty, and its recasting, during the neo-classical era and in 20th century Hollywood to refer to an exclusively white, European model, is still operational. Although the "Beauty Calibrator" is presented as an historical artifact, the standards of appearance it "scientifically" determined remain stubbornly in place: each year produces a new crop of young, white actresses for the consumer's delectation.

In two recent projects, an investigation of a closet in Le Corbusier's Unité d'habitation in Firminy, France, and of a turn Of the century public facility in Toronto, Burr has focused on the production of gay identity by, and within, liminal sites.⁸⁰ As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has argued, the homosexual closet is constitutive of western heterosexual identity; and this distinction (heterosexual/homosexual) serves to stabilize (is stabilized by) a metonymical chain of other oppressive binarisms:

Homo/heterosexual definition has been a presiding master term of the past century, one that has the same, primary importance for all modern Western identity and social organization (and not merely for homosexual identity and culture) as do the more traditionally visible cruxes of gender, race, and class... The now chronic modern crisis of homo/heterosexual definition has affected our culture through its ineffaceable marking particularly of the categories secrecy/disclosure, knowledge/ignorance, private/public, masculine/feminine, majority/minority... canonic/noncanonic, wholeness/decadence, urban/provincial, domestic/foreign, health/illness, same/different, active/passive, in/out, cognition/paranoia, art/kitsch...⁸¹

Sedgwick argues for a "deconstructive contestation" that would dislodge these supplemental relations; Burr's investigations of liminal sites fulfill this demand. Like the metaphorical terms used by Derrida to designate in-betweenness, the neither/nor space between writing and speech (the space of instability that would allow one to deconstruct this relation, which affixes the supplementary logic of western metaphysics), the closet's threshold is an unstable space of neither/nor in the metonymical chain inside/outside, private/public, homosexual/heterosexual. The closet, Burr observes, provides "the very essence of privacy... where one feels beyond the space of display to others, and where one might entertain a secret".⁸² The public bathroom or "tea room" is a complex liminality: a site not exactly indoors nor outdoors; civic yet not monumental; public yet accomodating a modicum of privacy; a site where homosexual identity is produced, exposed, penalized, or - as the recent murder of the sailor Allan Schindler, in a public facility, makes disturbingly clear-erased.⁸³

Nomadism

International capitalism, according to Jameson, is the final, most perfect stage of capitalism. Emerging in the late 60's, it is the capitalism of multinational corporations and instant exchanges of commodities and information.⁸⁴ The breakup of colonialism and of the eastern bloc (which postdates Jameson's account) have facilitated this transition. The development of new markets, and the movement of peoples across borders, challenging traditional definitions of national identity, have produced a situation Mouffe has called nomadic.⁸⁵ Nomadism operates on different class and racial levels, too complex to be assessed here. (For example, the current flood of refugees and international "business class" flyers are historically linked). These artists are nomads, too, moving from one show or teaching job to the next, from Cologne to Vienna, from Antwerp to New York.⁸⁶ To be sure, due to the general lack of support for serious work in this country, American artists have been engaged in a nomadic practice since the late 60's (much of the finest minimal and postminimal work is in European collections). But it has become increasingly so: the coherence of the "New York art world" of the postwar years has given way to a fractured, international situation of different constituencies and groups. It is telling that not all of the artists in this show will attend the opening, due to engagements abroad. (How different from the intimate openings the 50's and 60's!) Yet this dispersion has accompanied the exploration of the expanded site - the de-privileging of the gallery as the hallowed ambiance for the display

of work. The gallery has become merely a site among sites: it is less a place for intervention than one for re-presenting projects made elsewhere (hence the dominance of video and photo-documentation here); the gallery is an agency, a financial representative, a dispenser of information, a mailing address as the artist is, more often than not, out of town.

Most producers, to support themselves in the 90's, lead nomadic existences. But it is those artists who are concerned with the conditions of production and reception of practice who have made this their content. In the second part of his Biennale project, at the Austrian Pavilion, Müller continued his analysis of the structures of national identity. In a side building, native Austrian trees were planted in ceramic pots; the traditional practice of importing "exotic" flora from southern countries for cultivation in northern hothouses was reversed; so too the room's temperature, kept uncharacteristically cool.⁸⁷ The focus of Müller's installation was his removal of Hoffmann's late modernist, white wall at the rear of the garden. Its absence barely noticeable, the spectator was invited to gaze through the woods to another, distant wall © the wall surrounding the grounds of the Biennale itself. The border between "Austria" and other countries was no longer clear; at the same time, the physical and ideological construction of the Biennale site - an "island of art" closed to a city desperately lacking parks during the rest of the year - was exposed. Müller's work reinflected the strategy of wall displacement of Matta-Clark and Asher to consider the physical and discursive boundaries of the national pavilion, legacy of 19th century trade fairs. What are the distinctions between one national culture and another, Müller asks? Whose interests are served by such distinctions? Whom do they exclude? What is the line between national pride and chauvinism? (Josef Hoffmann's pavilion, built in a modernist/ fascist classical style in 1934, is a chilling reply to such questions).

One of the focuses of Green's postcolonial inquiry is the traveler. The traveler is one who crosses boundaries, disseminating information; s/he is a translator, recording impressions of the other's culture for those back home. But these impressions are always already mediated by the accounts of previous travelers, or (cruder, more inescapable) the stereotypes s/he has heard about the culture. And yet the discourse on the other is constitutive of the traveler's identity; the self is constructed in relation to this "knowledge".⁸⁸ Projecting his/her culture's fantasies onto the other, the traveler affirms these stereotypes.

Green's interest in the traveler can be traced to her undergraduate thesis at Wesleyan University, which she completed in 1981. An analysis of the critical reception of African

American art during the 20's and 60's, Green's essay gave particular attention to the figure of Carl Van Vechten. Alone among white critics, Van Vechten had an "in" with Harlem Renaissance circles, and his devotion to black production was tireless. Yet, as Green observes, at the end of the day Van Vechten would return from his outings in "Darktown" to his apartment in the all-white West 50's. And when it came time to assemble his observations, he produced a fictional account of "Harlem life", *Nigger Heaven* (1926). Green reports the negative reactions of black intellectuals, who found the novel offensive (starting with the title), sensationalized, cliched. The "well-meaning" Van Vechten, who had taken pains to observe black culture first hand, could only repeat the stereotypical discourse of the day.

There would be many Van Vechtens in Green's work, each historically specific: Teddy Roosevelt, whose hunting for animal trophies in Africa (now in the American Museum of Natural History) was analyzed in *VistaVision - Landscapes of Desire* (1991); Frederick Edwin Church, Thomas Cole, and George Catlin, 19th century artists who traveled to South America in pursuit of "primitive" motifs (*Idyll Pursuits*, 1991); or Angela Davis and Diedrich Diedrichsen, the subjects of *Import/Export Funk Office*, the one an African American intellectual in Germany in the 60's, the other a German critic who recently traveled to the United States to observe the hip-hop scene. Each of these projects explored the relational structure of national and racial identity. World Tour, Green's recent show at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, brought together four projects (*Bequest*, *Idyll Pursuits*, *Import/Export Funk Office*, and *Mise en Scène*, originally produced in Clisson, France) as a comparative analysis of four moments of cultural translation. Her work in the present show, *Secret*, is a reflection on the circuit of international group exhibitions - the Biennale, Documenta, Sonsbeek, and the like - publicity shows that tend to lack curatorial focus (while expressing curatorial egos) and dialogue among artists (Green's habitation of a tent during a recent show at Firminy, France, presented here in diaries and video, emblemizes the nomadic isolation of artists today). All of these installations suggest that culture, for Green, is a mobile site, a process of translation and contestation across national, racial, and class boundaries. According to this view there is no discrete object, no work of art or cultural artifact comprehensible apart from the historical, material, and discursive conditions of its production and display. On another level, the binding link between these projects is Green herself. Investigating different sites, moving between cultures, disseminating information and drawing connections, rendering the spectator conscious of his or her position, Green is herself a

traveler, a Carl Van Vechten or Frederick Church, albeit of a different kind. Rather, Green is a critical traveler along the lines proposed by James Clifford. For such a traveler

culture... comes to resemble as much a site of travel encounters as of residence, less a tent in a village or a controlled laboratory... and more like a hotel lobby, ship, or bus. If we rethink culture and its science, anthropology, in terms of travel, then the organic, naturalizing bias of the term culture seen as a rooted body that grows, lives, dies, etc. is questioned. Constructed and disputed historicities, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction, come more sharply into view.⁸⁹

For Green, nomadism has become an end in itself, a strategy of critical practice. As Clifford suggests, nomadism offers a uniquely mobile positionality, and the multiple opportunities for critique such a positionality affords.

Situation

How does an artist support his or her practice in late capitalism? Has the recession, and the collapse of the 80's art market, altered the possibilities for situation? Or has the gallery system's capacity to assimilate anything remained intact, affirming Mandel's and Jameson's argument that "late" capitalism is the moment of capitalism's triumph - the point when all things become exchangeable? (After all, Koons's schlock still sells). One of Müller's early gestures was to stage an auction of his previous work, which he placed, Broodthaers-like, in spotlit vitrines. The "sale" was intended as a critique of the material situation of Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, which supports itself through auctions of antiques and Old Master paintings. The "success" of Müller's liquidation of his own inventory (everything sold) suggests the process of transforming avant-garde work into commodities, canonized by the Peau d'Ours sale of 1914, is hardly finished. I have indicated my disappointment, in the late 80's, when such critically-minded artists as Levine and Kruger joined a gallery previously known for its commitment to "neo-expressionist" painting, the very activity their work was supposed to oppose. I was not alone in my dissatisfaction. At that time, Kruger found herself publicly defending her move:

The fact that we survive by exchange means that our lives are encompassed by a market that is erratic, virulent, horrendously pervasive. To ignore this, to argue there's a

way around it, is the privilege of a person with an inheritance or a tenured job... I'm not being facetious... I'm just trying to be in the world. Because if my work is not tested by this reality by the labor and exchange conditions of the market then it might be politically correct, but I'd be deluded... Nothing I know in New York is outside the market, not even, not especially, people who can't get jobs. After all, just because something some person, some art doesn't sell, doesn't mean it's not a commodity.⁹⁰

Activism seemed an appealing alternative to Kruger's intelligent cynicism. ACT UP's videos, t-shirts, etc., collectively produced, functioned primarily outside the gallery; if they participated in the commodity system, they did so merely to support the fight against AIDS.⁹¹ In short, activist work was "ideal". Yet movements emerge and disperse; one does not always have such a context to work in. One may want to work alone; one must support oneself. Such concerns do not always square with "political correctness". Leonard, for example, has been criticized for selling her photographs, as if this were somehow a betrayal of her activism.⁹² But what is the force of economic resistance today? Does poverty guarantee the integrity or seriousness of a practice? On the other hand, the easy commodification of certain practices may indicate - one thinks of 19th century Salon work - a lack of commitment. These questions are not easily resolvable. As Kruger suggests, even something that "doesn't sell" is potentially marketable. The final commodification of Duchamp's readymades or the "dematerialized" practices of the 60's have only confirmed this.

What alternatives of situation are open to cultural producers now? Bordowitz took the step of "leaving the art world" to work in ACT UP and at GMHC, his principle source of income. The intended site of reception of his work, as he has said repeatedly, is broadcast television. But, even if he were awarded public TV grants (given the "controversial" content of his work, this is hardly assured), this support is hardly pure. Art foundations and museums, dependent on a troubled NEA or wealthy patrons, are similarly problematic. As Fraser's project suggests, the very institution she works for (the Hartford Atheneum) has a long history of promoting the interests of the "old families" who founded and supporting it, and the clubbish insurance companies that assumed the hegemonic positions of these families. By bringing a "radical" presence to the museum for a brief period, Fraser legitimates the image of the Wadsworth as a vital institution (the Matrix series in which she participates is relatively new).

In "The Author as Producer" (1934) Benjamin argued that a committed political art requires an alteration in the means of its production; a shift in the mode of production, he believed, would guarantee a shift in reception. Two years later, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", he argued that photography, because the (then) least auratic of media, the most reproducible, answered this call. As a new means of production, photography would allow for a truly populist art, an art of social transformation. Now Benjamin never addresses how such work would be supported, nor the means of its distribution; presumably, the socialist state would take care of it. As Buchloh has shown, when the techniques of populist photography invented by Lissitzky, Rodchenko, and others were taken up by Stalinist and fascist régimes, this argument fell apart. In the "Theses on the Philosophy of History" of 1940, Benjamin seemed to acknowledge this: he now characterized art objects as *spolia*, the trophies of accumulated wealth and power. For all their capacity to provoke thought, works of art, he suggested, are tied to a hegemonic patronage - an admission which, it must be said, he did not always object to.⁹⁴ The trajectory of Benjamin's attitude toward the situation of culture is profoundly ambivalent. In late capitalism, when the instrumentalizing of practice (including critical practice) for commodification has only accelerated, his example remains relevant. Müller's sale of his own work early in his career is a powerful recognition of this contradiction as an inescapable condition of contemporary production. Moreover, it hardly need be mentioned that the political effect of a practice, produced apart from a movement - or even movement work for that matter - is inevitably displaced, neutralized, not easily accountable. Even so, much can be accomplished within these limits. At the moment of the emergence of a generalized political, the political-as-theme, these and certain other practices analyze their material and discursive conditions (including the current political trendiness): they at least answer Smithson's call for consciousness of the parameters. Ultimately situated in the Marxian and Nietzschean traditions of material and ideological analysis, the institutional critique (both in its "classic" and expanded forms), along with activist work (in which it has become intertwined) remain, for me, at this time, the most convincing strategies for an art with claims to the political.

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Notes

This text benefited greatly from the comments of Kim Paice and Gregg Bordowitz. I wish to thank Christian Philipp Müller for his catalogue design and advice on all aspects of this project; Kynaston McShine and Timothy Greenfield-Sanders for supporting my work; Paula Cooper, co-publisher of the catalogue; and Colin Deland for allowing me to realize this show.

1. "Conversation with Bruce Kurtz, April 22, 1972", in Nancy Holt, ed., *The Writings of Robert Smithson* (New York: New York University, 1979), 202.
2. On the limits of studio technique for a politicized practice see Daniel Buren, "The Function of the Studio", in Annette Michelson, Rosalind Krauss, Douglas Crimp, and Joan Copjec, *October - The First Decade* (Cambridge: MIT, 1987), 201-208.
3. As Gregg Bordowitz has pointed out to me, the demand of this essay for a practice that acknowledges its material and discursive situation (activism, institutional analysis) in opposition to a metaphorical, "transgressive" art (e.g. "body" work) somewhat repeats the constructivism/surrealism debates of the 20's and 30's. Of course, the political claims of a practice are decided by the spectator: as Baudelaire argued long ago, this is the very definition of art criticism. Moreover, I am not expressing a dislike for metaphorical work as such. Nor am I claiming such work could not sustain, like any cultural practice, a politicized reading. I am merely questioning its status as "political art".
4. "Picture a Coalition", in Douglas Crimp, ed., *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, October 43 (Winter, 1987): 184 and 195.
5. This is the argument of my "AIDS and Postmodernism", *Arts Magazine* (April, 1992): 62-68.
6. Bordowitz's project was entitled Silence=Death. The show, organized by Collier Schorr, also included work by Mark Dion, Andrea Fraser, and Fareed Armaly, among others.
7. It should be noted that Piper's famous installation, *Cornered*, which "entraps" the viewer into a meditation on racism, would deploy the corner schema for a different content two years later.
8. On the emergence of the institutional critique in the 60's and 70's see the series of extraordinary essays by Benjamin Buchloh, including "The Posters of Lawrence Weiner", Benjamin Buchloh, ed., *Lawrence Weiner - Posters November 1965 - April 1986* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1986); "Open Letters, Industrial Poems", in Benjamin Buchloh, ed., *Broodthaers* (Cambridge: MIT, 1988); "From the Aesthetic of

Administration to Institutional Critique", *l'Art conceptuel, une perspective* (Paris: Muséum d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1990), among many others.

9. Foster's influential opposition of a "neoconservative" vs. a "resistent" postmodernism appears in his introduction to *The Anti-Aesthetic* (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983). On the recuperation of "resistent" postmodernist work, see Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Living with Contradictions: Critical Practices in the Age of Supply-Side Aesthetics", Andrew Ross, ed. *Universal Abandon - The Politics of Postmodernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988), 191-213.

10. Quoted in Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989), 140.

11. "A Conversation Between Douglas Crimp and Gregg Bordowitz, January 9, 1989", in Jan Zita Grover, *AIDS: The Artists' Response*, exh. cat. (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1989), 8.

12. A distinction should be made between two counter-practices representing people living with AIDS: works like Bordowitz's and Carlomusto's *PWA Power and Work Your Body* or Stash Kybartas's *Danny*, which seek to present positive images of PWA's; and projects like *Silverlake Life: A View from Here* or Bordowitz's recent series of *Portraits*, which attempt to map the nuances - and difficulties - of living with HIV. On the politics of representing people with AIDS, see Simon Watney, *Policing Desire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987), Martha Gever, "Pictures of Sickness: Stuart Marshall's *Bright Eyes*", in Crimp, *AIDS - Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, 109-126, Richard Meyer, "Rock Hudson's Body", in Diana Fuss, ed., *Inside/Out* (London: Routledge, 1991), 259-288, and Douglas Crimp, "Portraits of People with AIDS", in Ferguson et. al., *Cultural Studies*, 117-131.

13. Lisa Phillips, "No Man's Land: At the Threshold of a Millennium", in Elizabeth Sussman, ed., 1993 Biennial Exhibition (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993), 52.

14. Quoted in Douglas Crimp, "The Art of Exhibition", *October - The First Decade*, 234. On the inseparability of formal decisions and content in Haacke see Yve-Alain Bois, Douglas Crimp, and Rosalind Krauss, "A Conversation with Hans Haacke", in *Ibid.*, 175-200.

15. The strongest case for the continued relevance of formal analysis in the assessment of visual culture, including politicized practice, is Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge: MIT, 1990).

16. "Concerning form, the [Russian] Formalists thought it important to change the meaning of this muddled term. It was important to destroy these traditional correlatives and so to enrich the idea of form with new significance. The notion of

'technique'... is much more significant in the long-range evolution of formalism than is the notion of 'form'. Boris Eichenbaum, "The Theory of the 'Formal Method'", in Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, *Russian Formalist Criticism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1965), 115.

17. This is the title of a show that will appear at the Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz, Austria, in October. The present text has been solicited for a catalogue bearing this name.

The reference to the confinement of practice is Smithson's: "Cultural confinement takes place when a curator imposes his own limits on an art exhibition, rather than asking an artist to set his own limits. Artists are expected to fit into fraudulent categories. Some artists imagine they have a hold on the apparatus, which in fact has got a hold on them. As a result, they end up supporting a cultural prison that is out of their control... The function of the warden-curator is to separate art out from the rest of society. Next comes integration. Once the work of art is totally neutralized, ineffective, abstracted, safe, and politically lobotomized it is ready to be consumed by society. All is reduced to visual fodder and transportable merchandise. Innovations are allowed only if they support this kind of confinement". "Cultural Confinement" in Holt, *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, 132. Clearly, for Smithson any curatorial framing of practice qualifies as "confinement". The earthwork was in part an attempt to circumvent the curator's function.

18. Quoted in Jan Brand et. al., eds., *Sonsbeek 93*, exh. cat. (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju and Zoon, 1993), 213.

19. The classic discussion of this expansion in terms of sculpture, earth art, and architecture is Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", *October 8* (Spring, 1979): 30-44.

20. Eugenio Donato, "The Museum's Furnace: Notes Toward a Contextual Reading of Bouvard and Pécuchet", in José V. Harari, ed., *Textual Strategies* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1979), 213-238.

21. In this respect, these producers are continuing the field of analysis initiated by *Broodthaers* and subsequently explored by producers like Silvia Kolbowski and Barbara Bloom.

22. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in Donald Bouchard, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1977), 139 and 140. The references to various aspects of Foucault's thinking throughout this essay is merely an indication of his primary status for many of these producers. If previous institutional critique was reflexive (analysis of the art apparatus as such), then it would not be too extreme a reduction to characterize current institutional analysis as

"Foucaultian". But, as this essay attempts to demonstrate, it is not merely such.

23. The site-specificity of these practices is briefly discussed in Isabelle Graw, "Field Work", *Flash Art* (November/December, 1990): 136-137.

24. Elizabeth Brown, Interview with Renée Green, June 1, 1990, in *Social Studies: 4 + 4 Young Americans*, exh. cat. (Oberlin: Allen Memorial Art Museum, 1990), 24.

25. This project is reproduced in Kynaston McShine, *Andy Warhol - A Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989), exh. cat., 414.

26. "Postmodernism neither brackets nor suspends the referent but works instead to problematize the activity of reference. When the postmodernist work speaks of itself, it is no longer to proclaim its autonomy, its self-sufficiency, its transcendence; rather, it is to narrate its own contingency, insufficiency, lack of transcendence". Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism", reprint Brian Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 203-235.

27. It is true that Owens's initial model of an allegorical practice was Smithson's, in particular the Spiral Jetty. See Craig Owens, "Earthwords", *Beyond Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California, 1992), 40-51. By the early 80's, however, the multi-part conceptual or earth project or site-specific performance was replaced by the "picture" that incorporated difference within a single object or tableau. It is not coincidental that Owens referred to Rauchenberg's combines

Rebus and Allegory in his discussion of Troy Brauntuch, Robert Longo, and Cindy Sherman. As Crimp explained in "Pictures", "An art whose strategies are... grounded in the literal temporality and presence of theater has been the crucial formulating experience for a group of artists beginning to exhibit in New York [Brauntuch, Longo, Levine, Jack Goldstein, and Philip Smith; Sherman was added in the essay's final version]. The extent to which this experience fully pervades their work is not, however, immediately apparent, for its theatrical dimensions have been transformed and, quite unexpectedly, reinvested in the pictorial image. If many of these artists can be said to have apprenticed in the field of performance as it issued from minimalism, they have nevertheless begun to reverse its priorities, making of the literal situation and duration of the performed event a tableau whose presence and temporality are utterly psychologized; performance becomes just one of a number of ways of 'staging' a picture". See Wallis, *Art After Modernism*, 177.

28. "The Cultural Politics of Difference", in Russell Ferguson et. al., *Out There - Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*

(New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), 19.

29. Mark Dion, "Confessions of an Amateur Naturalist: A Discussion with Miwon Kwon, James Marcovitz, and Helen Molesworth", *Documents* 1:1/2 (Fall/Winter, 1992): 39.

30. "A Conversation Between Douglas Crimp and Gregg Bordowitz", 8.

31. Telephone conversation with Mark Dion, August 9, 1993.

32. The famous conversation between Foucault and Deleuze in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 205-217, was a principle source for Owens's formulation - an enthusiasm he conveyed to his students. (Conversation with Gregg Bordowitz, New York City, August 10, 1993).

33. Anders Stephanson, "Interview with Craig Owens", in *Beyond Recognition*, 310. As Gregg Bordowitz has observed, a discussion of critical activity as it emerges in the late 1970's and 1980's would also have to include the practices of Adrian Piper, Stuart Hall, Isaac Julien, Silvia Kolbowski, and such collectives as the Guerilla Girls, Paper Tiger Television, Not Channel Zero, Sankofa, Gran Fury, Fierce Pussy, and Testing the Limits (of which he was a member), among many others. See "Practices: The Problem of Divisions of Cultural Labor", in *Acme Journal* 1:2 (1992): 40-41, the transcript of one of two symposia organized by Joshua Decker and Andrea Fraser at the Drawing Center in New York City in March, 1992.

34. To be sure, classic Marxist theorists like Lukacs, and later Adorno and Horkheimer, had already theorized reification as a specialization of labor along class lines. The postmodernist critique of the division of intellectual labor, mediated by Foucault, stressed the discursive and epistemological limits of professional roles.

35. See Owens, "Earthwords". It was thus a quick step from this text, a book review of Smithson's writings, to Owens's theorization of the textual practice of the late 1970's and early 1980's in "The Allegorical Impulse".

36. Gregg Bordowitz quoted in "Practices: The Problem of Divisions of Cultural Labor", *Acme Journal* 1:2 (1992): 42.

37. Telephone conversation with Mark Dion.

38. The activist involvements of several of these artists are not coincidental. Before joining ACT UP in 1987 (in which he would play a significant role), Bordowitz was involved, with Dion, in the Anti-Intervention Support Network, a group against U.S. involvement in Nicaragua. Leonard also joined ACT UP, where she became involved in the collective Fierce Pussy, the ACT UP Women's Caucus, and wrote several contributions to the *Women, AIDS, and Activism*. In contrast to Bordowitz and Dion, however, she describes herself as "both an activist and an artist", which she sees as "separate practices". "In activism, you have to forgo ambivalence. You have to be able to say 'This is wrong'. You have to be willing to go in

and chain yourself to a desk or get arrested. Art allows a very different part of me to function and grow - things that I feel really mute about, things that I can't articulate in a single sentence. Things that aren't politically correct, that I can waver and question". Quoted in Faye Hirsch, "A Spy in the Museum", QW (May 24, 1992). Of course, for Dion and Bordowitz, critical activity incorporates critical thinking and questioning. Moreover, it would seem that Leonard's photographic critiques of the presentation of women's bodies in medical discourse, museums, and the media would have been informed by her experience as a women's health advocate in ACT UP.

39. "Confessions of an Amateur Naturalist: A Discussion with Miwon Kwon, James Marcovitz, and Helen Molesworth", 43.

40. Letter to Andrea Miller-Keller, Curator of Contemporary Art, Wadsworth Atheneum, March 12, 1991.

41. Ibid.

42. Conversation with Andrea Fraser, New York City, July 30, 1993. Bordowitz has also spoken of the depoliticization of continental theory as it was received, and taught, within progressive segments of the New York art community in the early and mid 1980's: how it was necessary to go back and reconstruct for oneself the context of 1968 in Paris © the situation that fostered Foucault's later work and *The Anti-Oedipus*, or the cynicism of later Baudrillard. (Conversation with Gregg Bordowitz).

43. Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse", 235.

44. Andrea Fraser, "Damaged Goods Gallery Talk Starts Here", *Artpaper* (March, 1988): 15.

45. Conversation with Andrea Fraser.

46. In its refusal of a position of exteriority, Fraser's practice embodies, for me, a notion of postmodern montage distinct from the modernist montage articulated by theorists like Brecht (the "alientation moment" posited a spectator who was master of her/himself, who would transform reality). The topic of postmodern montage is discussed in my "Notes on a Video: Tom Kalin's *We Are Lost to Vision Altogether*" (unpublished manuscript, 1990).

47. "Cultural capital" is the term introduced by Pierre Bourdieu to denote degrees of cultural accumulation which, like monetary capital, determine class boundaries or "distinctions". See *Distinction* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1988).

48. Conversation with Andrea Fraser.

49. Telephone conversation with Mark Dion.

50. Conversation with Tom Burr, New York City, August 9, 1993.

51. Henry Giroux, "Resisting Difference: Cultural Studies and the Discourse of Critical Pedagogy", in Lawrence Grossberg et. al., *Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 202.

52. Henry Giroux, "Rethinking the Language of Schooling", in *Teachers as Intellectuals* (New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1988), 9.
53. The model of a critical pedagogy that would challenge, yet not seek to destroy its epistemological and methodological traditions is proposed in Roland Barthes, "Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers", in Stephen Heath, ed., *Image/Music/Text* (New York: Noonday Press, 1977), 190-215. Completed three years after the Events of May, Barthes's text is a powerful reflection on the possibilities, and limits, of radical pedagogy.
54. Conversation with Mark Dion.
55. See "Frederick Law Olmstead and the Dialectical Landscape" in Holt, *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, 117-128. For another account of the relationship of Dion's work and Smithson's, see Miwon Kwon, "Unnatural Tendencies: Scientific Guises of Mark Dion", *Forum International* VI:18 (May/August, 1993): 104-107.
56. *Culture in Action: A Public Art Program of Sculpture Chicago* (Chicago: Sculpture Chicago, May-September, 1993), unpaginated.
57. Conversation with Mark Dion.
58. On the need for an erotic counter-practice during the AIDS crisis see Douglas Crimp, "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic?" in Crimp, *AIDS - Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, 237-271. On strategies of safer sex instruction, see Cindy Patton, "Safe Sex and the Pornographic Vernacular", in *Bad Object-Choices*, eds., *How Do I Look?* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 31-51, and my "Signal Documents: Review of Douglas Crimp with Adam Rolston, AIDS Demographics and Sterling Winterhalter III, Risky Business", in Paul Zelevansky, ed., *American Book Review, Special Issue on Visual Literacy, Part II* (April-May, 1993): 10, 19.
59. Brown, Interview with Renée Green, 24-25.
60. "The Political Function of the Intellectual", *Radical Philosophy* 17 (Summer, 1977): 12-15.
61. For example, Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1992).
62. Jan Brand et. al., eds., *Sonsbeek* 93, 198-203.
63. The distinction I imply between a "geological", Smithsonian site and an "archaeological" (Foucaultian) one does not do sufficient justice to the complexity of Smithson's entropic model, which becomes increasingly archaeological by the early 70's. His brilliant "Frederick Law Olmstead and the Dialectical Landscape", published only months before his death, situates the transformation of landscape in material and discursive history, and speaks at length on the park's creation and subsequent use. Indeed, Burr's *Ramble* displacements might be described as an extended footnote to Smithson's essay. It is this Smithson - the

Smithson of an inhabited, contested site, the Smithson who could produce critical analyses of the natural history museum and the gallery system, a "Foucaultian" Smithson - who is important for Burr and (as the epigraph of this essay suggests) for the entire field of practices being presented here. My thinking through these questions has been facilitated by conversations with Kim Paice.

64. The impact of Kosuth was such that Bordowitz would go on to study ethnographic film at New York University. (Conversation with Gregg Bordowitz). On Kosuth's formulation see "The Artist as Anthropologist" in Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After*, ed. Gabriele Guercio (Cambridge: MIT, 1991), 107-128.

65. These implications in Flaubert are discussed in Foucault's "Fantasia in the Library" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 87-109, and Donato, "The Museum's Furnace: Notes Toward a Contextual Reading of Bouvard and Pécuchet".

66. "Confessions of an Amateur Naturalist: A Discussion with Miwon Kwon, James Marcovitz, and Helen Molesworth": 41.

67. Ibid: 46. On the absurd and ecologically destructive effects of 19th century museological practice, epitomized by the diorama halls at the American Museum of Natural History, see Donna Haraway's superb "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936", *Social Text* 4:2 (Winter, 1984-1985): 20-63.

68. Renée Green quoted in Frank Magiera, *Worcester Telegram and Gazette* (December 1, 1991).

69. Quoted in Hirsch, "A Spy in the Museum": 40.

70. "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text from the Third World", In *Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 253-254.

71. "Introduction", "Difference: 'A Special Third World Women Issue,' *Discourse* 8 (Fall-Winter, 1986-87): 9.

72. *Meaning* 7 (Spring, 1990): 15-16.

73. Renée Green, "Trading on the Margin", *Transition* 52 (1991): 124.

74. Ibid, 126.

75. E.g. such works as Johns's *According to What* and Lewitt's *Red Square, White Letters*. Indeed, Green's point of entry into the conceptual field was LeWittian. As an undergraduate at Wesleyan she worked on the catalogue of LeWitt's collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum, an experience that provided a first encounter with the work of Adrian Piper, whose association with LeWitt is well known, and who had already begun to reconfigure conceptual strategies to explore questions of identity. On these connections see Donna Harkavy, "Insights: Renée Green" (Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 1991), exh. pamphlet, 7.

76. "My intention isn't to be obvious, and it's not to be didactic... I'm more interested in sparking the viewer to ponder

something, especially the blurry divisions between fiction and history." Ibid, 6. In this respect, Green fulfills Homi Bhabha's mandate for a postcolonial analysis that would foreground discursive systems. "The point of intervention should shift from the identification of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the processes of subjectification made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse". "The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism", in Ferguson et. al., *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, 71.

77. From an important interview of June, 1991 conducted by Miwon Kwon for the show "Emerging New York Artists" at the Sala Mendoza, Caracas.

78. Conversation with Andrea Fraser.

79. Conversation with Christian Philipp Müller, New York City, July 6, 1993.

80. The practice of Simon Leung has also focused on the production of gay subjectivity within liminal sites (the "tea room", "glory hole").

81. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990), 11.

82. Statement in *Project Unitá,á* (Firminy, France, 1993), unpaginated.

83. It is perhaps not coincidental that the murder of Schindler, who served on the Belleau Wood stationed at Sasebo, Japan, occurred in a public bathroom. In his defense Schindler's killer, shipmate Terence Helvey, claimed Schindler had made a pass at him in the bathroom, provoking a beating so brutal Schlinder's face was unrecognizable even to his mother. Helvey later confessed the "come-on" was a fabrication. In fact, he and his accomplice had followed Schindler, whom they had spied in a park, into the facility. Entrapping and destroying Schindler in a site identified with homosexual activity, Helvey's vicious attack could be construed as a desperate attempt to sublimate his own homosexual desire.

But harassment of gay men in public bathrooms occurs closer to home, if not always in so violent a form. Entrapment of gay men cruising parks and facilities is still police policy in many cities, an activity that brings humiliation on those who are caught (henceforth stamped as "homosexual") and seeks to produce a symbolic closing of the closet. Have we come so far from Wilde's trial? Public monies would seem to be better spent in a concerted campaign to protect gay men and lesbians from homophobic harassment rather than stigmatizing gay identity.

84. Jameson's analysis, based on the economic theory of Mandel, appears in "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late

Capitalism", *New Left Review* 146 (August, 1984): 53-92. See also his "Periodizing the 60's" in Sonya Sayres et. al., *The 60's Without Apology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984): 178-209.

85. For a critical assessment of the current nomadism see Chantal Mouffe, "For a Politics of Nomadic Identity", in Andrea Fraser, Christian Philipp Müller, Gerwald Rockenschau: *Austrian Contribution to the 45th Biennale of Vience 1993*, exh. cat. (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Unterricht und Kunst, 1993), 239-255.

86. Of course, the biaxiality of this movement - between the richest countries of Western Europe and the United States - suggests that the "new" internationalism, at least within the world of contemporary art, is structured along the rigid racial and class lines of the imperial, second stage of capitalism of Jameson's schema. Recently, Jameson has observed that the transition into late capitalism is more uneven, and regionally specific, than his initial formulation had allowed. See the introduction to *Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University, 1991) xviii-xxii.

87. Original drawings of Italian scenes by Austrian artists also appeared in this room.

88. This is, of course, the argument Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the essential text for a discussion of the traveler. As Green has written, summarizing Said: "The Orient can not be discussed without making reference to previous statements made about it - either by referring to specific academic works or by referring to what, as a result of such works, has become 'common knowledge'". Renée Green, Senior Thesis, Wesleyan University, 1981.

89. James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures", in Grossberg et. al., *Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 101. See also Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1988).

90. Quoted in Hal Foster, ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), 52. Kruger's interlocutors in this exchange were Abigail Solomon-Godeau and Douglas Crimp.

91. Of course, ACT UP's work has also been supported by regular contributions of commodifiable works by Kruger, Ross Bleckner, Eric Fischl, and many others.

92. "In recent years, Leonard has been exemplary in her commitment to activism; in this show, however [at Paula Cooper Gallery, 1992] it seems she fails her own philosophy as she hawks critical intervention like any other capitalist product". Keith Seward, *Artforum* XXXI:2 (October, 1992). In fact, Leonard, unlike Bordowitz, makes a distinction between her activism and art production, on which see n. 38.

93. "From Faktura to Factography", in *October: The First Decade*, 76-113.

94. "O bliss of the collector, bliss of the man of leisure! Of no one has less been expected, and no one has had a greater sense of well-being than the man who has been able to carry on his disreputable existence in the mask of Spitzweg's 'Bookworm'... For a collector - and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be - ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them". "Unpacking My Library", in Hannah Arendt., ed., *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 67.