

# REVIEW

Art and Politics in the  
Age of Enterprise Culture  
GREGORY SHOLLETTE

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# GLUT, OVERPRODUCTION, REDUNDANCY!

What is neoliberalism? A programme for destroying collective structures which may impede the pure market logic.

Pierre Bourdieu<sup>1</sup>

## Glut

The glut of art and artists is “the normal condition of the art market,” Carol Duncan commented in 1983.<sup>2</sup> More than 20 years later a 2005 Rand Corporation study of visual artists in the United States updated her observations, describing an even more unsettling picture of the art world. Its key finding was that although the number of artists had greatly increased in recent decades, the hierarchy among artists, “always evident, appears to have become increasingly stratified, as has their earnings prospects.” The report goes on to add that although a few “superstars” at the top of this economic pyramid “sell their work for hundreds of thousands and occasionally millions of dollars, the vast majority of visual artists often struggle to make a living from the sale of their work and typically earn a substantial portion of their income from non-arts employment.”<sup>3</sup> Certainly, if post-modernism has taught us anything is it not that individual authorship should be viewed with intellectual suspicion? Why, then, more than 40 years after Barthes’ legendary essay “Death of the Author,” does the Rand Corporation report reveal increasing art world disparities based on the success of “a few”? Several important questions flow from these observations. First, if the oversupply of artistic labor is an enduring and commonplace feature of artistic production, then the art world must inevitably draw some specific, material benefit from this redundant workforce. Second, the fact that inequality between artist producers has become increasingly evident in recent years suggests that processes of deregulation and privatization within the broader enterprise economy directly affect the working conditions of artists.<sup>4</sup> What possible consequences would result from a mutiny within the global art factory? That is to say, if this inert surfeit of cultural production were to mobilize itself in opposition to the exclusionary mechanisms of the art market? First it would need to awake to the fact that its seemingly natural condition of underdevelopment is contingent, constructed, and that its invisible status renders the efforts of most artists no different from that of the joyful labor of the hobbyist, amateur,

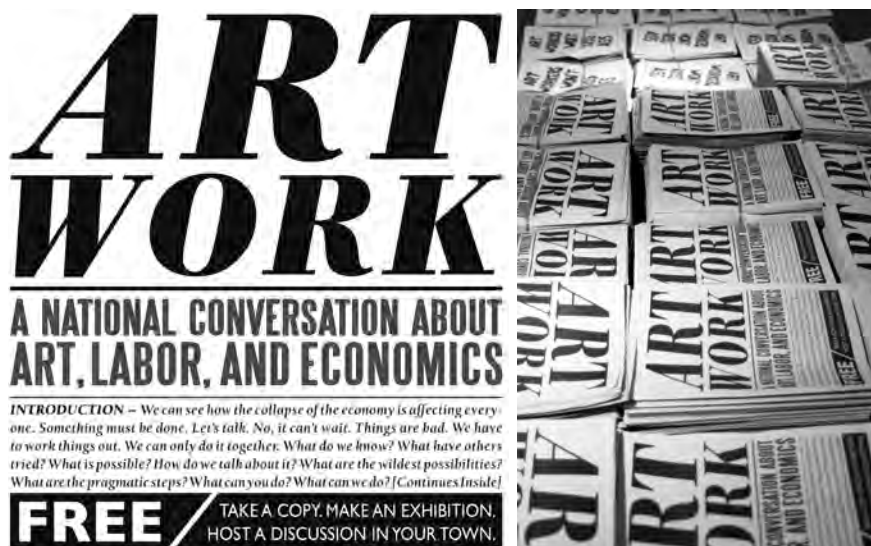


or Sunday painter. We appear to be far from witnessing some general art strike today. Still, conditions for unprecedented self-organization are readily available to artists as an increasing number of professional cultural producers turn to social networking sites, online art galleries, and individual webpages as a way of directly distributing images and information about their work. It is a trend that follows the actions of informal artists who have joined such DIY exhibition platforms as deviantART and Elfwood in the millions over the past decade. What would it take to politicize this dark mass of redundant cultural production and what might this politics look like? One thing is clear: thus far, in spite of a burgeoning wave of newly minted talent fresh from art schools and universities with direct access to the means of self-representation, the familiar, pyramidal structure of the high culture industry has not only been unfazed, it appears to have become more entrenched than ever before. Of even greater concern is the degree to which this business as usual appears to be de-politicizing the longstanding role of the artist as a force of independent social criticism.

In her breakthrough study of the visual arts during the rise of neoliberal enterprise culture, art historian Chin-tao Wu concludes that corporate intervention into the world of art has radically altered the way museums, government cultural programs, and other public institutions operate.<sup>5</sup> The shift towards privatization also affects the content of art, as well as the working conditions of artists. Corporations are not known for their support of controversial political work for example, and the exaggerated differences between a few successful artists and all others reported by Rand appears to reflect the ultra-competitive rules of business, as opposed to the collaborative networking of culture. Wu does not dismiss the longstanding involvement artists have always had with capitalist markets; she does however suggest a qualitative shift has occurred in the current neoliberal economy. As complicated and controversial as public arts funding was prior to the 1980s, by enclosing culture within their private business interests global corporations have since “reframed the space and redefined discourse on contemporary art.” What then to make of the fact that an increasing number of individuals now identify themselves as “artists” in such an entrepreneurial environment?<sup>6</sup> Is it possible that this enterprise culture has so de-radicalized artists that something approaching an historic compromise or *détente* is taking shape whereby artists gain improved social legitimacy within the neoliberal economy while capital gains a profitable cultural paradigm in which to promote a new work ethic of creativity and personal risk-taking? Far from merely an academic question the possibility of an historic collaboration between art and capital holds out serious consequences for anyone who believes artistic production should retain some degree of autonomy from the market, or that cultural work is more than just instrumental labor, or most urgently of all that it is the historic mission of art to fearlessly engage in social dissent.

## Overproduction

That the art world is awash in surplus labor is not a startling insight. Tens of thousands of individuals now have undergraduate or graduate degrees in fine art. Their webpages complete with project descriptions, résumés, contact information, and blogs are spread across the World Wide Web like leaves after a storm. A few commercial entities have begun indexing these sites for a fee, however it is The Saatchi Gallery that has developed the most comprehensive online art platform providing artists with free digital space for their work (jpgs and videos), but also investing in the future of this lucrative industry by appealing directly to art students. According to information on the site some 120,000 artists and art students use their services worldwide. Saatchi takes no commissions for any sales made through its website, and boasts that since launching the platform in 2006 some 130 million dollars in transactions have taken place. The number is difficult to believe. As far as can be ascertained, cyberspace has yet to launch the career of any previously unknown artist into stardom. Most serious Internet sales appear to be backed by the legitimating collateral of a respected art dealer and physical gallery space. One noteworthy alternative model of autonomous online repre-



Artists have historically self-organized in response to their own precariousness; a recent example is *Art Work*, a newspaper and accompanying website published by Temporary Services with writings about the effects of the current economic collapse on artists' working conditions. The newspaper is available online and from Half Letter Press in Chicago and has been distributed for free in over a dozen cities around the world since September 2009; see [www.artandwork.us/tag/temporary-services](http://www.artandwork.us/tag/temporary-services). Images courtesy Temporary Services.

sentation is Justseeds.org, a cooperative web platform made up of left-leaning artists from Canada, Mexico, and across the United States (although primarily from the west coast and Midwest). Thematically focused on issues of social justice and anarchist history, Just Seeds artists produce “traditional” graphic works—silk-screen posters, spray painted stencils, even linoleum block prints. The pieces are displayed as digital images on the website and sell for modest prices, often between 10 and 75 dollars. As if illustrating the long-tail theory of retailing in which numerous specialized interests form a proportionally larger consumer base than that of mainstream buyers, Just Seeds’ tiny sales add up to at least enough to sustain both the website and provide a partial income stream for participants.<sup>7</sup> Despite the simplicity of this model, made all the more effortless thanks to the Internet, such cooperation is still rare among contemporary artists. Instead, the growing army of surplus art producers apparently prefer to survive by helping to reproduce the familiar hierarchies of the art world, the same symbolic and fiscal economic system that guarantees most of them will fail.

Some redundant cultural workers are employed by the mega-studios of successful artists. Inside these art factories they might sand and polish resin-cast sculptures or even paint entire canvases, often doing so for little more than the minimum wage.<sup>8</sup> A growing number of these “art extras” operate out of cultural Bantustans surrounding the invisible municipality of the mainstream global art world. In the 1990s New York City’s art center shifted away from the downtown scene in SoHo to its present location in “Chelsea” on Manhattan’s West Side. But unlike the SoHo that was initially colonized by artists in the 1960s, Chelsea, according to sociologists David Halle and Elisabeth Tiso, represents “the triumph of the commercial gallery system as a mode of showing and distributing art.”<sup>9</sup> Practically speaking, few artists can afford to live or work anywhere near this exhibition machinery. Affordable studio space has migrated outwards, away from where the established gatekeeper galleries, museums, curators, and critics are concentrated. The actual production of art has come to resemble a form of outsourced manufacturing or “just in time” creativity. The structural partitioning of the culture industry is not limited to New York City. German sociologist Melanie Fasche points out that while 50 percent of the artworks ultimately shown at *Documenta 12* and the 2007 Venice Biennale were produced in Berlin, very little of this work is actually exhibited in Berlin itself. The city has become a “production site” for the manufacture of contemporary art that is shown elsewhere. Along similar lines, French sociologist Alain Quemin’s research into France’s participation in the global art world came as a shock to that nation’s cultural elite when he reported that despite the flow of artists and art institutions between an increasing number of global museums and art biennials around the globe, the majority of artists and the capital (actual and cultural) associated with contemporary art remain concentrated in the US, the UK, and Germany.<sup>10</sup> Which

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is to say that even as art production appears increasingly distributed in time and space, the processes of cultural valorization remain tied to New York, London, and Berlin. Meanwhile, the majority of professionally trained artists go on reproducing this state of affairs, despite their guaranteed exile from its inner circle.

If the art world still typically represents itself as a top-down process with the cream rising and the dross settling, it effectively functions the other way around, from the bottom-up. For what the Rand Corporation does not report, or cannot acknowledge, is that unlike other professions the art industry *must* ghettoize the majority of its qualified participants in order to generate artistic value. But this dark surplus creativity does not function to lower artistic labor costs or the price of artistic goods, as in Marx's classic formula. Rather, the army of under and semi-employed cultural workers performs a price-enhancing role, though only with regard to a limited number of artworks by a select group of artists whose labor is in turn lavishly rewarded. All the while, as we have seen, these many "invisibles" help reproduce the art world through their purchase of art supplies, journal subscriptions, museum memberships, teaching assignments, but also their informal conversation and gossip, which reasserts the status of leading art brands at openings, on blog sites, at parties, and so forth. Furthermore, as Marcelo Expósito points out, this upwardly distributed art factory system does not extract value on a limited basis as do traditional forms of employment, but does so intensively, continuously, by requiring nonstop forms of "self-educating, training or testing, preparation, production, and so on," all of which are carried out without remuneration.<sup>11</sup> The majority of art world participants are in fact being groomed for failure through a managed system of political (small "p") underdevelopment. Only those who believe that talent (like noble birth) inevitably determines one's individual fortune would describe this as natural. And yet that is typically how the art market is described, as a natural economy in which truly gifted artists are rewarded. What would be necessary to see this the other way around? For one thing it might mean that those who exceptionally succeed become a sort of footnote to a broader social intelligence or collective talent. Furthermore, the closer the art world gets to some sort of full employment, the more it would incorporate a mass larger than its own ideological construction. That would appear to be a logical impossibility, unless a very different art world was imagined, with a very different dispensation of artistic "real estate."

## The Grammar of Art Worlds

Sociologist Howard S. Becker famously used the plural term *art worlds* to describe the multiple inputs that make possible the production of any work of art (a painting, sculpture, novel, or concert). In the visual, plastic arts this multiplicity includes canvas and paintbrush manufacturers, as well as critics and museum

administrators. Becker insisted that such art worlds have soft and frequently contested boundaries that sometimes allow acts of aesthetic innovation to upset and displace cultural norms and hierarchies. From the vantage point of the early 1980s, when Becker devised his famed formula, he was looking back at a period of substantial public beneficence on the arts in the United States, fueled in large part by an ideological conflict with the Soviet Union and its allies.<sup>12</sup> Federal arts funding peaked in the late 1970s, but not before giving birth to a cluster of artistic institutions that in some cases sought to disengage, or openly contest, the world of art and commerce.<sup>13</sup> Artist Martha Rosler explains that ample government funding in the 1960s and 1970s not only helped spread cultural equality amongst artists, but also expanded cultural support to many smaller American cities wherein prospered “active art scenes that were not oriented toward making (a lot of) money from art.”<sup>14</sup> In New York City a series of “alternative” exhibition spaces emerged including 112 Greene Street, Artists Space, and The Kitchen.<sup>15</sup> While these spaces indeed functioned somewhat autonomously from the established art world they did so largely because of steady funding by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), as Julie Ault has shown.<sup>16</sup> Once the Cold War ended, so did a great deal of public support for this non-market-oriented experimentation. Which is why the art dealer who bluntly explained to Rosler that your either on or off the artworld’s “table” was not exaggerating, but was nonetheless speaking from a decidedly post-1980s perspective.<sup>17</sup>

Today, more than 20 years after the collapse of “actually existing socialism,” and some 30 years after the rise of ultra-free-market capitalism, the art world is inundated with participants yet increasingly devoid of Becker’s pluralistic “s.” Despite a proliferation of international biennials, national museums, gatekeeper galleries, not-for-profit spaces, and commercial art fairs the same acknowledged art luminaries and their proven goods tend to be circulated at all levels of the system. Paradoxically, the contemporary art world is at once more global and yet less varied, more visibly diversified and yet neither porous nor malleable in its aesthetic range. Certainly no single artistic style rules this scene, or, to employ a term popular amongst some younger artists, no single artistic brand holds market supremacy. On the contrary, contemporary art appears indiscriminate in appetite; a maw perpetually opened in uninterrupted consumption as vats of chemicals, butchered animals, dirty mattresses, mass produced commodities, disposable packing tape, cast-off pieces of cardboard, even acts of coitus enter the art world through its specialized showrooms in New York, Los Angeles, London, Berlin, Paris (and, minus the sex, also now in Beijing, Shanghai, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi). Animal, vegetable, mineral: like a steady flock of coarse penitents, the more profane in outer appearance, the greater the artistic yield. For there seems to be one constant leveling everything entering this global cultural matrix: faith

in the institutional art world's ability to drag some aesthetic meaning out like a confession from any object, person, or situation.

In this sense, the contemporary art factory deconstructs and reconstructs the world in its own image and for its own ends much as capital has from the start. In both instances—contemporary art and global financial systems—the level of complexity, number of transactions, and volume of participants makes it all but impossible to disentangle physical products and forces of production (labor plus technology) from regulatory, legal, and discursive practices. In addition, the material and symbolic sides of these economies appear to endlessly amplify each other. Think of the way neoliberal “financialization” entangles material goods, from shoes to genes, seeds, or plumbing supplies, with such intangibles as electromagnetic fields, exotic financial instruments, and intellectual property rights. This is perhaps why someone who collects contemporary art, but who also teaches marketing to MBA students, can confidently assert that the art dealer brand “often becomes a substitute for, and certainly is a reinforcement of, aesthetic judgment.”<sup>18</sup> From this perspective, an era known for its “toxic business assets” is logically epitomized by Damien Hirst's sculpture *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991), a chemically embalmed stuffed shark. And, not surprisingly, the same knotting-together of art and commerce leads some to despair.

Art historian Julian Stallabrass skeptically describes the world of contemporary art as *Art Incorporated*; artist Andrea Fraser caustically insists “It's Art When I Say It's Art”; and historian Chin-tao Wu insists that “while contemporary art, especially in its avant-garde manifestations, is generally assumed to be in rebellion against the system, it actually acquires a seductive commercial appeal within it.”<sup>19</sup> But what if we could set principles aside for a moment? After all, Stallabrass and Wu seem to be applying what some might describe as outmoded ethical standards more in keeping with nineteenth- and twentieth-century notions of “high” art as something exemplary and noble. What if we could re-imagine the conflict pitting producers against proprietors by lifting this age-old struggle out of its moorings in an outmoded essentialist language and reconfiguring it as a horizontal network of scripts and textual articulations? In other words, if we stop expecting art to be a qualitative measure of a civilization's or an artist's deeper spirit or truth, then such aesthetic and ethical complications should disappear. Unlike Becker's bottom-up interpretation of art-making as a collective process, sociologist Olav Velthuis is concerned with the fluid world of art prices at the other end. But top becomes a bottom of sorts as overlapping “cultural constellations” establish aesthetic values through a web of discursive networks made up of gossip, price-setting games, and the exchange of monetary and informational “gifts” between art dealers, collectors, and artist-producers. Becker's *art world* is reborn as a symbolic economy in which all players—gallery owners, patrons,



and artists—now allegedly share “the same business culture.”<sup>20</sup> Perhaps it’s not a coincidence that this description of artistic enterprise culture resembles the ineffable flow of derivatives, puts and calls, and “dark liquidity” that also make up the financialized neoliberal economy.

Velthuis begins by challenging Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital. According to Velthuis, Bourdieu understood art as an economy of symbolic goods that nevertheless ultimately serves to enhance the actual, material wealth of a group or individual.<sup>21</sup> Thus, “real” capital is always concealed within (or exchangeable for) what Bourdieu famously called cultural capital. This “economistic” tendency, writes Velthuis, incorrectly emphasizes old notions such as the forces of production, exchange, accumulation, and the sort of antagonisms between producers and owners (artists and dealers) that hint at an art world version of class politics. Perhaps it is also no coincidence that Velthuis’ description of the contemporary art world as a messy, interconnected discursive field closely resembles Laclau and Mouffe’s radically de-centered field of political antagonism?<sup>22</sup> But the art world is even less antagonistic than this because its many players “visit the same or similar shows, are interested in each other’s gossip and rumors and read the same arts magazines.”<sup>23</sup> And what begins as an analysis of how art is priced morphs into a comment on artistic value in general. Even more unequivocally than the author of the *\$12 Million Stuffed Shark*, Velthuis declares that the sort of detached aesthetic judgment once called for by Immanuel Kant can never be disentangled from the instrumentality of the global art market. Instead, he insists, when it comes to establishing an artwork’s worth, “value and price seem to be entangled in an ongoing dialectic,” and that artistic quality “is avoided explicitly as a direct determinant of price.”<sup>24</sup> Why would anyone seek some mysterious underlying cause and effect for how artistic value comes and goes, rises or falls? We need only look to the language games (expressed in prices) displayed by the market’s social players to discover these answers already exist. The sociologist of prices concludes with a twist on a familiar post-structuralist maxim: there is nothing outside the market.

Velthuis is certainly correct to point out that it is impossible to fully, meaningfully disentangle contemporary art practices from art discourse; both involve production that is always already social, plastic, and unfixed. He is also right to imply that this model is universal, or nearly so. Even those artists who claim to care nothing about the “art world” in New York, London, Berlin, and so forth, or those artists who produce “community-based” projects and installations in small cities and towns, or those who operate collectively at the outermost spatial and geographical regions of the market, still inadvertently play a role within this world. No matter how obscure or seemingly radical one’s creative activity may be there is an avaricious interest at work within the art world’s restricted economy, a hunger not only for the new, but for everything. And this

desire is enhanced today by a prosthesis made up of technologies and protocols such as the Internet, html, various graphic interfaces, email, cell phones and cheap, print-on-demand (POD) publications. You can be sure that at any given moment an essay is being written, a paper delivered, a conference planned, an exhibition curated in which all but the darkest corners of this entangled cultural universe are included, however briefly, or superficially. Velthuis most likely gets this, and yet his particular post-modern interpretation prevents him from drawing the obvious *political* conclusion: that what he calls prices are dependent upon an inherent asymmetry of productive forces in which most artists are transformed into a precarious culture proletariat, gleaning and extracting what value can be wrested from the material and symbolic economy of the actually existing art world. By not challenging the processes through which cultural values are produced, circulated, and accumulated, or seeking to ask by whom and for whom these values (or prices or scripts) are established, the sociologist winds up offering little more than a cheerful bromide for coming to terms with neoliberalism and what appears to be a “natural” situation whose new “Social Darwinian” playbook we are all supposed to accept and happily comply with.

This “naturalized” system of asymmetrical risks and benefits is eerily similar to the theory of desired rates of unemployment proposed by ultra-free-market guru Milton Friedman. Post-depression era efforts at creating full-employment, Friedman argued, led to greater bargaining power amongst workers, which in turn inflated wages and ultimately also the price of all commodities, not just labor. As a result, conservative free market policy makers in the late 1970s and 1980s promoted increasing unemployment through industry deregulation, directly opposing the managed approach to capitalism associated with John Maynard Keynes.<sup>25</sup> But this calculated unemployment inevitably led to increased precariousness amongst workers. It is, insists the Midnight Notes Collective, a disciplinary mechanism aimed not just at stopping the economic redistribution of wealth, but at halting the re-appropriation of social capital underway in the 1960s and 1970s by labor, women, people of color and other minorities. If we compare this system of social discipline in the economy at large with the more limited sphere of the art world some curious similarities emerge. Contrary to the oft-cited canard that artists are too individualistic to work together, we find in the United States alone a substantial history of non-governmental guilds, unions, associations, and collectives organized by artists. Efforts to provide greater employment for art workers in the 1930s, through the Work Progress Administration (WPA), or in the 1960s and 1970s, through the NEA, CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) and Artist in Residency (AIR) programs, led again and again to acts of organized, often militant confrontation in which artists actually demanded even greater autonomy and social security. Their demands included better pay and greater job security from Federally funded programs associated with the WPA, and

the Harlem Artists Guild of 1935 also tackled the issue of race-based discrimination in the government's hiring of artists. Some of these artist-led organizations were wholly independent, others initiated by the Communist Party USA. Although difficult to trace, the organizational tactics developed by the political left during the 1920s and 1930s appear to have had some influence on the thinking of artists groups in the late 1960s and 1970s and perhaps later.

Since then, in the age of neoliberal enterprise culture that has followed the Reagan/Thatcher “revolution,” we find a tremendous lowering of expectations amongst artists and a cooling down of efforts at collective action. Significantly, this trend towards passivity appears about to change once again in the wake of the current economic collapse. Nevertheless, precariousness, or simply “precarity,” has become the “new normal” for workers in the current “jobless recovery.”

### The Precarity this Time

Out of necessity, artists are expert at juggling intermittent bouts of barely profitable creative work with more numerous and routine jobs in construction, standardized graphic design, and other service industries. Artists not only incessantly retrain themselves to satisfy novel working conditions, they establish complex social networks made up of other, semi-employed artists, as well as family members, friends, and on occasion, the patron. These networks circulate material support, as well as a great deal of intangible, informational assistance in the form of opportunities for auditions, exhibitions, publications, technical solutions, even gossip. Supplementing this precarious existence is the occasional monetary gift from a parent or a foundation grant or residency. A small percentage of artists also procure additional income from part-time teaching, although in the United States such positions typically exclude benefits such as health insurance or retirement pay. According to an unpublished study, one third of those who graduated from a major US art school in 1963 had given up making art by 1981 and were actually earning more money than those who continued being artists.<sup>26</sup> Visual, plastic artists— painters, sculptors, installation, new media, and performance artists— also benefit from the sporadic sale of artwork, although only a small percentage will ever be able to depend on direct sales in any meaningful way. Instead, for most artists, especially for the majority of visual artists, actual working conditions remain much the same under neoliberalism as they have for centuries. As French Sociologist Pierre-Michel Menger points out, artists as an occupational group tend to be “younger than the general workforce, better educated, and concentrated in a few metropolitan areas.” However, artists also reveal:

higher rates of self-employment, higher rates of unemployment and of several forms of constrained underemployment (non-voluntary part-time work, intermittent work, fewer

hours of work), and are more often multiple jobholders ... artists earn less than workers in their reference occupational category (professional, technical and kindred workers), whose members have comparable human capital characteristics (education, training and age). And they experience larger income variability, and greater wage dispersion.<sup>27</sup>

Menger insists that studying artists' careers is useful insofar as it illuminates "how individuals learn to manage the risks of their trade." In the case of artists this involves the continuous transfer of risk downwards into a "highly flexible and disintegrated organizational setting." All of which leads the sociologist to depict a Lilliputian version of neoliberalism in which artists operate within a continuous state of *oversupply disequilibrium*. And yet despite this inherent precariousness and the built-in "income penalty" the market charges for becoming an artist, the number of people claiming that title is on the rise. In the US the population of artists doubled between 1970 and 1990, roughly the same time frame in which deregulation and privatization delivered us the entrepreneurial risk society.

According to the 2005 US Census, nearly 2 million Americans listed "artist" as their primary employment. Another 300,000 claimed it was their second job. This makes the "job" of being an "artist" one of the largest single professions in the nation, just slightly smaller than those employed in the active-duty military. The actual number of "professionally trained" artists in the United States, or in the world for that matter, is difficult to quantify. Perhaps some idea of this mass can be gleaned from the fact that over 150 specialized "art schools" are dedicated solely to turning out artists in the US, and that most other colleges and universities now offer a bachelor or graduate level degree in fine art.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, although visual artists are only one portion of creative industry workers typically surveyed by the EU, its cultural sector reportedly employed at least 5.8 million such people in 2004, which is more than the total working population of Greece and Ireland put together.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, although the overall number of artists in England has kept pace with other types of labor, employment in the arts has allegedly increased by some 150,000 jobs between 1993 and 2003. An estimated total revenue of between £23 and £29 billion was reportedly generated by the cultural sector in London alone, making art second only to the city's business sector, according to the Arts Council England in 2004. The growth of artists in Germany is even more astounding. While the majority of the German workforce showed zero growth between 1995 and 2003, the cultural sector grew at a rate of 3.4 percent. As in other post-industrial economies Germany's workforce is increasingly self-employed, but self-employment among cultural workers is four times that of the rest of the labor force.<sup>30</sup> Just as remarkable is the spike in Canada's artistic population. Between 1991 and 2000 the number of artists in all provinces grew



Editors, and a future editor, of the *Journal of Aesthetics & Protest* (JOAAP) pose amidst items displayed in an exhibition they organized entitled “Street Signs and Solar Ovens: Socialcraft in Los Angeles” for LA’s Craft and Folk Art Museum in 2006. Much like the editorial outlook of the journal itself, the exhibition highlighted a range of items that fell on the outer margins of formal art practice made by individuals, groups, and artists, including work about foraged foods, seed bombs, radical knitting, pirate radio technology, and sustainable urban culture. Challenging normative ideas of artistic valorization and who is defined as an artist appears to be at the core of JOAAP and many similar, informal collectives. The JOAAP editors are, from left to right: Cara Baldwin, Robby Herbst, Christina Ulke, Marc Herbst, Anselm Herbst. Image courtesy joaap.org

at a rate three times that of the overall Canadian workforce. The authors of the Canadian Council for the Arts report appear genuinely surprised by the fact that some 131,000 Canadians now “spend more time on creating art than on any other occupation.” They go on to suggest that this number is probably too low since many “artists” who drive taxis at night or work civil service jobs during the day are simply invisible.<sup>31</sup> Considering the overall reduction in social security since the 1980s, and especially in light of the near-total elimination of direct subsidization to artists in the US at least, one might conclude that the volume of new cultural producers would contract, or remain static. If, as Menger and others maintain, art is the precarious profession *par excellence*, why then does it appear to be thriving in an environment of deregulation, privatization, and risk?<sup>32</sup> Bluntly put, might there be a secret bond between post-Fordist enterprise culture and contemporary art?

## AWC v. APT

One example of an allegedly mutually beneficial partnership between artists and free-marketers is the recent invention of Artists Pension Trust (APT). Created in 2004 by Moti Shniberg (a “new” economy technology entrepreneur), Dan Galai (onetime accomplice of the late economist Milton Friedman, father of Reaganomics), and David A. Ross (former SF MoMA and Whitney Museum of Art director), APT now has offices not only in New York, Los Angeles, London, and Berlin but also in the budding art-market centers of Dubai, Mumbai, Beijing, and Mexico City. The fund’s goal is to collateralize the chronic insecurity of art professionals by enlisting artists—generally those who have already achieved a certain level of market success—to invest some of their work alongside a “community” of select peers, thereby providing “a uniquely diversified, alternative income stream.”<sup>33</sup> In theory, only a few APT artists need become cultural superstars to raise the raft beneath the entire “community,” including of course the trust fund’s founders, managers, and curators. Officially, legally, APT is located in the British Virgin Islands (BVI), a Caribbean territory of the UK that provides a legal tax haven for the company’s assets. The mission of APT is to apply “the discipline of financial services and the concept of risk diversification in creating the first investment program specifically dedicated for artists.”<sup>34</sup> APT’s model of privately collateralized risk management contrasts sharply with the universalist aspirations of collective security made by several informal artists’ groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>35</sup> Between 1967 and 1968 the Canadian Artists’ Representation/Le Front des CARFAC (later CAR) organized to demand that commercial galleries respect copyright for all Canadian artists and provide royalties from sales and rental-like fees for exhibiting work. (CAR continues to serve artists today.) Several years later two short-lived London-based organizations briefly expressed concerns about social security for artists. One did so with solemnity, the other sardonically (though not without a kind of critical seriousness). In 1971 Mary Kelly, Kay Fido, Margaret Harrison, and Conrad Atkinson founded the Artists Union and immediately sought to establish resale rights for all British artists.<sup>36</sup> But the year before, artists Gustav Metzger, Felipe Ehrenberg, Stuart Brisley, and others led a march on the Tate Gallery under the name of the International Coalition for the Liquidation of Art. Their objective was to debate museum “visitors and staff about the complicity of museums in racism, sexism, war,” as well as demand the “equal representation of women, ethnic minorities, and greater decentralization of culture.”<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the short-lived Syndicate of Unified Plastic Artists (*del Sindicato Único de Artistas Plásticos*, or SAUP) sought to enhance artists’ professional status through a highly politicized trade union with ties to the militant *Tucumán Arde* art project of 1968.<sup>38</sup> However, one of

the most militant efforts to garner legal rights for cultural workers began with an international group of artists who resided in New York City. On January 1969, Vassilakis Takis from Greece, Hans Haacke from Germany, Wen-Ying Tsai from China, as well as Tom Lloyd, Willoughby Sharp, and John Perreault from the United States met to establish the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC).<sup>39</sup> Several hundred people soon joined its open-door meetings, including Carl Andre, Benny Andrews, Gregory Battcock, Lee Lozano, and Lucy Lippard. In many respects, AWC functioned much like a trade union that viewed museums, their boards, and their top administrators as a *de facto* managerial class, which effectively represented not the public good, but the interests of the commercial art market. It was the artists' job to reveal this conflict and propose ways of amending it. AWC staged protests outside the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan, and Guggenheim museums. Thirteen demands were formally presented to museums (the following year the list was boiled down to nine). Among the reforms called for was a royalties system in which collectors would pay artists a percentage of profits from the resale of their work, and the demand that museums "should be open on two evenings until midnight and admission should be free at all times." The one definite lasting accomplishment of the short-lived AWC is free-admission museum hours at museums in New York City, but the group also helped to set in motion the Professional and Administrative Staff Association (PASTA) union at MoMA, and inspired the formulation of The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer And Sale Agreement, a legal agreement that provides artists with several post-sale rights including royalty payments if an artwork is resold for a higher price.<sup>40</sup> Before it disbanded in 1971 AWC members marched in support of striking staff at MoMA, called on museums to set aside exhibition space for women, minorities, and artists with no gallery representation, and staged public actions along with sister groups such as Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG) to protest US military involvement in Southeast Asia. However, AWC also called for the establishment of an artists' trust fund to provide artists with social security benefits much along the lines proposed by APT some 40 years later. And yet, this is precisely where AWC and APT most clearly diverge.

The language used by 1960s artists' groups such as CARFAC, Artists Union, SAUP, and AWC was built around an essential antagonism between artists and cultural labor that takes place in and for the public sphere on one hand, and the production of art commodities and art careers necessary for the art world on the other. As Lucy R. Lippard put it:

As a public and therefore potentially accountable institution, the Museums were targeted in order to make points not only about artists' rights but also about opposition to the war in Vietnam, to racism and eventually sexism, and about the institutional entanglement of aesthetic with corporate finance and imperialism.<sup>41</sup>

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As just noted, one of AWC's demands was for the establishment of a trust fund that would provide living artists with "stipends, health insurance, help for artists' dependents and other social benefits." But the endowment for this trust was to have been levied by taxing the work of dead artists in the collections of major museums. More like a public trust, the AWC fund would need to be accessible to all working artists. In fact, the ambitious programs proposed by the AWC and the other self-organized groups could only have been realized if the majority of cultural producers were willing to participate in any given region. Notably, only CARFAC still operates today, some 40 years later, boasting affiliated organizations in more than half of Canada's provinces. Perhaps its longevity is possible because solidarity between artists is easier to sustain in a weaker commercial art market where universal social security remains intact.<sup>42</sup> Regardless, the kind of public accountability that makes up Lippard's premise is exactly what neoliberalism has sought to eviscerate from the public's collective memory. By contrast, APT functions much like a private, gated community set apart from the broad population of artists. And this exclusivity is not optional. In order to focus attention on a select group of artists APT has no choice but to ignore the security and fair trade interests of the majority of artists. Any investment strategy based on market speculation must concentrate value disproportionately. The prevailing ideology of APT and much neoliberal enterprise culture is concisely summarized in the title of a recent, best-selling business book: *The Winner-Take-All Society*.<sup>43</sup>

## Modern Ruins

Shorn from the social safety net, exposed to unmediated market penetration by every demand set forth by capital, beyond the reach of effective political power, the so-called free market economy offers two asymmetrical options: either sell oneself "creatively" at the high end of the market—as an IT systems designer, hedge-fund manager, graphic interface specialist, etc.—or join the ranks of the burgeoning surplus workforce who compete for non-unionized, low-skilled, part-time jobs. Between these two poles very little gradation exists. Creative jobs typically provide exceptional individual rewards in terms of salary and benefits, but also in the way productivity is organized. Deviating from the routines of the factory, so-called "creative" industries offer flexible schedules and non-hierarchical work environments that encourage employees to indulge in non-linear problem solving. Many of these workers are not salaried but "independent" contractors responsible for their own health care and other benefits. For creative laborers, intermittent, project-based employment, working from home, and opening an individual retirement account are signs reflecting superior education and imagination. As long as contracts are maintained and clients are available, such workplace elasticity allows high-end laborers to experience a unique sense



of personal freedom inconceivable within the traditional brick and mortar factory world of yesterday. By contrast, the low-wage service bottom-end of the neoliberal economy is full of unimaginative, repetitive jobs, a world of retail sales cashiers, truck drivers, waiters and waitresses, nursing aides, janitors, and food preparation workers. It was here, as Saskia Sassen and others have shown, where the most robust employment growth in the United States was taking place until the recent economic collapse (and no doubt this is where job growth will first return).<sup>44</sup> But disciplinary mechanisms exist at both extremes. For the majority at the bottom of the labor market flexible employment is not a gift, it is an ever-present and tangible reminder that joblessness is just one paycheck away. For those who lack the capacity, or desire, to produce on demand in an artistic, self-fulfilling manner the penalty is no different from that which befalls the “failed” artist: exile to the precarious abyss of office cubicles, stock rooms, and fixed-wage servitude. Of course there are significant differences in pay grade, social status, and physical mobility between a dishwasher at McDonald’s and a web designer, or between a janitor in an office building and an art professor. Nevertheless, all forms of post-Fordist work are continuously exposed to the disciplinary forces of neoliberalism, including anti-union legislation, the lack of secure social benefits, the use of non-contracted part-time labor, and the corporatization of the academy where part-time instructors dominate the learning environment. The effects of this new “precarity” on the imagination of those it administers have yet to be systematically investigated, but it is not surprising to find that many cultural activists are pessimistic regarding organized politics involving anything larger than informal gatherings of small, cellular groups, a point taken up in Chapter 7. For those at top of the economy on the other hand, what lies in wait should they fail to be creatively self-motivated is evident all around them: a former executive scans groceries at the supermarket, a discharged securities trader empties ashtrays down the street from the office where he once worked.<sup>45</sup>

Globalization, privatization, flexible work schedules, deregulated markets; 30 years of “neoliberal” capitalism has driven most world governments partly or wholly to abandon their previous function as arbitrators between the security of the majority and the profiteering of the corporate sector. The “free market” oriented state that emerged in the late 1970s does not even pretend to offer citizens full, meaningful employment, directly contradicting the promise of security, however illusory, once offered by the post-war Keynesian state. And this has little to do with lack of training or education. “Rather than a skills shortage, millions of American workers have more skills than their jobs require,” insists Uchitelle.<sup>46</sup> The result has been a radical re-distribution of potential risk from the collective level—the community, state, nation, society—downward, towards each increasingly isolated member of the populace. Today, one’s individual sense of “being” seems to exist in a perpetual state of jeopardy. And yet, this impression is



Still from the video project *Angry Sandwich People or in a Praise of Dialectics* (2006), named after a poem by Bertolt Brecht and staged here in collaboration with local political activists by the Russian artists' collective Chto Delat? (What is to be Done?). Participants gathered in a St. Petersburg square where they moved in unison and recited Brecht's poem in a "Soviet mode." "Who dares say 'never'? Who's to blame if oppression remains?" Chto Delat? describes the effect of the reading as resounding "with the depleted pathos of the revolutionary past, a re-collection (*Erinnerung*) of the very language that new forms of protest aspire to negate." Visible behind the performers is a fading 1960s mural displaying the words "Proletariat Unite!" Project realized by Tsapya, Nikolay Oleynikov and Dmitry Vilensky. Image courtesy Chto Delat?.

also unreal, involving an unpredictable set of hazards from multiple sources both real and fictive: the inhalation of invisible toxins, a mutated virus, a government conspiracy, genetically manipulated food, sudden acts of violence, an unforeseen terrorist plot. According to one group of sociologists the essence of this indefinite risk-consciousness is not that it is happening, "but that it might be happening."<sup>47</sup> Compounding these fears is the sublime spectacle of the modern ruin: a blasted skyscraper, a bomb-flattened metropolis, an exploded hospital, devastated marketplace, or pillaged museum, school, library. Perhaps most devastating of all, a geometrically precise pile of naked men forced to display their utter vulnerability in front of some down-market digital camera. Theorist Allen Feldman describes the sadistic snapshots of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq as pixilated presentations of a "subjugated and damaged interiority." Nicholas Mirzoeff insists these widely circulated obscenities provide Western viewers with a "full spectrum

dominance” that ranges from demolished bodies to devastated nations.<sup>48</sup> The result is a vivid display of what philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls “bare life,” human existence that has passed beyond the outermost limits of law, language, and society to become a kind of living, biological ruin, a no-longer-human human.<sup>49</sup> For the spectator in developed nations, these bodily and metropolitan degradations always appear to be occurring elsewhere, amongst those unfortunates with the least resources who are already only a few steps away from disposability and abjection: so many distant bodies that help mark-off the outermost margins of our world-image; so many dire cities where society and “bare life” incessantly brush up against each other. The essence of this ontological precariousness is summed up not only by the rise of a 7 billion dollar human trafficking industry, but by the expendable form this modern bondage takes on in an age of weakened national governments and individuated risk. “Slaves of the past were worth stealing and worth chasing down if they escaped,” writes activist Kevin Bales:

Before globalization, people were concerned with “fixed” capital investments, like factories, or lifelong slaves, and long-term planning. The globalized world is more concerned with flexibility than fixed capital, and with processes of production rather than permanence. The same is true of slavery. Slaves are so cheap now that they are not seen as long-term investments, just flexible resources to be used or thrown away as needed.<sup>50</sup>

Given the sweeping integration of the world’s economy Bales notes that we may even be directly “using or profiting from the work of these slaves.”<sup>51</sup> The risk no longer appears entirely *elsewhere*. A local shipping container reveals a cargo of discarded human sexual slaves; a nearby neighborhood is contaminated with sewage, oil, chemicals; a bank repossesses the home of a friend or family member; the dreaded *pink slip* is deposited in our office mailbox demarcating termination of employment. Instability moves closer. It insinuates itself into our everyday world. And simultaneously, on a far vaster scale that is often beyond comprehension, it takes on an epic dimension: the Asian monetary failure of 1997; the Argentinean economic collapse of 1999–2002 (a preamble to the current crisis?); the botched US government response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005; and the global financial implosion of 2007–9 whose full effects remain ongoing and unpredictable at the time of writing, although it is clear that a structural adjustment of historical proportions is taking place within global capitalism. Despite a recently elected reform government in the United States headed by Barack Obama still scrambling to contain this latest capitalist “malfunction,” the line has clearly grown too slender between what once separated manageable economic predicaments—workplace redundancy, unemployment, an uninsured illness, student debt, a failed mortgage—and all-out catastrophe—bankruptcy, homelessness, incarceration, or deportation. Suddenly, it is *we* in the developed world brushing up against bare life. The encounter may be brief, or it may be extended—or it may be interminable.

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Without losing site of the dramatically different levels of risk faced by shantytown dwellers, prisoners, or slaves, as opposed to an increasingly at-risk workforce in the cities and towns of developed countries, it is not too difficult to see how such unremitting precariousness reinforces the day-to-day disciplinary mechanisms of neoliberal, enterprise culture.

### We Are the Surplus

Like the deterritorialized flow of finance capital, all that is solid, and all that is intangibly social, has been reduced to a kind of raw material for market speculation and bio-political asset mining. It is the social order itself, and the very notion of governance, along with a longstanding promise of security and happiness, that has become another kind of modern ruin. Even if the MFA (Master of Fine Arts) is the new MBA (Master of Business Arts), as some neoliberal business theorists intone, mumbling the phrase like some magic formula, what exactly does enterprise culture gain from its seemingly tender embrace of artists and creative labor?<sup>52</sup> Perhaps, rather than an historic compromise between artistic creativity and the neoliberal economy, what has fixated neoliberalism onto the image of the artist as ideal worker is not so much her imaginative out-of-the-box thinking or restless flexibility as the way the art world as an aggregate economy successfully manages its own excessively surplus labor force, extracting value from a redundant majority of “failed” artists who in turn apparently acquiesce to this disciplinary arrangement. There could be no better formula imaginable for capitalism 2.0 as it moves into the new century. Still, what remains to be seen is how those lost bits and pieces of a ruined society and dreams of collective dissonance might be reanimated through some artistic necromancy by those not yet ready to give in to the disciplinary sirens of enterprise culture.



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59. [www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/n.php?n=an-errorist-movement-at-the-bienial-2009-09-14](http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/n.php?n=an-errorist-movement-at-the-bienial-2009-09-14)
60. Longoni, “Crossroads,” 587.
61. Yomango’s entire ten-point, anti-capitalist lifestyle tips are available at: “10 style tips for a Yomango life: [www.yomango.net/node/126](http://www.yomango.net/node/126)
62. “Whatever happened to Yomango: Fifteen answers to a questionnaire,” on the website of [Translate.eipcp.net](http://Translate.eipcp.net); <http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0307/yomango/en#redir>
63. [www.yomango.net/book/export/html/137](http://www.yomango.net/book/export/html/137)
64. Yomango, “10 style tips.”
65. Annalee Newitz, *Pretend We’re Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture*, Duke University Press, 2006, 12.
66. For an engaging elaboration on the revenge of the surplus population see Lars Bang Larson, “Zombies of Immaterial Labor: the Modern Monster and the Death of Death,” *e-flux journal* #15, April 2010, 38–44; and Nikos Papastergladis, “The Zombification of the Other,” *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2009, 147–78.



## Chapter 5

1. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Essence of Neoliberalism,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, December 1998, available in English at <http://mondediplo.com/1998/12/08bourdieu>
2. Carol Duncan, “Who Rules the Art World?,” in *Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, 172.
3. Kevin F. McCarthy, et al., *Rand Report: A portrait of the visual arts: meeting the challenges of a new era*, Rand Corp., 2005; [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND\\_MG290.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG290.sum.pdf)
4. An excellent example of how to read visual artworks (prior to neoliberalism in this case, not solely in terms of iconographic or metaphoric imagery, but in relation to specific conditions of production) is Paul B. Jaskot, “Gerhard Richter and Adolf Eichmann,” *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2005, 457–78.
5. Wu, *Privatizing Culture*, 303.
6. This includes not only visual, plastic artists, but also filmmakers and other media producers together with painters, sculptors, installation and other fine artists.
7. This is essentially the marketing logic behind Amazon.com, explains editor-in-chief of *Wired* magazine Chris Anderson in *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*, Hyperion press, 2006.
8. According to reports by several artist friends of the author the going rate for studio fabricators is about 12 dollars an hour in the studio of Jeff Koons, meanwhile the artist Damien Hirst assigns assistants to paint entire canvases that are later sold under his name; see Don Thompson, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 65.
9. David Halle and Elisabeth Tiso, “Lessons from Chelsea,” *International Journal of the Humanities*, vol. 3, 2005–6, 6.
10. Melanie Fasche, *The Art Market and Regional Policy—Happy Marriage or Troubled Relation?*, Free University Berlin (unpublished paper), 2009, available from <http://nuke.creative-regions.org.uk/OutcomesPapers/ThirdSeminarOutcomes/tabid/476/language/en-US/Default.aspx> or from the author at [melanie.fasche@gmx.de](mailto:melanie.fasche@gmx.de) and Alain Quemin, “Globalization and Mixing in the Visual Arts: An Empirical Survey of ‘High Culture’ and Globalization,” *International Sociology*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2006, 522–50.

11. Marcelo Expósito, “Inside and Outside the Art Institution: Self-Valorization and Montage in Contemporary Art,” trans. Nuria Rodríguez, Aileen Derieg, in Raunig and Ray, eds., *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice*, 149.
12. There is no question that the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was established to win over the hearts and minds of cultural workers worldwide in favor of the seemingly uninhibited freedom of expression granted in the West, even if the exact role that agencies such as the CIA and US State Department played in supporting, say, Abstract Expressionists remains controversial ever since the appearance of essays by Max Kozloff and Eva Cockcroft in the pages of *Artforum* magazine in the 1970s. The prominent discussants in this ongoing debate include Serge Guilbaut, Robert Burstow, Michael Kimmelman, and Nancy Jachec.
13. In dollars adjusted for a 2007 constant the NEA’s 1979 budget would be over 400 million dollars, while its allocation in the year 2007 was only about a quarter of that amount (\$124,561,844 ). 
14. Rosler, “Money, Power, and the History of Art.”
15. A number of superstars including Cindy Sherman, Mike Kelly, and Richard Prince moved from these government-supported venues into mainstream market success, thus demonstrating the underlying capitalist logic of the Keynesian liberal welfare state.
16. Ault, *Alternative Art New York*.
17. Cited in Rosler, “Money, Power, and the History of Art.”
18. Thompson, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark*, 12.
19. Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated*; Andrea Fraser, *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, ed. Alexander Alberro, MIT Press, 2007, 37–47; and Wu, *Privatizing Culture*, 161.
20. Olav Velthuis, *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art*, Princeton University Press, 2007, 18.
21. *Ibid.*, 27. 
22. See above, pages XX–XX.
23. Velthuis, *Talking Prices*, 27.
24. *Ibid.*, 178, 126.
25. Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, University of Chicago Press, 1962; Midnight Notes Collective, “The New Enclosures.”
26. A study of 300 graduates of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago were tracked between 1963 to 1980 by researchers Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Jacob W. Getzels and Stephen P. Kahn in *Talent and Achievement*, Chicago, 1984 (an unpublished report), 44.
27. Pierre-Michel Menger, “Artistic Labor Markets: Contingent Work, Excess,” in Victor A. Ginsburgh and David Throsby, eds., *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture, Volume 1*, North Holland, 2006, 28.
28. “If all the professional dancers in the United States stood shoulder to shoulder to form a single chorus line, it would stretch from 42nd Street for nearly the entire length of Manhattan. If every artist in America’s workforce banded together, their ranks would be double the size of the United States Army. More Americans identify their primary occupation as artist than as lawyer, doctor, police officer or farm worker”; Sam Roberts, “A 21st-Century Profile: Art for Art’s Sake, and for the US Economy, Too,” *New York Times*, June 12, 2008; <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/12/arts/12nea.html?ex=1214193600&en=a8f30b5b62faf0f4&ei=5070&cemc=eta1>; see also the report *Artists in*

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- the Workforce: 1990–2005*, a publication of the National Endowment for the Arts, 2008, available as a pdf file at: [www.arts.gov/research/ArtistsInWorkforce.pdf](http://www.arts.gov/research/ArtistsInWorkforce.pdf)
29. “The Economy of Culture in Europe,” KEA European Affairs, Belgium, November 2006; [www.ifacca.org/publications/2006/11/01/the-economy-of-culture-in-europe](http://www.ifacca.org/publications/2006/11/01/the-economy-of-culture-in-europe)
  30. “Artists in Figures: A Short Statistical Portrait of Artists, Publicists, Designers, Architects and Related Professions in the German Cultural Labor Market, 1995–2003,” Federal Commissioner for Cultural and Media Affairs, Germany, March 2007; [www.ifacca.org/publications/2007/03/01/artists-in-figures](http://www.ifacca.org/publications/2007/03/01/artists-in-figures)
  31. See “More artists in Canada, but still making less than most: study,” CBC.CA, October 22, 2004; [www.cbc.ca/story/arts/national/2004/10/21/Arts/artsjobstudy041021.html](http://www.cbc.ca/story/arts/national/2004/10/21/Arts/artsjobstudy041021.html)
  32. Statistics on artistic labor can easily become misleading or contradictory. Some data gatherers use the term artist to include Hollywood screenwriters as well as painters and poets, thus skewing significant differences between these types of cultural labor. And while this book is not intended as an empirical study, nor do I make any claims to being a sociologist, much of this information gathered from the US, UK, Canada and Germany is no doubt applicable to the working conditions of artists in other post-industrial nations.
  33. APT website: [www.artistpensiontrust.org/homepage.asp](http://www.artistpensiontrust.org/homepage.asp)
  34. APT, Frequently Asked Questions: [www.artistpensiontrust.org/faq\\_page.asp](http://www.artistpensiontrust.org/faq_page.asp)
  35. Andrew Hemingway, *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement, 1926–1956*, Yale University Press, 2002.
  36. See Walker, *Left Shift*, 83–5; see also Mary Kelly, *Imaging Desire*, MIT Press, 1998, 12.
  37. Walker, *Left Shift*, 30.
  38. See Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Listen Here Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s*, Museum of Modern Art, 2004.
  39. Several excellent histories of AWC exist, including Lucy R. Lippard, “The Art Workers’ Coalition: Not a History,” in *Get the Message: A Decade Of Art For Social Change*, E. P. Dutton, 1984, 10–19; Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*; and Alan W. Moore, “Artists’ Collectives Mostly in New York, 1975–2000,” in Stimpson and Sholette, eds., *Collectivism After Modernism*, 193–221.
  40. Artist Seth Siegelaub and attorney Robert Projansky penned *The Artist’s Reserved Rights Transfer And Sale Agreement* in 1971, it has since been used by Hans Haacke and several other artists associated with AWC. For more on this document and its history see: Maria Eichhorn, *The Artist’s Contract*, Verlag der Buchhandlung/Walther König, Germany, 2009. An online copy of the contract is available at: <http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:mZdXErfPzPEJ:www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/siegelaub.pdf+The+Artist%E2%80%99s+Reserved+Rights+transfer&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>
  41. Lippard, cited in Ault’s *Alternative Art New York*, 79.
  42. The organization’s website is [www.carfac.ca](http://www.carfac.ca)
  43. Robert H. Frank, Philip J. Cook, *The Winner-Take-All Society: Why the Few at the Top Get So Much More Than the Rest of Us*, Penguin, 1996.
  44. Saskia Sassen, “Informalization in Advanced Market Economies,” a discussion paper for the *International Labor Office Organization*, Geneva, Switzerland, 1997, 10.
  45. Michael Luo, “Forced From Executive Pay to Hourly Wage,” *New York Times*, February 28, 2009; [www.nytimes.com/2009/03/01/us/01survival.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/01/us/01survival.html)
  46. Uchitelle, *The Disposable American*, 66.

47. Barbara Adam and Joost van Loon, "Introduction: Repositioning Risk; the Challenge for Social Theory," in Barbara Adam, Ulrich Beck and Joost Van Loon, eds., *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory*, Sage Publications, 2000, 2, 3. But for a more politically critical reading of "risk society" see Anthony Giddens, "Risk and Responsibility," *Modern Law Review*, vol. 62, no. 1, 1999, 1–10.
48. Allen Feldman, "On the Actuarial Gaze: from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib," *Cultural Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, March, 220–3; Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Invisible Empire: Visual Culture, Embodied Spectacle, and Abu Ghraib," *Radical History Review*, 2006, 21.
49. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford University Press, 1998.
50. Kevin Bales, *New Slavery: A Reference Handbook*, ABC-CLIO, Inc 2000, 7.
51. Ibid.
52. Katherine Bell, "The MFA is the New MBA," *Harvard Business Review*, April 14, 2008; [http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/cs/2008/04/the\\_mfa\\_is\\_the\\_new\\_mba.html](http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/cs/2008/04/the_mfa_is_the_new_mba.html)

## Chapter 6

1. The total sum of monies raised for the defense of Kurtz and Ferrell was about \$350,000, of which approximately \$241,070 was actually spent. Had the case gone to court instead of being dismissed after four years by Judge Arcara, however, it would have likely cost an estimated half a million dollars. (Note: the author was himself a member of the CAE Defense Fund, and the committee's usefully informative website remains online as of this writing at [www.caedefensefund.org](http://www.caedefensefund.org))
2. CAE members included or include Steve Kurtz and his late wife Hope Kurtz together with the artists Steve Barnes, Dorian Burr, Beverly Schlee, and most recently Lucia Sommer (beginning in 2005). The group's website is [www.critical-art.net](http://www.critical-art.net)
3. There is no evidence of prior interest by the government in CAE with this one hypothetical caveat: several years before the FBI investigation of Kurtz, a lecturer at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana baselessly stated that "Critical Art Ensemble paints a picture of cyber-resistance that looks a lot like the descriptions of bin Laden's alleged network." Whether this paper ("Electronic jihad" by Heidi Brush) was even noticed by Federal agents is anybody's guess. It was, however, reported by Kevin Featherly in *Newsbytes* (now part of the *Washington Post*) in a piece entitled "US On Verge Of 'Electronic Martial Law'," October 16, 2001, and the comparison of CAE to electronic terrorists was circulated over the Internet, among other places at [Virus.org](http://virus.org), an online IT Security News and Information Portal; <http://lists.virus.org/isn-0110/msg00110.html>
4. Details on some of the public cases mentioned above as well as others involving US government censorship or intimidation of citizens, tourists, journalists, academics, and students have been compiled by Matthew Rothschild; see the McCarthyism Watch Updates published by the *Progressive* magazine available at [www.progressive.org/list/mccarthy](http://www.progressive.org/list/mccarthy). For information specifically involving state harassment of cultural workers after September 11, see the Temporary Services website, "Resurgence of the Culture Wars" at [www.temporaryservices.org/culture\\_wars.html](http://www.temporaryservices.org/culture_wars.html); and John Tarleton, "Busted Puppets: Philly Police Arrest Puppetistas, Toss Their Art Into the Trash," *On the Road with John Tarleton*, August 3, 2000; [www.johntarleton.net/philly\\_puppets.html](http://www.johntarleton.net/philly_puppets.html)
5. CAE are not the only cultural activists attempting to defend plants, seeds, and soil against global agribusiness through artistic interventions. Other practitioners include