

Panel Discussion: Between the Of and the On

in order of speaking

Eva Díaz, Sam Gould/Red76, Lee H. Jones, Sande Cohen, Javier Toscano

Lights are dim. The stage is set with a podium and conference table large enough to accommodate four speakers. There is a live microphone at the podium, and two on the table along with bottles of water. Also on the table are four name tags that read, left to right: SAM GOULD/RED76, EVA DÍAZ, SANDE COHEN, and LEE H. JONES.

JAVIER is seated in darkness on a beanbag chair off to the side of the stage near some papers, a jar of ink, chalk, a brush, red tape, and a long white banner. Spotlights should be positioned so as to single out each figure at the table. The podium is equipped with an adjustable reading lamp.

EVA wears a chic black dress, high heels, and a silver chain necklace. Her hair is attractively haphazard. A young, independent curator and art historian from New York City, EVA has a few excellent publications under her belt and tenure on the horizon. She writes regularly for international art journals and carries herself with the confidence of a cosmopolitan abroad. Few in the audience would imagine the existence of her lightly furnished studio apartment in Brooklyn, which her grants, art reviews, and teaching salary just cover. A black rolling suitcase is perpetually ready in her hall closet.

SAM wears a porkpie hat, plaid logging jacket, and frumpy clothing in general. He carries an old suitcase and should look as if he's been traveling for some time. He sits slightly off to the side of the conference table. He hasn't made a lot of money from his profession, but he has made contacts. His demeanor should suggest that he is an autodidact, an organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense. His accent is urban and thick, and he should be played as not altogether comfortable in an academic setting, though not unfamiliar with it. Thus, SAM should exhibit an air of amiable impatience with the situation. He likes interrupting. He has brought a thermos of coffee into the conference. His place at the

table is indicated by a pack of American Spirit cigarettes and a disposable lighter.

LEE is dressed in a dark wool frock, black boots, and a pillbox hat. LEE wears thick-framed spectacles on a chain; the hair is up. LEE's accent is European, though it should be difficult to determine LEE's nationality—it could very well be London via Lahore, or Monte Carlo via Iqaluit (or vice versa). LEE's voice and demeanor shift throughout the monologue, at times imposing, at others humorous and warm. It should be clear that LEE is occupying different subject positions from one moment to the next, surfing the very crest of global homogenization.

SANDE is an intellectual, scholar, and polemicist recently expatriated to Southeast Asia. This should be indicated by his sandals and worn T-shirt, good travel clothes for a warm, humid climate; these items should be in strong contrast to the urbane attire of EVA, or anyone else's clothes at the conference, even SAM's. He wears wire-framed glasses and a bandanna on his head. He is energetic and bobs with Dionysian enthusiasm when he speaks. One should be able to tell from his age and demeanor that he has weathered a good share of public controversies, though he hasn't come through them unscathed. SANDE, as a professional critic, should

be played with an ironic and biting good humor that has pessimistic undertones. JAVIER is dressed in black Converse sneakers, black jeans, and a black hoodie. He paces as he speaks, sometimes stopping, but rarely looking up. He walks in angular patterns throughout the space, sometimes crossing into the audience, whose members must move to avoid him.

I

EVA takes the podium and is illuminated from above.

EVA. Thank you. [pause] It has been long evident that education policy in the United States is in need of an overhaul. The chronic disinvestment in public schools reads as an epic tale of neglect, with schools inadequately and unequally financed by community property taxes at the K-12 level and higher education institutions precariously dependent on revenue from state lottery ticket sales.¹ The cost of private education, on the other hand, is well-nigh astronomical, with private elementary and prep schools often charging over \$25,000 per year, while the cost of many private universities now approaches nearly \$50,000 per year including tuition, room, and board.²

Light up on SAM.

SAM. My own education began flawed and fragmented. This had as much to do with genetic disposition as it did with institutional rigidity. I was often uncomfortable in school, not sure where I fit in. I was afraid to offer the wrong answer. I was stubborn and also scared. I often wonder what life I might be living had I experienced school differently. Not in opposition, not in fear. Sunday evenings frightened me.

Eva. The ideology of equal opportunity in mass education was predicated on a meritocratic ideal. Poor but promising students (promising as determined by their high performance in IQ or other standardized tests) would be invited to enroll in top universities with scholarship support. However, talent-based selection did not promise an equality of outcomes. The sociologist Michael Young, in his seminal 1958 essay "The Rise of the Meritocracy," contended that in the meritocratic economy, "every selection of the one is a rejection of the many."³ Therefore, although most private colleges subscribe to need-blind policies, no parallel guarantee exists that colleges will provide sufficient fellowship money to cover underprivileged students' attendance. A notion of sacrifice has attached itself to the earlier, *aspirational* model of education, now construed as personal betterment and a transformative agent within the existing class system. Parents are expected to save money to send their kids to college. Poor students are expected to assume large debts to fund their education. The question arises—in this economy, can students afford the debt?

SAM. [pouring a coffee from his thermos] In what way would my educational experience—and my life experience as well, as so much of primary school is geared toward assimilating us into outward culture—differ from what it is now had I been provided with a more expansive explanation of how one can experience learning? What if I had been asked to consider more seriously the possibility that learning and learning environments existed all around me, instead of being told as I really was, that all outward (that is, out of the classroom) learning was in service to the School and not a school in itself?

Eva. These demands are in the air, not only in response to egregiously unaffordable tuition costs but also as part of the outcry against national fiscal spending priorities, in the wake of ballooning bailout payments to the auto and finance industries as well as the expense of ongoing wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan. I also want to point out the necessity for reinvigorating claims to universal access and economic justice in the face of the privatization schemes that dominate education policy. A consideration of the economics of higher education is essential when dealing with the long history of progressive educational institutions and experiments, particularly those related to pedagogy in visual art and art history.

SAM. As soon as I was over eighteen and disaffection appeared to be too much to bother with, I severed ties and (unconsciously for quite a while) began to look for a new educational life for myself. I can't believe I wrote this nineteen years ago ... [reading from an old notebook] "My education came in the form of working in bookshops and video stores; in periods of itinerancy; in forming, losing, and maintaining friendships; and definitely in drinking ..."

Eva. What can be meant by "progressive arts education" today?

SAM. "... in being upset with my drinking habits, in taking hallucinogenic substances both organic and man-made ..."

Eva. This question is particularly pressing in the face of economic pressures that limit access to quality education and thus limit access to the superior professional outcomes resulting from such privilege. Can we imagine a model of pedagogy where learning is regarded as enhancing personal growth and stimulating progressive social change? So prevalent is the lament that a consumer model of education has supplanted the notion of future producers of art and culture having a stake in progressive social change, this question is more pressing today than ever. At the very least, those producers have a stake in making apparent the connections of art and culture to social, political, and ethical issues.

SAM. [*interrupting* EVA, *reading again from his notebook*] Christ! Listen to this: "... in playing and listening to music; in talking endlessly, in listening, in looking; in searching through antique shops and thrift stores; in writing film scripts, in writing bad, angst-saturated poetry; in making films with friends; in driving cross-country and in doing it over again and again; in having sex and not having sex; in bad relationships and then a good one that has lasted; in exercise; in considering the deaths of others, in considering the deaths that others live with; in looking through bookstores, the bookshelves in others' living rooms, bedrooms, hallways, basements; in buying books, feeling books, searching for books, stealing books from shops I worked at; in justifying the theft of those books and in time questioning that justification yet not returning the books I had stolen; in getting into fistfights and questioning how those brawls began; in confronting my anger, my depression, and my sudden periods of overwhelming happiness; in fatherhood and the bond with my children that I fall short of being able to explain to anyone; in the study of the history, in the study of the uses of the past, in the study of the prostitution of our past; in taking hikes and learning to be absorbed by the landscape; in cooking, in eating, in thinking about the food I eat, in searching for the best taco trucks in whatever city I may be in; in searching through record shops, in finding old vinyl; in learning through the skills, lived experience, flaws, and grace of others; in seeking out people who are devoted to music, ecstasy, energy, writing, poetry, film, food, fucking, nature, political action, a sense of honesty, being humane, being pragmatic, being contradictory; in the work of others, in how the work of others operates, how it moves, how it interacts; in the language others use, in how the language expands or retracts from the experience, in how the language helps to create narrative in consort with the world; in confronting the intersection of politics, geography, and time; in living through war, in walking through the invisibility of war at home, in encountering the visibility of war through the

lives of veterans, through the lives of refugees and rape victims and through living with veterans trying to come to terms with their complicity in actions they abhor; in recognizing my own complicity; in finding ways to manifest these experiences and not sublimate them, in finding ways to examine them with honesty and criticality in public and in private; in creating media and action and movement—art that brings to light these experiences and speaks of them as replicas of the experiences of others; in celebration of the contradictory expectations of our public and private selves.

He rummages through his bag. A cigarette. He lights it and takes a few drags.

I can smoke in here, right? I mean, I don't know what the customs are ...

LEE *motions to burn a cigarette.*

SAM. [*to a disappointed LEE*] It's electronic ... all vapor.

EVA. The predicament of American higher education extends to institutions of art education in general and to what has come to be known as curatorial studies in particular. If tuition fees are kept low, one hurdle is removed for those already burdened by the high cost of supporting themselves as full-time students. I don't want to argue that a low tuition is the most progressive element of any curatorial curriculum. But, taken in conjunction with other elements of the first curatorial studies program instituted by the Whitney Independent Study Program, the radical nature of low tuition should not be underestimated in an era in which affordable education is being eroded.⁴ In the interest of transparency, I should state that I, too, made the transition from student to faculty member during nearly ten years of affiliation with the ISP, eventually serving as an instructor for the curatorial program until 2008.

The Whitney Program was formed in New York in 1968 as an initiative by the Whitney Museum's first education department director, Doug Pederson, following the museum's move to its current location in the Marcel Breuer building on Madison Avenue. As art historian George Baker notes, the education department "understood its original mission to include the reform and critique of existing forms of art education,"⁵ a particularly salient claim in '68, when women's and minorities' access to education was shoddy at best. Initially, the program was divided into art history, run by David Hupert, who in '68 took over directorship of the Whitney's education department, and a studio program run by Ron Clark. The Art History Program was renamed Museum Studies in '73 and then retitled the Curatorial and Critical Studies Program in 1987.

Several organizations have been inspired by the Whitney Program's model to varying degrees.⁶ In the past several years, masters-level curatorial and critical studies programs have sprung up as supplements to existing museum studies and art history departments in many universities in the U.S. and abroad.⁷ I mention these changes in order to situate the history of curatorial studies and to trace its progressive possibilities in the present. This means asking, Why is there such a global proliferation of postgraduate curatorial programs today? Although the Whitney Program was certainly a bellwether, I would argue that it acts as an oppositional force to some key aspects of curatorial studies manifesting today. This prompts the related question, What exactly might curatorial studies be as a discipline? And this raises the disturbing thought that perhaps curatorial studies isn't a discipline at all.

Perhaps it's easier to begin by considering what sort of professional outcomes curatorial studies programs offer their graduates. The curatorial studies qualification, as a masters degree or credential, doesn't offer much professional security. Academia generally reserves permanent or tenured positions

for the art history Ph.D. or art practice MFA. The close connections and often asymmetrical alignments between Ph.D.-less curatorial studies programs and Ph.D.-granting art history departments means that the professional aspirations of those who graduate from the former are not located in academia but elsewhere. Where is that elsewhere?

A beat.

Simple answer, right? Curating—that is, organizing art exhibitions, arguing ideas spatially, and producing and perhaps writing for art catalogs resulting from these exhibitions. This happens in but a few sites ... art museums, nonprofit or university art centers, and commercial art galleries. Curatorial studies feeds students into these three institutional contexts.⁸ Working as a curator generally means intersecting with at least one of the types of institutions geared to the display of art, [*indicating the stage, the gallery, and her colleagues*] whether or not the curatorial work is independent or salaried. These sites have different employers, different *masters*, so to speak. The alternative art space and the museum field in particular share certain professional similarities, yet curatorial studies doesn't seem designed to educate students about the expectations of these institutions.

Curatorial studies is perhaps best understood as a process of attempting to prepare students for the professional demands of curating today—in roles that can be described schematically as follows ...

One, the underpaid arts administrator.

Light on SAM, who seems surprised.

EVA. This is ultimately a powerless position in a system of compromises in response to fiscal and ideological pressures

from home institutions, pressures that often originate in fund-raising or market demands. The position itself is subject to related pressures from artists for curators to act as administrative agents and supporters for artist's careers by facilitating professional opportunities in interior decorating or architectural design, social networking, and publicity. Such activity counterbalances the position's desultory reality of meetings, grant writing, paper-pushing, et cetera.

Light out on SAM.

EVA. The star supercurator.

Light on LEE, who appears not to notice.

EVA. This role is dangled before students as a lure, suggesting that the field provides a lifestyle of fame, affluence, and leisure. Successful—read charismatic and exceptional—curators globe-trot to exotic locations, putting together financing and deals [LEE notices] without having to do much real intellectual work, scholarship or writing. In this role, charm goes a long way. These folks must be good at entertaining wealthy trustees in search of cultural edification or other “transgressive” experiences.

LEE. [not amused] Hoh!

Light out on LEE. Light on SANDE, who notices.

EVA. The scholar or intellectual: a role with a stake in the production and circulation of knowledge. This is the curator as someone who marshals expertise in the discipline of art history toward a form of spatialized and textual argumentation. A creative practice that at its best connects the history of art to its present while maintaining intellectual freedom and conveying a kind of activist zeal. [SANDE pshtaws, light out]

Even so, jobs fitting any of these described roles are available only infrequently to the annual parade of graduates of curatorial programs.

It isn't solely the fault of curatorial studies. The life of the intellectually creative scholar is under siege in most quarters. Curatorial studies isn't actually part of an academic department or discipline. Museums and nonprofits, at least in the U.S., frequently append other criteria to curatorship. Curators are used to finding revenue for their own shows and for the operation of the institutions in general. This is where most of our time and energy goes, leaving little space for ideas, creative work, or even basic scholarship. I hear this complaint from curators with depressing regularity. Undoubtedly, the role of curator has been squeezed too narrowly between administration and deal making. The greatest travesty may be that curatorial studies programs fail to acknowledge this when they recruit students and collect their sizeable tuition fees. Shouldn't we ask what sort of training curatorial programs are giving their students?

Should a creative curatorial process be wedded to expectations of a professional career? Ideally, we'd all find fulfillment being paid for doing what we love, but that may happen later and later in the careers of many curators and critics, and much earlier in the careers of a very few ... sometimes when they've just finished an undergrad education that likely involved no curatorial training. Perhaps we should acknowledge that what we often call curatorial education isn't giving students the training they really need for the field.

EVA motions to SAM from the podium.

EVA. Sam, would you like the podium?

SAM. [to EVA] No, no, I'm fine here.

Light out on EVA, who remains at the podium.

SAM. [to the audience] Around the turn of the century, a shift in my practice began to take shape. Through a change of environment and economics, as well as of affections, my work began to dematerialize. The discursive elements that often stayed in the planning stages, in the background, began to take the foreground. It seemed—the majority of my work up until that point was centered on film and photography—that the set, the script, the actors were breaking time. The elements that were supposed to be captured and made finite in films and photographs were let loose and given the ability to expand. When there was no money to buy film stock, the extraneous nature of production became the medium itself. Content was overshadowed by context. As time passed, the rough edges and haphazardness of this early dematerialization shifted further from its associations with film to incorporate other kinds of media—records, publications of many sorts, the Internet, radio, the telephone, posters, and other forms of public address. Histories began to take on the role of narrative vehicle: they were a means of engagement. History became a medium in itself, [takes a long drag on his cigarette; longer than usual] rather than merely subject matter. In the end, all the material and experience that helped inspire me to write scripts and make films and photographs ... the books, the movies, the music, the friendships, all the cities I have lived in, my life in general—these began to be played out in public as the work. The process by which I refined my life experiences and my education into films and photographs became a practice in and of itself. All the extraneous material that makes up our lives and that inspires us to continue, to move on, to make things, and make things of ourselves, became the work. It wasn't until I began to meet so many friends and colleagues with BAs, MFAs, and Ph.D.s that I began to examine the means by which I had gained my own education, away from these institutions they inhabited. I would often be asked where

I went to school, where I studied, and I would respond that I was a college dropout, with barely a credit to my transcript. Increasingly I was asked, and I began to ask myself, how I became interested in the things I do now and, inevitably, how I became the person I am *without* an educational degree. Of course, these are questions we all ask ourselves. I'm thankful that, to some to degree, it's my job to do so.

By watching the work of others and examining histories like that of *Home*—this was a planned community in Washington State, the Pacific Northwest of the United States for those of you not familiar with it. So, *Home* and the Vietnam Day protests at Berkeley—yeah, arguably the first-ever teach-in. [wistful now, another cigarette] I began to look for a means to redefine the received narratives of my profession. An alternative work-set, a method, began to take shape. By doing work myself, creating my own education in public, failing, succeeding, and continuing on, I began to consider and more fully realize these methodologies. I also began to see them as a recurring and possibly unconscious methodology in contemporaries I admired.

At first I didn't see this practice as being in line with education, at least not overtly. As time went on and projects of a discursive, collaborative, and mediated nature began to take shape, the idea that what was occurring was an educational platform, possibly a pedagogical one, became evident.

Light out on SAM. EVA crosses the stage and is seated at the conference table. LEE moves to the podium, flicks on the lamp and turns it upward, creating a spooky effect. LEE surveys the audience, allowing a slightly discomfiting silence to develop before speaking.

II

LEE. [*Slightly menacing*] This is a racist country—this is how I want to begin my speech about feminism today. The racism in your country made me think hard and long about even coming here. My fellow speakers are the reason I am here. I would like to thank you and applaud your perseverance and engagement. I am humbled and I blush before you. Thanks to all of us for creating this space in which we can imagine a future different from the one introduced to us by the present. Thanks to the fighting feminist movement for securing my safety while I'm here. Thanks for all the temporary political truths in the name of the revolution. Thanks to the artists for continuing the communication, for changing the world and making it a more interesting place.

[*warm, inviting, charming the audience*] And thank you all for coming! It's so good to be in a room full of queers; you make me feel all normal.

LEE turns the podium lamp down. Pause. LEE's demeanor becomes that of a seasoned academic.

I am speaking to you this afternoon as one of the leftovers, one of the weirdos: the ones who shave their heads, who don't know how to dress, who worry that they stink. Those who have rotten teeth, the ugly ones; the old hags, the dykes, the frigid, the unfucked, the unfuckable, the neurotics, the psychos, the fat tarts, the skinny sluts. Those who have big bellies, who would rather be men, who behave as if they were men. The ones with big asses. Noisy women who destroy everything that comes their way, women whose shyness is due to their hang-ups, women who don't know how to say no, women who are locked up and controlled. Women with scars, pitiful ones, women who don't turn men on, those with flabby skin and wrinkled faces. Those who dream of plastic surgery, of

liposuction, of having their nose broken so it can be reset but can't afford it. Women who look like the back of a bus, who can only rely on themselves for protection, who don't know how to comfort others, who couldn't care less about their kids.

Pause.

[*Casually, easily*] We often hear that the deconstruction of essentialized identities, which results from an acknowledgement of the contingency and ambiguity of identity itself, renders feminist political action impossible. Many feminists believe that without the existence of Woman as a coherent category, we would not be able to imagine the possibility of a feminist political movement in which women could unite as women in order to formulate and pursue specific feminist aims. To the contrary, the deconstruction of essential identities is a necessary starting point for those feminists who are committed to a radical democratic politics, because it highlights the variety of social relations to which the principles of liberty and equality should apply. Let's demand that we locate our political identities between what we have inherited and what is not yet born, between what we can only imagine and the histories that constrain and shape that imagination. This is a notion of political identity quite at odds with an identity shaped by fixed social coordinates. [*becoming intimate now, as if divulging a personal anecdote*] See, essentialism is like dynamite or a powerful drug. Judiciously applied, it can be effective in dismantling unwanted structures or alleviating suffering; uncritically employed, however, it is destructive and addictive. That's why we need to use essentialism with care, why we need to use it temporarily and, most importantly, why we need to use it strategically. Strategic essentialism is like role-playing—briefly inhabiting the criminal mind in order to understand what makes it tick. The strategic essentialist should act as a good lawyer would: When on defence, prod the prosecution's narrative until the cracks appear, and when

prosecuting, piece together a case by understanding the criminal's motivations.

We need to be alert, decide quickly and without fear or guilt when we need to essentialize ourselves and say yes to a group identity to reach a particular political goal in a particular situation in a particular place at a particular time. We also need to learn when to say no. We need to distinguish when naming works for emancipation and leads to increased agency, and we need to learn when it doesn't. And when we do apply a name, [*taking a long sip of water*] we shouldn't be content with naming just a few.

Lesbians, the lumpenproletariat, Southern Cameroonians, gay men, the trashy chic, Papuans, bisexuals, Assyrians, trans men, Celts, class travelers, Bakassi people, trans women, queers, fags, Ainu people, dykes, the underprivileged, the muff divers, Inuits, refugees, the shabby chic, bull daggers, the leisure class, queens, men, Aymaras, drama queens, Han Chinese, flaming queens, trannies, Afro-Arabs, fairies, gym boys, Lakota Sioux, boxing boys, Romanies, boxing girls, the middle class, pitchers, catchers, Sami people, butches, dead ones, Kabyles, cosmopolitans, bois, F-to-Ms, M-to-Fs, the middle class to working class, the working class to underclass, East Indians, old maids, Kurds, Miss Kittens, Dear Johns, subalterns, the upper middle class, Creoles, inverts, perverts, Pacific Islanders, the sans papiers, girlfriends, Rohingya people, drag kings, prom queens, women, Cherokees, happy people, nouveaux riches, alien sexualities, hipsters, Tamil people, petite bourgeoisie, freaks, Caucasians, the lower working class, the criminals, Faroe Islanders, suicides, the arty trashy, Sahrawi Arabs, the lower middle class, Tutsi Rwandans, gender benders, slaves, the working class, losers, Hutu, upper middle upper class, Dimasa people, mestizos, white trash, Tibetans, the aristocracy, the filthy rich, Sikhs, wiggers, clandestinos, other genders, Palestinians, the undocumented, Afro-Latinos,

nouveaux pauvres, global workers, Uighurs, seasonal workers, the privileged, the no-class and the low-class.

[*flirting*] I mean, who wouldn't go to such a bar?

[*baring teeth, seriously, accusingly, but with the charm and humor of a shark*] Unfortunately, this is but a fantasy in your somewhat underdeveloped part of the world. You know, some people on the left in the U.S. have faith in you to provide a counter hegemony, but I have always said, No! Because turning to your country in a time like this would be a turn to the right, that is, the wrong way. Three worlds or four are always better than one, that's what I've always said. I'm serious. Everyone I have just called out—you need us all! Social, cultural and economic sectors—all parts of your union—need a more heterogeneous population. If you don't act and make allies transnationally, *glocally*, you're going down. I'm surprised you're even alive. Just look at this place! Damn you're a pale bunch! But hey, there are those of you who recognize this and who join us as we work collectively toward a more diverse and multiple world. And we will stick together. We'll find each other even in a place like this.

[*forcefully rallying*] 'Cause we *are* the people in the house and we refuse to be dignified and rational. Dreams, unhappiness, and rage are all over this building. This space is nothing more than a parenthesis in the excitement called our lives.

[*leaning out over the podium, relishing the feel of the words*] We are the people in the house and this is our house, so what do we do and what do we want? Let's scream too loud together and let our high-pitched voices crack the fancy windows of this place. Let these walls turn into overcooked spaghetti, soggy and soft and easy to tear. Let the ceiling peel away like dry skin exposed to too much sun. [*abandoning the podium, walking around it and the stage, indicating spaces*

here and there while speaking] Or, we can take command over this space, organize meetings here, order pizza and stay the night. [*to the audience*] This is OUR HOUSE! We can decide whether this is the beginning or the end. We can decide if we want to try to change the conditions for who is included and who is excluded. For us, social injustice is a collective problem that requires a collective solution. We have feminism and we have places where we don't have to participate in capitalism. We are communists, we fight capitalism, we want a revolution.

Calmly now, LEE returns to the podium and adopts a stern pedantic voice.

Using words such as communism, class struggle, and revolution will qualify you for a free consultation with a psychiatrist. Which is really not so bad. In fact, one of our demands is a president who has been to therapy, who has cross-dressed and misbehaved. Someone who has been in love and been hurt, who respects sex, has made mistakes and learned from them. Someone who is bent as much on destruction as survival. We want a black woman as president. We want three presidents or none at all. Whatever comes first.

[*casual*] Affirming nonbinary structures also entails living without conceits of foundations, origins, and progress, and especially without clear distinction between the real and the fictive, the ideal and the material, the past and the present.

[*flirtatious*] See, gray was the new black, then black was the new black, then brown was the new black, then, if I remember the sequence correctly, navy entered the picture, but well before that, dyke was the new feminist, making life fascinating ... such is my bias. Meanwhile, gay ditched lesbian, so queer had perforce to be the new gay and now old is the new queer.

[*slowly, eyes closed, palms to the audience.*] Politics is always about nomination. It is about naming the political subjectivity and organizing politically around that name. The political task then is one of inventing a name around which a political subject can aggregate from the various social struggles through which we are living. [*eyes open, examining the gesture*] This act of aggregation on the part of the political subject is a moment of counterhegemony. This act is precisely what I desire. What is exhibited in this fantasy is the possibility of performing and articulating the movement among static choices of identity. It's the movement and the action—not quite specifically all the time, one way or the other—that I hope to articulate here.

[*hands down and with gravity*] Making boundaries is politics, crossing them is drama.

[*in the tone of a grade-school teacher.*] We need to focus on ambivalence rather than on truth. Rather than fight for a right or true politics, we might purposefully embrace its impossibility, understanding that we cannot determine the meaning of our own acts. Let's give up intentionality and the scientific method, give in to politics motivated not by truth or morality but by love, desire, restlessness, humor, hope, inventiveness, and impulse.

Walking to the conference table, LEE leans against it, professorial.

We need art that can analyze the workings of capitalism and patriarchy in all of their manifestations—ideological, institutional, organizational, subjective. We need art that will let us think in terms of diversities rather than unities. We need art that will break the old concepts and traditions of Western art, which have systematically construed the world hierarchically in terms of masculine universals and feminine specificities. We need art that will enable us to articulate alternative ways of

thinking about and acting upon gender without either simply reversing the old hierarchies or confirming them. We need art that will be useful and relevant for political practice, because neither empowerment nor social justice is possible without some sense of what needs to change. We need also to place greater emphasis on the connections among art, knowledge, and power relations. Aesthetics beyond disciplines. Aesthetics as a fact of life. We need art; that goes without saying. We need art that goes without saying.

Pause.

We will reconnect discussions of aesthetics to the base.

LEE paces in front of the table.

We will step outside, highjack buses, abolish prisons, open our flats, lend our grandmother's scarf to a homeless person. Use the trailer as a mobile library, turn the football field into a ballroom for the queens, and in your uncle's shoes we will toast the future. We will do social research and exploration within a context shaped by the hard material facts, fluctuating passions, and affective instabilities that characterize our daily lives. We will take power using all available means: a mattress becomes a residency, the bedroom a cinema, the living room a meeting space, the police station a day-care center, the bus a classroom, the prison a ...

SAM. An artist residence.

LEE. Yes ... an artist residence. The square a ...

EVA. Dance floor?

LEE. A dance floor, great. The workroom an archive ... the institute a ...

SANDE. ... daytime pizza parlor.

LEE. ... and a nighttime art class. The military a coffee break. Life a musical. The home a university.

Because [*slowing down, explaining*] pedagogy is providing alternatives to the way things are suppose to be. Pedagogy is all about bodies; it all happens in bodies. Pedagogy is about sociality. Pedagogy is about the grime of history, and it happens in a panopticon. Pedagogy is praxis. Empowerment is gaining the critical consciousness to unpack hegemonic ideologies.

Returns to the conference table. SANDE adjusts LEE's mic.

Thanks, Sande. I've been thinking and talking with others about what it means to make public declarations, public declarations about social relations, about politics. Declarations through words or another language—actions, images, clothes, ways of behaving and of reflecting on behavior. By opening our private spaces, we turn them into public institutions. A collective, hovering phantom. Reclaiming public spaces makes them *public*.

[*motherly*] Let's make one thing clear.

[*fatherly, slapping the table for emphasis*] Art does not necessarily have to reflect the hegemonic structures of society. Art can be organized and based in and around the everyday knowledges and material struggles that structure people's lives. Art can in fact counter hegemonic structures.

[*savoring each syllable*] We are the world's darkest past. We are giving shape to the future. We will open a new front.

LEE stands and ascends the table, walks its length. Looks down, rearranges the table's contents with little kicks, while speaking.

Who allows herself, affords herself, the possibility of risk? Who puts herself at stake? Who overcomes fear, acts on thinking without thinking, sees thinking as acting? Who speaks loudly into the microphone at the conference, takes her shirt off in the nightclub, takes off her panties on stage? Who goes to another place, stays in one place, who asks you to look after her child for twenty minutes, who goes out to film when it's minus-fifteen degrees centigrade? Who survives a stomach virus? Who fought for contraceptive rights, homosexuals, and anarchism in the late nineteenth century? Who cooks for many people without really planning to, then fasts for six days? Who refuses to get out of bed, spend money, work, communicate, refuses to identify with any one group or ideology? Who gets fisted in the toilet at a nightclub, bases her look on Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings?

[to SAM, stepping down from the table] Can you give me a hand?

[crossing to the podium] Who is ready and willing to share the problematic reading of an image? Who gets to read it, who refuses to look, refuses to leave, to pay, to leave without being paid?

Who is here, present and ready?

Three beats. LEE switches off the reading lamp and returns to the conference table.

III

SANDE. [positioning the microphone] Is this okay? Can you guys hear me? Okay then, great. [waving both hands and searching the audience] Thanks, Camel Collective. Thanks, all. I know we don't have a lot of time, so I'll just jump right in.

Jorn and Wolman's 1956 speeches at Alba, Italy highlight, now, extreme disjunctions between today's art discourse and art realities. Discourse is incessantly inflated, idealized, while artworks are subject to intense conjunctions of institutional politics and, to put it bluntly, business, inclusive of symbolic and imaginary currencies. Art's collective social impact, Jorn and Wolman's object of concern, has only deteriorated. The scramble for impact value, especially in regard to art's capacity to support consciousness enhancement, has intensified. It has done so via the question of which artworks further a critique of society, often in the name of emancipation. Allegedly, all university-based art is emancipatory. Competitions for recognition derived from the master-slave model have also intensified. Today, every day, artists or intellectuals must show *legitimation and justification—they must answer to a tribunal.* (This is an idea from Odo Marquard's *Farewell to Matters of Principle*, by the way.¹) Critique is precisely legitimized. Yeah, that's right. How? [long pause] By recourse to society's failures, lacks, absences. Art collections and tenure in the academic system give credibility to such functions as ranking things, the power to pass judgments on future works. Today, art is suffused with a progressive-reactionary interleaving, directly apparent in conflicts over recognition.

I like some of the things Asger Jorn says. First off, the affirmative—an artwork “speaks” a language that is *of*, and not *on*, an artwork; art can say something because it is invention and composition; any other discourse is secondary. Okay, fair enough, but contemporary art is defined by its

Notes to Eva Díaz, "Whither Curatorial Studies?"

- 1 In the U.S., K-12, kindergarten through 12th grade, is equivalent to elementary and secondary education. (Students there attend high school between the ages of 14 and 18.)
- 2 The underfunding of the public system contributes to a stratified, two-tier system under which the promise of universal public education has receded. The Obama family's decision to send their children to an elite private school in Washington, D.C., at a cost of more than \$28,000 annually per student, stoked complaints about unequal, class-based opportunity for educational attainment.
- 3 Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy 1870-2033: An Essay on Education and Equality*, New York: Penguin Books (1961), 15.
- 4 This interdisciplinary, postgraduate educational institution in New York City is now in its 40th year. "Postgraduate" here generally indicates that the studio program attendees have completed their MFAs and that most of the critical and curatorial students are post-MA if they are currently working toward a Ph.D. Occasionally, students who have only recently been awarded a BA are accepted into the Whitney Program. The program itself is unaccredited and has achieved visibility and status largely by word of mouth.
- 5 George Baker, "Pedagogy, Power, and the Public Sphere: The Whitney Program and (Its) History," *Whitney Program Newsletter*, Spring/Summer 2000.
- 6 The Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, was founded in 1990 and launched a curatorial MA program in 1994; the MA in Curating Contemporary Art was initiated at the Royal College of Art in London in 1992. The De Appel Curatorial Training Program in Amsterdam was founded in 1994. In 1998, the Core Program at Houston's Museum of Fine Arts added a critical studies component to its fine arts residencies, a shift influenced by the Whitney Program's interdisciplinary organization. In 2002, Columbia University founded its MA-granting program, Modern Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies. Other programs include the two-year Critical Studies at Malinö Art Academy in Sweden, the MFA in Curating at Goldsmiths in London, founded in 1987, and the tuition-free one-year curatorial program Le Magasin in Grenoble in France.
- 7 This list includes New York University; School of the Art Institute, Chicago; California College of the Arts; and CalArts, Valencia, California.

⁸ The art-magazine world and the grant-giving and foundation sectors could be folded in here, too, though they generally do not involve curating in the narrow definition of the term.

Notes to Sande Cohen, "Unteachable Likeness"

- 1 Odo Maquard, *Farewell to Matters of Principle*, New York: Oxford University Press (1989).
- 2 Boris Groys, *Art Power*, Cambridge: MIT Press (2008), 57.
- 3 *Ibid*, 55.
- 4 *Ibid*, 46.
- 5 Martin L. Davies, *Imprisoned by History: Aspects of Historicized Life*, New York: Routledge (2010).
- 6 Groys, 25.
- 7 *Ibid*, 51.
- 8 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1983).
- 9 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, New York: Columbia University Press (1994), 172, 177, 198.

The Second World Congress of Free Artists

In Three Acts

Camel Collective

AARHUS KUNSTHAL, AARHUS, DENMARK

THE PLAY WAS FIRST PERFORMED AT AARHUS
KUNSTBYGNING IN NOVEMBER 2010, DIRECTED BY
CAMEL COLLECTIVE WITH ROBERT OCHSHORN, AND
THE SUPPORT OF KARIN HINDSBO AND THE DANISH
INTERNATIONAL VISITING ARTISTS PROGRAM
(DIVA)

CAST

IZA MORTAG FREUND, WANDA JAKOB,
ZAKI NOBEL MEHABIL, ROSA SAND MICHELSEN,
VIVI NIELSEN, AND MIKKEL TRIER RYGAARD,
WITH MICHAEL ASHKIN, ZACHARY CAHILL, AND
JOHANNES RAETHER

A SECOND PERFORMANCE OF ACT I, TRANSLATED
INTO SPANISH BY CARLA HERRERA-PRATS, TOOK
PLACE AT CASA DEL LAGO, MEXICO CITY, IN
FEBRUARY 2013, DIRECTED BY CAMEL COLLECTIVE,
CURATED BY FABIOLA IZA AND VICTOR PALACIOS.

CAST

ELSY JIMENES, ALONSO NAVARRO MENDOZA,
JOSÉ MARÍA NEGRI, JACQUELINE SERAFÍN, AND
GASTÓN YANES

SPECIAL THANKS TO DORTE KIRKEBY ANDERSEN, LARS BAY,
AND KAREN FRIIS HERBSLEB (MUSEUM JORN, SILKEBORG);
CECILIE LERKE ASAA, SARINA BASTA, MAARTEN BREUM,
GIULIA CRISCI AND LILIANA DENATTEIS (ARCHIVIO
GALLIZIO); JENNIFER GONZÁLEZ; NATE HARRISON; KATRINE
HEE; KARIN HINDSBO; FABIOLA IZA; JAKOB JAKOBSEN
(COPENHAGEN FREE UNIVERSITY); KAREN KURCZYNSKI; TONY
MULLIN; ROBERT OCHSHORN; VICTOR PALACIOS; JUDITH
WIELANDER; AND EMILY VOTRUBA.

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