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- 43 Preparatory notes

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On Saturday June 15 at 18:30, Program – 23 and Guillaume Maraud will meet with the reading groups Collective Autonomy and Services Working Group (defunct), and anyone else who would like to join, at Cittipunkt e.V. The continuation of the editorial collaboration on the occasion of the publication “Cultural Abolitionisms, 2021, 2023 / Des abolitionnismes culturels, 2021, 2023” by Maraud will be the starting point for a discussion of the schematic concepts of (1) reproduction and (2) abolitionism, here: (1) the concept of “domestic salary” in relation to the concept of “artistic salary” and (2) approaches to abolitionisms divided into voluntarist and non-voluntarist strands, maximalist and pragmatist, etc.

In the following we would like to share some preparatory notes (p. 37) for the evening at Cittipunkt, as well as a selection of text excerpts that we would like to read together on site, divided into sections (*L'arpentage*). We hope this offers an additional basis for a possible discussion following our introduction. The event takes place in the context of the Program – 23. As such, over the past few months, we have been trying to rationalize the best of the bad concepts of artistically and politically relevant visual artistic practices.

Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism, Ideology and Ideological state Apparatus*, trans. Ben Brewster, (London/ Brooklyn: Verso, 2014), 224–246.

III THE IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES

What has to be added to the ‘Marxist theory’ of the state is therefore something else. Here we shall be advancing cautiously on a terrain on which Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao have long since preceded us, but without systematizing, in theoretical form, the decisive progress that their experiences⁷ and procedures implied. Why? Because these experiences and procedures were restricted in the main *to the terrain of political practice*.

By that, we mean to suggest that the classics of Marxism in fact treated the state, in their political practice, as a *reality* that is *more complex* than the definition of it given in the ‘Marxist theory of the state’, even when that definition is completed as we have just completed it. Thus they acknowledged this complexity in their practice without expressing it in a corresponding theory.

We would like to try to sketch that corresponding theory.

We know very well the sort of objection we will be opening ourselves up to, since we cannot put forward a single proposition *that is not already contained in the records of the political practice of the proletarian class struggle*. Thus it can be objected at every turn that we are not adding anything new at all; and in a sense, that is perfectly true. We nevertheless believe that we *are* adding something new – doubtless very little, since we are merely *giving theoretical form* to something that has already been recognized in the practice of the proletarian class struggle. Yet we know, thanks to the same Marxist classics, that this ‘very little’ (casting the practical experience of the class struggle in theoretical form) is, or can be, *very important* for the class struggle itself. Without revolutionary theory (of the state), no revolutionary movement.

We shall lay our cards on the table. We are going to advance and defend the following thesis.

To produce a theory of the state, it is imperative to take into account not only the distinction between *state power* (and those who hold it) and *state apparatus*, but also another ‘reality’ that must clearly be ranged alongside the Repressive State Apparatus, but *is not conflated with it*. We shall take the theoretical risk of calling it

the Ideological State Apparatuses. The precise point on which our theoretical intervention bears is thus these *Ideological State Apparatuses* in their distinction from the state apparatus in the sense of Repressive State Apparatus.

Be it recalled that the state apparatus comprises, in ‘Marxist theory’, the government, administration, army, police, courts and prisons, which together constitute what we shall henceforth call the *Repressive State Apparatus*. ‘Repressive’ should be understood, at the limit (for there exist many, very varied and even very subtly occulted forms⁸ of *non-physical* repression), in the strong, precise sense of ‘using *physical violence*’ (direct or indirect, legal or ‘illegal’).

What, then, are the *Ideological State Apparatuses* (ISAs)? The following provisional list will give us a rough idea of them:

- 1) the Scholastic Apparatus
- 2) the Familial Apparatus
- 3) the Religious Apparatus
- 4) the Political Apparatus
- 5) the Associative Apparatus
- 6) the Information and News Apparatus
- 7) the Publishing and Distribution Apparatus
- 8) the Cultural Apparatus

This list is provisional because, first, it is not exhaustive (see [Chapter 12](#)) and, second, because it may be that apparatuses 7 and 8 are just one apparatus. The reader will perhaps bear with this last hesitation, for I have not yet made up my mind on this point, which calls for further research.

This list (in which, for example, the family figures) and these terms will not fail to cause surprise. Let us be patient and proceed in orderly fashion in order to arrive at a provisional but clear definition.

First remark: one can observe, empirically, that there exist ‘institutions’ or ‘organizations’, as they are called, corresponding to each ISA. For the scholastic ISA: the various schools and their

various levels, from the primary to the tertiary, the various institutes, and so on. For the religious ISA: the various churches and their specialized organizations (for example, youth organizations). For the political ISA: the parliament, the political parties, and so on. For the information and news ISA: the press (the various newspapers or newspaper groups), the RTF,⁹ and a large number of publications and organizations. For the familial ISA: all the institutions that have to do with the family, including the famous associations of parents of schoolchildren, and so on. For the cultural ISA: all kinds of entertainment, sport included, as well as a series of institutions that may dovetail with what we have called the publishing ISA.

Second remark: for each ISA, the various institutions and organizations comprising it form a *system*. That, at any rate, is the thesis we are putting forward. We shall see what constitutes the unity of the system in each case. If this is right, we cannot discuss *any one component part* of an ISA without relating it to the *system* of which it is a part. For example, we cannot discuss a political party, a component part of the political ISA, without relating it to the complex system of the [political]¹⁰ ISA. The same holds for a trade union, which is a component part of the system constituted by the associative ISA, and so on.

Third remark: it can be seen that the institutions existing in each ISA, the system they form, and, consequently, each ISA, although defined as *ideological*, is [*sic*] not reducible to the existence ‘of ideas’ without a concrete, material *support*. I mean by this not only that the ideology of each ISA is realized in material institutions and material practices; that is clear. I mean something else: that these material practices are ‘*anchored*’ in *non-ideological* realities. Take the family: it is an ISA, but the ideology that it realizes is ‘anchored’ in a reality that is not purely ideological. For the family is the site of the biological reproduction of representatives of the ‘human race’, of their rearing and training, and so on (let us say that it reproduces

the existence of labour-power). But the family is clearly also something else. Even in our capitalist societies, in which it is now ‘disappearing’, it preserves, at least in certain now disintegrating sectors, the role of a *production unit* (for example, in the countryside: ‘family farms’). In the mode of production based on serfdom, the family was the dominant production unit. In our mode of production, this is a survival. On the other hand, the family still is a *unit of consumption* in our societies. It is not the only kind of unit of consumption there is, but, of those in existence, it is a kind that still plays an extremely important part and it is not about to disappear (it subsists in the socialist regimes with which we are familiar, albeit in transformed or waning forms). For example, the cultural ISA: the ideology that it realizes is anchored in practices either aesthetic (the theatre, film, literature) or physical (sport) that are not reducible to the ideology for which they serve as a support. The same holds for the political and associative ISAs: the ideology they realize is ‘anchored’ in a reality irreducible to that ideology – here, the class struggle. The same holds for the ISA we are calling the scholastic apparatus: the ideology it realizes is ‘anchored’ in practices that make it possible to acquire and use objective ‘know-how’ irreducible to that ideology. An ISA such as the religious apparatus, in contrast, does in fact seem to ‘exist’ up in the air, as a function of the pure and simple ideology that it realizes. But this is by no means certain. Later, we shall attempt to say why.

These three remarks will allow us to state a *provisional definition*. It foregrounds the ‘reality’ (namely, ideology) which unifies, in *systems*, the various institutions or organizations and the various practices present in each ISA. We shall say that:

An Ideological State Apparatus is a system of defined institutions, organizations, and the corresponding practices. Realized in the institutions, organizations, and practices of this system is all or part (generally speaking, a typical combination of certain elements) of the State Ideology. The ideology realized in an ISA ensures its systemic unity on the basis of an ‘anchoring’ in material functions specific to each ISA;

these functions are not reducible to that ideology, but serve it as a 'support'.

When the time comes, we will explain what we mean by *the State Ideology*, the existence of which accounts for the fact that the ISAs are *ideological* apparatuses and *state* apparatuses, and also for the unity that makes each ISA a specific *system* distinct from the other ISAs.

We can now come back to the concept that we are proposing – *Ideological State Apparatus* – in order to examine each of its three terms and justify the fact that we have associated them in our concept.

Readers will doubtless be surprised at seeing these 'realities' (diverse institutions or 'activities') designated as *apparatuses*, a concept that obviously brings the expression state 'apparatus' to mind; and they will be intrigued at seeing us attach the adjective 'Ideological' to the term 'Apparatuses', only to discover, finally, at the tail end of this expression, the state itself: *Ideological State Apparatuses*. It is as if we wanted to bring out that the ideological is, as it were, 'stuck in the middle' of the expression *Appareil ... d'Etat*,¹¹ with the small 'difference' that the term state apparatus tout court is *in the singular*, whereas our 'Ideological State Apparatuses' are *in the plural*. All this obviously calls for explanation.

In presenting our explanation, we shall set out from this singular situation in which *Idéologie* is 'stuck' between *Appareil ...* and *Etat*, precipitating the passage from the singular (state apparatus) to the plural (Ideological State Apparatuses).

We shall go straight to essentials. In our capitalist societies, what distinguishes the Ideological State Apparatuses from the Repressive State Apparatus is the following *difference*.

Whereas the Repressive State Apparatus is by definition a repressive apparatus that makes direct or indirect use of *physical violence*, the Ideological State Apparatuses cannot be called repressive in the same sense as the 'state apparatus', because they do not, by definition, use *physical* violence. Neither the Church nor the school nor political parties nor the press nor radio and television

nor publishing nor entertainment nor sport *have recourse to physical violence* in order to function with their ‘clientèle’. At any rate, the use of physical violence is not *manifest* or *dominant* in them.

It is ‘of our own free will’ that we go to church or school (although school is ‘mandatory’),¹² join a political party and obey it, buy a newspaper, switch on the TV, go to a cinema or a stadium, buy and ‘consume’ records, paintings or ‘posters’, and literary, historical, political, religious, or scientific works. This is to say that Ideological State Apparatuses are distinguished from the state apparatus in that they function, not ‘on violence’, but ‘on ideology’.

We have already uttered this sentence in discussing the way law ‘functions’ on ‘legal-moral ideology’. We know what that means: these apparatuses apparently function ‘*all by themselves*’, without recourse to violence. In fact, they function thanks to means other than violence, namely, on *ideology* or, rather, *ideologization*. With that, we have very clearly marked the distinction that sets the state apparatus apart from the Ideological State Apparatuses.

It remains to explain why we consider it imperative to use the apparently enigmatic term ‘state apparatuses’ to designate these ‘institutions’ and ‘activities’ (churches, schools, the political system, radio and TV, the theatre, the press, publications, and so on). Why State ... Apparatus? And why this plural (State Apparatuses)?

Our affirmation becomes still more enigmatic when we take the trouble to note (and it is in our ‘interest’ to note this ourselves, for, if we do not, others will not fail to take issue with us) that if some of these ‘institutions’ are now state institutions (in our country, the school, certain theatres, radio and television), *not all of them are*. The Church, in our country, is officially separate from the state, as are some schools, and so on.

The press, political parties, trade unions and other associations, the vast majority of cultural institutions and activities (entertainment, sport, publications, the arts) are ‘free’, that is, part of the private ‘sector’, not the state sector. Better, in certain capitalist countries, a large proportion of the schools (for example, two-thirds of higher education in the USA), and even radio and television (in the USA and Great Britain), belong, or can belong, to

the private sector. By what right, then, do we say that these ‘institutions’ or ‘activities’ fall into the category of Ideological *State* Apparatuses?

IV. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ‘INSTITUTIONS’

numerous. It is quite simply because the state is the state, and

Étienne Balibar, “Reproductions,” trans. David Broder,
Rethinking Marxism 34, no. 2 (2022): 155–159.

ual; this is medicine for the government, that is, of the entire species.

Yet the life of the species (Marx would say, *generic being*) is precisely what German idealism sought to formulate the idea of, in order to make it the model of becoming in general.²⁶ In Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of Spirit* ([1807] 2018), *The Science of Logic* ([1812] 2010a), and *Encyclopedia* ([1817–30] 2010b), the term *Reproduktion* (sometimes printed *Re-produktion*) applies to daily exchanges between the organism and the environment that allows for its subsistence, rather than to generational and sexual reproduction (*Fortpflanzung der Geschlechter*). Hegel also went as far as to designate “the real organic concept, or the whole which ... returns to itself” (*Phenomenology*, chap. 5). But it is in Schelling’s (1799) *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* that we find an anticipation of Marx’s axiom that all production is also reproduction. For Schelling (2004, 205–16) this proposition has an ontological significance in which appears, remarkably, both the dialectic of annihilation and regeneration and that of the conflict between the productivity (or productive force) of the subject and the objective constraint to which it is subjected: “The product must be thought as *annihilated at every step*, and *at every step reproduced anew* ... the subsistence of the product is a continual process of being reproduced ... It is absolutely unthinkable how the activity that everywhere tends toward a product is prevented from going over into it *entirely* ... [when] the product, if it is to subsist, is compelled at every moment to reproduce itself *anew*.” To exist is to be produced, but to be produced is to be reproduced.

These references would have a philological value alone if they did not also lead us to question the function of the *passages* that occur between one “sense” and another when “reproduction” becomes either a biological or economic concept,

23. See Jacob (1970, 90), Hogwood (2018, 287–304), and Cartelier and Piguet (1999).

24. Editors’ note: While we do not contest this point in this particular sense that was discussed here in this text, Ricardo uses “reproducible vs. non-reproducible commodities” distinction which is akin to Balibar’s notion of “poietic reproduction.”

25. Cited in Charbonnier (2020, loc. 2681).

26. The following paragraph essentially follows from the indications given me by Emmanuel Renault. Strictly speaking, it would be necessary to examine how these formulas relate to the Kantian usages, which counterpose “productive imagination” and “reproductive imagination” (*produktive* versus *reproduktive Einbildungskraft*), in favor of the former, from which for him the latter derives.

or when an ontological axiom is retranslated into a politically relevant critique of exploitation. In each case, a trace of the displacement is obviously conserved. There is never metonymy without metaphor. In our intellectual culture, “reproduction” today spans *three* distinct and yet constantly overlapping meanings.

A *mimetic reproduction* is found at work in the problematics of the copy, the image, the model, the representation, the double, or the substitute.²⁷ It runs through the whole history of the relationship between knowledge, art, and technology—from the Platonic critique of imitation to the Aristotelian distinction between natural technique (which follows an internal model) and human technique (which follows an external model) to the question of the mutation introduced into art by the “technical reproducibility” of artworks, as in Walter Benjamin. Through Freud’s reflections on *identification* as a basis for the psychological aggregation of the masses, mimetic reproduction has also become part of our political thought on the ambivalence of institutions and revolutions.²⁸

A *genetic reproduction* is at work in our understanding of life, where it appears as the operator of hereditary transmission, of the permanence and variation of forms (and thus of specific types at one extreme, of individual characters at the other, and of their more or less rigid subordination). The decisive point, as soon as we are talking about sexual reproduction (or its metaphors) is fertilization and therefore the need for an “encounter” between two asymmetrical organisms that maintain relations which may be episodic or permanent, fusional or antagonistic, egalitarian or hierarchical. For human beings, the institution of these relationships becomes the site of an insertion into the social, one that, even as it reorganizes the vital, never abolishes it and finds itself exposed to the complication of the sexual “nonrelation” (as Lacan would say).

Finally, what I will call a *poietic reproduction* (thus completing the philosophical triad of *mimesis*, *genesis*, and *poiesis*) has its model in material or cultural *labor*. Namely, in the “formation” (*Bildung*) of a more or less durable object (or, in practice, a *series of objects*) through the repeated application to continually renewed material of a specialized technical activity and its instruments, according to a “plan” that is conscious or that has been transformed into a habit. The criterion of this reproduction is *usage*, related to users through the mediation of a system

27. See the entry “Bild” by Pascal David in Cassin (2004) for the history of this paradigm in philosophy. An English adaptation can be found in Cassin et al. (2014).

28. In Freud’s 1922 essay “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,” which inaugurates the articulation of psychoanalysis and political theory with regard to the army, the Church, and their respective pathologies, Freud does not exactly adopt the theory of imitation (widely associated with the name, Gabriel Tarde). Rather, he constructs a relationship of identification around individuals’ common reference to the unconscious *Vorbild* (“model”) represented for them by some “leader,” “ruler,” or spiritual “idea” or “value.” This relationship also inscribes repetition at the heart of the social. Hence is found both Freud’s competition and potential complementarity with the Marxist theory of reproduction but also, more fundamentally, the disruption that he can introduce therein.

of *values* (be they market values or customary values or otherwise). Our “European” languages tend to relate the idea of *production* to this single modality of reproduction; but perhaps a comparative viewpoint would demand that we relativize this priority.

These three meanings thus each have one or more privileged *domains* of application, evolving over the course of time. But in reality they constitute transversal, “categorical” *thought schemas* that can be exported from one domain to the others. The conception that Marx develops of the reproduction of capital clearly encompasses a combination of all three. To reproduce the conditions given to the production process first means—*poiesis*—to “form” them through labor, directly or indirectly. Marx unites these two modalities by using the vocabulary of *consumption*, which allows him to immediately bring out the necessity of *renewing* goods for use. To reproduce the relation of exploitation—*mimesis*—is to *copy* or *reiterate* it from one production cycle to another, providing it with a “sort of eternity” (the eternity of domination and bondage). But *genesis* is not absent from this process, either—or rather, it is not slow in making itself felt, if necessary, *in opposition to* Marx’s silences or lack of explicitness, for the *agent* of production that is at the same time the *patient* of reproduction is “living labor,” the labor power or productivity that must generate and be generated. And perhaps it even metaphorically encompasses the whole, for Marx tends to think of the *automatism* of the reproduction of *Gesamtkapital* in the Hegelian model of the substance-subject as “organic” life. In contemporary theories of social reproduction, subject to a more differentiated and refined reading, this generation is of course at the center of attention, as a “real” process—but on condition that it enters into a specific unity with domestic exploitation, making the latter into a kind of labor (“reproductive labor”) that, as such, also reproduces a social relation running through the whole of society. What comes into the foreground here (and can thereby be used to analyze the intersections with other relations of domination) is the constraint of repetition under which certain subjects (in effect, meaning female ones) reproduce other subjects who dominate them (through sexuality, motherhood, services, and care). The “dual character” of reproduction is thus incorporated into the very lives of its bearers so that it is no longer so much a question of “renewing” initial conditions (or “advances”) as of undergoing or even *acting upon* their uninterrupted constraint (and we know that there are many ways of doing this).²⁹

Repetition is the—itsself polysemous—term on which I would like to conclude (very provisionally). I have thus far held off from invoking this term because it

29. For want of space—albeit regretfully—I cannot here deal with the distinction that Claude Meillassoux (1981, 1992) proposed in his day between the study of modes of *production* and the study of modes of *reproduction*, along with the corresponding “social relations.” This fruitful contribution to a refounding of historical materialism purged of all functionalism in turn calls into question, however, its entire historical typology. See the contribution by Sibertin-Blanc (2021).

seems to me to cut through all three reproduction schemes and thus to raise the most difficult “metapolitical” questions.

The discourses we have laid out in relation to Marx’s own are all associated with political projects for emancipation. And emancipation—whether we define it as *transformation*, as *revolution*, or even as *bifurcation*—when related to a “scheme” of reproduction, always presupposes that some repetition is interrupted. For—even if we do not make it the essence of reproduction in general—an element of repetition, or even a *cycle of repetition*, which entails its own *constraint*, is a formal component of all the modalities of reproduction that have come to our attention. What does it mean to interrupt a repetition? To what extent is it possible? At what level would this interruption take place if it is true that a reproduction process is always dual, or even multiple? Can one reproduction be *played off against another*, in such a way as to interrupt or block their “alternating rhythm”? Strikingly, Marxist theory (implicitly assuming there is no repetitive or reproductive fatality)³⁰ has always fundamentally looked for the key to interruption in the convergence or meeting of two “nonreproductive” effects. That is to say, the famous “objective and subjective conditions” of the revolution, situated on each side of a both *historicized* and also *structured* social process. The former primarily addresses the discontinuity of the labor process (and thus thinks interruption in light of *poiesis*) and the latter the subversion (or the massive refusal, by the “masses” themselves) of the relation of subjection (thus seeing interruption in light of *mimesis*). Contemporary intersectionality, in its most imaginative variants, reproduces this alternative by installing in the place of the labor process and its “productive forces” a greater multiplicity of “vital” activities and the social conflicts linked to them. Or else it pitches the whole question to the side of (counter)-*mimesis*, by invoking the future (or perhaps already existing) power [*puissance*] of a “great refusal” that does not wait indefinitely for the social relation to enter crisis but candidly reckons with its unbearable character. When life “is nothing of the kind,” another existence *must necessarily arise* if “everyone” (or the greater number of people, say the “99 percent”) wants it. However, my feeling is that the equivalent of the revolutionary “encounter” between the subjective and the objective—still so sought after by many of the contemporary manifestos best rooted in the experience of real social struggles—has difficulty in finding a scheme of “nonreproduction” that itself has an institutional figure or its own determinate mode of subjectivation. Perhaps, however, this is not an imperfection but a *positive virtue* if the aim is not to “reproduce” or repeat conceptions of political practice that have themselves become embroiled in the forms of dominant reproduction.

30. This assumption is even more implied by a philosophy of history marked by a political and ontological “optimism” in which the transformation of the world and its constitutive relations is presented not only as a matter of hope or will but also as a “real possibility.” But it is not absolutely dependent on this optimism.

Yet, before stopping to reflect on these hypotheses, we must, in extremis, confront another one: namely, that there *is never, in reality, any effective reproduction* (or that reproduction is itself a fiction). This thesis can be elaborated speculatively, at an ontological or quasi-transcendental level, as does the part of contemporary philosophy that inscribes in temporality itself the impossibility of identical repetition and therefore of reproduction in its different modalities (as imitation, as return, as hereditary transmission).³¹ But it can also have a materialist translation in the (very real) figure of the *unsustainable ecological debt*. For, as we know, this debt means that the (capitalist) *economy* does not “reproduce” the “primary” conditions of its productions (rather, it irreversibly *spends* them at an accelerated rate, which, it seems, could be marginally altered by an environmental policy that is yet to arrive).³² This debt thus obliges us to rediscover the idea of a “negative reproduction”—not in the form of a cyclical crisis (as was the case in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution) but at the heart of the *historical tendency* itself.

Such an inversion of the semantic and practical values of the idea of reproduction is likely to completely change the intellectual game. After the era of transformative projects based on a “generalized economics” of the reproduction of capital, and without it having perhaps lost all heuristic significance, we would have entered the era of a politics (and, correlated to this, of a utopia) of interruption as the production of the all-new (*Neuproduktion, Produktion des Neuen*). Which is to say, a “re-production” that is both radically nonrepetitive and intrinsically aleatory, having as its condition an anti-economy—assuming at least the classical sense of “economy.”

Of course, my aim in this essay was not to issue a ruling but to lay out the cards.

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31. This is true for Derrida as well as for Deleuze. For the latter (in *A Thousand Plateaus*, written with Guattari (1987)) there is a more explicit opposition between the appearance of *reproduction* (identified with copying) and the reality of *becoming*, while Derrida, a thinker of aporia, tends to indefinitely *put into question* the possibility of either reproduction or iteration.

32. Ecological debt also has a “dual character.” While on one hand it appears as the global footprint that each year further exceeds the planetary environment’s capacities for regeneration, it is also *distributed* in an extraordinarily unequal way between North and South, in a proportion that is rapidly changing, all the while conserving (and thus “reproducing”) the stigmata of three centuries of industrialization and imperialism. But that is the topic of another discussion. See vol. 61, no. 1, of *Actuel Marx* (on “ecological Marxisms”).

Kitchen Politics, “The Family in a Free Society – the Hopes of Alexandra Kollontai,” in *Die Neuorganisation der Küche (Reorganization of the Kitchen)*, eds. Kitchen Politics (Munster: edition assemblage, 2023), 21–35.

The Reorganization of the Kitchen, Kitchen Politics (eds.)

The Family in a Free Society – the Hopes of Alexandra Kollontai by Kitchen Politics

A century ago, the material and political space that could be shaped seemed vast. With the Russian Revolution in 1917, the question of how we should and want to live suddenly became a real political, creative and organizational challenge. A socialist way of living and consumer aesthetics and a communist family and urban planning policy had to be established – albeit under conditions of war communism and scarcity, but with hope for a tangibly better future. The Marxist social analysis of the Communist Party dominated these debates; however, fragments of the perspectives of other left-wing movements, social reformist debates and the bold dreams of the Ukrainian and Russian avant-garde, the futurist, suprematist and constructivist movements also found expression. In the first years after the revolution, the (everyday) political and artistic discourse was rife with proposals on how the “old everyday life” could be overcome, fought against and a new society, new habits, ways of life and relationships, in short a new everyday life, in Russian *новый быт* - *Novy byt*, could be created (Buchli 2000; Groys/ Hansen-Löve 2005). The possible organization of everyday life, the introduction of crèches, new gender relations and living arrangements were discussed at the delegates' meetings of the Communist Party's women's department or in letters to the editor of the magazine *Kommunistka*. These negotiations formed, according to Carmen Scheide in her historical study on women's politics in the 1920s, a “transmission belt” between broader sections of the population and the party leadership that did not exist in relation to party and economic policy (Scheide 2002: 69). How a new society based on solidarity could be created through revolutionary architecture and design became a hotly debated question among socialist designers, bureaucrats and workers. The old everyday life, characterized by poverty or the remnants of bourgeois taste, was to quickly give way to a new socialist way of life - here, it was assumed, revolutionary achievements in a consumer and everyday culture superior to capitalism would have to show themselves as soon and immediately as possible.

[...]

The family as it had developed under capitalist conditions in Russia and Western Europe, Kollontai wrote in 1918 in the aforementioned text, would become superfluous in a communist society, would die off, would disappear. For workers, the old family was already characterized by a lack of time, money and space, by endless arguments, endless worry and despair. Under the exploitative conditions of capitalist production methods, after long hours in the factory and in poor living conditions, the efforts to provide good care, responsible parenting and a loving bond constantly came to nothing. For many, family remained a luxury they could not afford, and for others it became a prison of dependency and hardship. In the new communist society, the old dysfunctional family would soon lose its importance

thanks to the consistent collectivization and nationalization of social care work, Kollontai promised and hoped: the skill and experience of housewives, still vital in pre-industrial society, would no longer be necessary in a socialist and communist society. Workers would soon be able to buy cheap industrially manufactured products, professional cleaners would in the morning, stockings would no longer be darned by candlelight at home but in laundries, food would come from canteens. Nursing mothers and parents would be supported and cared for, no child would go hungry or be neglected. Lovers and families would no longer be held together by the necessity of survival and the constraints of reproductive work and could develop their relationships freely. A sexuality that is as free as it is passionate and responsible would develop, and lovers could meet each other in a new way. Kollontai's analysis stands in the tradition of Marx, Engels and Bebel's prognosis of the disintegration of family structures in advancing capitalism and the abolition of the family in the liberated society. Kollontai deliberately rejected the usual terminology of overcoming, abolishing or fighting against the bourgeois family and wrote of the death and obsolescence of certain social ties that were no longer necessary. Her analysis should also be understood in the context of her powerful political commitment to women's rights in the new society. As the only woman on the Central Committee of the Communist Party, she contributed to the reform of divorce law and supported the right to abortion (as a pragmatic interim solution). Kollontai was a founding member of *Shenotdel*, the women's section of the Communist Party, which served to provide political education and discuss women's political issues until it was abolished in 1928 and repeatedly advocated concrete measures to improve the viability of family life and paid work. Although the shaping of a new everyday life was an omnipresent topic in the young Soviet Union, gender-sensitive perspectives were marginal. Kollontai and Shenodtel's analysis of the importance of the women's question for the transition to a new society was not taken particularly seriously in the party. This becomes clear, for example, in Trotsky's 1923 propaganda pamphlet on the *Problems of Everyday Life*. His analyses are based on conversations with 25 workers, only three of whom were women. His design, based on the needs of Soviet workers, envisages a rational division of time into eight hours of work, eight hours of leisure and eight hours of sleep. He subsumed reproductive work under leisure time and did not even raise the question of who did it. The idea was that a new proletarian culture should overcome the conservative elements of everyday life (Trotsky 1973: 94ff), because he considered the sphere of everyday life to be consistently backward, "immobile and unruly" (ibid.: 33). With reference to reactionary habits, Trotsky speaks of the "Asiaticism of life" (ibid.: 40) and calls for a struggle against these ways of life implicitly associated with peasant, Central Asian or Caucasian traditions. The debates about the backwardness or backward, mostly peasant or bourgeois "elements" in Soviet society also had a gendered subtext: the *Komsomolze* and the *Komsomolzin* stood opposite the баба – BaBa – the woman/wife. The latter represented the incorrigible old woman from the village who resisted the innovations and who, in the political iconography of the 1920s, represented the failure of the Soviet reform movement. The image of the recalcitrant, militant peasant women, the Бой-баба – Boj-Baba, also played a role in the suppression of the Ukrainian national movements. On the one hand, it fed the spirit of resistance of the people in Ukraine and, on the other, was an expression of anti-Ukrainian

Russian chauvinism. In Soviet feminist debates, the “fighting woman”, the boj-baba, the militant woman, also became a symbol of the successful emancipation of women under communism. Kollontai's work also reflects the tension between peasants and women in the eastern republics, who were imagined as backward, and the appreciation of and commitment to the emancipation of diverse women in the emerging Soviet Union. For critical readers, this tension could be the starting point for a decolonial re-reading of such early socialist writings, especially with regard to the recognition and devaluation of productive labor in large family and peasant households.

Another distinctive feature of Kollontai's position, which distinguished it from national-liberal, conservative-social reformist and other socialist and communist approaches, was the importance she attached to sexuality: along with and alongside work, Kollontai also held out the prospect of sexual liberation as the starting point and practice of self-development for all Soviet citizens. For Kollontai, the “comrade woman” is not a guarantor of respectable working-class families, as can be read in Karl Kautsky and German social democracy at the turn of the century. Rather, Kollontai's propaganda argumentation oscillates between the attempt to alleviate the misery of workers through communist social and family policy, to ensure that the state is supplied with workers and to insist on the right to realize a good life. “The rich have long since taken all the [...] boring and exhausting work off the shoulders of their wives. Why should the working woman torture herself? In Soviet Russia, the life of working women should be endowed with the same amenities, the same light, the same hygiene and beauty that were previously only available to the rich.” (Kollontai, in this volume) Especially with regard to sexual morality Kollontai developed an idea of sexual self-determination that was far ahead of its time, especially when articulated by the state.

However, Kollontai's proposal can also be read more critically. According to this reading, he aimed to free the worker from domestic labor, which was no longer economically productive, only to subject her entirely to the labor process in the state-owned factory. “The woman in communist society”, Kollontai wrote, “no longer depends on her husband, but now on her labor” (Kollontai, in this volume). Feli (Felicita Reuschling) criticizes such statements as an expression of the “repugnant” work ethic of the state-scripted Soviet model (Reuschling, in this volume). In her contribution “Family under communism”, she highlights the devaluation of care work and the pronatalist ideology that overshadowed the emancipatory approaches.

State socialism had simply developed other mechanisms for the exploitation of human labor and the control and incapacitation of citizens. According to the critical voices of Vica Kravtsova and Anastasia Inopina in our group discussion, the central organization of social life led to an attachment to an authoritarian, paternalistic and caring state; this interfered with 'private and intimate life and close relationships and formed the foundation of Stalinist rule. Cultural continuities of this paternalistic state welfare model are still evident today. They can be understood as the breeding ground for today's dispassionate support for Putin's regime, the obedience of state employees and pensioners who are carted off to the ballot boxes and events, and the low level of resistance.

The text also reveals the breaking points of socialist society. As Maria Grujic and Anastasia Inopina emphasize in our conversation, Kollontai underestimates the multi-layered social significance of domestic work; her proposal remains to professionalize and outsource these activities. Kollontai does not give any further thought to the working conditions of those who are supposed to perform this work. She also misses the fact that domestic and care work elude the logic of productivity and develop their own temporality and relational dynamics. Recklessly, or perhaps in the historical context of material constraints, need and hunger, guided by pragmatism, she accepts the loss of quality that the mass industrial production of food and clothing entails, and from which the visitors to Soviet canteens certainly suffered. Kollontai's unbroken heteronormative perspective also becomes clear: Kollontai speaks of the mother and worker, housekeeper and citizen and thus constantly refers to the diversity of roles and responsibilities with which people socialized and living as women are confronted. However, gender operates as a binary category in the text. Desire and love are naturally thought of as heterosexual and familial bonds as heterosexually structured. In this way, heterosexual love is propagated as the nucleus of communist society, in a way analogous to its bourgeois counterpart. However, Kollontai constantly emphasizes that our understanding of family and normality is shaped locally and historically: "So it was, so it will be!" Nothing is more wrong than this saying. When we read how people have lived in the past, it becomes obvious that everything changes, that there are no moral principles, no state structures and no customs that will not change." (Kollontai, in this volume) In our discussion, Daniel Heinz develops a queer-feminist reading of this argument, according to which Kollontai would unquestionably be an advocate of queer kinship relationships and rainbow families in the present. Love relationships that, like Kollontai's, unfold beyond material necessities and in which people could meet free of convention and existential needs would be genuinely queer ways of loving and living. In view of the Soviet Union's homophobic policies, such a queer-feminist reading of Kollontai ties in with the emphasis on the avant-garde gender politics of the early Soviet years (Adamczak 2017). The fact that the text allows for such different readings, which unfold against the backdrop of various political concerns as well as family histories, is one reason for our decision to translate and republish it after a good 100 years.

In this respect, Kollontai's text plays an unusual and dazzling role in the library of queer-feminist materialist criticism. It outlines a radical social utopia based on an analysis of social conditions that was far-reaching for its time and is still relevant today. It is also a testimony to feminist realpolitik, as well as a pragmatic art of political leadership and propagandistic speech. In it, Alexandra Kollontai attempts to convince the population of the new ideas immediately after the revolutionary seizure of power, to describe the unrest of social change as "growing pains" and to transform her utopia into a party program.

Kollontai's texts were never banned in the Soviet Union and were published by communist and socialist groups in the West in the 1920s and 1970s. And especially in recent years, more than a hundred years after the revolution, a renewed examination of these texts has begun (Vanackere et al. 2018; Volk 2022). However,

they have not yet found a clear place in current debates. We, too, do not want to uncritically celebrate Alexandra Kollontai as an unjustly forgotten voice. Rather, we want to encourage a close reading of her multifaceted texts and a critical examination of her decidedly materialist proposal of an “abolitionism of the family”. We do not understand this merely as a critique of a bourgeois ideology or an assertion of the voluntaristic possibility of overcoming it. Rather, her contribution takes seriously the fact that we need to think very concretely about social tasks, institutions and material conditions if we want to reshape society and relationships and transform the family into other forms.

We are thinking of diverse, socially supported forms in which binding and (with regard to children) unconditional, solidary, tender-loving and caring relationships can unfold, which allow more autonomy while at the same time recognizing the dependence on care, which is itself the condition for autonomy.

Kitchen Utopias and Realpolitik

Kollontai's text paradigmatically raises the question of the fate of feminist-socialist utopias. Particularly far-reaching demands, including those for an actual redistribution of care work, were not implemented in the Soviet Union from the outset or were already reversed in the 1920s, such as the possibility of getting divorced by postcard or the right to abortion, which was revoked in the 1930s (see Adamczak 2017). Under Stalin in the 1930s at the latest, a conservative model based on *Kulturnost*, an idea of “sophistication”, became dominant. The one-kitchen house of Red Vienna, whose social democratic urban policy was smashed after the annexation of Austria to National Socialist Germany in 1938, is only accessible today through the initiative of left-wing historians in guided tours; the house in Berlin-Charlottenburg, now without a communal kitchen, is no different from the surrounding old buildings. The promise to free parenthood and relationships of love, friendship and family from the burden of economic necessity and to organize care work socially – for Kollontai this meant in her position: state-run - has of course remained a utopia. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the revolutionization of everyday life by no means failed and that many of the ideas from the materialist-feminist debates in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were realized – albeit in contradictory ways in terms of their quality, their scope and their social and ecological costs. For some readers, for example, the seemingly avant-garde discussion of collective kitchens, canteens and polyclinics at the time may bring to mind the very concrete taste of overcooked vegetables, the smell of wet rags and chlorine in public corridors or the exhausted faces of parents and grandparents who had to queue for hours or prepare and cook food. The introduction of collective kitchens and canteens in Soviet countries did not necessarily lead to an improvement in living conditions. Contemporary witnesses and historians recall the violence with which the Soviet leadership and society enforced their idea of the new man and persecuted alleged dissenters. In hardly any other society was there such a broad and detailed discussion about a good and proper everyday life, and in no other society was there such a clear gap between reality and discourse, writes cultural scientist Svetlana Boym (1994: 263 f). Nevertheless, many of the radical-sounding promises made in 1918 were more or

less realized over the course of the 20th century in socialist societies and at some point in capitalist societies too: self-determined love relationships beyond marriage that were unencumbered by the law and bourgeois morality, state-protected maternity leave and the provision of childcare. In particular, the spread of washing machines and refrigerators in both socialist and capitalist consumer societies brought about a simplification of everyday life that hardly anyone wanted to do without. The improvements in conditions for domestic and care work have become a matter of course for many readers of this volume – for others, however, these achievements, like many feminist victories, remain precarious; institutional childcare, access to functioning technical devices, “dishwashers for all”, maternity and parental leave and the right to abortion are anything but secure in many places.

It is undisputed that the debates of materialist feminists – not only in the Soviet Union – resulted in a “grand domestic revolution” (Hayden 1981: 1). The first women's movement at the turn of the century not only fought for the right to education and political participation, maternity protection, kindergartens and school meals, care and nursing in professionalized social work and pedagogical professions. A large number of design and consumer-related innovations as well as architectural designs by the Soviet avant-garde and the Bauhaus, especially the modern kitchen, can also be traced back to feminist debates. Hardly any other area of life has changed as radically in the last 100 years as everyday life. In retrospect, it is difficult to determine what were utopian discussions and what can be seen as precursors for many welfare state institutions and everyday conditions that seem self-evident today.

Although the modernization of reproductive work – and this is another contradiction – brought with it a reduction in working hours to some extent, it also led to a densification, increased demands, alienation, isolation and new dependencies in Fordist societies, not to mention an immense increase in ecological costs, and was successively externalized to an ever greater extent in post-Fordism. It is therefore not without irony that the structural, technical and organizational changes that were discussed between the 1890s and 1930s – modern apartments and fitted kitchens, washing machines, kindergartens – ultimately became the basis for the organization of the nuclear family in late industrial society. By no means did they lead to the abolition of the family. Rather, they stabilized this and the gendered, class-specific and racialized division of care work on which it is still based today. Cynically speaking, it could be argued that the utopia of the reorganization of family work outlined by Kollontai has been realized as a neoliberal distortion in countries of the global North. Well-earning parents who see themselves as equals can enjoy a relatively carefree life, i.e. without being crushed under the 'triple burden of reproductive work', can devote themselves to their 'personal' (ideologically critically deciphered, this means: professional) self-realization, as they outsource the former to babysitters and delivery services, cleaners, sex workers, carers for the elderly and precariously employed logistics workers – global inequalities, racisms and restrictive and brutal migration regimes make this possible.

A re-reading of the old feminist-materialist debates makes it clear how much the imaginations and the actual reorganization of domestic work were also historically

permeated by social divisions. The efforts of 19th-century bourgeois feminists in particular to rationalize and modernize household management unfolded in opposition to the supposedly regressive and socially dangerous everyday culture of workers, peasants and colonized populations who were to be disciplined through social reform (Schütze 1991; Stoler 1989; Walgenbach 2005; Walsh 2004). The modern white housewife of the 1900s to 1930s as well as the 1960s and 1970s not only stood for the clean, healthy and contented nuclear family (and public health) but also represented the essence of German, English or US American efficiency, moral integrity and civilization in their various national colourations. The work in the factories, laundries and restaurants that made these lifestyles possible was done by migrant and/or racialized workers, and the raw materials and products were sourced and produced in intolerable working conditions in the global South and East. At the same time, it is precisely these dreams of a comfortable, secure standard of living that bind workers to poor and exhausting working conditions and cause people to embark on risky and strenuous migration projects. The hopes of workers and migrants often enough include the dream of a nice apartment, a comfortable fitted kitchen, nice clothes or practical gadgets and the possibility of giving their children a good education. And who could question these longings for comfort, functionality and a good life? Taking these hopes, their dynamics and potentials seriously, however, we need to discuss which utopias fulfill these aspirations and hopes more sustainably under the given conditions, which utopias we can wrest from the false but very dominant promises of neoliberal economic methods of a capitalism based on racialized exploitation and global predatory exploitation, and which dreams will lead us to a more solidary and just future. [...]

gestational labor. Christian-nationalism is on a rampage, proposing that trans children, for instance, shall be kinless (legislators in Texas this year equated trans-affirming childcare with child abuse and proposed it be grounds for child removal).⁸ The family is being re-disciplined. What will happen next?

So far, this little book has introduced the emotional panic and political promise of family abolitionism, argued against setting aside a particular kind of family to be saved from abolition, and surveyed its history to date. My hope is that you now agree that moving beyond the family—as opposed to “expanding” it—is desirable. It is time to ~~grasp~~ the nettle, then, and consider what *abolition* means in practice. The answer is surprisingly complicated, even though the word is lately being broadcast around the world and spelled out in giant letters once more on the tarmac outside police precincts via the movement of hundreds of thousands of feet.

From where I am standing—a viewpoint which, admittedly, is likely to be Anglocentric—it seems as though the specific term “abolition” has been taken back up in a big way. We have entered a moment of abolition fervor and generalized abolitionism on a scale that was last seen in the nineteenth century. This upswell represents a magnificent outcome of at least ten years of grassroots agitation in the belly of the beast of American empire, in tandem with other struggles: Palestine’s, for example. “Abolish prisons,” “abolish ICE,” and “abolish the police” became familiar demands and credible concepts attached to popular platforms. To be sure, some pundits cannot believe their ears. You can’t possibly mean *abolish*!? Because, on

its face, the answer to this question is almost comically self-evident: what do abolitionists want? Abolitionists want to abolish. We want things not to be. We want an absence of prisons, of colonizers. We desire the nonexistence of police.

Simple, right? Not according to the earliest originators and modern philosopher-activists of abolition (and we should now briefly register the word *abolition*'s weighty original German form, *Aufhebung*). In English translations of the early nineteenth-century writings of German idealist G. W. F. Hegel, *Aufhebung* is sometimes translated as "positive supersession," and intriguingly, this rather stiff bit of jargon unites the ideas of lifting up, destroying, preserving, and radically transforming, all at once. These four components can be illustrated with reference to slavery, the earliest example of a radical cause calling itself "abolitionist" in history. The successful global fight for the abolition of slavery meant that the noble ideal of humanism, trumpeted in the French Revolution, was simultaneously lifted up (vindicated), destroyed (exposed as white), preserved (made tenable for the future) and transformed beyond recognition (forced to incorporate those it had originally excluded). Slavery was overturned in law and eventually more or less done away with in practice. What we must understand, however, is that our very capacity to understand these events was generated *by them*. In the "before" times, the ideals that governed slave-trading societies really *were* human rights, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The world manifested those ideas as they existed then, until, at the end of an enslaved person's rifle, the self-styled inventors of "freedom" in these societies learned at last what real freedom (a *more real* freedom,

for the time being) looked like. Humanism: negated, remade, born, buried, prolonged. By winning the struggle against slavers, abolition gave the lie to those societies, and supplied those brave ideals with their first-ever shot at becoming more than words.

That is *Aufhebung*, as I understand it, and it's an understanding I owe to the expansive teachings of, among others, above all, Ruth Wilson Gilmore. The abolition of prisons and of the police, rather than constituting a simple deletion of infrastructure, is better understood as a world-building endeavor, a collective act of creativity without end, giving rise to real justice where, before, there had been Justice with a capital 'J'. At its most basic level, says Gilmore, abolition "is not the absence of something; it's the presence of something. That's what abolition actually is."⁹ To practice abolition, we are required to "change one thing: everything."¹⁰ While Gilmore does not focus on kinship questions, there is no question in my mind that the horizon of abolition entails changing everything about the family, too. *What would it mean to not need the family?*

So, what can we say, now, about the destruction-preservation-transformation-realization of the family, in light of these brief thoughts on how struggle unfolds? We might remark, first of all, that a process of "changing everything" *could not* leave the family intact even if it wanted to. Secondly, we could seek to isolate that which is liberatory about the kinship-ideal, buried within the material misery that is familialized society. What is it that is presently travestied, yet worth realizing? In the case of familiarity, the latent utopian kernels seem to be:

reciprocal care, interdependence, and belonging. These are the mass desires buried inside a casket labeled "exclusivity," "chauvinism," "race," "property," "heredity," "identity," "competition." Anyone can glimpse them, these ideal versions of family values smothered in everyday life. They're iterated emptily in everything from fashion branding to ecological ethics symposia. All around us, we can glimpse the filaments of the family's dialectical explosion: *Maria our cleaner is part of the family,¹¹ here at Olive Garden everyone is family, we're all family here at TrustAir™ (because we care), say hello to the great family of humanity, we use 30% renewable energy because the island's endangered birds are family, the great planetary family, family is as family does, welcome to the city of brotherly love, we believe in kinship between all living things.*

Bullshit. Imagine what would have to happen in order for the staff at restaurants and airlines to be welcome to input your name as a guarantor for their student debt. Consider what would make the fashion retailer Kinship™ (whose website currently celebrates "the bond we share," and states that "we are all kin") turn up to an eviction defense on your behalf. Ask yourself what needs to change before Maria the cleaner is able to add her name to the children's birth certificates if she wants to. Then ask yourself whether birth certificates are really necessary. If these thought experiments seem silly, we have to consider the possibility that kinship, as a value, isn't worth all that much. Let me be more direct: ~~I don't particularly like what kinship affords us, ethically or politically. I don't think it is doing a lot of good. What is worse, I think it is getting in the way of better possibilities.~~

Don't get me wrong: I appreciate that our quasi-universal desire for kinship mediates a desire for care, no more no less. It is not our collective desire for care that I am criticizing; it is the insufficiency of the vehicle we have at our disposal for that desire's realization. Without wading into the weeds of anthropological debates around definition of kinship—or, for that matter, anthropological debates about *whether* it is important to define kinship—I submit that kinship, at least right now, is always a reference to something that is imagined to be inerasable; to “nature.” Perhaps one day it will be fit for purpose again, who knows? Perhaps because the concept of nature has itself been turned inside out. But right now, even when it is conceptualized as practice-based (as it is in many Indigenous cosmologies), kinship functions as a linguistic appeal to something *non-contingent* that can ground a relation. And I am asking: can we suspend that fantasy of something non-contingent? Can we let go of it?

Before the twenty-first century, Donna Haraway—the philosopher to whom I owe my feminism—was not advocating “kinmaking.” Quite the contrary, in fact. “I am sick to death,” she said in 1997, “of bonding through kinship and ‘the family’”:

and I long for models of solidarity and human unity and difference rooted in friendship, work, partially shared purposes, intractable collective pain, inescapable mortality, and persistent hope. It is time to theorize an ‘unfamiliar’ unconscious, a different primal scene, where everything does not stem from the dramas of identity and reproduction. Ties through blood—including blood recast in the coin of genes and information—have been bloody enough already. I believe that there

will be no racial or sexual peace, no livable nature, until we learn to produce humanity through something more and less than kinship.¹²

Just as I am changing my tune here with regard to the line “real families against the family” (a distillation I started offering audiences of the thesis of *Full Surrogacy Now*, which Haraway generously read), Haraway’s recent work on “making kin” is a departure from her own conclusions—above—about the material semiotics of kinship. Not for the first time, I am plumping for the earlier Haraway.¹³

The kinship-value, despite its potentially radical aspiration to encompass the whole world and all the beings in it, is functionally unusable, I think. It is, in the current moment, just a cute frontispiece over the family. When you drill down into it, *blood being thicker than water* is always and perhaps inevitably kin-talk’s central referent and underlying metaphor. Thus, I submit, taking family abolitionism seriously requires a serious and concerted effort to loosen, unseat, and unlearn the thought, practice, and language of “kinship.” It is a simple argument, and one others before me have expressed more pithily: “It is the belief that kinship, love and having nice things to eat are naturally and inevitably bound up together that makes it hard to imagine a world in which ‘family’ plays little part.”¹⁴ These, as you may know already, are the words of Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, whose tremendous answer to the question “What would you put in the place of the family?” was, simply: “Nothing.”

If we hold hands, we can certainly be brave enough to step into the abundance that will be the nothingness that comes after the family.

La Buse, “A Call to End the Logic of Financial Aid and to Guarantee Income Continuity for All Art Workers,” trans. Katia Porro, 2021.

A Call to End the Logic of Financial Aid and to Guarantee Income Continuity for All Art Workers

Disseminating Structures, Spread the Word!

Last spring we published a statement, “Let’s not support artists, let’s pay art workers!” in response to the statement published by directors of French art institutions entitled “The Art World Unites / # Let’s Support Contemporary Artists.”

In the latter, those who wrote the letter asked the state to increase the acquisition budgets for museum and Frac (French regional contemporary art collections financed by the state) collections; for more money to “support” research and production; for “material assistance” for recently graduated art students; an increased budget for public art commissions; and finally, “a real status for artists-authors.”¹

– In our response, we demonstrated that only 0.6% of artists are concerned by the acquisition of artworks², and that putting artists-authors in a category of people to help incites the lack of recognition for the work that is done. This also leads to the multiplication of complex grants that very few artists-authors, in the end, benefit from. To really support artists, it is necessary to recognise the value of the work they produce. This could be achieved by the improvement of the existing status and the rights it offers.

Our statement thus proposed a set of specific actions to offer new rights – such as an unemployment insurance system – to self-employed art workers. The status that we have envisioned includes a plan for income continuity and rights within professional engagements. We proposed that it could be financed not only by increasing the laughable contribution that disseminating structures – that is to say, the structures (museums, art centres, galleries, etc.) that contribute to the circulation of artworks – currently pay when they solicit

the work of artists-authors in France (1.1% of the gross remuneration, against 46% of employer contributions in the entertainment sector).

Following the publication of our article, we met with disseminating structures wishing to “support” artists as we also submitted our proposal to them. Many confided that they had no power in implementing such measures, nor could they defend such measures before elected officials because public cultural institutions (as well as the people who run them) are they themselves struggling. In parallel to our conversations with various disseminating structures, we have also met with the financing entities (the Ministry of Culture, the DRAC – the state’s regional branches managing cultural affairs) who state that there is nothing they can do because they are subject to the decisions made by the Ministry of Finance.

– Meanwhile, the Ministry of Culture announced to the trade unions its next particularly reticent actions for the visual arts sector that would only benefit a limited number of people: a project for the transfer of rights so that artists can be remunerated during future exhibitions of works acquired by public collections, the dissemination of recommendations for remuneration in museums, etc.

Our proposal has nevertheless resonated with certain political groups such as France Insoumise (FI), and more specifically with members of the French Communist Party (PCF). For several months, a task force has been imagining a bill to propose replacement income for artists-authors. The text is to be presented before the National Assembly soon. We would thus like to take advantage of these parliamentary debates to call on disseminating structures to reconsider their involvement with art workers, to support the implementation of a real status for art workers and to promote our initiative.

→

1 A literal translation of the French term “artistes-auteurs” which is applied to all creators (visual artists, writers, translators, curators, designers, and so forth).

2 Figures from public acquisitions of artworks (CNAP and FRAC) in 2019.

Work, in General...

Today, the economic conditions of artistic practice remain catastrophic, particularly in the field of visual arts. If the people working in institutions are for the most part protected by common law, visual artists and people of similar professions (art handlers, curators, critics, mediators, translators, etc.) have very little social protection and are subjected either to the uncertainties of an unequal market or to the hunt for funding which, although public, remains part of the neoliberal logic of the “project”.

Thus, a massive financial precariousness exists within these sectors, the extent of which can surprise even specialists of the subject: 48% of visual artists earn less than 5,000 euros a year with their artistic revenue; or 52% if we were to consider women only. If we add up all of their resources, including those outside the field of art (employment, day jobs, pensions, social assistance, annuity, etc.), their median annual income amounts to 15,000 euros for men and 10,000 euros for women³.

A majority of artists are thus well below the poverty line. At the beginning of the health crisis, many workers could not even declare a sufficient income to benefit from COVID relief efforts.

COVID Relief Efforts: When a Capitalist Government Spreads the Idea of Income Continuity in Spite of Itself

Waged and self-employed works have nevertheless experienced income continuity outside of the workplace during the lockdown. The rare artists-authors that received COVID relief funding also thus learned that their work has value in its own right, beyond the possibility of selling or distributing it through art institutions. Some artists have been able to conduct their

research with a regular income, whereas in the normal course of events, anything peripheral to sales or commissions is rarely considered worthy of remuneration.

– Are artists-authors thus workers who deserve recognition and remuneration, but only temporarily, during a crisis? It is urgent to shift the perspective: during the pandemic, too many artists-authors have been forgotten by the “whatever it takes”⁴ attitude, and too few benefit from the basic rights of social protection. How can we facilitate access and develop the status of independent art workers?

What We Have, What We Want

Since the end of the 1970s, artists-authors have had a social security system linked to the general system, which means that they have employee rights. Yet, their income comes from intellectual property (copyright) and freelance work (fees). To calculate their benefits, social security converts their income into a volume of hours based on minimum wage. This is called financial equivalence.

Example: today the gross hourly rate is 10.48 euros. An illustrator earning 8,000 euros in 2021 would thus be able to claim 763 hours based on minimum wage.⁵ Thanks to this conversion, the social security system establishes an entry threshold and gives independent workers the same rights as employed workers have.

When speaking of an unemployment insurance system for artists-authors, certain people involved as well as certain heads of cultural institutions respond by saying that it is not possible because they are paid by the hour. According to a popular belief, artists-authors could not enter a system such as the intermittent workers system⁶, where access is conditional on the validation of a number of hours (to date, 507 over

³ Bruno Racine, “The Author and the Act of Creation”, 2019, p. 25.

⁴ Only 15 to 20% of artists-authors have had access to COVID relief efforts (all measures combined: solidarity fund for small businesses, emergency aid from the CNAP and the CNL, etc.).

⁵ $8,000/10.48 = 763.36$.

⁶ In French, intermittence refers to the system adapted by the entertainment industry for intermittent workers (actors, singers, costume designers, and so forth). The individuals working within this system are considered as “intermittent-es du spectacle”, literally meaning “intermittent workers in show business”.

the last 12 months). In fact, this objection stems from a misunderstanding of how the social security system works, which already converts our income into a volume of hours. – Currently, artists-authors contribute 16% of their earnings to the social security system.⁷ Disseminating structures pay an additional contribution of 1.1% of gross earnings. These contributions give the right to health insurance from the first euro received, as well as four quarters of retirement and sick and maternity leave from 6,000 euros of annual income. However, regardless of their income, artists-authors have no benefits in case of work accident or work-related illness, nor do they benefit from unemployment insurance. With such high entry thresholds and low benefits, social coverage for artists is substandard and the contribution is unpopular.

In our proposal, rights would be more accessible and the disseminating structures would be required to contribute more. Artists-authors would thus contribute 17% of their earnings whereas disseminating structures would contribute 5.15% of gross earnings.⁸ For every 100 euros of income, an artist-author would pay 17 euros in contributions to which their disseminating structure would add 5.15 euros.⁹ Thanks to these contributions, they would have access to health insurance from the first euro received, as well as to all other rights from 3,000 euros of annual income (revenue): insurance for unemployment, worker's compensation and work-related illness; full retirement, sick leave and maternity leave.

A Major New Feature: Income Would No Longer Be Based Solely On Sales and Fees

In addition to facilitating access to current rights and beginning to recognize work-related accidents and illnesses, the new feature of our proposal is the creation of an unemployment insurance system designed

as a right to income continuity. Between two sales or two freelance jobs, our status as workers does not change. Our official status thus must therefore be maintained over time, and an increasingly important part of our income must become a personal right.

Unemployment compensation would be open to all artists-authors whose annual income is equal to 3,000 euros¹⁰, or the equivalent of 286 hours based on minimum wage rates. The amount would be calculated according to the income of the last 12 months and a replacement rate that would allow for a compensation as close as possible to the working wages.

We believe that it is not acceptable that pensions and allowances are below or equal to the poverty line. We therefore propose a minimum monthly compensation of 1,700 euros. This figure corresponds to the minimum wage demanded by the most militant trade unions and to the level of decent income according to the Directorate for Research, Studies, Evaluation and Statistics (DREES).

– We also recommend a maximum compensation of 3,400 euros so that the scale of replacement incomes stays within a ratio of 1 to 2.

Drawing Inspiration from the Intermittent Worker Unemployment Insurance System

These proposals may seem ambitious, but they are based on a system that has a long history, the intermittent workers systems. These already established systems allow us to reconsider the work/income relationship and to affirm that our social identity as workers should not depend on the structurally uncertain nature of work commitments in the cultural field. As our proposal of unemployment insurance is a contestation of the paradigm of employment, it aims to re-politicise our relationship

7 The current contribution rate varies significantly according to the tax system.

8 i.e. 1.1% of current disseminating structures' contribution + 4.05% of unemployment contribution.

9 It should be noted that the disseminating structures' contribution is added to the gross remuneration. It should not be deducted from the gross salary.

10 Article 65 of law n° 2020-935, July 30, 2020 of rectifying finances for 2020 grants a coverage of social contributions to artists-authors whose artistic income is a minimum of 3,000 euros per year – thus recognizing their professionalism.

to work and to go beyond the capitalist understanding that reduces any alternative employment to a logic of aid or charity.

On the contrary, the unemployment insurance that we defend aims to be inspired by the political sense of the intermittent worker unemployment insurance system that considers each person as a full producer of economic value by bringing the principles of self-organisation to a systemic level.

Re-Politicise our Relationship to Work

This movement does not only focus on the symbolically valorised historical figure of the artist-author, but must be extended to all independent art workers (art handlers, curators, critics, mediators, graphic designers, translators, producers, etc.).

More generally, because of its deep political meaning, this movement seems to us to be generalised beyond the cultural sectors: it is associated with all social movements and the innumerable professional sectors that have been rallying for decades to fight against a precariousness that, under the blows of the neoliberal “reforms”, extends to the heart of traditional employment. We are thus convinced that a seemingly sectoral movement could in fact allow for a broader rethinking of the very notion of “work”, whose definition should not be pre-empted by a restricted social group whose favours should be begged. We imagine this reassessment as both a point of convergence of struggles and an unavoidable stake if we want to respond to the various emergencies that we face.

La BUSE

SNAP-CGT (National Union of Visual Artists-General Confederation of Labour)

STAA (Union of the Artists-Authors Workers)

SNÉAD-CGT (National Union of Art and Design Schools-General Confederation of Labour)

SUD Culture Solidaires (Solidarity, Unity and Democracy)

Translated by Katia Porro.

→ To sign our statement and see the diagrams, visit <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/la-buse/blog/221221/garantir-un-droit-la-continuite-du-revenu-aux-travailleuses-de-l-art-0>

→ Or scan this:



→ More to read on www.la-buse.org

Introduction to Writing for Post-MoMA Futures, Part I

This dossier of materials is the first installation of [Writing for Post-MoMA Futures](#), a collaborative project with the Verso blog intended to build the intellectual and relational infrastructure of the [Strike MoMA](#) initiative over the course of the Ten Weeks of Action and beyond. The release of the dossier is a real-time contribution to Week 4 of this initiative, and is interwoven with two other events this week. The first is a conversation (included below) between Ariella Azoulay, Shellyne Rodriguez, Dalaeja Foreman, and Nitasha Dhillon about the task of what Azoulay calls “abolishing MoMA” and its significance for collective liberation struggles beyond the art system. The second is the [Ruins of Modernity Tour](#), which gets under way just as this dossier goes live. Conceived as a direct action, the tour will lead from Columbus Circle to MoMA and represents an escalation and intensification of the Strike MoMa initiative.

This dossier assembles a variety of movement-generated writings by organizers, artists, scholars, and educators, blurring the boundary between these roles. Included here are outlines of Strike MoMA working groups, movement analysis, poetic texts, and theoretical interventions. These materials present a variety of forms, aesthetics, and emphases. What brings them together is that they share Strike MoMa: Framework and Terms for Struggle document as a horizon, embracing its call to imagine and enact the dismantling of MoMa with a diversity of tactics and visions. These materials have been produced within and for the movement spaces that have been opened since the release of that document on March 23, including the [weekly pop-up de-occupation](#) at Post-MoMA plaza across from the museum and its parallel online gathering for those unable to be there physically. In

other words, these texts are operational and time-specific interventions that are helping to cultivate, deepen, and strengthen the emerging Strike MoMA formation as it grows. This common ethos and relational affinity is what binds them as an editorial assemblage, and together they establish the beginnings of a collective conversation that will unfold in later phases of *Writing For Post-MoMA Futures*, as well as forthcoming iterations of the Ruins of Modernity tour in coming weeks.

On April 23, an [email was sent by Strike MoMa organizers to MoMA Director Glenn Lowry](#) announcing their intent to bring the Ruins of Modernity Tour into the museum. In the email, they address a letter sent to staff by Lowry (and subsequently leaked by workers) in which he charges that Strike MoMA's motivation is to "destroy the museum." In response, organizers write:

Your attempt to conflate striking MoMA with "destruction" amounts to fear mongering, as if it were us, rather than the oligarchs, who embody a threat to culture, art, and society. MoMA has been a mechanism of destruction since its inception with the Rockefellers. Its claims for enlightenment and progress have always been in ruins; we are heightening this condition and its related contradictions. You invoke "the museum" as if it were a homogenous community with a unified interest; but everyone knows it is a site of class struggle and riven with antagonisms, however many reassuring emails you send or conversations you have with staff. The MoMA regime is a system of power and wealth that harms people, that uses art as an instrument of accumulation, and that makes empty appeals to what you call "the public good" while covering for billionaires like Leon Black, Larry Fink, and Jerry Speyer, whose names have become synonymous with patriarchal violence, the carceral state, climate destruction, neo-feudal landlordism, and direct support for the NYPD Foundation. Disassemble, dismantle, abolish. All these verbs apply when we are

talking about destroying an apparatus of violence so that something else can emerge, something controlled by workers, communities, and artists rather than oligarchs.

Lowry's fear mongering is to be expected given that Strike MoMA directly threatens the MoMA regime he is tasked with managing. However, his invocation of "destruction" finds echoes in a more diffuse sense of cognitive dissonance percolating across the art system, as when we overhear the idea that Strike MoMa is aiming to "cancel" MoMA in the manner of a disgraced celebrity. The current movement strikes at the core of the art system. The struggle against settler institutions like the museum and the university is unsettling to all of our ways of being. For many artists, critics, curators, it is difficult to divest from an institution that has convinced the world of its necessity and permanence, and around which many professional profiles revolve. As stated in the Strike MoMa document, striking MoMA is not about moralizing from a place of purity. It is about "heightening contradictions" to the point that the apparatus breaks down so that something else can emerge, something based in values of care, generosity, and cooperation rather than property, profit, and imperial plunder.

Seeing the continuities between imperialism and the contemporary museum becomes all the more resonant in light of a recent development at MoMA that follows on the heels of the announcement of the tour by Strike MoMa. This past Tuesday, after months of silence from MoMA, it was officially announced that Leon Black's replacement will be Marie-Josée Kravis, a long-time board MoMA board member. As Strike MoMA put it in a statement released to journalists on April 28 in advance of the Ruins of Modernity Tour:

The replacement of Leon Black by Marie-Josée Kravis is a game of musical chairs. For us, the issue is not one bad board member. They are all part of the same "interlocking directorate" whose violence is

accumulated in the very structure of the museum and the power grid of the city surrounding it. Kravis is deeply involved in a network of think tanks that make up the intellectual and operational infrastructure of the global ruling class. She is the vice Chair and Senior Fellow of the right-wing [Hudson Institute](#), started by Rand Corporation executives and connected to the Institute For Advanced Study in Princeton. It has given awards to figures including Ronald Reagan, Henry Kissinger, Benjamin Netanyahu, Paul Ryan, Marco Rubio, and Vice President Mike Pence. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderberg Group, and is active as Chairwoman Emeritus of the [Economic Club of New York](#). This elite planning body hosted a nationally-televised speech by Donald Trump in 2019, and Kravis [personally introduced](#) a speech by Trump's Secretary of State Mike Pompeo less than a year ago. At this level of the power elite, ideological lines between liberals and Trumpists break down. It is about consolidating ruling class governance in the face of heightening contradictions. The profile of Kravis only adds to the case against MoMA. Her name now appears in the limelight alongside better-known board members like Larry Fink, CEO of Blackrock and supporter of the New York City Police Foundation, and [Glenn Dubin](#), the hedge fund billionaire who has been explicitly named as a participant in Epstein's inner circle of sexual abuse on his private Caribbean island. The election of Kravis to the head of the board makes the stakes of striking MoMA all the more clear for our communities and movements for collective liberation.

The Writing for Post-MoMA Futures project is woven into the work of organizing against the forces of death and destruction represented by a figure like Kravis and her affiliated institutions. The materials appearing here and in future iterations are concrete contributions to developing the framework for what it means to simultaneously exit the apparatus of MoMA while imagining and building counter-institutions. They point in the direction of Phase 2 of Strike MoMA, which will unfold later this year with a Convening for a Just Transition to Post-MoMa Futures.

The Art of Maiming: A Research Working Group (text by Jasbir K. Puar, working group member)

The research-intensive working group is focused on excavating and exposing the circuits of capital that make the Settler Museum possible. Through our research we intend to unravel these circuits to reveal and imagine other ways of being in relation. Warren Kanders (Whitney/Safariland), Leon Black (MOMA/Jeffrey Epstein), and Darren Walker (Ford Foundation/"humane" jails) have been rendered monstrous exceptions or benevolent "best of" capitalists in a system that relies on the wealthy washing their money through philanthropic arenas and institutions. In actuality, none of these philanthropists are exceptional. Rather their profit-making practices and ideological orientations to capitalism and exploitation are normative, typical, expected, lauded, and justified as the only way to create urban spaces of cultural value. There is much more work to be done to unearth these carceral assemblages of the settler museum, board of director members, benefactors, and the industries that make money for philanthropists: "humane" weapons manufacturing companies; housing and business development projects that gentrify neighborhoods and fracture communities; support of building more prisons; Zionist efforts to suppress freedom of speech on Palestine; liaisons with sexual predators and violent "white collar" criminals; corporate corruption and malfeasance.

As a methodological approach we refuse to accept the mystification of capitalist exploitation presented by the lexicon of financialization. We labor in tandem with the Strike MOMA Working Group in the spirit of not only decolonial and abolitionist *futures* but decolonization and abolition *now*. This research is necessary tactically, to use as leverage in the media and for impact, to disseminate information in order to discredit and to educate, to demand acknowledgement of the great harms of these institutions, and to execute certain actions to solicit their dismantling. This research is in concert with movement pedagogy that seeks to unsettle everything.

In short, we do not need profit from war, economies of maiming and death, labor exploitation, land grabs, settler colonialism, and the prison industrial complex in order to have sustainable, nourishing, representative, and accessible artistic work grounded in community needs and desires.

Andreas Petrossiants and Jose Rosales, Is the Museum Obsolete?

Advocating a position that sees the “material world” as more necessary for changing social relations than the ossified aesthetic regimes of art, Guy Debord wrote something to the effect of: that which changes our way of seeing the street is more important than that which changes our way of seeing a work of art. On its face, this Situationist provocation is an invitation to reject participation in the art system and to upend social relations embodied *in* the street—that is, a space of revolt, of riot, of looting, and perhaps, of critique. However, if read in the context of Strike MoMA—a durational period of collective action fostering a space

from which to imagine the mechanics of post-MoMA futures—another meaning emerges. It becomes a call for the abandonment of the illusory supposition of art’s autonomy from labor or political economy, from the street. Or, to use the terms of the Strike MoMA Working Group, it is an invitation to engage in a “diversity of aesthetics.”

After decades of political antagonism that has taken the museum as a site of contestation, whether through the artwork or otherwise, it is more widely understood that the museum is not an institution that should be reformed, re-staffed, or even critiqued, but rather one that has failed its historical claims to curating art and publics. Even Daniel Buren, a central progenitor of institutional critique—the historical precedence for art that explicitly targets the museum in the artwork itself—wrote in his canonical 1970 text [“Function of the Museum”](#) that the museum’s historical role has always been “a careful camouflage undertaken by the prevalent bourgeois ideology, assisted by the artists themselves.”

Following after decades of the institution folding critical art into a performative self-reflexivity, Marina Vishmidt argues that much critical artistic practice today functions as a kind of “reconciled realpolitik not all that different from the kind that anointed liberal democracy as the least-worst form of government still standing after everything else has ostensibly been tried.” In light of this, we also see that beginning in the late 60s, if not earlier, a shared sensibility began to establish itself among various, dissident currents of the left paralleled by critiques of the art system: the rejection of the inherited institutions of historical communism including the union, the worker’s council, cultural propaganda in the service of building class consciousness, the party-form, or the state itself. In other words, in certain spheres of militant theory and art practice, there emerged coterminous rejections of the museum and the organizational forms characteristic of previous cycles of struggle.

The task now is to continue developing strategies and tactics “inside” and “outside” of the museum to unravel its connections to global systems of violence; to do this means to cease being precious about our movements or our institutions, and to acknowledge that to abolish capitalism, the police, and settler colonialism may also mean to abolish the foundational terms of the modern museum as such—what has historically been a receptacle for the spoils of colonial looting on the one hand and a vehicle for legitimizing nationalist prestige on the other. That said, if we do in fact acknowledge that the boundary between the street and the museum (or the political party, the supermarket, the airport) is a false one, then on the level of strategy, we can also ask: when is it better to look out and see the street and when better to maintain the illusory spaces of (aesthetic) autonomy? How to enter or exit the spaces and functions of the institution and act in such a way that cannot be recuperated, or wherein the recuperation is beneficial to abolition and struggle?

Over the last few months, we have been thinking with comrades and friends about similar questions. In solidarity with the Strike MoMA initiative, the ten week pop-up de-occupation taking place across from the museum, and MoMA workers, we would like to share the three lines of inquiry for collective research that we have been following (the results of which will be published as individual pamphlets in the coming months).

Inside and Outside, an Infrastructural Critique

In some recent organizing efforts targeting cultural institutions for their material connections to the carceral and surveillance apparatuses, to displacement, to occupation and (neo)colonial violence, an important characteristic has been the involvement of organizers and militants from outside the realms of cultural production. Contrary to efforts in the past, many of these recent struggles have attempted to delegitimize the boundaries between ostensibly autonomous art and other forms of waged or unwaged labor and their incumbent forms of exploitation,

even as they strategically abide by them when necessary. With that in mind, where can we isolate spaces conducive to collectivity, and do they need to respect the lines sketched by power and its opposition? How can groups activate the MTL+ collective's call for an “arts of escalation” in and out of those realms considered part of the art system?

Value and the Destituent Potential of the Human Strike

Could Mario Tronti's claim that the working class is simultaneously the articulation and dissolution of capital be rephrased for thinking cultural production and cultural workers, even as art production is falsely considered to be an exceptional form of work? Insofar as value remains a fundamental social relation, ever efficient at recuperating activity, it gives the lie to the relative autonomy of the aesthetic as a privileged type of activity under capital. From what we have seen thus far, the various attempts to reappropriate its institutions have shown themselves to be short-lived at best, reactionary at worst. If that's the case, then the question would be what to do with that social relation, value, and how to abolish it?

Looting (convened by Vicky Osterweil)

Of the various images from Nanni Balestrini's reconstruction of NYC and Italy in 1977, it is the scene of a fifty year-old woman who, upon entering a store, announces that “today she shops for free” that remains especially dear to us; if second only to the poem's autonomist refrain: “we're going to take what we want and what we want is what we need.” Balestrini's poetic dictum of want and need was renewed during the George Floyd Rebellions of last summer. In a video from an “autonomous zone” in Minneapolis, someone says: “people just came and shopped for free.” No longer valuable given their subtraction from exchange, and no longer useful vis-a-vis the requirements of the production process, commodities are devalorized and their functions recomposed. In the spheres of art's custodianship especially, the value of art has historically been produced through the colonial looting and violence of Western capital. How then, to loot back without enshrining

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art's value? If only to prove the anarchist dictum that property is in fact, and has always been, theft—and though the ideologies of modern art have attended to art's exceptionality to/in capitalism—the foundations of modern art in Indigenous and working class dispossession make that exceptionality seem overstated at best. Given this historical context, could we say that looting is the theft of property that no longer presupposes the property-form?

*

The legacy of Adorno's claim to the problematic nature of the autonomy of art finds echoes in the neoliberal art world today, one that agrees with critical positions so long as they are articulated mimetically. In his 2018 remarks, director of the Whitney Museum Adam Weinberg defended (former) vice chair of the board Warren Kanders, notwithstanding his career as an investor and weapons manufacturer, as follows: "Even as we are *idealistic* and missionary in our belief in artists ... the Whitney is first and foremost a museum. It cannot right all the ills of an unjust world, nor is that its role. Yet, I contend that the Whitney has a critical and urgent part to play in *making sure that unheard and unwanted voices are recognized.*" (The italics are ours) Today, Glenn Lowry employs a similar counterinsurgent tactic to discredit Strike MoMA, pointing to the museum's commitments to "equity, diversity, and inclusion."

The irony of this PR strategy—to open MoMA's archives and wallets to historically oppressed and marginalized communities from whose exploitation they have also profited—is not lost on us. If only for the simple fact that the museum's staff is already diverse, though many of those workers of color are concentrated in security, sanitation, and human resources. MoMA appears to be making the preparations necessary for the terms and stakes of this confrontation, wherein talks of diversity are but one element in a strategy of counter-insurgency. Seeing that decolonization is not a discourse on the universal, and that

there is little point in engaging in a debate with MoMA's current stewards, we détourn Marx and Engels in reply:

You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with *your* property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend. Just as you view the disappearance of class property as the disappearance of aesthetic production itself, so the disappearance of class culture is, for you, identical with the disappearance of all culture. What you call culture is simply the place where power always finds accomplices.

Communique from Comandante Scream #1

Communique from Comandante Scream #2

Strike Modernity

Reproduction

Other than artistic practice, reproductive labour is great, has managed to penetrate the everyday, it is the every day. Existing means being produced, means being reproduced. Like art, reproductive labour is glorified, romanticized and underpaid. Is this a productive alliance: art (mimetic reproduction) and reproductive labour (genetic and poetic)? If reproduction is only associated with care and the only question is how to compensate it, to the trash.

Can domestic exploitation, be used to analyze intersections with other relations of domination?

Based on the polysemic understanding of reproduction: mimetic reproduction (copy, symbolic, art); genetic reproduction (survival, every-day tasks, domestic labor); poetic reproduction (conscious, habit, plan), would the interruption of repetition mean emancipation? Is the revolutionary potential (discontinuity of the work process and subversion, here the refusal of the masses, general strike) a useful outlook in general? Puhhh, general strike and subversion... is this where we end up again?

Beyond the analogy between “domestic salary” and “artistic salary”

The recognition of art as labour should be taken for granted. The question is if it is worth to make artists' remuneration the center of our attention? Why is Aurélien Catin particularly asking for artistic salary (based in Bernard Friot's concept of domestic salary)? And why should it spread from there of all places?

Abolitionisms

Idealism actualized. Demystify and clarify perspectives of abolition, replacement and elimination. Approaches, methods and strategies applied. There are several interpretations/ translations of abolitionist approaches depending on their respective leaning towards either a more voluntarist or non-voluntarist plan of action.

Family/art

As a breeding ground for possessive individuation and corporatist consensus groupings of solidarity, actors in the field of visual arts should be perceived as members of a naturally corrupt private household. A family where authentically grown values and organically evolved community norms replace deliberate acts of will and social justice. A house locked from the inside, where pre-existing opinions govern and creativity only emerges spontaneously. With the canteen and the elderly home, for example, alternative models exist, that aim for rationalization rather than mere remuneration.

<i>abschaffen</i> (to eliminate)	<i>aufheben</i> (to cancel out, to annul, to keep)	<i>absterben</i> (to die off)
voluntarism		non-voluntarism
“active”		“inactive”
undo		crisis theory
anarchist		socialist/marxist
individual		collective
anti-institution/state bashing		
reformist		revolutionary
canteen and elderly home		

¹ Preparatory notes by Program – 23 on the occasion of June 15, 2024.