School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry

The Politics of Artistic Labour: Rethinking a Position of Autonomy

David Brazier

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number: HRE2017-0227

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Abstract

While the criticality of the artist has historically been linked to the autonomy they produce from normative ways of work, in recent times such a distinction has been increasingly difficult to sustain. This can partially be attributed to the changing nature of artistic labour. Socially-engaged artists, such as myself, work through sites, contexts, and social forms which loosen the boundaries between artistic labour and other modes of production. However, of equal significance are the changing notions of "work". Under the conditions of post-Fordism, for example, attributes traditionally associated with the artist such as creativity, flexibility, conviviality, and autonomy itself have become integral to the generation of surplus value. Rather than producing a distance from normative modes of production, the artist has emerged as a role model for new capital-labour relations.

My research carefully examined this context, exploring both the critical claims for the autonomy of artistic labour and how such claims have been undermined by the changing notions of work. While art's newfound proximity with labour would seemingly negate a possibility for critical distance, my research considered how this proximity also produces specific political contexts that can be the grounds for autonomy's renewal.

Negotiating politics of production produced through a distance *from* labour and a proximity *with* labour has, therefore, become a defining aspect of my research. Through an identification and disidentification with labour, I developed a methodology that examined how these political positions could operate together in productive contradiction. This methodology was applied to my practical output over the course of an artist residency in New Delhi and two performative interventions at conferences. Within these works, art's mimesis with labour became the grounds from which autonomy could be reimagined. The ambiguities

and contradictions that arose from my research promote the negation of existing disciplinary boundaries, not only of labour, but the production of art itself.

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INTRODUCTION

The impetus for my research came from working for over 10 years in the field of socially-engaged art. While I consider myself to be a socially-engaged artist, as I often work with people, I've found it difficult to completely identify with this field of practice. Just prior to commencing my PhD, I was teaching a social practice workshop at the California College of the Arts, and I remember thinking how my way of working differed from the genre's dominant rhetoric. None of my work sets out to mend the social bond, or ameliorate social injustices, as many social practitioners tend to do. My interests, rather, come from a critical reflection on the labour processes embedded within the production of socially-engaged art. While I consider my practice political, it is a different kind of politics usually tackled through this field of practice. Socially-engaged art routinely presents political subject matter such as race, gender, or environmental issues as occurring somewhere else. But the politics I am interested in emerges from within the production process of my practice, from within the labour processes involved in making the work.

In attempting to locate and understand these politics, I have become conscious of the relationship my practice has with labour. While the work of the artist has traditionally produced a politics through its distance *from* labour, the way I was practising, and the way I thought about art production, seemed to produce a state of proximity *with* labour. The way I viewed the act of participation in my practice, for example, was through the lens of labour in that it seemed to replicate service-based evolutions in the economy. While this negated the potential for a politics of critical distance *from* labour, it produced a different political context through its proximity *with* labour.

Much of my work during this 10-year period has also been made in artist residency situations and these experiences also led to me questioning the politics within my artistic

production. The way I found myself working on residency was very much embedded within a complex web of functional expectations from funding bodies, host organisations, local art institutions, and government authorities. There was always a sense working on residency that my output was to be socially, politically, or economically instrumentalised. This seemed to limit the agency of a critical distance and situated my practice within external, heteronomous contexts.

My theory and practice, therefore, embodied a contradiction which I have taken this opportunity to examine. While I set out to acknowledge the heteronomous interdependencies and interrelationships of my practice, I also explored the possibility of artistic labour as an autonomous activity "free of the economic logic that defines our contemporary world" (Esche, 2011, p. 6). What becomes clear is that the politics I am examining emerges from within my own artistic labour. It is a politics that is derived from being removed from the notion of "work" in one respect, and mimetic of it in the other.

The dichotomy between these two ways of working became a point of departure for my research. I am essentially setting out to explore the politics of artistic labour from two opposing positions and look to negotiate a practice between them. On one hand, artistic labour is political because it produces a separation from normative ways of work. On the other hand, particularly in recent times, it generates a certain political context through its mimesis; it is political because it replicates some key structural evolutions in the way we work today.

Exploring this has involved understanding the critical claims and critiques of these two opposing ways of "working", which I look to mediate through a dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy. Initially, I examine the politics of critical distance and how art can make claims for producing a separation from normative capitalist modes of production. *The*

autonomy of artistic labour is the term I use to describe this condition, where the artist's production process "opts for a form of praxis beyond the spoils of labour" (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 33). In doing this, it presents a form of life outside the profit motif that reduces everything to the logic of exchange. This separation, I argue, is entwined with the development of art as critical activity throughout modernity.

While I associate this position of distance as intrinsically linked to art's criticality, my own experience working as an artist has created doubts over its possibility. Once the claims for an autonomy of artistic labour have been established, I therefore use my research to explore the extent to which such claims have collapsed. In other words, rather than producing a critical distance *from* labour, I want to understand how art practices produced a mimesis *with* labour. While I consider the implications of this for the formation of a critical practice, I will also consider how this mimesis can carry with it a political context through proximity.

This exploration of the collapse of a critical distance within artistic labour will move into elements specific to my practice such as the process of participation and the artist residency. However, I will begin by looking to understand broader evolutions in labour that redefine the potential for art to produce a critical distance from work. Immaterial labour, for example, has seen the subjectivity and creativity of the worker made productive. Elements that were previously considered non-productive, or "disinterested", have been brought into the commodity sphere which has in turn collapsed the distinction between artistic labour and wage labour (Beech, 2015).

The way we now work has, therefore, become an important facet of my study, revealing many surprising discoveries which create complex research trajectories. One such complexity is the inversion of artistic labour's critical modes of production. The freedom presented by the artist as autonomous from a regulated world of work, for example, has now

been appropriated by the neoliberal system as a means of implementing deregulation and flexibilisation of labour. Autonomy has emerged as a complex site of struggle that my research examined. Artistic labour is shown to oscillate from a position of distance to one of proximity, and I look toward this undecidability as the potential site of its agency.

Developing a means for negotiating this context is what the practical component of my research seeks to achieve. What is at stake is inherent in the criticality of the artist. If criticality appears redundant with the demise of art's separation from labour, then this signifies the need to rethink a notion of autonomy within artistic labour not reliant on a position of distance. In other words, what my research examines is whether the autonomy of artistic labour could be reimagined dialectically where it emerges from a space of proximity. Here, it becomes contingent with a process of negotiation, where the opposing positions of distance and proximity, autonomy, and heteronomy oscillate in productive contradiction.

In locating the agency of this contradiction, I will look toward the theories of Theodor Adorno for whom the autonomous artwork embodies such a contradiction from the start. For Adorno, it is the autonomous artwork's ambiguous relationship to its status as commodity that both contradicts itself and also the logic of the value form. Agency, therefore, emerges from a dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy which this research looks to apply to the fluctuations between the distance and proximity art produces to labour. Jacques Rancière's understanding of this dialectic has also proved vital for understanding how art's conflicted relationship to labour can produce a constructive contradiction. Following Adorno and Rancière, the ambiguity between these positions can be the grounds from which both the order of art and labour can be reorganised.

The practical application of this methodology has allowed me to consider art's relationship to labour which is specific to my work as a socially-engaged artist. I have

focused on the mimetic relationships between participation and the artist residency produce with labour. As the research evolved, the conference also became an important site of production. The conference, with its format for networking and self-promotion, enabled me to think about the performative shift in labour that defines the way we work today. Identifying contemporary evolutions of labour within art's production processes became a defining aspect of the research methodology. But as the study evolved, of equal importance was disidentifying with labour. The undecidability of art's autonomy and heteronomy, distance, and proximity is thereby put to work through an identification and disidentification with labour.

Chapter summary

Chapter 1 looks to define the autonomy relevant for this study. An exhaustive analysis of autonomy is beyond the gamut and necessity of this research. However, I continually found myself coming up against different definitions and applications for autonomy which necessitates some clarification and historical grounding. "The basic problem with autonomy persists: whether it exists or not largely depends on how one defines it, but neither its defenders nor its detractors can agree on a definition" (Wildanger, 2016, para. 32).

In Chapter 1, the autonomy that is the focus of the research is defined as the autonomy of artistic labour. This was an autonomy that evolved throughout modernity, where artists were seen to live and work in a manner that separated them from the division of labour inflicted upon almost all other fields since industrialisation (Bürger, 1984). There was a sense that the artist was able to avoid specialisation through their polymorphous way of working. Furthermore, in focusing on the production of essentially "useless" or purposeless things, they avoided the means end rationality of economic imperatives. But it was also the fluid and flexible way the artist worked, not dictated to by the alienating conditions of "labour", that

gave their processes of production an autonomy from those of the capitalist system. This chapter goes onto explore how this autonomy of artist labour has historically been entwined with art as a critical activity.

Many of these notions of autonomy have long been proven illusionary. For many the concept of autonomy has been abandoned altogether, particularly in the field of social practice (Kester, 2011; Wright, 2013). In Chapter 2, I investigate how autonomy has been relegated to the status of an ideological relic (Stakemeier, 2016). Rather than working in negation to the economic, art and culture have emerged as a major economic driving force. We can see that clearly through art's dominant role within the culture industry, the way it attracts huge sums of money through the market, and how it is broadly instrumentalised as a productive neoliberal economic tool. In these contexts, any claims that art produces autonomy from an economic rationality would appear increasingly difficult to sustain.

While my research explores this collapse, I pay closer attention to the structural changes in both art and labour which creates new proximities between the two. The freedom and flexibility traditionally associated with the criticality of the artist, for example, is now the cornerstone of a deregulated world of work. The artist's refusal of the division of labour is now integrated into neoliberal modes of production where "multitasking" and the "fusion of professions" has increasingly become the norm (Steyerl, 2011). What my research uncovers are persuasive claims that the critical autonomy imbued by artistic labour have now been appropriated as the dominant ideology (Lorey, 2015). Rather than producing a critical distance from real existing labour, there is an argument that artistic labour now presents an occupational role model (Steyerl, 2011).

This inversion of artistic labour's critical distance became an unexpected yet pivotal point of this research. The critical autonomy presented by artistic labour has emerged as a

complex site of struggle. It is something that has been appropriated by power, yet continues to inform the production of art, even within those practices that claim to have abandoned it. What became clear is that the ground has obviously dramatically changed and the politics of autonomy within artistic labour as critical distance is no longer a possibility.

With a thorough understanding of this context established, its negotiation becomes the methodology for the practical aspect of the research. In Chapter 3, I consider ways this negotiation can be achieved. While it may be rational to abandon autonomy completely as many in the field of socially-engaged art are believed to have done (Kester, 2004; Wright, 2013), the fact that a critical autonomy is so lost to us, and has even been appropriated by capitalism, would suggest that autonomy is a problem in urgent need of address (Lütticken, 2016). If the way we live and work today increasingly exposes us to market forces, which my research points toward, then a re-articulation of autonomy within that space would appear vital.

Chapter 3 is where I establish a methodology by investigating autonomy dialectically via the theories of Theodor Adorno and Jacques Rancière. I then explore this methodology via the lens of labour through the "readymade". For Adorno, the autonomous artwork is entwined with the commodity form, and its agency comes from its ability to contradict the logic of exchange. Importantly for this research, the agency of autonomy comes not from a defensive position of distance but through its proximity. I use Adorno's ideas to consider the proximity artistic labour has with post-Fordist modes of work and management and whether autonomy can be reimagined via this space proximity for critical effect.

Art production and its possibility for autonomy has shifted dramatically since Adorno's wrote his *Aesthetic Theory,* and I have used the work of Rancière to greater understand this dialectic for social practices like my own. For Rancière, "critical art has to

negotiate between the tension which pushes art towards 'life' as well as that which, conversely, sets aesthetic sensorality apart from other forms of sensory experience" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 46). Autonomy, therefore, needs to be preserved but at the same time mediated with its heteronomous counterpart to create a contradiction which enables a change in the perception which, for Rancière, constitutes the "political" (Rancière, 2009b).

In Chapter 4, I apply the context and methodology to the process of participation and the artist residency situation which has been my main means of production for the past 10 years. The artist residency necessitates a fluid, mobile, and polymorphous way of working which are now the sought-after characteristics of a contemporary workforce. But they also often replicate global socioeconomic labour relations, particularly when national representation is involved, contradicting the artist's traditional position as removed from labour. I consider this through a residency I undertook through the Australia Council in 2017 at Khoj International Artists Association, New Delhi, and critically evaluate two projects I produced in relation to this context. While the works could be evaluated through numerous criteria, I choose to explore them through their mimesis with real existing labour. I pay close attention to how the works identify with a division in labour between India and the West and in doing so reproduce an important political context for this research.

This analysis is extended to inform my methodology, and in Chapter 5 I introduce a work, *Virtual Employee*, also made at Khoj, which involved outsourcing my residency to a virtual employment company. I will suggest that like the readymade, the agency of the work exists through a disruptive conjunction of two forms of aesthetic and non-aesthetic labour held in suspension. The performative conditions of contemporary labour are critiqued not through an autonomy produced through distance or "defensive disowning" (Fraser, 2012, p. 5) but one which both identifies and disidentifies the labour conditions it looks to hold in question.

In 2017, I wrote a paper about outsourcing my New Delhi residency which I was to deliver at the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ) conference held in Perth of that year. During the AAANZ conference, however, I was giving another paper at a conference in Holland. Chapter 5 explores the negotiation of this circumstance, where I hired an actor to play the part of "David Brazier" to deliver a paper on my behalf extending the themes of the original *Virtual Employee* work. Unbeknown to the audience, actor Renato Fabretti was my surrogate throughout the conference presentation and post-conference social gatherings. The performance articulated the abstractions of space and identity that comes with globalised, fluid, and flexible labour practices. It also manifested the commodification of subjectivity that characterises immaterial labour and "labour as performance". However, the act of hiring a surrogate in this scenario remained somehow illogical, or counter functional. I consider whether autonomy can be reimagined here not as a grand gesture of freedom from labour but as a functional glitch within its systems of operation (Lütticken, 2016).

The conference presentation emerged through the research as a form of artistic production that I became interested in engaging with. As a site of performative labour which involves networking, branding, and the instrumentalisation of one's personal attributes, the conference - like the residency - represents the increased proximity between artistic labour and new formation of work. At the end of 2018, an opportunity came to present a paper for a session titled *Artistic labour under Post-Fordism* as part of the AAANZ Conference, *Aesthetics, Politics and Histories: The Social Context of Art*.

For the conference I decided to extend these themes into a performance which revolved around the sale of 49% of my socially-engaged practice for a 2-year period. I have included transcripts of the paper in chapter 6, where I hired corporate actor Raj Sidhu to deliver. Unfortunately, but not altogether unexpectedly, the sale of the shares in my practice

was unsuccessful. This chapter includes an analysis of the work's failure in relation to the dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy. While the life of the project was cut short, I consider the failure for my practice to adhere to the rationality of the corporate share market as a means for autonomy to be reimagined. The capacity of aesthetic practice to rupture an existing order is, I argue, reliant on this ability to be non-compliant, non-utilitarian, and to fail these heteronomous expectations. In other words, and paraphrasing artist Paul Chan, "a work works by not working at all" (Chan, 2011, para. 10) . However, it is the precise way the performance failed when it was interrupted by a guerrilla performance that unexpectedly articulated the methodology of the research giving new perspectives and clarity to what I have been looking to achieve.

My study looks to present an important investigation of the politics of artistic labour at a moment when, for many, it has well and truly evolved from its former position of critical distance (Kester, 2013; Lind, 2012; Wright, 2008). While the politics of autonomy as we once knew it may have passed by, artistic labour's new space of proximity also carries with it its own defined sense of politics. Operating in opposition to a position of autonomy, this politics is not readily acknowledged, particular in the field of socially-engaged art (Léger, 2012). In my research, I consider whether the politics of proximity can produce the site for a reimagination of autonomy where these two forms of artistic labour collide to produce productive contradictions.

Through a dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy, manifest via an identification and disidentification with real existing labour, I thereby look to perform contradictions and ambiguities within the production process. Through this study, I explore how these contradictions and ambiguities allows for the perception of these processes to be reorganised. The negation of artistic labour is looked to be mobilised here, but it is used to produce an

autonomy within a space of proximity rather than occupying a space of distance associated with the autonomy as a critical project in the past.

CHAPTER 1

THE AUTONOMY OF ARTISTIC LABOUR

This chapter will look to establish an understanding of autonomy in relation to artistic labour. My research here has placed an emphasis on the critical claims of autonomy which separates artistic labour from other forms of capitalist modes of production. I will look to identify key areas where the autonomy of artistic labour has been manifested. A refusal of specialisation, for example, has separated the artist from the division of labour that has dictated production in almost all other fields (Steyerl, 2011). Having identified how autonomy exists within artistic labour, I will examine its function as a form of critical negation. This leads to the question fundamental to this research that this chapter will explore: how can artistic labour critically negate the labour practices of an expanded capitalist culture?

Coming into this research, I was attracted to the freedom and autonomy of working as an artist. My MFA professor, David Mabb, described being an artist as "the nearest thing you come to a non-alienated activity" and, unlike many forms of labour, "there is a real sense that you are in control of your own work" (Mabb, 2009). This non-alienated nature of artistic labour is a defining characteristic of autonomy, a term intrinsically entwined with the criticality of art. Historically, autonomy has generated a type of freedom from labour that has made the work of the artist an inherently critical act.

Presented as autonomous from labour, there is a sense that the artist can provide a critical alternative from labour's alienating conditions. The initial part of this research examines this criticality articulated by theorist Charles Esche:

> The field of art remains a tolerated enclosure within global capital in which non-productive, dysfunctional and pointless experimentation can still take place. Even though much has been commodified, there is no other field so free of the economic logic that defines our contemporary world. Try doing what art does in business or in democratic politics to understand the difference. We understand this status under the term 'autonomy' (Esche, 2011, p. 6).

My interest in the notion of autonomy, however, has undoubtedly emerged in unison with the very lack of autonomy I have experienced in my own practice. Over the past 10 years, I have worked site-specifically as a socially-engaged artist; frequently in residency situations. Working in this way has allowed me to respond to new contexts, work with a variety of people, and take my practice outside of art's traditional parameters. However, it also situates my practice in the shadow of a complex web of expectations from funding bodies, host organisations, and other institutional structures.

As a socially-engaged artist, my practice is bound up with art's expanded use values. Socially-engaged art can foster community and a sense of belonging. It can be convivial and bring people together. It can foster new forms of collectivity and togetherness, which are necessary requirements to create social change and ameliorate social injustices. Working as a socially-engaged artist has often felt like a very generous and rewarding way to practise. But it also signifies a shift in the function of artistic labour towards quantifiable cultural measurement and processes of legitimisation. Socially-engaged art brings with it an expectation to serve specific social purposes which transcends the traditional understanding of artistic quality, or merit, which has been historically associated with art as a separate, autonomous field. With this shift in the function of artistic labour comes a departure from the criticality associated with autonomy.

While autonomy may seem the antipathy of the connectiveness of a social practice, it is still a term that I have continually encountered working in this field over the past 10 years. *The Autonomy Project*, established in 2010 between the Netherlands and the UK, is an example of this revival of autonomy in contemporary art. Consisting of a series of seminars, newspapers, and a symposium, the project looked to "bring the issue and practice of autonomy back into debate" (Byrne, 2010, para. 1). The work done by *The Autonomy Project* gave weight to the relevance of autonomy as a resurgent concept, and their website opens with the following description:

> The word 'Autonomy' sounds outdated. In an artistic field, this term finds itself unfortunately wedged between two possibilities: the romantic notion of the isolated artist, developing works in a studio, unaffected by the socio-political beyond his [*sic*] walls; or the cold reality that to operate within those same socio-political arenas an artist and the mediators involved in a creative action are only there to facilitate public agenda(s) or to smooth social process (Byrne, 2010, para. 1).

This resonates with the dilemma I found myself in when I was working within my own practice. Early in the research, it became clear that a tension emerged in my practice between the critical promise of autonomy and the heteronomous way I found myself working as an artist. My research considers these positions as not mutually exclusive. I am interested in locating a way in which their contradictory claims can be mediated and reconciled for critical effect.

I will analyse recent shifts in contemporary art in terms of a departure from autonomy. This departure has been widely celebrated amongst social practitioners, including myself, for allowing art to have greater traction in the "real". But it also sees practices that exist in

proximity with systems of power which I believe requires urgent reflection. This proximity has led me to consider the relevance of reconsidering autonomy which I attempt to do through the lens of artistic labour. I aim to explore how the critical claims for the autonomy of artistic labour could be made relevant, or even possible, for a practice "holding no semblance of 'art's being in itself'?" (Roberts, 2015, p. 111).

A Historicisation of the Autonomy of Artistic Labour

The initial point of my research has become firstly about developing a thorough understanding of autonomy within artistic labour. A difficulty I have encountered here is that the nature of autonomy is a highly contested term with multiple definitions and associations. My initial focus has been on what the critical claims of autonomy are and not a definition of "autonomy as a style, as a marketing strategy, as a simple commodity niche" (Vishmidt, 2016, p. 40).

This chapter will, therefore, look to clarify the terms of a critical autonomy I am interested in. I will examine how autonomy's critical claims have been historically made and how they manifest today. Current notions of autonomy have, of course, been founded on these past formations, and an understanding of them will help in their reimagination and renewal within a contemporary context.

For the 'founder of liberal thinking', John Loche, the individual's right to autonomy and freedom is linked not only to *property* but fundamentally to *labour*. In *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1690), he claimed in that "every man [*sic*] has a property in his own person: this, nobody has any right to but himself. The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his" (Locke, 1690/1990, sect. 27). Adam Smith expanded upon this when he claimed: "The property which every man has in his [*sic*] own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable" (Smith,

1776, p. 200). As early as the 18th century, this highly gendered construction of productive labour is presented as allowing the worker the means to feed themselves and their family, providing *autonomy* and freedom from both state and non-state institutions.

This notion of autonomy has made a resurgence under neo liberal governance which expects its citizens to be self-regulated and self-sustained. This appropriation of autonomy by capital forms a major component of this research as the site for which a struggle for autonomy unfolds. But, before taking this up in chapter 2, I want to explore how the critical claims of the autonomy of artistic labour introduced in this chapter have historically developed.

A critical notion of autonomy can be most strongly traced back to Immanuel Kant who saw it related to common sense ideas about duty and morality. The "universal subject of reason" is free and autonomous by acting on these *internal* drive rather than via *external* dictates, thereby, "living without direction from another" (Kant, 1784/2013). This notion of autonomy has also been shown to be highly problematic and associated with "the imperialist and colonialist autocracy of Western subjectivity" (Lütticken, 2016, p. 59). To live without direction from another, or the need for support, is of course a right that is not evenly distributed to all and has come to be associated with privilege. "The Enlightenment subject has been unmasked as nothing but a male bourgeois rights holder and property owner" (Lütticken, 2016, p. 59) whose own sense of autonomy is maintained via the subjugation of the rights of others.

Nevertheless, Kant's ideas have been pivotal in the development of autonomy as we understand it in the field of art. Kant brought his ideas into the aesthetic field with his *Critique of Judgment* (Kant, 1790/1987). Here, "rational judgement" was extended into the outer appearance of the world through common-sense ideas of aesthetics or taste. For Kant,

"taste is, in the ultimate analysis, a faculty that judges of the rendering of moral ideas in terms of the senses ... laying the foundations of taste is the development of moral ideas and the culture of the moral feeling" (Kant, 1790/1987, p. 183).

The universal subject of reason thereby incorporated common and inherent ideas of aesthetic appreciation. The notion of "beauty" came to be seen as a source of value in its own right which allowed the aesthetic realm independence or *autonomy* from religious or feudal-use values. As theorist Kersten Stakemeiser suggests in her essay *Reproducing Autonomy*: "in order to not ideologically collide with the former religious or feudal use values of the artworks, their early bourgeois acclamations had to render them purposeless, free from any applied function – ultimately *aesthetic*" (Stakemeier, 2016, p. 14).

In his text, *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* Peter Bürger makes clear the criticality to emerge from this notion of autonomy when he describes how: "Kant's axiom also defines the freedom of art from the constraints of the developing bourgeois-capitalist society. The aesthetic is conceived as a sphere that does not fall under the principle of the maximization of profit prevailing in all spheres of life" (Bürger, 1984, p. 42).

> The citizen who, in everyday life has been reduced to a partial function (means-ends activity) can be discovered in art as 'human being.' Here, one can unfold the abundance of one's talents, though with the proviso that this sphere remain strictly separate from the praxis of life. Seen in this fashion, the separation of art from the praxis of life becomes the decisive characteristic of the autonomy of bourgeois art (Bürger, 1984, pp. 48-49).

Bürger positions the criticality of autonomy as a "distinct social subsystem" (Bürger, 1984, p. 47), completely separate from the praxis of life. The criticality of autonomy here is defined by its own internal logic which separates it from utilitarian requirements, making it

irreducible to heteronomous factors of “a psychological, biological, economic, social, or political nature” (Haskins, 1989, p. 170).

If ‘Kant assigned the aesthetic a special position between sensuousness and reason, and defined the judgment of taste as free and disinterested’ (Bürger, 1984, p. 44), in *Letters of the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Schiller, 1967), Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) expanded upon these ideas further. For Schiller, it was through art’s autonomy, or specifically its *functionlessness*, the quality of “not being tied to immediate ends, that art can fulfil a task that cannot be fulfilled any other way: the furtherance of humanity” (Bürger, 1984, p. 44).

Grant Kester identifies basic tenets within Schiller’s thought that he believes set a precedent as to how art’s autonomy is understood today. Specifically, that there is a moment of historical degradation that is accompanied by a scepticism of the ability of the people to transcend these conditions. There is also a belief that conventional political or social action will flounder due to its proximity Finally, the solution to these problems involves a reconfiguration “of the human spirit” through aesthetic experience or more specifically an “experience with a work of art that is radically autonomous” (Kester, 2011, p. 42).

The proposed agency of the artwork as “free from any applied function”, or as a manifestation of “purposeless” labour, resonates with Charles Esche’s more recent description of the field of art as “a tolerated enclosure within global capital in which non-productive, dysfunctional and pointless experimentation can still take place” (Esche, 2011, p. 6). This critical definition of autonomy culminated in the period of Aestheticism and the rise of the doctrine of Art for Art’s sake in the late 19th century. Autonomy encompassed a struggle for artistic independence from the control of institutions and the pressure for it to be socially useful. This was a condition reserved for “members of those classes which, at least at

times, are free from the pressures of the need for survival, a sensuousness could evolve that was not part of any means-ends relationships" (Bürger, 1984, p. 46). Despite its reliance on privilege, autonomy became emblematic of artistic freedom. For Walter Benjamin, for example, it represented the "freedom to write whatever he [*sic*] pleases" (Benjamin, 1970, p. 220). Emancipated from patronage, autonomous activity became the defining attributes of the artist and promised a "vision of human energies as radical ends in themselves which is the implacable enemy of all dominative or instrumentalist thought" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 9).

For theorist John Byrne, this tradition saw "the value of art and culture as the physical embodiment of non-alienated labour, and for art and craft to be used as a means of protecting the moral and ethical ownership of work and labour against the instrumentalising and brutalising forces of mass production" (Byrne, 2016b, pp. 64-65). "The artist remained as the only one whom the division of labour had passed by" (Bürger, 1984, p. 46). With respect to this, the labour practice of the artist took on a position of autonomy from instrumentalising and alienating capitalist labour relations.

Throughout modernity, as Maria Vishmidt states, "art, as principally a social activity without predetermined use or outcome, is a source and site for the development for autonomy in its sense of free individuality ... situated as a circumscribed realm of freedom and purposeless creation from the otherwise merciless laws of property, exploitation, and expansion of economic and state rationality" (Vishmidt, 2016, p. 37).

These critical claims for art's autonomy through the purposelessness of artistic labour found a powerful ally in Theodor Adorno whose ideas I draw on throughout my research. Adorno claimed that "insofar as a social function can be predicated for artworks, it is their functionlessness" (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 227):

> By crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as 'socially useful', it criticizes society by merely existing, for which puritans of all stripes condemn it. There is nothing pure, nothing structured strictly according to its own immanent law, that does not implicitly criticize the debasement of a situation evolving in the direction of a total exchange society in which everything is heteronomously defined. Art's asociality is the determinate negation of a determinate society (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 226)

For Adorno (1997), it is precisely the refusal of social function that gives the autonomous artwork agency by creating its own logic free from external imperatives. In his described "total exchange society", where everything has been instrumentalised for exchange, the functionless of autonomous art performs a social critique by resisting the logic of capitalism through "a disengagement from instrumental rationality" (Martin, 2000, p. 202). For Adorno, autonomous art resists instrumental reason by virtue of its uselessness. As theorist John Roberts describes: "as socialised, non-coercive labour (or purposeless purposiveness in the language of Kant), the artworks fabricated uselessness is able to recall for the spectator the freely human and non-instrumental content of labour" (Roberts, 2015, p. 96). As a product of purposeless creation, in other words, the autonomous artwork presents other forms of experience *beyond* instrumental reason and, therefore, its promise of emancipation comes from its separation form the increasingly hegemonic principle of exchange. As Maria Vishmidt describes:

> ... this formal freedom was also often attributed a critical content, certainly in Marxist aesthetic theory such as Adorno's: a freedom whose roots were structural to capitalist social relations as much as much to its own immanent laws. Art

> introduced a discrepancy into that which exists, thus posing a challenge to a world organised around work, accumulation and power (Vishmidt, 2016, p. 35).

On these grounds, the autonomy of art emerged as an important ingredient of critique and resistance. As artist and theorist Andrea Fraser makes clear: "Historically and discursively, the notion of critical art practice is unthinkable without some notion of autonomy – even if one of the primary objects of artistic critique has been artistic autonomy itself" (Fraser, 2012). For an artist such as Richard Serra, for example, who spoke in opposition to a pragmatic rhetoric of public art, autonomy is "necessary to work in opposition to the constraints of the context so that the work cannot be read as an affirmation of questionable ideologies and political power" (Serra, 1989, p. 202). Like Adorno, Serra sees the works functionlessness as a tool for critique and negation: "To deprive art of its uselessness is to make other than art. I am interested in sculpture which is nonutilitarian, non-functional. Any use is a misuse" (Serra, 1980, p. 128).

The Link Between Autonomy and Negation

Autonomy is once again positioned, ideologically at least, as providing artists the space to produce something in opposition to an economic rationality. I would like to consider this as a form of negation where autonomy manifests as a conceptual space via the negation of established boundaries. Artistic labour, therefore, is positioned as negating the labour practices of capitalist culture. Andrea Fraser expands on the negation which emerges from the artwork's autonomy:

> Art's capacity to negate or invert the values and principles of hierarchization dominant in other fields or in the social world is linked to the autonomy of art as a social field. The freedom of artists to question and challenge is linked not only to politically guaranteed free speech rights, but also to the practical and economic

> autonomy of artists as independent producers who control our own labour and the products of that labour to a relatively large degree (Fraser, 2012, p. 4).

Here, Fraser (2012) links art's capacity for negation to the autonomy of artistic labour, separated from other "social fields". Drawing from the work of Bourdieu, Fraser identifies the aesthetic dimension of artistic autonomy with "traditions of disinterestedness, distancing, and freedom from rationalization with respect to specific functions, etcetera" (Fraser, 2012, p. 2). For Bourdieu in particular, these traditions of disinterestedness are implicitly linked to a negation of the economic (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 55).

This negation of the economic is, of course, the assumed position that critical art takes. For theorist John Roberts, like Adorno, this capacity for negation comes from the "very 'asociality' of art under capitalism ... it must experience itself as being 'out of joint' both with its place in the world and within its own traditions" (Roberts, 2015, p. 56). This quality of art being "out of joint ... with its place in the world" becomes important to repositioning autonomy in this research, through which I refer to the above quote regularly.

What becomes important at this stage is how this quality of negation has been exemplified in the autonomous artwork through the functionlessness and purposelessness of artistic labour. From here the artist has evolved a means of production that separates them from a means end economic rationality. Artistic labour managed to avoid the division in labour and specialisation that have infected almost all other fields since industrialisation (Steyerl, 2011) and, in doing so, the artist became, and is still perceived as, a symbol of freedom. They are workers in a unique field where "non-productive, dysfunctional and pointless experimentation can still take place" (Esche, 2011, p. 6). This freedom and flexibility afforded to the artist has become the defining qualities that situate artistic labour as

a critical practice. To work in a manner that is autonomous stands in negation to the economic and, by extension, in opposition to the alienating conditions of wage labour.

Therefore, autonomy, when viewed through the lens of labour, "is not a fixed morphological attribute of art expressed through the various aesthetic predicates, but a *social relation* immanent to art's production and reception and, as such is determined by the changing material, cognitive and political requirements of these relations" (Roberts, 2015, p. 92). This definition of autonomy as a social relation allows it to break free from a reliance on medium specificity and the stylistic associations of modernity. In turn, the notion of autonomy gains relevance for social practices. As a social relation, the autonomy of artistic labour emerges as an act, or performance, which operates in a dialectic relationship with the social constitution of commodity relations, or productive labour.

While I take this up further in chapter 3, in the following chapter, I will explore how the notion of autonomy has come under fire in recent times. A critique of autonomy as a "distinct social subsystem" (Bürger, 1984, p. 47) has facilitated a merger of art with life where it is believed it can have efficacy in the "real" (Wright, 2013). While this is something I support in my practice, I question what becomes of the critical notion of autonomy inherent in artistic labour as described above. If autonomy is departed from, how does artistic labour produce a position of critical negation? How does art challenge existing social order? Furthermore, how can an oppositional practice be reformulated? In addressing these questions, I will look to a critique of autonomy as the grounds from which autonomy can be reimagined dialectically.

CHAPTER 2
A CRITIQUE OF AUTONOMY

In chapter 1, I explore the critical notion of autonomy derived from art as a mode of production separated from an economic rationality. As that chapter makes clear, artistic labour has been positioned as autonomous from, and in negation to, labour per se. This negation occurs via a separation from a means end rationality where art can pursue a sense of purposelessness. This freedom has allowed the artist to evolve without the need for specialisation to defy the division of labour dictating other fields of production. To a large degree, the artist remains self-sufficient and in control of their own work. This nonalienated mode of production has defined the oppositional nature of artistic labour.

In this chapter, however, I will explore how the notion of autonomy has been critiqued in recent times. A critique of autonomy could encompass this entire thesis, so I have therefore decided to focus on three interconnected areas. Firstly, I will look at how a critique of autonomy has manifest through an interrogation of art as a "distinct social subsystem" (Bürger, 1984, p. 47), which is seen to make art socially inconsequential. This critique provided the impetus for art's merger with life, where it is believed it could have efficacy in the real. It is a critique which continues to gain momentum particularly in the field of social practice, where the idea of critical autonomy has been dismissed in favour of art producing concrete solutions to social problems (Kester, 2013; Wright, 2013).

The second critique of autonomy explores the definition of autonomy as negating the economic. As art and culture have now become economic driving forces, this form of autonomy has been proven to be an illusion. To maintain a proposition of autonomy, therefore, requires a process of disavowal. In other words, claims for autonomy need to disavow art's proximity with economic circuits of valorisation in order to produce a critical

distance, outlined in the opening chapter. In this context, autonomy and the critical claims it puts forward, become increasingly difficult to sustain.

While these critiques have fostered a departure from autonomy for art to merge with life, the critical promise of autonomy within artistic labour has not been discarded altogether. Rather, autonomy has been appropriated as the "new dominant ideology of flexibility and personal initiative" (Steyerl, 2011, p. 1). The post-Fordist restructuring of the way people "work" has "commodified flexibility, creativity, networking and conviviality, thereby collapsing the critical difference between artistic labour and wage-labour" (Beech, 2010, p. 34). As art merges with life, therefore, it merges via the appropriation of the previously critical labour practices of the artist into an "occupational role model" (Steyerl, 2011, p. 4). In considering this, I will explore the extent that "the dissolution of art into life is not simply emancipatory but a dissolution of art into capitalist life" (Martin, 2007b, p. 373).

As this chapter attempts to work through this complex struggle around autonomy, what becomes clear, is that the critical claims for autonomy outlined in the opening chapter are no longer viable. However, the proximity of artistic labour with the way we now work, coupled with the fact that work now encompasses every aspect of our lives, would seemingly make a reconceptualization and reapplication of the critical notion of autonomy all the more vital.

Autonomy as Socially Inconsequential

As a major player of the culture industry, attracting blue chip investment in the art market (Lütticken, 2016), speculation from hedge fund managers (Malik, 2007), and serving a myriad of functions linked to tourism, regeneration, and promotion, the idea that art can somehow be autonomous from economic rationality might today seem absurd. Defined as a "seemingly self-sufficient entity obeying its immanent logic" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 81) the

concept of autonomy has in recent decades "gotten a bad name in the field of art … toxic and beyond reappropriation [*sic*]*"* (Lütticken, 2016, p. 59), "associated with apolitical isolationism, with a retrograde ideology of High Art" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 81). For Brian Holmes: "University careers are to be made by refuting Greenberg, by deconstructing the harmonious totality of the white male Kantian subject, by critiquing the closure of the artistic frame" (Holmes, 2004, p. 547). While Boris Groys suggests, "the times in which art tried to establish its autonomy – successfully or unsuccessfully – are over" (Groys, 2009, para. 1), with autonomy, in Kerstin Stakemeiser's words, now a "representational leftover" (Stakemeier, 2016).

Informed by the avant-garde movements of the early 20th century, who were "unanimous in their fundamental questioning of the autonomy of art" (Bürger, 1998, p. 177), a common perception of autonomy today is that it inflicts art with a sense of social irrelevance. Early on in my research I gave a paper at a conference, *Art and Activism: Resilience Techniques in Times of Crisis*, in Leiden, Holland, and was struck by the oppositional stance taken against the notion of autonomy in this context. The conference presented multiple voices of equal urgency, calling for practitioners to "take the front line" and effect change within a variety of social, political and environmental problems. With theorist and environmental activist TJ Demos (Demos, 2017b) as a keynote speaker, the focus of the conference was miles from a "neo-Kantian logics of aesthetic autonomy and disinterested contemplation" (Byrne, 2016b, p. 62). When working in the politically charged context of the Marikana police massacre of protesting miners in South African, or the violent occupation of Palestine, for example, ideas of autonomy and disinterested spectatorship could only come from what Andrea Fraser would describe as the luxury to disengage (Fraser, 2012). Many of the contexts presented at the conference afforded no such indulgence. A

position of autonomy was simply not an option, and in its separation from the rest of society, viewed as a seriously limiting factor of art's efficacy in times of crisis.

This recognition of "the social inconsequentiality of autonomous art" (Schulte-Sasse, 1984, p. xiv), initiated by the avant-garde of the early 20th century is now carried forth by activist and social art practices today. Like the avant-garde, such practices critique autonomy in an "attempt to lead art back into social praxis" (Schulte-Sasse, 1984, p. xiv). In advocating "useful art", theorist Stephen Wright describes the need to "quit the autonomous sphere of purposeless purpose and disinterested spectatorship", putting to rest terms inherited from modernity such as "autonomy", "authorship" and "objecthood" (Wright, 2013, pp. 10-12). The doctrine of useful art describes a place for art as a "tool" or "device" that can implement social change, moving from a "state of proposal to that of real implementation" (Bruguera, 2016, para. 1)

What is important here is the departure from the notion of autonomy as "distinct social subsystem" (Bürger, 1984, p. 47) to positioning art within a state of proximity, where it can exist within life with "a negligible coefficient of art-specific visibility" (Wright, 2008, para. 16). Rather than uphold a separation from life, for Wright:

> What is more unusual, and far more interesting, is when artists don't do art; or, at any rate, when they don't claim that whatever it is they are doing is, in fact, art. When they recycle their artistic skills, perceptions and habitus back into the general symbolic economy of the real (Wright, 2005, p. 1).

As a socially-engaged artist, who looks to connect with sites, publics, and practices not normal associated with the field of art, Wright's ideas resonate strongly with my heteronomous leanings. Artist and theorist Walead Beshty expands upon these ideas to claim social practices today demonstrates an "excision of the notion of critical or political art as

negation … and the innovation of a new set of tools for the evaluation of art's 'agency' which is predicated on its *connection*, rather than its *distance* from, the social world it operates" (Beshty, 2015, p. 15).

Theorist Grant Kester has emerged as a powerful advocate of this shift in artistic discourse based upon a connection rather than a distance from the social world. On these grounds, he formulated his influential theories of "Dialogic Art", founded on egalitarian forms of dialogue, collaboration, and exchange of which social practices are emblematic. Like Wright and Beshty, Kester questions the legitimacy of critical art. For Kester, the critical negation aligned with autonomy arrives from an "aesthetic discourse based on notions of purity and contamination" (Kester, 2011, p. 35), and the perceived need to maintain a distinction between corrupt and authentic practices. This "hygienic model" of critique fuels an attitude of resistance toward what is perceived to be its "other" and a defensive relationship with other modes of cultural production. Critiquing Clement Greenberg's defining principels of autonomy, Kester notes how in Modernism, political discourse was critiqued as propaganda, mass culture as kitsch, performance as theatrical. Distance from these normative conventions requires a "form of critical insight [to] transgress existing categories of thought, [while the] formation of an artistic subjectivity capable of such insight requires a process of withdrawal and interiorization" (Kester, 2011, p. 20).

For Kester, autonomy "instantiates one of the central logical contradictions of modern aesthetics: art has no purpose and possesses an entirely 'intrinsic' value, yet art is also the sole experimental mode capable of reversing the deleterious effects of modernity" (Kester, 2013, p. 40). The notion of autonomy has been cited as deeply flawed and entwined with a modernist ideology responsible for many of our current problems (Lütticken, 2016). Such contradictions have fuelled a departure from modernism's critical concepts (Wright, 2013),

towards social practices that can produce a positive social outcome via a merger with life (Kester, 2011).

Along with this merger, the efficacy of the critical distance associated with artistic labour has been abandoned. The current focus on art as a "socially useful" activity (Groys, 2014), for example, sees it begin to "emulate various social services" (Vishmidt, 2016, p. 39). The autonomy of artistic labour as "purposeless" is replaced by a defined sense of utility, as artists react to "the increasing collapse of the modern social state … that for different reasons cannot or will not fulfil their role" (Groys, 2014, para. 1). The desire for increased efficacy, combined with the rollbacks in social welfare, sees social practitioners frequently appropriating the labour practices of other professional fields including social work, environmental science or the work of NGOs. As Grant Kester notes, social practices "mark a (cyclical) renegotiation of aesthetic autonomy via the permeability that exists between art production and other, adjacent, forms of cultural production and activism" (Kester, 2011, p. 10).

Autonomy as Illusionary

The notion of critical distance associated with autonomy would also appear hopelessly hypocritical because of its newfound proximity with capital. If critical art looks to negate the economic, then the inequalities of Neo Liberalism (Harvey, 2006), the destructivity of non-reproduction (Seymour, 2006) and the instability around fictitious capital (Goldner, 2001) would seemingly provide fertile ground for a critical art of autonomy to flourish. It is flourishing, but not because of a growing support for critical art's causes, but because critical art and autonomy, provide the marks of distinction that makes it commodifiable. Critique becomes a desirable luxury, and like any new, progressive, and intelligent art, it is valuable. While critical art has been historically linked to negating modes

of power, it is now more than ever being supported by the dominant political economy that it has traditionally taken the role of delegitimizing (Malik, 2007). With the increased access of art to capital, manifest through the influx of buyer friendly art fares and the financialisation of the art market, critical art has become a currency. This begs the question: what is the position of a critical autonomy when there appears to be no opposition between wealth and critique?

In expanding on this proximity between art and the economic, Maria Vishmidt notes: "The power of capital to subsume areas of social activity which are not directly value producing has massively expanded 'in our time' and has changed the conditions for art as an economic, as well as extra-economic activity" (Vishmidt, 2016, p. 38). Art, therefore, "enters much more into circuits of valorisation, be it luxury manufacturing, brand enhancement, the 'experience economy', tourism or gentrification" (Vishmidt, 2016, p. 38). Such a shift sees art and culture emerge into an economic driving force, making impossible any claims for autonomy without an either naivety or disavowal of this relationship.

In analysing this closer, I have turned to Karl Marx's analysis of the economic base where a past distinction can be located between culture and dominant economic forces (Marx, 1867/1989). For Marx, the material and economic "base" made up the forces and relations of production, including people, resources and materials necessary for the reproduction of the capitalist system. The "superstructure", on the other hand, included culture, ethics, ideology, social institutions, and political structure, which were seen to operate ideologically, separate from the productive forces of the economic base. The influence of the superstructure, thereby, came from a position of distance through ideological reflection. Theorist John Byrne identifies this historical separation:

> Art and culture came to be seen as little more than a functional reflection of the true economic driving forces of history (with the concomitant assumption that a

> reading or analysis of culture could provide a key to understanding these material driving forces) (Byrne, 2016b, p. 65).

While this separation between base and superstructure rationalised a position of art's autonomy from instrumental reason, today it is a distinction which ceases to exist. Culture is no longer separate from the dominant means of production but a highly productive force in its own right. As part of a cultural sector, art is at the vanguard of capitalism rather than its supplement (Lütticken, 2016). For Mark Banks, Rosalind Gill and Stephanie Taylor an example of this:

> … can be traced back to the mid-1990s and the wave of enthusiasm that greeted the alleged rise of a 'creative' or 'cultural' economy, seen, for example, in the hyperbole about 'Cool Britannia' in the UK, or in the 'Creative Nation' cultural policy of Australia. The cultural and creative industries, once regarded as peripheral to the 'real' economy, took centre stage in a seemingly unstoppable celebration in which they were hailed as engines of economic growth, motors of urban regeneration, and promoters of social cohesion and inclusivity (Banks, Gill, & Taylor, 2014).

Such proximity may suggest that while inroads in the merger of art and life may have been achieved in recent times for emancipatory effect, they have also produced a collision with capitalist processes of valorisation. In this context, there is little that distinguishes the labour practice of the artist from what it once stood in opposition. John Byrne notes:

> This new proximity of art to everyday life, once the messianic dream of the historical avant-gardes, has made it increasingly difficult for artists and art institutions alike to distinguish their output from more instrumentalized forms of corporate entertainment, advertising and leisure service. To make matters more

> complicated, the working methods of artists are now shared and understood by the majority of people who go to look at art in galleries or assist artists in the production of their work (Byrne, 2016a, p. 2).

Despite the apparent collapse of autonomy, or perhaps because of it, my research focuses on autonomy as an arena of struggle. This struggle becomes particularly pertinent in the context of the appropriation of autonomy as neo liberal ideology which Byrne goes on to makes clear:

> While the European tradition of art's self-referential and self-contained aesthetic autonomy has long since been debunked as an ideological fantasy, its legacy still haunts the production, distribution and consumption of contemporary art. Perhaps more importantly, art's alleged autonomy is now often confused with more general uses of the term to describe a type of economic freedom, or more accurately agency, which is held to be the ideological cornerstone of globalized neoliberal economics (Byrne, 2012, p. 1).

Appropriation of Autonomy as the Dominant Ideology

Byrne's above quote points toward how rather than the critical autonomy of artistic labour being abandoned, it has seemingly been appropriated by neoliberal labour relations. The freedom and flexibility of the artist are now the dominant traits of deregulated, insecure workforce. The artist's refusal of the division of labour is now synonymous with the "development of neoliberal modes of production [where] the division of labour started to be reversed in many other occupational fields too" (Steyerl, 2011, p. 5):

> The assumed role of the artist as creative polymath serves as a role-model (or excuse) to legitimate the universalization of professional dilettantism and overextension in order to save money on specialized labour (Steyerl, 2011, p. 5).

The self-regulated, autonomous way the artist has traditionally laboured, becomes the role model for the neo-liberal, self-supporting citizen. This has become an unexpected, yet important inversion within my research of the critical claims of the autonomy of artistic labour. I will now explore how this appropriation of autonomy has occurred, how it has shaped the way we now work, and how this way of working has in turn becomes the site for a struggle around autonomy that my research explores.

Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello identify the struggle for autonomy in their book *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007). Boltanski and Chiapello analyse the appropriation of once oppositional modes of artistic modes of labour into what artist and theorist Friederike Sigler describes as the "avant-garde of an entire society of workers" (Sigler, 2017, p. 14). For Boltanski and Chiapello, this has been made possible by capitalisms ability to absorb and re-appropriate critique (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007). In their writing, they identified two main critiques of capitalism; "social critique" was used to describe a critique of exploitation, and "artistic critique" to describe a critique of alienation. For Boltanski and Chiapello, capitalism has been able to absorb and repurpose the critical attributes exemplified by the autonomy of artistic labour, such as freedom, flexibility, and non-specialisation. The new spirit of capitalism has been able to "justify its irrational compulsion for accumulation by at least partially integrating or 'recuperating' the critique of the previous era so that the system can become tolerable again" (Holmes, 2002a, para. 25).

In a reading influenced by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), theorist Brian Holmes identifies a critique of capitalism during the 1960s manifest in calls for greater levels of

flexibility, freedom, and autonomy. This critique was made by the "baby boomer" generation in opposition to the hierarchical and authoritarian ways of their predecessors. Freedom and flexibility were called for in response to the oppressive capitalist world, dominated by market, homogenisation and commodity relations.

> But the 'Great Refusal' of the late sixties and early seventies was clearly aimed at the military-industrial complexes, at the regimentation and work discipline they produced, at the blandishments of the culture industry that concealed these realities, and perhaps above all, at the existential and psychosocial condition of the 'authoritarian personality' (Holmes, 2002a, para. 15).

The Baby Boomer generation's struggle for autonomy was evident for theorist Shannon Jackson in "civil rights, feminist, gay rights, and anti-institutional voices gathered in alliance…[and] responded to an assemblage of institutions generalised as 'The Man' – militaries, dictatorships, racist governments, campus presidents, parents" (Jackson, 2011, p. 22). Revolt took the form of "everything from Reichean group sex, burning draft cards and dollar bills, to Provo events, situationist drifting and LSD. What Marcuse called 'outbreaks of mass surrealism'" (Holmes, 2002b, para. 6).

While 1960s counterculture critique called for an autonomy from an oppressive and authoritarian capitalist system, the system was able to integrate that critique and use the criticality of autonomy for its own means:

> Today's 'self-managed' or sociological type has been shaped overwhelmingly by the impact of '60s counter-culture. Jettisoning the disciplinary schemas of modernity, capitalist production models – of goods and subjects – have taken on board the anti-authoritarian demands of the flower power generation…A poetics of resistance helped bring the decline of regimentation, welfare state

> bureaucracies, mass-consumption models and factory discipline. But are we even aware how that decline helped shape today's political-economic system? (Holmes, 2002b, para. 1)

Shannon Jackson similarly notes how calls for freedom and derestriction "could be directed not only at capitalist hierarchies or genocidal dictators, but also at 'bureaucratic' unions and state welfare systems" (Jackson, 2011, p. 23). The capitalist "authoritarian system had to start learning from the enemy within" (Holmes, 2002b, para. 9). It answered calls for freedom, flexibility, and autonomy, with systemic restructuring to bring more opportunities for accumulation. This is what Boltanski and Chiapello describe as the "New Spirit of Capitalism" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007), where a critique of capitalism has been appropriated as the rationality for the neo liberal dismantling of social welfare, or anything else that could limit profit, including protecting the environment and the safety of jobs. Any forms of governmental intervention were conveniently cast as restrictive and a threat to the collective desire to be self-governing. Such a rhetoric sees state owned enterprises, such as banks, railroads, and hospitals sold off to private investors, effectively concentrating wealth to a minority and making the public pay more for its needs. The concepts of "public good" and "community" become replaced with "individual responsibility" (Martinez & Garcia, 1998), where a resistance to regulation is positioned as necessary for the construction of the idealised autonomous, "flexible self" (Beck, 2000; Jackson, 2011). It is perhaps more than a coincidence that the implementation of neoliberal policies has coincided with an artistic impulse for collectivity and positive social change.

This analysis demonstrates how a demand for autonomy during the 60s as a critique of capitalism, was taken on by capitalism and integrated into "new corporate strategies" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007). Holmes describes:

> The golden age of neo-management began in the mid-1980s, while unionised workers were replaced with robots and unskilled labour was sought overseas. Corporate operations and financial flows expanded outside nations, where regulation and redistribution were deemed excessive (Holmes, 2002b, para. 10).

Within the workforce, autonomy was linked to a form of "self-supervision", reducing a need for a managerial workforce. "Creativity", as innovation and imagination has been now been hyper exploited as a productive force. Meanwhile, the call for "authenticity" in the face of rampant homogenisation merely produced a diversification of merchandise and the illusion of choice. "Flexibility" and "freedom", once associated with the critical autonomy of artistic labour, became neoliberal watchwords, and conjoined into a new mode of political control (Holmes, 2002b; Lorey, 2015).

The ability for the capitalist system to recuperate critique has thereby seen the notion of freedom and autonomy appropriated as the "ideological cornerstone of globalized neoliberal economics"(Byrne, 2012, p. 1). Political theorist, Isabell Lorey notes: 'Through the notion of autonomy as *self-responsibility*: precarity, poverty and dependency on social welfare can be conveniently cast as self-inflicted…Autonomy becomes the disciplining instrument of domination" where the fear of precarity, or lack of autonomy, is used as an instrument of control (Lorey, 2015). As DJ Demos alluded to at the conference I presented in Leiden, autonomy can be identified more of a project of the "right", than it is of the radical "left" (Demos, 2017a).

An example of this tendency can be seen in David Cameron's 2010 UK election pledge for a "Big Society". "The idea of the Big Society was to give further autonomy to citizens in the governance of their own lives – by encouraging the breakdown of government offices and councils into independent small businesses and by allowing communities to establish their

own ‘self-help’ charities” (Byrne, 2012, pp. 1-2). In reality, of course, the Big Society merely gives example of how autonomy and freedom have been granted but as a form of “centralized capital deregulation which continue to erode the power and rights of under-represented and vulnerable individuals” (Byrne, 2012, p. 2). The concept of the “Big Society” takes the notion of autonomy and reapplies it as a form of self-responsibility. Self-governance gives the impression of freedom and autonomy but not the kind, of course, which the flower power generation had in mind. Rather this is an autonomy which aligns with the neoliberal logic of economic deregulation “that has spread across the globe since the Reagan/Thatcher era” (Byrne, 2012, p. 3).

The Collapse of the Critical Distance of Artistic Labour

If this appropriation of autonomy signifies a site of struggle, then at the heart of this struggle is the labour relations inherent within it. In other words, the struggle encompasses the flexible, deregulated, and precarious way we now work. These qualities were once emblematic of the critical autonomy of the artist. However, they are now emblematic of neoliberal labour relations that dissolve the distinction between work and non-work, fosters insecure casual employment, and makes productive formerly non-productive and personal moments. This increased exposure to market forces suggest the struggle for autonomy is more vital and pressing than ever. This chapter will now look to identify what these labour characteristics are, and the consequence for the critical labour practice of the artist.

Hito Steyerl suggests, these “struggles around autonomy and above all Capital’s response to them are…deeply ingrained into the transition from work to occupation” (Steyerl, 2011, p. 5). Steyerl is referring to the transference of a critical autonomy to new ways of working as described above. These ways of working are characterised by Sven Lütticken as

"general performance", a condition he sees "at the heart of the new labour of post-Fordism" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 9):

> The new labour is marked by the inability to distinguish between labour and leisure, between work and occupation, between working hours and free time, between performance and life – and ultimately between objective economical pressures and subjectivities that are constantly updated, upgraded, remodelled. As part of the erosion of the distinction between labour and non-labour, looking and reading have become productive of value – often for others. We all work for free all the time – practically every time we go online (Lütticken, 2014, p. 9).

In describing the new labour of post-Fordism, Marxist theorist Dave Beech observes: "Post-Fordism commodifies flexibility, creativity, networking and conviviality, thereby collapsing the critical difference between artistic labour and wage labour" (Beech, 2015, p. 340). Lars Bang Larsen similarly notes that "in the paradigm of immaterial work, labour gets hooked up to the worker's subjectivity through her creative and social skills" (Larsen, 2010, p. 18). The condition of general performance has therefore profound implications for the critical separation from labour ascribed to autonomy of the artist in the opening chapter. Under these post-Fordist conditions of labour, such moments of separation have been subsumed, and with this, the position of autonomy must be reimagined.

In expanding on what these shifting condition are, I have turned to the theorists of Post-Fordism who identified the deterritorialization of labour through what Mario Tronti termed the "social factory" (Tronti, 1962), and Antonio Negri the "factory without walls" (Negri, 1989, p. 204). For thinkers such as Negri, an important distinction can be made between the formal and real subsumption of labour. In the formal subsumption of labour, time outside of the factory remains unproductive. However, from the beginning of the 1970s, in a process of

real subsumption, one's daily life became subsumed into capitalist processes, and the whole of society used as means of capitalist production (Negri, 1992). This sees the "reduction of every intention to the maximization of advantage and sales, and … the turning of any critical purpose into nothing but a marketable spectacle" (Brouillette, 2016, p. 169). "The idea appears to be that non-labour and non-productive activities … have adopted the techniques, processes and ideology of the factory" (Beech, 2015, p. 336).

In his thesis on the immaterial labour of Post-Fordism, Italian Marxists Maurizio Lazzarto describes: "What modern management techniques are looking for is for 'the worker's soul to become part of the factory'. The worker's personality and subjectivity have to be made susceptible to organization and command … [and] active subjects in the coordination of the various functions of production" (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 2). Labour is, thereby, dispersed and decentralised, and the "whole society is placed at the disposal of profit" (Negri, 1989, p. 79). No longer within the confines of the factory, the contemporary labour of "cognitive capitalism" looks to "prioritize extracting value from relational and emotional elements" (Morini, 2007, p. 40). For Isabell Graw, within Neoliberal capitalism "the market reaches into areas that were formerly considered 'private' and sheltered from its evaluative logic, such as the body, health, social relationships one's look, one's friendships etc" (Graw, 2010, p. 103).

The consequence of this "new labour", for Isabell Lorey, is that "[s]ubjects and their capacities to socially interact become both the resource and product of the new paradigm of political economy … The exchange of knowledge, intellectual and affective cooperation thus becomes decisive for the production of surplus value" (Lorey, 2016, p. 40). In becoming a form of *labour,* "knowledge, intellectual and affective cooperation" are thereby subject to their abstraction and subjugation into exchange value.

For Sven Lütticken, these decentralised conditions of labour and accumulation described above, point toward:

> … the post-Fordist culture of self-performance … In the 'social factory' of post-Fordism there is no sortie de l'usine. Performance is ongoing, in different constellations and with different degrees of publicness. It is modulated: languid stretches alternate with intense moments … it stands both for one's quasi-dramatic self-performance and for one's economic achievement – and increasingly, the former is essential to the latter. This is what I call general performance (Lütticken, 2014, p. 10).

What is exposed by this reading of labour through the lens of post-Fordism is that there is a huge increased integration into the market. Our relationship to the market goes beyond what we produce "at work" to the total integration of our subjectivities. As Lütticken describes, by enacting the condition of general performance, we "all work for free all the time" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 9). The task of reimagining autonomy from labour which this research undertakes, comes about at a time the simplest of daily interactions are generative of capitalist value. When, for example, complex algorithms mine our data every time we go online, and our engagement with such technologies provide the labour for 3rd party corporations (think of captcha image recognition or the use of snapchat to work for facial recognition algorithms). If the conditions of general performance today produce an increased proximity and integration to the heteronomous market, I would argue that this makes the notion of autonomy more important than ever.

The implications of these conditions of "new labour" for the autonomy of artistic labour are profound. Theorist, Friederike Sigler, describes how artistic labour practices, far from

separated from an instrumental rationality, now actual provide the role model for "performative" evolutions in the way people work:

> Since the 1970s mainly in Western Industrialised countries, work is primarily about turning in the perfect performance. To do this require the highest standard of communication skills, flexibility, autonomy and creativity and alongside that (and here many theorists agree) have suddenly catapulted the figure of the artist into debates about economic surplus-value production, and at the same time have chosen the artist to be the model of a new class of hyper workers. As the creative subject par excellence, always alert and always creative, the artists is now considered the avant-garde of an entire society of workers (Sigler, 2017, p. 14).

As the "new class of hyper worker" the labour practices of the artist no longer offers a critical distance, or alternative, from labour per se. Artist and theorist Liam Gillick morbidly reflects:

> The accusation … is that artists are at best the ultimate freelance knowledge workers and at worst barely capable of distinguishing themselves from the consuming desire to work at all times, neurotic people who deploy a series of practices that coincide quite neatly with the requirements of neoliberal, predatory, continually mutating capitalism of every moment. Artists are people who behave, communicate and innovate in the same manner as those who spend their days trying to capitalize every moment and exchange of daily life. They offer no alternative to this (Gillick, 2010, para. 2).

Examining the collapse between the critical, autonomous labour practices of the artist, and the emergence of a "new class of hyper worker", reveals the co-option of autonomy by the very forces it traditionally stood against. Hito Steyerl argues, this collapse is evident

within this condition of general performance, which sees the artist, once separated from the division of labour, now become the role model for novel polymathic labour practices (Steyerl, 2011). The ability to be autonomous, or self-governing, which once exemplified a freedom from the hegemony of instrumental reason, is now the very the rationality of neoliberal labour relations, and capital accumulation.

For socially engaged artists, this collapse is perhaps more pronounced. Socially engaged artists work specifically through networks, communication, and collaboration, which are now commodified attributes of enterprise culture. Furthermore, they look to produce socially useful art works, or to ameliorate the negative conditions of neoliberal capitalism. As Gregory Sholette attests, a "relationship exists…between the rise of social practice art and the fall of social infrastructures" (Sholette, 2015, p. 97). In reference to the example of the Big Society, John Byrne notes the proximity between neo liberal discourse, and the utopian aspirations of art, where:

> the proximity of such rhetoric to the emancipatory dreams of the historical avant-gardes is striking; it is this proximity of language, between the utopianism of avant-garde rhetoric and the systematic instrumentalization of neoliberal discourse, that is the key problem that we must all now confront (Byrne, 2016a, p. 2).

For Claire Bishop, the ease to which the ameliorative ambitions of socially engaged art collide with the neo liberal appropriation of autonomy, is particularly problematic. Bishop uses the example New Labour's (1997-2010) cultural policy in the UK to illustrate how socially-engaged art's capacity to produce positive social outcomes became politically instrumentalised. During this time: "Participation became an important buzzword in the social inclusion discourse", and through its ability to foster inclusivity, art was put to work in

"increasing employability, minimising crime, fostering aspiration" (Bishop, 2012, p. 13). The rhetoric being, to "participate in society means to conform to full employment, have a disposable income, and be self-sufficient" (Bishop, 2012, p. 13).

For Bishop, what is perhaps most problematic appears to lie in how the use value of participation is instrumentalised to serve the neoliberal appropriation of autonomy as a form of self-management and self-responsibility. As Bishop articulates:

> …social participation is viewed positively because it creates submissive citizens who respect authority and accept the 'risk' and responsibility of looking after themselves in the face of diminished public services…The social inclusion agenda is therefore less about repairing the social bond than a mission to enable all members of society to be self-administering, full functioning consumers who do not rely on the welfare state and who can cope with a deregulated, privatised world (Bishop, 2012, p. 14).

Bishop here links emancipatory social participation within art practices, with the political appropriation of autonomy as a form of neoliberal self-sufficiency. For Bishop, however, "none of these outcomes [of social inclusion] will change or even raise consciousness of the structural conditions of people's daily existence, it will only help people to accept them" (Bishop, 2012, p. 14). Participation is implicated with smoothing over cracks and is instrumentalised as a means of control. What Bishop favours is a process of self-reflexivity, which I argue requires as a first step, acknowledging art's relationships with power. This chapter has attempted to acknowledge these relationships through the lens of labour, and in the process, the notion of autonomy as the production of a critical distance, appears to be well and truly lost.

Faced with this demise, John Byrne asks: "'just what it is that makes art special' in a world where contemporary art has long since become indistinguishable from all other forms of popular culture and mass media" (Byrne, 2016b, p. 2). Byrne here identifies the "complex issue of art's alleged autonomy", questioning the critical function of art as it loses differential from other aspects of life. If this differential is lost, the question arises; if art and life have in fact merged, "have they merged not at a moment of triumphant communal utopia" (Sholette, 2015), but as a "deregulated nightmare" (Byrne, 2016b) which sees the construction of the artist as a "model entrepreneur" (Gill & Pratt, 2008), and "occupational role model" (Steyerl, 2011)?

Such a question is relevant for the socially-engaged artist, who's practice constitutes a merger with life. While such practices have been widely celebrated for their emancipatory potential and successfully in breaking down some of art's restrictive and insular boundaries, their proximity to power and labour remain under theorised. I will argue this problematic proximity requires the notion of autonomy to be reconsidered and reimagined.

The difficulty is that the critical promise of autonomy has been shown to be subsumed into new modes of accumulation, been proven socially inconsequential, and widely considered illusionary. The question therefore becomes, how might a reimagination of autonomy produce a critique of consequence. The answer, I will argue, could come from a position of self-critique. In other words, I will examine whether a critique of artistic labour's autonomous and heteronomous positions, can inform a future direction via their mediation?

In the following chapter, I consider this question through a dialectical understanding of autonomy which takes the dichotomy of artistic labour's removal from labour, on one hand, and mimesis of it on the other, as a potential site for critical

agency. Rather than critique emerging from the position of "defensive disowning" (Fraser, 2012) associated with autonomy, or, an uncritical embrace of "connection" to the social world (Beshty, 2015; Kester, 2011; Wright, 2013), I will look at whether criticality can emerge via a mediation of these opposing positions. In turn, I will consider how the contradictions and ambiguities of this mediation could produce a new opportunity to consider the politics of art making.

CHAPTER 3
TOWARDS A DIALECTICAL UNDERSTANDING OF AUTONOMY

The previous chapter articulated a struggle around the autonomy of artistic labour that provides the context for the rest of my research. While a critique of autonomy has allowed art to break free from its limiting ideological framework to merge with life, this has occurred at a time when autonomy, as flexibility and self-entrepreneurship, is the dominant ideology of that life (Steyerl, 2011). Modes of artistic production, which were once inherently critical due to their distance from an economic rationality, are revealed to be the model for a new world of work. As theorist John Roberts observes, a departure from autonomy "produces an ideology of open-endedness that feeds a neoliberal fetishization of flow and multiplicity … [to] replicate the new management mantras about flexibility" (Roberts, 2015, p. 114).

Autonomy today, at least the definition inherited from modernity, has been shown to be an impossibility, enmeshed into novel forms of heteronomy. However, this chapter examines these entanglements as a possible site for autonomy's renewal. For this task, I will explore a dialectical understanding of autonomy as a means for rethinking it in relation to the proximity art produces to labour today. In doing this, I will turn to the theories of Theodor Adorno (1997) and Jacques Rancière (2009). Adorno saw the autonomous artwork as a functionless

contradiction entwined with the commodity form, while Rancière's "aesthetic regime of art" is relevant because of the tension it mobilises between autonomy and heteronomy. I will then turn to the "readymade" as a means of providing a practical example of where the autonomy of artistic labour meets in contradiction with the productive labour of the found object. The example of the readymade will be used when evaluating my practical output in chapters 4, 5, and 6 which I examine through the evolution in labour discussed above.

A Renewed Argument for Art's Economic Exceptionalism

While Chapter 2 used the new labour of Post-Fordism to problematise the possibility of an autonomy of artistic labour, thinkers such as Marxist theorist Dave Beech have in recent times reinvigorated the debate for art production as an economically exceptional activity. While Beech acknowledges that art has been "transformed by developments ushered in by capitalist society", his argument for art's economic exceptionality focuses on how its mode of production remains "almost entirely unaffected by the capitalist mode of production" (Beech, 2015, p. 11). Maria Vishmidt clarifies this position: "According to the labour theory of value, art is not part of abstract socially necessary labour, because the activity of the producer in art is neither determined by labour discipline, the quantity of the wage, nor the productive investment of capital" (Vishmidt, 2016, p. 35). For Beech, the apparent collapse of artistic labour with wage labour under Post-Fordism has not necessarily transformed art production into a capitalist mode of production:

> … the question of whether art conforms to the capitalist mode of production cannot be determined simply by observing certain capitalistic elements at work in the production or circulation of art but depends entirely on whether art embodies the social relations in which the capitalist subjugates production through the

> ownership of the means of production and the payment of wages to purchase labour power (Beech, 2015, p. 9).

While John Byrne describes how it is "increasingly difficult for artists and art institutions alike to distinguish their output from more instrumentalized forms of corporate entertainment, advertising and leisure service" (Byrne, 2016a, p. 2), for Beech (2015) this is not evidence of conforming to a capitalist mode production. Rather, art is painted as exempt from the structures of wage labour where a capitalist who owns the means of production purchases labour power and sells the product of that labour for a profit. Despite the commodification of art, its dominant role in the culture industry, and its structural mimesis with new forms of labour, in Beech's analysis art is an anomaly because the artist is not exploiting wage labour for the production of surplus value as a capitalist does. He goes onto specify that because:

> … the artist tends not to be paid a wage and owns both the means of production and the product that she produces, then no productive capitalist plays any direct role within the production of art. Since capitalists have not only taken ownership of already existing production but have transformed production through mechanisation, the division of labour and the scientific organisation of production, the absence of the productive capitalist from artistic production might imply that artistic labour can or ought to remain free from capitalist procedures (Beech, 2015, p. 11).

Further to this argument, Beech claims that artworks are "inseparable from how and when they are produced" and that places a reliance on the presence of the artist (Beech, 2015, p. 359). This establishes further limits to the reproducibility of an artwork which sets it apart from the "petty production" of the commodity. In other words, artworks are seen as

unique objects that, unlike the reproducibility of commodity production, cannot be replicated in their original form. The price of the artwork is determined not by the average socially necessary labour time that constitutes value under capitalism but under a value system unique to itself:

> Artworks can be bought and sold, of course, but they are more often produced according to values internal to art, partly as a process of discovery in itself, partly to add to knowledge, partly to make a contribution to ongoing debates, partly, perhaps, to set agendas and change the direction of art history, partly to test the water (Beech, 2015, p. 356).

Beech's strict Marxist analysis of the economic exceptionalism of art, however, appears limited to a small section of what could be considered art; namely, irreproducible fine art. Despite this, his claims questioned the extent of art mimesis with post-Fordist forms of labour, outlined in Chapter 2. As Beech suggests, despite the "apparent convergence of post-Fordist techniques of labour and management with art, artistic labour, artistic practices and the precarious lifestyle of the artist ... economically speaking, art is not post-Fordist; it is pre-industrial" (Beech, 2015, p. 343).

If art does stake a claim for economic exceptionalism, or autonomy, as Beech makes a strong argument for, then it nevertheless does so while operating in a space of extreme proximity with "post-Fordist techniques of labour and management" (Beech, 2015, p. 343). I am drawn here to an analysis of Sarah Brouillette where: "Far from representing a pure non-capitalist other, the production of art exists in an uneasy and conflicted relationship with the capitalist value form, and that unease will remain in force so long as capitalism itself does" (Brouillette, 2016, p. 171). Therefore, rather than holding onto the problematic idea that art is purely non-economic, or autonomous, "we might broaden that inquiry to conceive

aesthetic activity of various kinds as trapped in a definitively problematic relation to the production of capitalist value" (Brouillette, 2016, p. 171). So, while artistic labour enters into proximity with the way people work, it does so while still holding on to a semblance of autonomy, or economic exceptionality. It is here that my research looks to locate a critical contradiction between its current position of extreme heteronomy and its counterclaims for an autonomy, or exceptionality.

The Dialectic of Autonomy and Heteronomy

This idea forms an integral part of this research which I will explore in this chapter through an exploration of a dialectical understanding of autonomy. Rather than operating as a pure and absolute other, art enters into a critical dialectical relation with its heteronomous frame. In exploring how art can provide a "problematic relation to the production of capitalist value" (Brouillette, 2016, p. 171), I will return once again to Theodor Adorno (1997) for whom the relationship between autonomy and heteronomy is a contradiction at the heart of autonomous art's critical efficacy. For Adorno:

> If art cedes its autonomy, it delivers itself over to the machinations of the status quo; if art remains strictly for-itself, it nonetheless submits to integration as one harmless domain among other (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 237).

The autonomy of art, according to Adorno (1997), is characterised by this antinomy between its independence from society and at the same time its entwinement within the social structure of the commodity form. Adorno identified how historically art's autonomy, seen initially as its separation from religious or feudal use values, paradoxically required it to be reliant on its status as a *commodity* to bring it into being. Maria Vishmidt articulates

this contradiction of autonomy where "art was sustained materially by the social arrangements it was supposed to negate ideally [money and the state] … Art was opposed *to* the world (autonomy) but it was also part of it (heteronomy)" (Vishmidt, 2016, pp. 37-38).

It was this contradiction that led Adorno to claim the artwork as both autonomous for its social functionlessness and "*faits sociaux"* for its dependence on the social structure of the commodity form (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 304). Marxist critic Stewart Martin articulates the paradox at play here:

> For Adorno, autonomous art is both a commodity and not, both destroyed by and a product of capitalism, both its critique and its ideology … commodification is a condition of possibility of autonomous art as well as a condition of its impossibility … the autonomous artwork is…a contradiction produced by capitalism revealing its limits (Martin, 2007a, p. 18).

The autonomous artwork's commodity status therefore gives it autonomy, allowing it to break free from heteronomous determinations, only to be constrained by "commodification as a general principle of society [that] reduces all values to exchange-value, including the value of art, and thereby destroys art's autonomy" (Martin, 2007a, p. 16). While this sounds like an unresolvable dilemma, for Martin, following Adorno, it can also be read as a contradiction of capitalism. As a "produced" and "reproduced" contradiction emanant to commodification, autonomous art remains "a vital form through which [capitalist] culture can be resisted and criticized" (Martin, 2007a, p. 17).

For Adorno (1997), this contradiction is found specifically through the autonomous artwork's ability to accrue a commodity status despite its "functionlessness", thereby contradicting the logic that reduces the use value of the commodity to exchange value (Marx, 1867/1989). As Stewart Martin suggests, in autonomous artwork "the reduction of use-value

to exchange-value is both *necessary* and *impossible* for it, since it is ultimately uses – however frivolous or 'unnecessary' – that are exchanged, and the useless is, strictly speaking, rendered valueless. Pure exchange-value is a contradiction in terms" (Martin, 2007b, p. 374). In other words, through its non-functionality, the autonomous artwork looks to produce value autonomously, or independent of its exchange value, and thereby contradicting the laws of exchange.

> Capitalism is rendered inherently instrumental due to its principle of commodified exchange, in which the condition of exchange value is the abstraction of use-value, despite use-value being that moment of difference which is nonetheless the precondition of exchange: without the qualitative difference of use-value there is literally nothing to exchange' (Martin, 2000, p. 202)

In the context of the universality of commodity culture, Martin argues that autonomous artwork criticises the *illusion* that nothing is valuable independent from its exchange value. The artworks promise of emancipation therefore comes from this separation from the increasingly hegemonic principle of exchange. But, following Adorno and Martin, it does not do so via a position of defensive disowning attributed to the popular modernist conception of autonomy (Fraser, 2012) but, paradoxically, via a position of proximity with its commodity status.

> Rather than an alternative to the world of commodification, it [autonomous art] is revealed to be a product of it. 'Pure art'… is revealed to be an ideology, a fetish: not just in the general sense that it conceals the social determinations of art, but in the specific sense that it conceals them by virtue of the same logic as the fetishized commodity. But in doing so, the artwork insists on itself as something

> that is autonomous and that therefore cannot be reduced to its commodification (Martin, 2007a, p. 18).

This position of proximity is vital for a dialectical reimagination of autonomy that my research explores. Rather than autonomy coming from a position of "hygienic" distance (Kester, 2011), or a disavowal of the economic, it comes from an entwinement with, and contradiction of, the value form. This critical contradiction become important in relation to the proximity art produces with new forms of labour. If artistic labour enters into proximity with the post-Fordist labour practices and the condition of general performance outlined in chapter 2, then can we look to Adorno's dialectical understanding of autonomy for the production of a critical contradiction? If art can produce a "an uneasy and conflicted relationship with the capitalist value form" (Brouillette, 2016, p. 171), then does art's proximity with labour, like autonomous artwork's entwinement with the commodity form, give it grounds for productive contradiction? The answer for Adorno remains clear:

> Only by immersing its autonomy in society's imagerie can art surmount the heteronomous market. Art is modern art through mimesis of the hardened and alienated; only thereby, and not by the refusal of a mute reality, does art become eloquent; this is why art no longer tolerates the innocuous. (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 21)

I refer to this latter quote of Adorno (1997) throughout this research. Following Adorno, a "mimesis of the hardened and alienated" becomes a way for reimagining a position of autonomy in the context of art's proximity with the conditions of new labour. In other words, this proximity need not render art into a state of complicity but could provide the grounds for an "uneasy and conflicted relationship" (Brouillette, 2016, p. 171). Like Adorno's notion of critical autonomy being entwined with the commodity, the systemic

appropriation of the critical distance of autonomous artistic labour, as described in chapter 2, could provide the grounds for similar contradiction.

A return to Adorno's dialectical reading of autonomy as a form of "modernist auto-critique" (Lütticken, 2016, p. 59) needs to take into account Maria Vishmidt's observation that "art's prospects for autonomy certainly seem to have dramatically shifted, if not wholly expired since Adorno's analysis was first published" (Vishmidt, 2013, p. 42). Likewise, John Roberts notes Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* (Adorno, 1970/1997) was "written before, or at least on the cusp of, the emergence of conceptual art and 'art in the expanded field'" (Roberts, 2015, p. 106). The meaning and possibility of autonomy has therefore shifted in relation to the changing nature of both art and work, which my research needed to take into consideration.

The Aesthetic Regime of Art

I have used Jacques Rancière's (2009) reconceptualization of the dialectics of autonomy and heteronomy to expand Adorno's (1997) theories via the relationship he forms between art and politics. I will explore how it can be applied to my research to further examine the agency of art's conflicted relationship with labour. Rancière uses the term "aesthetic regime of art" to describe the system for understanding art since the enlightenment. His theories have been popular with those engaged in a critique of social practice, such as Claire Bishop, who interprets the aesthetic regime of art as "predicated precisely on a tension and confusion between autonomy (the desire for art to be at one remove from means–ends relationships) and heteronomy (that is, the blurring of art and life)" (Bishop, 2012, p. 27). As Rancière suggests, "critical art has to negotiate between the tension which pushes art towards 'life' as well as that which, conversely, sets aesthetic sensorality apart from other forms of sensory experience" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 46). What Bishop translates from Rancière is "the

aesthetic regime is constitutively contradictory, shuttling between autonomy and heteronomy (‘the aesthetic experience is effective inasmuch as it is the experience of that and’)” (Bishop, 2012, p. 278)

Rather than defining autonomy as something that emanates from the work itself, Rancière (2009a) considers the autonomy of the viewer’s experience. Analogous to Kant’s notion of aesthetic judgement, which was able to suspend the conventional reason of morality and knowledge through an experience of taste, Rancière’s understanding of the aesthetic realm is that it has the capacity to redistribute our perceptions and, by extension, the way in which the world is organised through productive contradictions between autonomy and heteronomy. In defining the dialects of the aesthetic regime Rancière states:

> Firstly, the autonomy staged by the aesthetic regime of art is not that of the work of art, but of a mode of experience. Secondly, the “aesthetic experience” is one of heterogeneity, such that for the subject of the experience it is also the dismissal of certain autonomy. Thirdly, the object of the experience is ‘aesthetic’, in so far as it is not—or at least not only—art (Rancière, 2002a, p. 135).

For Rancière, aesthetic experience is a political act because, like politics, it involves a reorganisation of perception. Politics only occurs for Rancière when it acts to reorganise the dominant social order, known to Rancière as “police order” (Rancière, 2015). Police order determines rules regulating inclusions and exclusions which operate within society. Levels of participation in society are determined by modes of perception or what can be apprehended by the senses. Rancière describes these modes of perception as the “distribution of the sensible” which sets “divisions between what is visible and invisible, sayable and unsayable, audible and inaudible” (Sayers, 2005, para. 5). As Bishop suggests through a reading of Rancière, “the undecidability of aesthetic experience implies a questioning of how the world

is organised, and therefore the possibility of changing or redistributing that same world" (Bishop, 2012, p. 27).

Rancière equates this "undecidability of aesthetic experience" with "dissensus". Through the propagation of dissensus, aesthetic experience is able to rupture consensus by redistributing established order. In opposition to "consensual democracy', which looks to transform conflict into negotiation, politics for Rancière is essentially oppositional; "a suspension with respect to the ordinary forms of sensory experience" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 23). Through a reading of Rancière, theorist of contemporary aesthetics Katherine Wolfe describes: "politics is that rare event that occurs when the confluence between sanctioned dispositions to partake of the shared world and positions within the partition of the sensible is ruptured. Politics not only interrupts common sense but also erupts into the shared sensible world" (Wolfe, 2006, para. 1). Dissensus is therefore paramount for the political to occur as it enables this "rupture" in the "partition of the sensible" and by extension challenges existing order.

If aesthetic experience has the capacity of suspending "ordinary forms of sensory experience", thereby enacting politics, this implies the need to maintain autonomy as a space for "artistic and political dissensus". In the context of my research, that might suggest a return to the notion of artistic labour as a separate social sphere. However, for Rancière, if art is to be critical, it needs to negotiate this with the "tension of which pushes art towards 'life'" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 46) or, in the case of my research, toward labour. The aesthetic regime of art described by Rancière (2009a) is, therefore, inherently contradictory; a dialectical understanding of autonomy that constantly oscillates between heteronomy. As Sven Lütticken notes: "The aesthetic is the constant questioning of art and more precisely of claims for art's autonomy" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 3). "Aesthetic art promises a political accomplishment that it cannot satisfy, and thrives on this ambiguity" (Rancière, 2002b, p.

151). It is, for Rancière (2002b), this ambiguity that produces the dissensus that makes art "political". While autonomy has been critiqued for rendering art socially irrelevant (Bürger, 1984), or preventing art's capacity for social change (Kester, 2004, 2011; Wright, 2013), for Rancière, the aesthetic signifies this "ability to think contradiction" (Bishop, 2012, p. 29). The negation, or dissensus produced through autonomy, needs to be enacted through an engagement with the heteronomous context of "sensory experience", the "heterogeneous sensible" (Rancière, 2015, p. 124)

Through a reading of Adorno (1997) and Rancière (2015), art's conflicted relationship with labour can be positioned for critical intent. The contradiction that art produces between being removed from labour on one hand, and mimetic of it on the other, could constitute the ambiguity that produces politics; a reorganisation of social order that is inherent within aesthetic experience.

In Chapter 2, artistic labour is situated as an "occupational role model" (Steyerl, 2011), mimetic with post-Fordist techniques of labour and management (Sigler, 2017), and enacting the condition of "general performance" (Lütticken, 2012). However, Dave Beech's recent argument for art as economically exceptional (Beech, 2015) reignites a debate within this research for its autonomy, despite arguments demonstrating its proximity to labour. Returning to Adorno (1997) and Rancière's (2015) dialectical reading of autonomy, a conflicted relationship between art and labour can be produced for critical intent. The proximity art holds to post-Fordist condition of labour, for example, may provide the opportunity to contradict and negate those conditions. "Only by immersing its autonomy in society's imagerie can art surmount the heteronomous market" (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 21).

This dialectic can likewise be read as producing the type of ambiguity between autonomy and heteronomy that Rancière associates with the occurrence of politics. In

negotiating the tension that pushes art into proximity with labour, on one hand, yet remaining a "sensorality apart from other forms of sensory experience" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 46), art can produce a contradiction to the conditions of labour. This contradiction has the capacity to redistribute the social order *that is* labour, not by virtue of a defensive distance *from* labour, but through both an identification and disidentification *with* labour.

In the Case of the Readymade

For Adorno (1970), this redistribution of the sensible might specifically occur through the process of defunctionalisation. Boris Groys notes: "to aestheticize the things of the present means to discover their dysfunctional, absurd, unworkable character - everything that makes them nonusable, inefficient, obsolete" (Groys, 2014, para. 13). In opposition to calls to abandon autonomy in favour of art as a functional "tool" (Kester, 2011; Strauss, 2013; Wright, 2013), for Groys "artistic aestheticization means the defunctionalization of this tool, the violent annulation of its practical applicability and efficiency" (Groys, 2014, para. 9).

Implied in this strategy of aestheticization through defunctionalisation is the act of negation. For John Roberts, qualities of negation such as "withdrawal, non-reconcilability, disaffirmation, distantiation, dissension, subtraction, displacement, denial … secures autonomy … a place, a site for reflection; a gap in the non-identitary' (Roberts, 2015, p. 56). For Groys, this act of negation is associated with "aestheticizing modernity, defunctionalizing it, to reveal the ideology of progress as phantasmal and absurd" (Groys, 2014, para. 14).

The readymade provides a useful example of this dialectic occurring in practice. When Marcel Duchamp exhibited the urinal in *Fountain* (Duchamp, 1917), he was effectively defunctionalizing it, rendering it an object for contemplation, removing its

capacity for use. John Roberts introduces a reading of *Fountain* that has proved instrumental to my understanding of how this negation can be understood dialectically through an identification and disidentification with labour. For Roberts, through the "readymade", Duchamp brought previously divided and conflicted forms of labour together in suspension; "art and non-art, alienated labour and non-alienated labour, simple labour and complex labour" (Roberts, 2007, p. 51). In *Fountain,* artistic labour as autonomous, defunctionalising and "exceptional" was brought together with the productive, functional, heteronomous labour used in the production of the urinal. In ascribing the criticality of this gesture, Roberts uses the historical example of *Productivism* which emphasised the "assimilation of the worker into the artist and the artist into the worker in order to transform the alienated character of both" (Roberts, 2007, p. 2). Art moved from its position of autonomous insularity to merge with "life", while the perception of that "life" was redistributed by the autonomy of art.

The autonomy of artistic labour in *Fountain* (1917), therefore, operates in a dialectical relationship with its heteronomous counterpart. Following Rancière, they appear to meet in contradiction, redistributing the social order contained in each other (Rancière, 2006). For Roberts: "At the point of the dissolution of its traditional forms, art invites both the productive and non-productive labour into its realm as a means of reflecting on the conditions of both art *and* labour under capitalist relations" (Roberts, 2007, p. 2). What is important in this reading is that a definition of autonomy is not abandoned but renewed in dialectic relation with heteronomy: "By presenting an anti-art gesture in the form of productive labour, the homogeneity of productive labour is marked and transfigured by the autonomy of artistic labour" (Roberts, 2007, p. 35).

The readymade provides an example of this dialectic in action and its critical claims in operation. However, as made clear in chapter 2, the conditions of labour, and what constitutes an autonomy from labour, have dramatically shifted since Duchamp exhibited *Fountain*

(1917). To negate or redistribute the organisation of social order requires an autonomy, or separation, from the rationality of that order. But following Adorno (1970), Rancière (2009), and the example of the readymade (1917), this task also requires art to produce a proximity with that order. For the purpose of my research, this occurs via art's proximity to labour. By leveraging this proximity, the "aesthetic" in this context, would appear to question "claims for art's autonomy" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 3). Following Rancière, this coming together of art's distance and proximity to labour, creates an undecidability. It contradicts the way the world, or specifically labour, is organised and, by extension, it provides a possibility to reflect on and reorganise that social order (Bishop, 2012).

While chapter 1 produced a definition of a critical autonomy as being in negation to labour, chapter 2 problematised this definition revealing the proximity of the artist to new world of work. What becomes clear is that a renewal of autonomy cannot take on a position of absolute separation, but rather needs to exist, much more modestly, as a conflicted relationship to capitalist value. While chapter 2 reveals the proximity of artistic labour with the production of capitalist value, rather than thinking this as a state of complicity, this proximity can provide the site from which such a conflicted relationship can be established. Following Adorno (1997) and Rancière (2009), autonomy is positioned in dialectic relation with heteronomy to produce this contradiction via both an identification and disidentification with labour. The analysis of the readymade proves vital for understanding the agency of this contradiction produced through a convergence of heteronomous labour and artistic labour. The challenge this research looks toward in the following chapters is how this methodology can be made relevant to the new modes of labour and accumulation that exists today. In the following chapter, I explore this methodology through the practical component of my research.

CHAPTER 4

AVOWAL OF LABOUR WITHIN PARTICIPATION AND THE ARTIST RESIDENCY

With the methodology for a dialectical autonomy established, I will now apply it to an analysis of my practical output. What this requires is an avowal of the presence of labour specific to my practice, moving beyond the broader collapse between artistic labour and wage labour discussed above. For the socially-engaged artist, the presence of labour within their output is not frequently acknowledged. Politics in these practices is usually presented as happening somewhere else and not from within their own means of production (Steyerl, 2010). However, I will argue that it is through an identification with labour that a politics within my means of production can come into focus. From here, I can begin to consider ways to disidentify with this proximity to produce a contradiction or a conflicted relationship with labour via a dialectical application of autonomy.

In this chapter, I will introduce the artist residency as a dominant platform for production in my practice and the process of participation as the dominant means of production. I will explore the artist residency and the process of participation by avowing their relationships with labour. As the analysis unfolds, I will explore how this proximity can provide the site to produce productive contradictions outlined in the research methodology in the previous chapter. Rather than autonomy as grand gesture of freedom, I want to consider how it can operate more modestly to produce a glitch in the system or an interruption to business as usual (Lütticken, 2016).

I will go onto apply the analysis of labour, within the process of participation and the artist residency, to a residency I undertook in New Delhi as part of my research in 2017. I will examine two works produced on the residency, focusing on how they identify with labour. Through the analysis provided in the previous chapter, I will evaluate how this

proximity can provide the site from which the dialectical application of autonomy can be applied to negate the conditions of labour inherent within my production processes.

A Critique of Participation

In her book, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (Jackson, 2011), Shannon Jackson introduces the term "support" to describe the heteronomous conditions that surround and support the production, reception, and distribution of art. A "disavowal of support" is a term used by Jackson to describe the "illusionary trick needed to create the effect of an autonomous artwork" (Jackson, 2011, p. 31). Throughout modernism, a disavowal of support was part of autonomous art's attempts to appear "self-governing"; to deny the conditions which brings it into being. Jackson gives the example of transcendental art which could appear independent or transcendent of the "material" conditions of its making. For example, marble could look like flesh, or a flat canvas could appear to have depth. However, this transcendence of materiality was of course illusionary, marble remains stone, and the canvas remains flat. Inferred in Jackson's argument is that an art practice that disavows its relationship with "external rules" is reliant on similar trickery. The autonomy of art is positioned as merely an illusion generated through a disavowal of its heteronomous context. Jackson calls for practitioners of an "expanded art practice" (which I would equate to social practices like my own) to acknowledge art's "interdependence with ensembles, technologies, and audiences" (Jackson, 2011, p. 15).

In championing social practices, Jackson is reproducing a critique outlined in chapter 2 that positions autonomy as illusionary. However, while much emancipatory social practice emerges from such a critique of autonomy or, as Jackson describes, an "avowal of [heteronomous] support" (Jackson, 2011), it feels that in order to achieve a level of emancipation it still requires a subordination of labour; the "dirty little secret that …

infiltrates every conversation, every gesture" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 5). Certainly, working as a socially-engaged artist for the past decade, I have felt that the proximity to the notion of work within this field has not been adequately acknowledged or critiqued. It almost seems as though socially-engaged art's relationship to labour, and the politics inherent within this relationship, need to be denied for the practice to create a social interstice from capitalist exchange (Martin, 2007b) where it can go about "reframing a sense of community [and] mending the social bond" (Rancière, 2006, para. 1) . This has raised the question for me as to whether practices that critique autonomy to merge with life still maintain a sense of autonomy in order to "disavow" the presence of labour that this merger produces.

In exploring this further, I will initially focus on the practice of participation that I have frequently employed within my work and which is present in the practical component of my research. While in chapter 2 I analysed the instrumentalisation of participation as a neoliberal tool for producing self-supporting, "autonomous" citizens, I will now explore it further through the lens of labour. Claire Bishop makes the observation that participatory art "could be seen as an heroic narrative of the increased activation and agency of the audience, but we might also see it as a story of our ever increasing voluntary subordination to the artists' will, and of the commodification of human bodies in a service economy (since voluntary participation is also unpaid labour)" (Bishop, 2012, p. 277).

Bishop's theories and curation around labour and participation are particularly relevant to this research. In 2008, I was fortunate enough to attend an exhibition, *Double Agent*, which Bishop cocurated with Mark Sladen at the ICA in London. Such was the impact of the exhibition on me that one of my works within my study has inherited the exhibition title.

Double Agent explored what Bishop would 4 years later term “delegated performance” - “the act of hiring non-professionals or specialists in other fields to undertake the job of being present and performing at a particular time and a particular place on behalf of the artist, and following his/ her instructions” (Bishop, 2012, p. 219). Bishop and Sladen included delegated performances by Paweł Althamer/Nowolipie Group, Phil Collins, Dora García, Christoph Schlingensief, Barbara Visser, Joe Scanlan and Artur Zmijewski. The works raised questions of “authorship, and in particular the issues of ethics and representation that ensue when the artist is no longer the central agent in his or her own work, but operates through a range of individuals, communities and surrogates” (Bishop & Sladen, 2008, p. 1). An example of this could be found in the contribution of Scanlan, who chose to give up his space to “the up-and-coming artist Donelle Woolford – who it transpired was a construct” (Sladen, 2008, para 2). In the work, Woolford sets up a recreation of her (fictitious) New York studio in the upper floor ICA gallery space and applies her craft as a performance in full view of gallery attendees. Similarly, Paweł Althamer exhibited the ceramic produce of the Nowolipie Group, a class of adults with multiple sclerosis he had been teaching for 15 years. By substituting authorial control to others both works demonstrate Bishop’s concern with challenging established notions of ethics and artistic authorship. They both successfully undermine artistic authority while evoking an irreverence towards the artistic convention of authenticity.

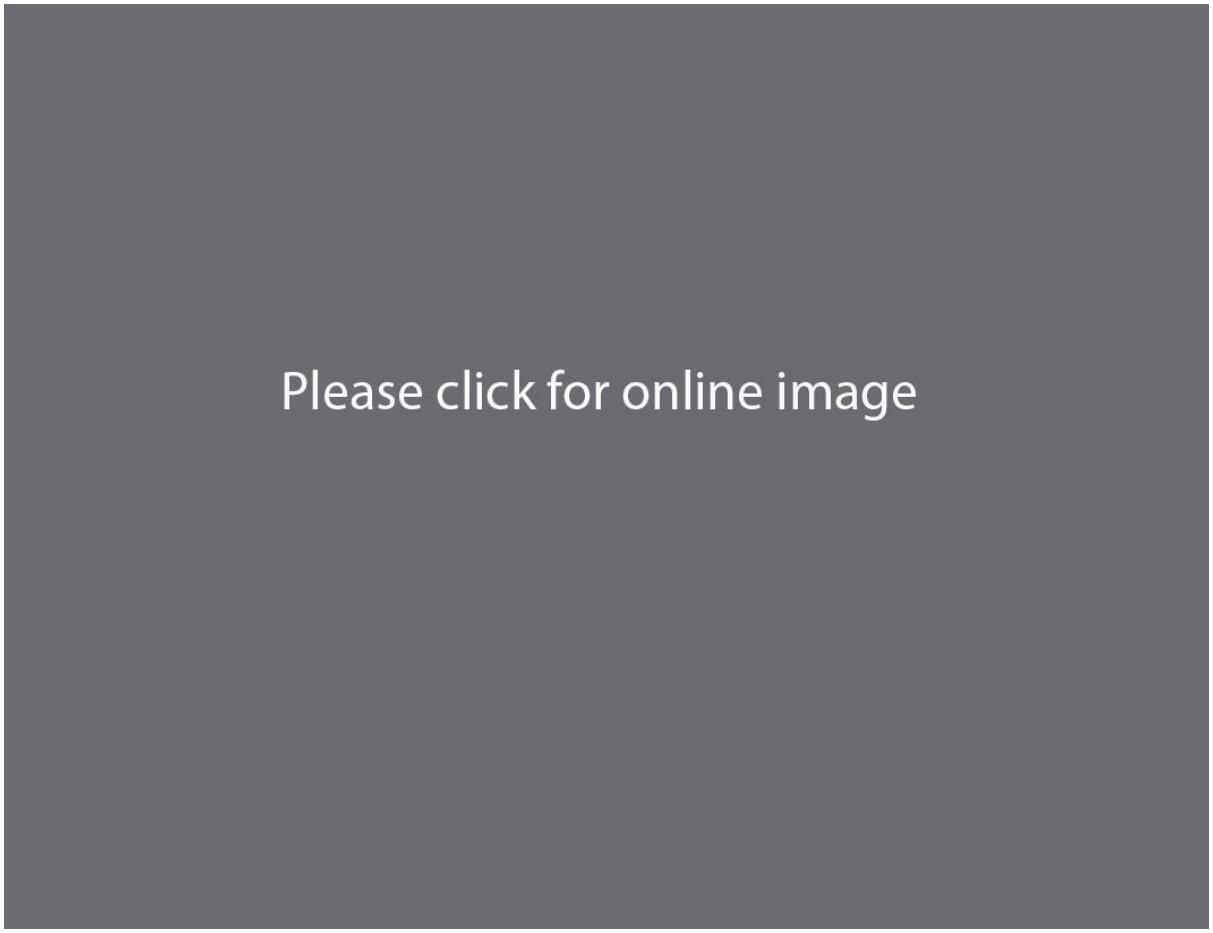

Figure 1: Joe Scanlan, *Donelle Woolford,* Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 2008.

While these themes coincide with those within my practice, it was not until Bishop delivered her curatorial talk at the gallery that the exhibition proved particularly pertinent for this research. Having given a detailed guided tour of the exhibition, Bishop was asked of the relationship between the use of "other people as a medium" (Bishop & Sladen, 2008, p. 2) and the labour operations of "big business". It struck me as a very appropriate question in relationship to delegated performance that I have pondered through my practice ever since. The relevance of the question was also acknowledged by Bishop herself, who suggested she would need to address the topic in her forthcoming book. *Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity,* appeared as a chapter in her hugely influential *Artificial Hells* (Bishop, 2012). In the chapter, Bishop describes how it "is not coincidental that [delegated

performance] has developed hand in hand with managerial changes in the economy at large" (Bishop, 2012, p. 231), making specific reference to the synchronistic popularisation of delegated performance and the process of "outsourcing", which "became a business buzzword in the early 1990s" (Bishop, 2012, p. 231). While Bishop acknowledges that this association produces "not altogether positive connotations … there are also important differences: if the aim of outsourcing in business is to decrease risk, artists frequently deploy it as a means to increase unpredictability – even if this means that a work might risk failing altogether" (Bishop, 2012, p. 231).

Drawing from the curatorial work of Pierre Bal-Blanc and the writing of Pierre Klossowski (Klossowski, 1970), Bishop goes onto to make further distinctions between delegated performance and labour processes of big business. While the labour process is acknowledged by Bishop as "perversion" which "degrades bodies into objects", it is used by artists in delegated performance in a different way - to "reflect on this degradation" (Bishop, 2012, p. 235). In other words, "the better examples of this work … reify precisely *in order to discuss reification*, or … exploit precisely *to thematise exploitation itself*" (Bishop, 2012, p. 239). She goes onto clarify that while delegated performance enters into close relation with labour practices of late capital, "it becomes essential to view […it] not as part of a seamless continuum with contemporary labour, but as offering a specific space of experience where those norms are suspended" (Bishop, 2012, p. 238).

What I have taken from this analysis into my research are questions of how such a suspension is achieved. In other words, how can autonomy from labour be produced from such a state of proximity? If participation through delegated performance produces a mimesis with labour, how does it then remove itself from labour to "offer an alternative form of knowledge about capitalism's commodification of the individual" (Bishop, 2012, p. 238)? And, does the formation of such knowledge necessitate a mimetic appropriation *of* labour as

much as it does an autonomy *from* labour? Of specific interest becomes how art's opposing and contradictory relationships with labour can be aligned for critical affect. I argue critique can come from an ability to produce both similarity and difference from labour simultaneously, where the ensuing contradictions produces the capacity to rupture the norms of contemporary labour and the production of art itself.

This methodology requires an avowal of the presence of labour within socially-engaged art which sits in opposition to the dominant emancipatory rhetoric attached to participation. Within socially-engaged art, participation - be it via a community group, an audience, or specialist in another field - is seen to not only overcome "the snares of negation and self-interest" (Kester, 2004, p. 112) but it also "rehumanises a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalist production" (Bishop, 2012, p. 11). By engaging others in the production, reception, and distribution process, the artist is thereby seen to reverse the passive consumption inherent in the presenter-spectator binary.

To meet these claims, however, requires an understanding of the participation of social engagement as somehow autonomous or removed from the social constitution of labour. In other words, for it to produce a social exchange that disengages it from capitalist exchange where it can rehumanise a society "numb and fragmented" (Bishop, 2012, p. 11), it needs to disavow its proximity to the increasingly social and network constitution of labour today. Despite being predicated on a departure from autonomy (Wright, 2013), I will argue that much socially-engaged art still produces a disavowal of labour and, in doing so, *reinstates* a position of social autonomy.

Stewart Martin explores this in detail in his text *Critique of Relational Aesthetics* (Martin, 2007b). Through an analysis of the value form, Martin positions participatory social engagement as mimetic with service-based evolutions in labour. He does this via a reading of

Nicolas Bourriaud's (2002) *Relational Aesthetics* in which Bourriaud presents a theory that relational art disengages from capitalist exchange to produce "an autonomous art of the social" (Martin, 2007b, p. 377). Crucially for Martin, Bourriaud argues that relational aesthetics produces "social relations between 'persons' *against* social relations between commodities" (Martin, 2007b, p. 376). In other words, the process of social engagement between people is seen as a way of avoiding our alienation and subjugation to the value form. Bourriaud essentially looks to reverse the dialectical inversion described by Marx of commodity relations:

> To the producers, therefore, the social relations between their private labours appear as what they are, ie, they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things' (Marx, 1867/1989, p. 166).

For Martin, by focusing on social relations contra objects, the theory of relational aesthetics looks to create a "micropolitical disengagement from capitalist exchange" (Martin, 2007b, p. 371) where people relate to people directly rather than to each other through the commodity. In the process, the act of participation is positioned as an emancipatory critique of commodification, alleviating our subjugation to the value form, thereby "mending the social bond". In doing this, Bouriaud is effectively proposing an emancipation of labour through "an art of social autonomy" (Martin, 2007b, p. 377).

However, as Martin makes clear following Marx: "Capitalist exchange value is not constituted at the level of objects, but of *social labour*, as a measure of *abstract labour*. It is the commodification of *labour* that constitutes the value of 'objective' commodities" rather than the commodities themselves (Martin, 2007b, p. 378). Replacing the object with social relations only leaves us with the "the commodification of human bodies" (Bishop, 2012, p.

277) that produce the "value" of capitalist exchange. In other words, the art of social relations does not so much rehumanise "a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalist production" (Bishop, 2012, p. 11) but replicates "the social constitution of capitalist exchange, exposing it directly … There is no freedom from capitalist exchange here; merely the confrontation with it, face to face" (Martin, 2007b, p. 379).

I have felt this paradox within the process of participation through my practice for many years. On the one hand, participation produces an emancipation from labour by creating a unique space of interpersonal connections. On the other hand, it produces a mimesis with labour because these interpersonal connections replicate the "social constitution" of capitalist exchange, particularly in an economy which so readily commodifies social networks and interpersonal relationships. However, rather than positioning participation as merely complicit via a proximity with labour, I intend to use my research to explore whether it can produce a contradiction which constitutes what Rancière would describe as aesthetic experience (Rancière, 2002a, p. 135). In other words, if participation does have a proximity to the social and performative constitution of labour today, can a productive contradiction be produced via its counter claims for a social autonomy? The fact that participation is both a "heroic narrative of the increased activation and agency" *and* "the commodification of human bodies in a service economy" (Bishop, 2012, p. 277) could provide the type of contradiction that produces a conflicted relationship to capitalist value (Brouillette, 2016). The proximity to labour within participation is not, therefore, a limiting factor but a critical opportunity so long as this proximity is avowed and recognised as the grounds for autonomy's powers of negation to be renewed.

The Mimetic Conditions of the Artist Residency

While participation has so often provided my means of production over the past decade, the artist residency has frequently provided the site of production. I will use the residency model as way of example throughout my thesis. Along with the conference, it has provided the platform for the practical part of my research. The artist residency produces an example of artistic production reliant on what Shannon Jackson describes as an "avowal of support" (Jackson, 2011). Residencies almost demand the context of a new location to influence artistic practice. They are about responding to external stimuli and, in this respect, is antithetical to a definition of autonomous art as self-determined or self-governing. To extend Jackson's metaphor of autonomy being like an illusionary transcendence of materiality, residencies for me are like "truth to material" where materiality informs the process of production. On residencies, the heteronomous contexts of history, people, politics, economy, culture, architecture, and so on are encouraged to inform one's practice.

However, this exterior circumstance also represents for me more than the opportunity to respond to a different physical location and its people. The residency exemplifies a form of creative production or *artist labour* where exterior expectations are placed upon the artist from a range of sources including funding bodies, hosting institutions, and local authorities. An avowal of support would only seem to be a precursor for critically examining the relationships between art and its heteronomous context. To consider artistic support in this circumstance is to consider how the artist interacts with larger governance models, how the artist *labours,* and what agendas they serve. In the context of artist residencies, I would like to extend an avowal of support to include the interrogation of art's co-dependencies.

Specifically relevant for my research, I will explore how they represent an increased proximity between artistic labour and the "new labour" of post Fordism which sees the artist emerge as an "occupational role model" (Steyerl, 2011). I will demonstrate how residencies embody a shift in artistic practice that positions artistic labour less in terms of being oppositional to instrumental rationality, as defined by an autonomous practice, towards a mimesis with "heteronomous mixed economies" (Jackson, 2011). If the residency model does embody heteronomous labour, I will consider whether they could be a site for a dialectical understanding of autonomy where, like participation, they can produce a productive contradiction via their proximity.

I will, therefore, focus my analysis on the relationship between the labour of the artist on residency and the broader socioeconomic evolutions of contemporary labour per se. This will be considered through the functionalisation of artistic production that I have found residencies often encourage, but more so the relationship between the labour patterns of the artist on residency with broader evolutions in the way people work. Once I have identified how the residency identifies with new forms of labour, I will consider the necessity for my practice to disidentify with them to produce a dialectical reimagination of autonomy.

As the dominant avenue for my practice for the past 10 years, the artist residency has provided me with opportunities to explore new contexts and work with a broad range of people and cultures. While they have been integral to my artistic output, I will focus on how as a mode of production they produce a number of structural similarities with new modes of work. The artist in residence embodies a logic of flexibility and freedom that is now defining characteristics of contemporary labour (Gill & Pratt, 2008) or what Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) describe as "the new spirit of capitalism". In the context of these fluid and mobile evolutions in labour relations, it is no surprise that the artist residency has flourished. Today, artist residency resource website "Resartis" lists over 660 residencies available to artists all

around the world (ResArtis, 2018). Functioning on a project-by-project basis, artists in residence find themselves operating like FIFO workers (Pryor, 2012), responding to different cultural contexts before being whisked away to seek the next opportunity for production. For Boltanski and Chiapello, such a reliance on work as a series of “projects” is synonymous with the freedom and flexibility of deregulated neoliberal worker who, like the residency artist, organise themselves less around a secure and linear career trajectory but on “informal, insecure and discontinuous employment” (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 26).

Often with dematerialised, transnational practices, the fluidity of the artist in residence begins to replicate a boundless flow of capital and “contemporary life as a network of unanchored flows” (Kwon, 2002, p. 164). However, they also represent the ultimate deregulated casual worker: creative, ambitious, and willing to risk working for very little remuneration or other forms of security that go with permanent employment in the hope of future rewards. In this respect “artists, (new) media workers and other cultural labourers are hailed as 'model entrepreneurs' by industry and government figures” (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 26).

As described in chapter 2, the ideal of autonomous artistic labour, which espouses flexibility and freedom from economic rationality, has been appropriated to rationalise deregulation, insecurity, and precarity. Freedom here allies with a broader neoliberal shift away from collective security towards a predatory market-led rationality. In this context, rather than producing critical distance, the artist or creative worker has been “identified as the poster boys and girls for the new ‘precariat’” (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 26). This analysis resonates strongly with my experience with the residency situation, which offers unbridled freedom in between periods of stagnation and insecurity. In their analysis of the residency, Hito Steyerl and Boris Buden suggest that their “ideology is one of competition” which fits nicely into the competitive logic of market driven neoliberal economics (Steyerl & Buden,

2007, para. 4). With its open-call format and scarcity of opportunity, the residency represents the "winner takes all" mentality which Ulric Beck describes of the "risk society" (Beck, 1992). In this "brave new world of work", risks and responsibilities are placed solely on the worker. To paraphrase Beck (1992), the payoff for the freedoms of "individualisation" is that individual citizens are required to resolve systemic problems. With the residency, like new models of labour, precarity and insecurity become the by-product of the ideal of freedom and autonomy.

Artists relying on residencies are expected to live a nomadic existence; able to leave their lives with very little notice and displaced from any material or emotional attachment they might have to the place they call home. Like the ideal worker, they are unencumbered by anything that would restrict production. My own ability to partake in residencies, for example, has in the past required a form of casual, insecure employment that enabled me to leave my "day job" at very little notice (three weeks in the case of one residency), rental accommodation that I could sublet, and a lack of dependents. This adaptability is what is increasing required by employers in the face of deregulated labour relations where an absence of encumbrance makes employees more malleable for exploitation. Rather than providing a distance from instrumentalised rationality, the structure of the artist residency could actually exemplify flexible and mobile neoliberal labour practices.

Dave Beech uses terms like "habitual mobility, keeping pace with rapid change, adaptability and flexibility" to describe "an anatomy of precarity" (Beech, 2015, p. 316). But this could quite easily be used to describe the professional characteristics of the artist in residence who unwittingly exemplify "the principle qualities demanded of the wage labourers today" (Beech, 2015, p. 316). Mark Fisher's description of the requirements for the contemporary workforce in his book *Capitalist Realism* (Fisher, 2009) also sits comfortably alongside the artist in residence:

> To function effectively as a component of just-in-time production, you must develop a capacity to respond to unforeseen events, you must learn to live in conditions of total instability, or 'precarity', as the ugly neologism has it. Periods of work alternate with periods of unemployment. Typically, you find yourself employed in a series of short-term jobs, unable to plan for the future (Fisher, 2009, p. 34).

Alongside these fluid, deregulated labour patterns, the output of artist in residence produces another set of characteristics that also defines a departure from autonomy. Residencies represent a shift in artistic labour from a position of purposeless creation to one of usefulness and accountability. In accordance to the doctrine of "useful art", they often operate outside art's traditional confines of museums or galleries to have a functional impact within society. However, these functional expectations often emerge from the expectations of funding bodies, hosting institutions, and local authorities. There is a tacit, or even contractual, agreement that as a "payoff" for the residency opportunity, the artist will produce something useful for the host. While residencies can provide important steppingstones for the development of one's practice, they can also be read as testimony to the extent that the arts in society have been undermined by the need to validate their social and economic value through external criteria. No longer can artistic labour be purposeless or autonomous, it needs to produce a social function, often in areas where neoliberal policy has left vacated, such as social welfare or environmental sustainability.

In this respect, the residency model lends itself perfectly to the labour practices of the socially-engaged artist. These types of artists, such as myself, who work through community engagement or with specific social or environmental concerns, are not only deemed socially useful, but they are also flexible, adaptable, and intellectually mobile enough to adjust their practices to the various contexts the residency may present. While expectations put upon

artists vary, I have on occasion felt extremely embedded within the needs of an institution, funding bodies, and the wider community. Rather than working in accordance with the ideal of non-alienated labour, I felt that I was at times producing a series of productive services where artistic labour becomes instrumentalised and made accountable, to serve external modes of governance.

This lack of autonomy, both in terms of the functional expectations placed upon production and the mimesis they promote with contemporary labour patterns, make the residency model particularly relevant to my research. In my experience, the residency model essentially encourages an extreme heteronomous form of artistic production that urgently prompts a reimagination of autonomy. How one negotiates this dichotomy of heteronomy and autonomy is what my research looks to uncover. Specifically, if the residency occupies a proximity with labour, then following Adorno, Rancière, and the example of the readymade, can a disidentification with labour produce a dialectical manifestation of autonomy, where art's conflicted relationship with labour can be made critically productive?

New Delhi Residency

In 2017, I successfully applied for an Australia Council, 1-month residency at Khoj International Artist Association in New Delhi. I had worked with Khoj in 2009 and my initial application for candidacy involved doing a residency with them again. The context of working as a Western socially-engaged artist in India extended my research from art's mimesis with labour towards a mimesis with specific transnational labour relations between the two regions.

An Australia Council residency, or any other residency involving selection from a national body, contextualises the socioeconomic relations between the host nation and that represented by the artist. With regard to this situation, critic Domeniek Ruyters observed that

artists are not only engaging with the local context of their place destination but are also serving the international cultural policy of their place of origin (Ruyters, 2005). “Residencies create trans-national sets of relations: like space stations for upwardly mobile self-entrepreneurs” (Steyerl & Buden, 2007). The sense of “transnational limbo” residencies generate is firmly located in the “logic of territorial cultural representation” (Steyerl & Buden, 2007). The artist becomes almost like a cultural ambassador and while they are on residency to experience other cultures, they are also there to represent their own. There is a sense of duty that gives new purpose, or function, to the role of the artist in this situation.

While the artist does not have the empowerment of political representation as such, this context inevitably affects the kind of art that a national organisation like the Australia Council will choose to endorse. It may likewise have a bearing on the type of activity that the artist would choose to undertake. A more diplomatic and egalitarian proposal, for example, might be favoured against anything overtly critical or antagonistic. For Steyerl and Buden, the residency enacts what Rancière (2015) describes as a “distribution of the sensible” via a selection process that governs what types of artistic practices are given visibility or remain invisible (Steyerl & Buden, 2007). The way in which the sensible is distributed or visibility given, therefore, “is strongly defined by allocation of origin or cultural background… artists become ambassadors, very often of dubious entities like cultures or even races. They produce location, cultural identity and national pride” (Steyerl & Buden, 2007, para.4). In this sense, the residency model is political, but often in a very different way to the artist’s choosing.

A residency in Delhi takes this context and reproduces it through specific socioeconomic labour relations India has with the West. Production is essentially relocated to India, creating a mimesis with the business process of outsourcing. Economist Alexandra Twin describes outsourcing as “the business practice of hiring a party outside a company to perform services and create goods that traditionally were performed in-house by the

company's own employees and staff [and] … usually undertaken by companies as a cost-cutting measure" (Twin, 2019, para. 1). The practice of outsourcing has, of course, found popularity in India during the process of globalisation where deregulated labour laws allowed Western countries to make use of a cheap and skilled Indian workforce. Outsourcing allows companies to employ staff for a fraction of the cost without the need to pay for insurance, holiday pay, pensions, or office space. In this process, traditional notions of space, time, and identity become abstracted, while a disparity of wealth and working conditions are exploited to generate capital for western-based companies. An artist on residency in India will inevitably enter into proximity with this labour practice, whether they consciously avow this this or not. My observation from working on residencies in India is that the use of a cheap Indian labour for the production of foreign artist's work is standard practice. However, for a socially engaged artist who use people through participation in their work, this proximity becomes magnified and particularly problematic. The proximity participation, and the artist residency produce with labour, are compounded in India by the mimesis generated with globalised transnational labour relations and specifically the practice of outsourcing.

An avowal of these relationships is the first stage of my practical methodology through which, I argue, art production itself is revealed to produce an inherent, yet perhaps undesirable, political context. I am interested in how autonomy can be reimagined *within* these heteronomous frameworks. Analogous to Adorno's dialectic of autonomy and the commodity, I will explore whether this proximity to labour can produces a site of contradiction which not only problematises art's autonomy but also the structure of labour itself. While for Rancière, the undecidability between artistic labour and real existing labour could constitute an aesthetic experience and, by extension, a redistribution of how labour is perceived. I will examine the works produced while on the residency, paying close attention to how they identify and disidentify with their proximity to labour.

Khirkee's Strongest Man and Woman Competitions

The first project I will analyse is *Khirkee's Strongest Man and Woman Competitions* (Brazier, 2017c), a two-part event I organised in Khirkee Village, South Delhi, where the residency organisation Khoj was situated. The events were open to the public arm-wrestling competitions for cash prizes. The men's event attracted 32 participants and a large, vocal group of spectators from the area around Khoj. It was staged within the courtyard of the institution, with the audience crammed into the ground floor and tiered balconies above. I hired a professional sports commentator to call the event, and a cash prize of 3,000 rupees (which is the equivalent of 2 weeks wages for some Khirkee residents) was given to the winner. The men's event attracted a great deal of intrigue and produced a heated conviviality. The women's competition, which created an almost serene atmosphere, was staged after I left the residency. A local female artist, Swati Janu, commentated the event and prize money was voluntarily shared amongst the competitors.

The initial idea for the men's event was partly a response to the patriarchal nature of the community. Khirkee is an extremely male dominated, working class neighbourhood. There is a real physicality to the way men gather and work on the streets. Walking around the area I felt a definite sense of struggle centred around capital and labour which as a Westerner I was implicated in. On one level, orchestrating an arm-wrestling competition looked to play this struggle out, providing a physical contest for remuneration which overidentified with the overtly masculine labour relations specific to the area.

In another respect, however, both men's and women's events could neatly fit into the expectation placed upon the artist in residence to produce a convivial form of community engagement. Participation could be read positively in terms of attracting a demographic

usually excluded or as a celebration of community togetherness. On one level, the events might have worked towards mending the social bond which, as discussed, is a dominant rhetoric of socially-engaged art (Kester, 2004; Lind, 2012). Both the events successfully produced an emancipatory quality of open engagement through participation. The men's competition, for example, opened the doors of the institution to a local population that had never before felt included. The women's competition perhaps achieved even greater degrees of emancipation in the context of a strong gender-specific social divide and division in labour within Khirkee Village. Artist Swati Janu describes:

> The Khoj courtyard turned into a women's only space with dozens of strong, confident and powerful women from different cultures coming together. As the first participant Najma (who went on to become one of the winners of the contest) shared 'this is the first time I feel like I'm in a safe space which I can share with other women who I'm meeting for the first time'. In fact, it seemed like a reversal of a zenana with the men restricted to the upper floors to watch the action on the ground floor, as one of them shared with me later on how he experienced first-hand what it feels to be kept away from a main space based on gender! (Janu, 2017)

Figure 2: David Brazier*, Khikee's Strongest Man Competition* (view from balcony) Khoj International Artists Association, New Delhi, 2017.

Figure 3: David Brazier*, Khikee's Strongest Man Competition* (spectators watching from balcony) Khoj International Artists Association, New Delhi, 2017.

Figure 4: David Brazier*, Khikee's Strongest Woman Competition* Khoj International Artists Association, New Delhi, 2017.

This type of ameliorative and convivial event fits nicely with the expected function of the resident socially-engaged artist and the type of outcome both Khoj and the Australia Council may have been looking for. Far from an autonomous practice in terms of purposelessness, the art in this scenario serves a specific social agenda or service. Khoj has a strong public outreach program and a mandate of social justice. As a socially-engaged artist and guest of the institution, I felt an expectation to conform to this agenda, which on one level this work does. Likewise, for the Australia Council, such an event fulfils the expectation of an artist as a kind of cultural ambassador through the delivery of a positive social outcome. The host organisation was happy enough to request repeat performances, and an image of Australia was perpetuated as sporty, inclusive, and convivial. The fact the event was taken on by the Khirkee community also gives the work a longevity that is typically absent from

residency situations. If analysing ideal outcomes or best practice, having this type of positive lasting community impact through a residency would be high on the list.

However, the work does something quite different and more troubling when analysed through the lens of labour. This analysis produces a mimesis that goes beyond the fluid, deregulated, and precarious evolutions of labour that the residency complies with as discussed above. If labour is present within the practice of participation, which my analysis reveals it is, the arm-wrestling competitions, following Claire Bishop, should also be seen as "the commodification of human bodies in a service economy" (Bishop, 2012, p. 277). If this analogy to labour is then carried forth then, as a Western artist orchestrating this participatory event in India, the work occupies a specific colonial context related to the labour relations between the two regions, which are of course manifest in the practice of outsourcing.

On critical reflection, the arm-wrestling competitions identified a division in labour between the cognitive and managerial labour predominant in the West and the physical or material labour seen in the global south. In producing the event, my artistic labour and working process was about organising, promoting and delegating. Leading up to the event I was engaged in meetings, sending emails, and ironing out logistical concerns with various parties. On the event day, I was overseeing and orchestrating the actions of the participants which was obviously of a physical nature. Such division is, of course, seen in the process of deindustrialisation in Western countries. Here, manual production is increasingly reliant on "new enclosures" in the Third World that can "increase the total pool of surplus labour, help depress wages, cheapen the elements of constant capital, and tremendously expand the labour market" (Caffentzis, 1999, p. 34).

Third World labour in this scenario is incentivised through the capital generated via an uneven distribution of wealth. While the arm-wrestling competition produced a number of

positive social outcomes, the offer of prize money and my presence as Westerner organising and officiating the event brought it into close proximity with this context. The slight feverishness the event produced amongst participants could, therefore, be read as desperation for financial gain as much as it could be of an expression of conviviality.

I am reminded here to a work I encountered while living in the UK by Michael Sailstorfer. The work, *Folkstone Dig,* was made in 2014 as part of the Folkstone Triennial. In the work Stailstorfer buried £10,000 of gold bullion in the sand at Folkestone's harbour beach for people to find. The work sparked a frenzy of prospecting amongst the locals with UK commissioning agency *Situations* describing a convivial atmosphere where "families spent days in the sunshine, digging and playing in the sand and new friendships were made […their activity] creating mounds of wet sand, [where] every once in a while people would gather around someone proudly holding up a small gold bar" (Situations, 2014, para 4). Despite the undeniable presence of fun, the works *critical* agency I believe came from revealing a more desperate element of the socio-economic reality in which the participants lived. Amongst the feel good "community" aspect described by the commissioning body, in the context of the impoverished area of Folkstone, critic Stephen Armstrong noticed how the work "turned into a documentary of despair. Regular visits to the short, sandy beach under the shadow of the harbour wall found the vast majority of diggers were unemployed or low waged" (Armstrong, 2015, para 4). The arm-wrestling occupies a similar dual narrative where underneath the conviviality of social engagement, lies a more disturbing reality of the labour relations that go into its making. The acknowledgement of this context produces a critique of autonomy, or specifically, a critique of the assumption that art, in its socially engaged form, could be excluded from the presence of labour.

Like *Folkstone Dig*, therefore, *Khirkee's Strongest Man and Woman Competitions* produce two types of affect which seem to operate in contradiction. First, and perhaps most

obviously, was the sense of conviviality and liberation of the community taking part in a slightly ridiculous event to find their village's strongest man and woman. "I can't believe this is going to happen" was a common joyful response from Khirkee residents. The work emancipated some of life's normal protocols, briefly putting aside social boundaries to do with class and gender that are deeply intrenched within the area. In doing so, the work produced a genuine sense of delight and freedom amongst those taking part and spectating.

But on the other hand, the work formed more difficult neo-colonial associations with labour that both the process of participation and the artist residency surreptitiously reproduce. These associations were dramatised by the requirement of participants to sign a contract, the presentation of the winner with a giant cheque, and the event signage made in the vernacular of local businesses. While these neo-colonial associations with labour are not desirable, I argue that they lie dormant in participatory art and residency formats. Rather than disavowing them, following Rancière, I am interested in whether an acknowledgement of their presence can produce a productive contradiction where the work's different affects enter into conflict to produce a form of dissensus.

Figure 5: David Brazier, *Khikee's Strongest Man Competition* (presentation of winner, Asim, with giant cheque) Khoj International Artists Association, New Delhi, 2017.

On reflection, a critical agency of the work could have emerged from a tension between art as autonomous from labour, on one hand, and mimetic of it, on the other. This shuttling between these two political positions within artistic labour could provide the inherently contradictory component of art as an aesthetic experience, constituted through the lens of labour.

An analysis of this, however, showed that the association with labour needed to be more strongly identified with for this type of contradiction to be made productive. The success of the works' convivial and emancipatory elements far outweighed any uncomfortable relationship with labour that the work may have produced. What this analysis revealed was the necessity to make the avowal of labour more pointed within the work, to acknowledge my implication as a socially-engaged artist on residency, and to produce a stronger contradiction with the work's social emancipation. Nevertheless, through this

analysis of this work, a process of identification and disidentification with labour begins to emerge. While this is perhaps too concealed behind the presence of conviviality to be overtly critical in this work, it starts to map out a methodology that concludes this research.

Division of Labour Chowk

A stronger identification with labour became the point of departure for another work produced on the Khoj residency, *Division of Labour Chowk* (Brazier, 2017a). Walking around Khirkee, I became interested in "labour chowks" which roughly translates to "labour market". They are seen all over India where groups of men informally gather on the side of the road, often with paintbrush or shovel in hand, and wait for employment. They form "a microcosm of the free market where workers, armed with their tools and their luck compete for customers to make their pick" (Hafeez, 2016, para. 5). They are a brutal representation of "insecure, casualized or irregular labour", now increasingly evident throughout the globe as condition of precarity and deregulation (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 26). Often made up from migrant populations, labour chowks manifest the abundance of deregulated Third World surplus labour on which immaterial evolutions of capitalism in the First World has come to depend (Caffentzis, 1999).

The labour chowk for me was a harsh representation of the social relations within the labour process that capitalism in the First World usually conceals. I wanted to make these social relations visible while avowing my relationship to them as a Western, socially-engaged artist on residency. My idea was to commission labourers from the labour chowk to make a set of tiered bleachers, commonly used in galleries to view videos. The commissioning and production process were to be video recorded and then edited into a film. The bleachers were then to be used by viewers to watch the video of their making.

The video opens with me approaching a couple of labourers attempting to communicate what I was looking to have made. Immediately a large group swarmed around me as I started communicating through a series of drawings and hand gestures. From within the group a carpenter emerged and together we walked the few hundred metres to the hardware store to buy the wood. The wood was then delivered to the site on the side of the road by rickshaw, and after a small pay-off to a local vendor, production on the bleachers began. Within 6 hours the bleachers were complete, delivered to Khoj on the rickshaw, and a week later used to view the video of their making in an exhibition.

The function of the bleachers was, therefore, to reveal the abstracted labour and the divisions of labour concealed in their construction. As a Western, socially-engaged artist working in India, I was implicating my practice within the neo-colonial division of labour specific to my origin and the site of production. But the work also implicated the modes of production within the institution of art. Khoj, for example, despite having a mandate of social justice, is reliant on such divisions of labour for their existence. Cheap labour, and the exploitation of social divisions, are essential for their day-to-day operations. The same reliance could be said for the spread of some of art's major global institutions such as the Guggenheim in Abu Dhabi "built on the back of exploited, indebted, and abused workers" (GLAC, 2019, para. 7). There is a certain politics, therefore, entwined in the production, reception, and distribution of art that is embedded in "the field of art as a place of work" (Steyerl, 2010, para. 1). *Division of Labour Chowk* looked to avow and identify with this context. An institutional apparatus for disseminating art - the bleachers - was revealed as a product of a problematic division in labour that I was implicated in. Returning once again to Sven Lütticken, the work was made "in the full knowledge that power is not located elsewhere, but in the social relations one enters" (Lütticken, 2010, p. 36). Rather than looking

to represent politics as happening elsewhere, the production of art and the labour embodied within it, is viewed as a political space itself.

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Figure 6: David Brazier *Division of Labour Chowk,* (production photograph) Khoj International Artist Association, New Delhi, 2017.

Santiago Sierra is an artist who occupies similar territory to *Division of Labour Chowk* in that he frequently employs the use of cheap migrant labour. In the work, *Lifted out wall leaning over by 60 degrees and held up by five people* (Sierra, 2000), which was initially

performed in Mexico City, for example, Sierra paid five people 700 pesos each (around $45AUD) to remove a gallery wall from floor to ceiling and hold it at 60 degrees over the course of five days. The work produced a brutal exploitation of workers' rights synonymous with the situation in Mexico City but evident across the globe. In analysing the brutality of his practice, I would argue it is partly the pointlessness of the tasks Sierra solicits that makes them so uncomfortable. Holding a wall up at 60 degrees has absolutely no functional 'use value' (other than Sierra's critical gesture). While the level of exploitation is comparable to what is seen in industrial society, because it slips outside of the realm of what is considered functional, it becomes amplified. In other words, when devoid of any means end rationality all the viewer is left with is the exploitation of labour.

Figure 7: Santiago Sierra, *Lifted out wall leaning over by 60 degrees and held up by five people,* Acceso A Gallery, Mexico City, 2000

Occupying a similar context, the function of the bleachers in *Division of Labour Chowk* was purely to make visible the conditions of labour. However, they also made visible things I was not expecting, including positive qualities such as a sense of pride, comradery, and a

complex social fabric that coincides with the labour process. Sierra's documentation, as black and white photographs, give no room for the communication of such attributes, and the highly demeaning nature of the tasks he solicits make it seem doubtful they could ever be expressed under such conditions.

Furthermore, Sierra is an artist who sells his work for huge sums of money via his numerous galleries. The production of surplus value from the exploitation of labour is an importance facet of his work. In *Person Saying a Phrase* (Sierra, 2002), for example, a homeless man says to the camera: "My participation in this project could generate $72000 profit. I am paid £5". Here, the viewer is confronted with unjust nature of capitalism which is rife within the art world. While this generation of surplus value is completely absent from my practice, what is relevant is how Sierra's practice looks to produce is an avowal of labour within the art context:

> What I do is refuse to deny the principles that underlie the creation of an object of luxury: from the watchman who sits next to a Monet for eight hours a day, to the doorman who controls who comes in, to the source of the funds used to buy the collection (Sierra, 2004, para 15).

In a similar way to Sierra, *Division of Labour Chowk* was conceived as an avowal of labour within art's production, reception, and distribution. Participation was revealed not as a means of mending the social bond, or providing an interstice from capitalist exchange, but firmly embedded within the labour process itself. The social participation, and the act of labour in the work, thereby became inseparable producing a series of contradictory associations. That is, the labourers were hired as participants, the bleachers were both a product of labour but also a means to view the product of a social practice, and my presence in the work was that of a socially-engaged artist but also that of employer.

The work, therefore, looked to occupy two spaces simultaneously, allowing art's proximity to labour to produce productive contradictions with artistic labour as autonomous. In considering the potential agency of *Division of Labour Chowk,* I return to the ideas brought up through the analysis of the readymade which, as John Roberts observes, converges artistic labour with heteronomous or productive labour for the emancipation of both (Roberts, 2007). The productive labour that went into the making of the urinal in *Fountain* (1917), for example, converges with the artistic, immaterial, and cognitive labour of Duchamp's gesture. In the readymade, heteronomous labour was brought into the purposeless domain of the aesthetic field whereby "the homogeneity of productive labour is marked and transfigured by the autonomy of artistic labour … Necessary labour and artistic labour, manual labour and intellectual labour, are brought together into suggestive, albeit uneven, alignment [which becomes the] reflection on art's place in the division of labour' (Roberts, 2007, p. 35).

What is important in this analysis is that the autonomy of artistic labour does not completely collapse into the heteronomous realm but remains in suspension. While artistic labour enters into proximity with heteronomous labour, what this analysis points towards is the ability for this conjunction to redistribute the perception of both. In the case of *Division of Labour Chowk,* this "redistribution" firstly came about by using socially-engaged art production to make visible the social constitution of the labour process itself. In other words, rather than labour abstracted into the object as is the case with commodity production, the function of the bleachers was to reveal the social relations (labour) involved in its manufacture. The second process of redistribution comes from implicating socially-engaged art production within that labour process, where its mimetic condition with labour is identified and avowed. While the former produces a type of ethnography of labour, the latter is more self-critical. As a socially-engaged artist, I was acknowledging that I do not produce

a social interstice from capitalist exchange but am essentially part of the problem which paradoxically becomes the condition of my agency (Lütticken, 2014, p. 6). In other words, through this methodology I avow a specific politics within my practice which then gives rise to a possibility of negating it. Autonomy here is not a position of distance but rather operates from a state of proximity, to sustain contradictions that can alter the way the social orders of both art and labour are perceived.

In the next chapter, I will apply this methodology through further practical examples. While the works produced on the residency described in this chapter are aligned with a very physical conception of labour, in chapter 5, I will move toward a more immaterial, performative conception of labour which is more relevant to labour practices today. Sven Lütticken uses the term "labour as performance" (Lütticken, 2016) to describe the new labour of post-Fordism that subsumes every facet of our being. If artistic labour has the capacity to contradict the pervading order as this research thus far suggests, then doing so in relation to the conditions of labour as performance would seem paramount.

CHAPTER 5:
A NEGOTIATION OF PERFORMATIVE LABOUR

In the previous chapter, I analysed the works produced on residency at Khoj through an avowal of labour. If the relationship to labour was more concealed in *Khirkee's Strongest Man and Woman Competitions*, it was made the subject of the work in *Division of Labour Chowk.* An avowal of labour has emerged as vital to my methodology. Autonomy here is presented as a "lack", but this provides a heteronomous space from which it can be reimagined dialectically; not as the grand gesture of freedom from labour, but as means of creating a contradiction *within* a space of proximity.

As discussed in detail in chapter 2, the notion of labour has evolved through the conditions of post-Fordism to encompass all aspects of our lives and subjectivities. The following chapter will explore two works I have made in relation to this performative shift in labour. If this shift increases our exposure to the market as this research suggests, then a capacity to contradict or negate this condition through a reimagination of autonomy seems an important position for art to take.

Virtual Employee

In 2017, I wrote a paper *Outsourcing Transnationalism* for the AAANZ conference. As a part of a performance, I employed an actor to play the part of "David Brazier" to deliver the paper and to attend the AAANZ conference social gatherings. The performance has become an important part of my practical research and articulates many of my concerns around an identification with labour; not only in the performative action of delegating my presence to a surrogate, but in the content of the paper itself.

The paper detailed a British Council residency, *1 Mile Squared*, which I undertook at Khoj International Artist Association in 2009. The residency culminated in the work *Virtual Employee* (Brazier, 2009) which involved outsourcing my involvement in the residency to a business process outsourcing company, "Virtual Employee". Virtual Employee is a Delhi-based organisation which provides outsourced labour for Western companies normally in the areas of accounting, finance, web development, and various other forms of digital production. As I left Delhi and returned to London, Ashish Sharma took on the role of international artist in residence. Without any previous artistic experience, Ashish worked for a month as a socially-engaged artist on the streets of Delhi fulfilling the residency objectives. He sent work back via email while reporting to me and those funding the residency over skype. Ashish performed the task of artist in residence with passion and diligence, and midway through the residency he confided that this was a profession he wanted to pursue.

Figure 8: David Brazier, *Virtual Employee*, (skype conversation video still) 1 Mile Squared Residency, Visiting Art's, British Council, 2009.

The decision to outsource the residency came about through a critique of the participatory art and the artist residency, articulating a methodology central to this research. *Virtual Employee* effectively pushes productive labour, through the process of outsourcing, into socially-engaged artistic labour via the residency situation. As was beginning to form in the analysis of the two works in the previous chapter, its agency comes from an identification and disidentification of artistic labour with productive labour. In other words, it enacted the dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy through the lens of labour oscillating between the business process of outsourcing and a participatory socially-engaged art project made on an artist residency.

In exploring this, I once again turn to the previous analysis of the readymade where autonomy and negation emerge from the estrangement this conjunction of artistic labour and productive labour creates. Rather than reproducing a rationality for greater accumulation, in *Virtual Employee* the business process of outsourcing was employed in the work for the realisation of socially-engaged art. In the process, outsourcing became defunctionalised, contradicted, or repurposed by artistic labour. Following the logic of the readymade, this conjunction produced a counter-functional rupture to production, both of productive labour and artistic labour, to alter the symbolic order of both. In considering the agency of this, I return to the quote of Adorno which resonates throughout this research:

> Only by immersing its autonomy in society's imagerie can art surmount the heteronomous market. Art is modern art through mimesis of the hardened and alienated; only thereby, and not by the refusal of a mute reality, does art become eloquent; this is why art no longer tolerates the innocuous (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 21).

The Criticality of Overidentification

My decision to outsource the residency to Virtual Employee was therefore firstly about identifying my practice with the presence of labour through "a mimesis of the hardened and alienated" (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 21). As discussed in the previous chapters, structural changes in art and labour see the critical distinction of artistic labour collapse. Meanwhile, an analysis of both the process of participation, and the residency itself, clearly sees the presence of labour residing within them. The identification with labour in *Virtual Employee*, however, goes well beyond what was produced in the *Khirkee's Strongest Man and Woman Competitions*, for example, and moves toward a strategy of overidentification. I will now explore overidentification as a methodology which extends the process of avowal discussed in chapter 4. I will then consider how overidentification has been employed in *Virtual Employee* to produce a more pointed critique of art's relationship with labour.

In the documentary *Predictions of Fire* (Benson, 1996), theorist Slavoy Zizek, describes the practice of overidentification as "taking the system more seriously than it takes itself seriously". Overidentifying with the symptom contradicts the logic of critical distance associated with autonomy. Rather than providing a distance from labour, for example, *Virtual Employee* overidentified with a collapse in the critical distinction between artistic labour and wage labour. The work implicated myself, socially-engaged art practices, and the residency model with neo-colonial global labour relations. Rather than the social practitioner as an "ideal trouble shooter" (BAVO, 2007, p. 36), somehow removed from the system themselves, it was about acknowledging a mimesis with the "hardened and alienated" (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 21) that exists within my production process. Through this identification, I produced a specific political context via a proximity that then amplified the potential for a productive contradiction.

In their analysis of overidentification, Dutch research collective BAVO suggest that:

> … in being forced to choose between two evils, one should always choose the worst evil … To choose the worst option, in other words, means no longer trying to make the best of the current order, but precisely to make the worst of it, to turn it into the worst possible version of itself. It would thus entail a refusal of the current blackmail in which artists are offered all kinds of opportunities to make a difference, on the condition that they give up on their desire for radical change (BAVO, 2007, p. 28).

The agency of overidentification is marked here as a form of radical critique, which stands against the pragmatic turn of socially engaged art. It appears aligned to the process of negation described by Boris Groys as wanting:

> … to make things not better but worse - and not relatively worse but radically worse: to make dysfunctional things out of functional things, to betray expectations, to reveal the invisible presence of death where we tend to see only life (Groys, 2014, para. 27).

As a methodology of negation, overidentification arrives when an ideology, or symbolic order, is pushed forward to the point of breakdown. For BAVO, overidentification stands in opposition to an artistic impulse to ameliorate and aligns with Claire Bishop's argument for practices that "reify precisely in order to discuss reification, or which exploit precisely to thematise exploitation itself" (Bishop, 2012, p. 239). Overidentification, therefore, remains a useful term regarding the more pointed form of avowal involved in *Virtual Employee*. It was used in a way to highlight a politics within the means of production for socially-engaged art that, I argue, is usually disavowed. This is the politics of labour. By outsourcing the residency, the separation between the participation of artistic practices and

the participation of productive labour are brought together in contradictory alignment. Overidentification is, thereby, employed to dispel the illusion that socially-engaged art provides a social interstice from capitalist exchange (Martin, 2007b). In *Virtual Employee*, it becomes a way of problematising the notion of autonomy as a "subordination of labour" (Vishmidt, 2016, p. 36) and is used to critique the modes of production within my practice.

Autonomy as Disidentification

The agency of my work, however, cannot be attributed to the process of overidentification alone. Rather, I see overidentification as a radical form of avowal that reveals art's relationship with labour. This then requires a process of disidentification to produce a productive contradiction, or negation. Overidentification, therefore, provides a space and context for autonomy to be reimagined, not through defensive disowning (Fraser, 2012), but via a close and uncomfortable proximity. While I use the process of overidentification in *Virtual Employee* to identify with productive forms of labour through outsourcing, crucially the work also still looks to disidentify with it through its conjunction with the residual autonomy of artistic labour.

In other words, through the contradictions involved in outsourcing an artist residency, I looked to reclaim a space of *autonomy* understood by John Roberts as "withdrawal, non-reconcilability, disaffirmation, distantiation, dissension, subtraction, displacement, denial [securing] a site for reflection; a gap in the non-identitary" (Roberts, 2015, p. 56). Autonomy here is located within a state of proximity, where it can create an experience of being "out of joint" with its place in the world (Roberts, 2015) or as a glitch in the system rather than a "grand gesture of freedom" (Lütticken, 2012).

Thinking about this dialectic further brings me to Rancière's (2002) argument of how the aesthetic regime "ties art to nonart from the start, it sets up that life between two

vanishing points: art becoming mere life or art becoming mere art" (Rancière, 2002a, p. 202). Following this, the decision to outsource became aesthetic by oscillating between the two poles of art as work, on one hand, and art as non-work on the other. It was definitively a site-specific intervention, informed by the context of the site of production, and it also looked to achieve the ambitions of the residency. Virtual Employee received the 1 Mile Squared residency brief which included the tasks of: "Challenging negative perceptions of different cultures and faiths … Building contact, dialogue and trust between communities … Encourage a sense of shared futures and empowerment within communities and across borders". While these ambitions are symptomatic of socially-engaged art's attempts to ameliorate social injustice, *Virtual Employee* looked to achieve all of this in an entrepreneurial way, which adhered to the logic of labour and capital. The works agency comes from this contradiction where, through their conjuncture, the disciplines of business process outsourcing and socially-engaged art production on residency are both engaged in *denaturalised* ways, revealing their functional limits. The function of socially-engaged art was thrown into question through an overidentification with productive labour and the rationality of capital. Meanwhile, the process of outsourcing, normally used for definitive modes of labour such as finance and accounting, was being stretched by the ambiguity, economic exceptionality, and the "irreproducibility" of socially-engaged art (Beech, 2015).

Reflecting on the precise nature of this "irreducibility" brings into focus what Hito Steyerl describes as the economy of presence (Steyerl, 2015). By outsourcing the residency, the work contradicted the expectation for the artist to be present, to perform their presence, or perform their visibility. Like many platforms of artistic production, the residency requires that the artist be physically present, that they are in the residency location doing their thing. Like the new labour of post-Fordism, artistic labour on residency becomes a kind of performance of subjectivity which today often takes precedence over what is physically

produced. Autonomy is therefore enacted in *Virtual Employee* as a refusal, or negotiation of, the expectation for this type of labour - as a kind of refusal of the economy of presence.

Through this analysis of *Virtual Employee*, the critical methodology which is the focus of this research begins to crystallise. This firstly involves an examination of the evolving nature of contemporary labour and contextualising the artists' proximity with that. As described in chapter 2, the new labour of post-Fordism has contributed to the collapse of artistic labour with wage labour (Beech, 2015). Meanwhile, chapter 4 details how production sites and processes, such as the artist residency and participation, also produce a proximity with labour. However, despite these proximities, my opinion is that artistic labour, or aesthetic activity, is still "trapped in a definitively problematic relation to the production of capitalist value" (Brouillette, 2016, p. 171). This problematic relation is not a separation that can be defined through the traditional association of autonomy but one that enters into dialectic relation with the proximity outlined in the previous chapters. In other words, it is not an autonomy that was garnered through the "defensive disowning" that Andrea Fraser stands against (Fraser, 2012) but through a state of avowal (Jackson, 2011) and a recognition that we are, in fact, part of the problem (Lütticken, 2016). What ensues via the magnification of such problematic relations is a series of contradictions that revolve around art as both simultaneously a place of work and non-work. As shown in *Virtual Employee*, these can be productive by revealing the limits of both art and labour. The agency of the work becomes reliant on a careful balance of these two positions, holding them in tension through a process of identification and disidentification with labour.

Outsourcing Subjectivity

The *Virtual Employee* work was brought into the practical part of my research when I wrote a paper about it for the 2017 Art Association of Australia and New Zealand

(AAANZ) conference held in Perth. The panel was *New Directions in Artist Residencies: Transnational Socially Engaged Arts Practice* chaired by Dr Marnie Badham. The paper I wrote, *Outsourcing Transnationalism,* used *Virtual Employee* as an example of both an identification with, and a disidentification of, the residency model's mimesis with contemporary forms of labour. I decided to extend the themes of the paper for the performance titled *Double Agent* (Brazier, 2017b) where I hired TV actor Renato Fabretti to play the part of "David Brazier" for its delivery. Unbeknown to the audience, Renato took my place at the conference, delivering my paper and mingling and networking on my behalf during the conference's social engagements. While his true identity was never formally revealed, those in the audience to whom convenor Marnie Badham exposed Renato's role "were absolutely floored and delighted!"

Figure 8: David Brazier, *Double Agent,* University of Western Australia, Perth 2017 (Renato Fabretti, second from the left, performing as "David Brazier" during question time).

While I felt that *Double Agent* successfully extended the themes of *Virtual Employee,* my decision to hire an actor to play the part of "me" and deliver the paper at AAANZ was not only a conceptual one but one that was born of necessity. During the AAANZ conference, I was away delivering another paper at the *Art and Activism Conference* in Leiden, Holland. Hiring a surrogate was therefore about negotiating my own work circumstance but, in doing so, I contextualised the nomadic contemporary labour patterns outlined in chapter 2. It was a decision that was a pragmatic and functional one as much as it was an artistic one. In other words, like *Virtual Employee,* it could be read as both an artwork and a pragmatic solution to a real problem.

This double ontology within the work becomes important for my reading of the dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy. The negotiation of my work situation brought the performance into a real-life context, or what Stephen Wright would describe a 1:1 scale. In advocating "useful art", Wright uses the term "1:1 scale" in opposition to "art of the twentieth century, [which] like so many post-conceptual practices today … was practiced as both other than, and smaller than, whatever reality it set out to map" (Wright, 2013, p. 3). Like Wright, I see this critique as necessitating what he describes as "full-scale practices, coterminous with whatever they, [the artist,] happen to be grappling" (Wright, 2013, p. 3). Like *Division of Labour Chowk* and *Virtual Employee*, *Double Agent* thematised contemporary labour through direct engagement *with* labour. "1:1 practices are both what they are, and propositions of what they are" (Wright, 2013, p. 3). Rather than merely symbolically representing the conditions of contemporary labour, the performance looked to become them. *Double Agent* was therefore not merely a proposition, nor a symbolic or oral representation of something, rather it began to enact or overidentify with ideas that were conveyed in the paper itself. It pragmatically navigated the fluid and flexible condition of contemporary labour; the *real-life* circumstance of me needing to be in two places at once.

However, returning to Rancière, I will argue that these pragmatics were performed in an aesthetic way in that "it sets up that life between two vanishing points: art becoming mere life or art becoming mere art" (Rancière, 2002a, p. 202) and in doing so "thrives on that ambiguity" (Rancière, 2002a, p. 151). The contradiction that this establishes produces agency through the undecidability of the political positions between artistic labour and non-artistic labour.

Labour as Performance

In considering this, I will explore how the AAANZ Conference presentation enacted the research methodology by identifying with, and disidentifying with, specific socioeconomic labour relations. I will firstly explore the socioeconomic relations manifest in the condition of "general performance" which *Double Agent* looked to reproduce.

In her influential analysis of site specificity, Miwon Kwon describes how so ingrained are the fluid and flexible characteristic of labour that: "Our very sense of self-worth seems predicated more and more on our suffering through the inconveniences and psychic destabilizations of ungrounded transience, of not being at home (or not having a home), of always traveling through elsewheres" (Kwon, 2002, p. 156). We are increasingly rewarded for enduring a sense of placelessness or, as Kwon describes, "we give into a logic of nomadism" (Kwon, 2002, p. 156). This could not be more apparent for the artist in residence but also for any number of cultural and academic practitioners who for, as Kwon suggests in jest, "success and viability … are now measured by the accumulation of frequent flyer miles" (Kwon, 2002, p. 156).

Such an unhinging of self from site was played out when I hired Renato to play the part of me at the paper at the conference. Kwon notes in contemporary times: "the distinction between home and elsewhere, between 'right' and 'wrong' places, seems less and less

relevant in the constitution of the self" (Kwon, 2002, p. 157). The performance takes this to its logical conclusion where the constitution of the self is liberated from a sense of locational specificity, and even liberated from the presence of one's own body. Through Renato, I was able to be present on the other side of the world via a surrogate, bringing about an abstraction of subjectivity that the performance looked to manifest.

Coming into focus from this is the way in which subjectivities are subsumed and made productive forces in contemporary capitalism. I was not employing Renato to merely read out a paper, I was employing him to be me. In doing this, I was subsuming his personality attributes: his confidence, charisma, communication skills, creativity, and so on. For anyone present at the conference who didn't know me, these qualities of Renato in fact belonged to me. Because for the people at the conference, he *was* me. Such attributes once stood outside the realm of capitalisation but are now highly commodifiable in their own right. As Isabelle Graw notes within the conditions of neoliberalism, there is very little of the worker the market doesn't use for the extraction of profit (Graw, 2010). In Renato's performance, this abstraction of the worker was played out where his entire being was seamlessly "performed" as someone else.

This commodification of subjectivity brings about the quality of "general performance" that Sven Lütticken describes as "at the heart of the new labour of post-Fordism … marked by the inability to distinguish between labour and leisure, between work and occupation, between working hours and free time, between performance and life – and ultimately between objective economical pressures and subjectivities that are constantly updated, upgraded, remodelled" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 9). Not just an accomplished actor, Renato is also a safety presenter, casting director, manager of an outdoor cinema, and event promoter. Highly performative, adaptable, and flexible, Renato resonated this condition of general performance, qualities found in "[a]rtists, (new) media workers and other cultural

labourers" that today make them the "model entrepreneurs" (Gill & Pratt, 2008). Renato was able to use the affective qualities of his personality as a productive force; they are his commodity. His personality is effectively what he sells.

I am drawn here to Hito Steyerl when she refers to these conditions of general performance as an "occupation". "Networking, endless meetings and greetings, all-out affective and performative labour: all of these have entered the repertoire of the former work force" (Steyerl, 2011, p. 4). For Steyerl: "The struggles around autonomy and above all Capital's response to them are thus deeply ingrained into the transition from work to occupation" (Steyerl, 2011, p. 5). In other words, a reimagination of autonomy needs to emerge from this condition of general performance that defines the conditions of labour today:

> To unfreeze the forces that lie dormant in the petrified spaces of occupation means to rearticulate its uses, to make it non-efficient, non-instrumental, non-intentional, to disable its utility, capacity of being efficient, utilitarian and a tool for social coercion. In short: it means to reclaim its autonomy along the lines of what used to be thought of as artistic autonomy (Steyerl, 2011, p. 6).

Steyerl articulates what has emerged as pivotal to this research - a necessity that autonomy is repositioned *within* the contemporary conditions of labour and its agency coming from a capacity to negate those conditions. By hiring Renato to be "David Brazier", I was identifying with the conditions that increasingly expose our subjectivities to market forces. However, I was looking for these conditions to be enacted in denaturalised, "*a*disciplinary [*sic*]" (Roberts, 2015) ways, to disidentify with them, so that their conditions are seen as new. In other words, the heteronomous conditions of labour were applied in a way, and to a context, where those conditions are stretched and made strange. For example,

the function of the conference, like the artist residency, required the presence of the academic. It is reliant on the economy of presence (Steyerl, 2015). It is an opportunity to mingle and stamp your brand on your research in a curious mix of work and leisure time. Conferences present an archetypal form of performative labour. While *Double Agent* overidentified with the "wrong place" and "logic of nomadism" (Kwon, 2002, p. 156) as a condition of contemporary labour, it disidentified with the function of the conference and the artist/academic, reliant on an economy of presence. Critique here relies on an interplay between proximity and distance, mimesis and opposition, autonomy and heteronomy, artistic labour and productive labour. Following Rancière (2002), through these convergences and contradictions, the normal perception of their protocols become "redistributed" and seen from a different perspective.

As alluded to by Steyerl, rearticulating "use" could give rise to reimagining, or "reclaiming", the concept of autonomy (Steyerl, 2011). John Roberts describes such a process as producing the condition of "being 'out of joint' … with its place in the world" (Roberts, 2015, p. 56). Like *Division of Labour Chowk* and *Virtual Employee*, the heteronomous conditions of labour were brought into focus, only to have them engaged in denaturalised ways through their convergence with artistic labour. For Rancière, this convergence "between two vanishing points" provides the condition of the aesthetic. The contradiction or dissensus that ensues creates a rupture to the perception of existing order (Rancière, 2002a, p. 150) thereby "breaking up the limited perspective which the isolating capitalist organisation of work imposes on us" (Kolinko, 2004, p. 459).

An Identification and Disidentification with Labour as Performance

In concluding the analysis of *Double Agent,* I would like to consider the performances of Andrea Fraser whose theory and practice have been particularly relevant for my research through their manifestation of a critical autonomy. Andrea Fraser's performances such as *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* (Fraser, 1989) and *Official Welcome* (Fraser, 2001/2013) intervenes in the "structure" of a public presentation within an institutional context as *Double Agent* does. Of particular relevance is *Museum Highlights*: *A Gallery Talk (1989),* where Fraser adopts the persona "Jane Castledon" as a site of identification. Jane Castledon occupies the position of a museum docent - someone who works, usually on a voluntary basis, as a museum guide. Attracted to the promise of social capital, the labour practice of the docent is situated in the performance as a mix between work, leisure, and social standing. Fraser (1989) uses the character to overidentify with institutional hierarchies and power relations in which Fraser herself is imbedded. Sven Lütticken describes the performance as:

> … anchored … within a wider performative economy, using it to reflect and intervene in it … This is autonomy not as the grand gesture of freedom, but autonomy as *work on and with constraints*. It situates the dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy within the practitioner. He/she is part of the problem, which is in fact the condition for his/her agency. This is neither the plot of 'life of art' nor that of 'art becoming life'; rather, it is an aesthetic problematization of artistic autonomy (Lütticken, 2014, p. 6).

Lütticken goes on: "Critical autonomy is a matter of constant negotiation, of reflecting on one's practice and its conditions in the full knowledge that power is not located elsewhere, but in the social relations one enters" (Lütticken, 2010, p. 35).

Double Agent looked to achieve similar affects which Lütticken describes as "an enacted autonomy in the age of labour-as-performance [that] foregrounds the pressure of self-performance" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 6). The AAANZ performance overidentified with the pressure of self-performance to such an extent that a professional was hired to do the performing on my behalf. Renato *self-performed* as my surrogate and therefore opened up a mix of identification and disidentification with "labour-as-performance". In overidentifying with the pressure to self-perform, I ended up refusing, or disidentifying with, that expectation through my absence.

Reflecting on *Double Agent*, however, I am amazed at how successful it was in terms of Renato producing a seamless performance as "David Brazier". Such was the quality of his acting, someone in the audience who had met me, but hadn't seen me in a couple of years, did not notice a discrepancy. Catherine Wilkinson remarked having a strange feeling that "something was not right" but had no idea that Renato was in fact not me. During question time, he eloquently elaborated on *Virtual Employee* and confidently contributed to the themes of the session. "Question time was my time" he divulged, "I've had numerous discussions with curious parties since speaking who of course believe me to be you". Halfway through the conference I received the message: "I think this will be a 5-year residency. Me living as you I mean. I quite like it!"

However, could the success of *Double Agent* limit the potential for negation? In other words, while the performance successfully identified with the condition of general performance, did it do enough to rupture this condition, or were these conditions inadvertently affirmed? While the work produced an abstraction of subjectivity that coincides with the way we work today, did it risk producing an exemplary example of this functioning in all its glory?

The agency of Fraser's performances rely on "discursive fluctuations, transdisciplinary confusions, role reversals, modulations of affect, self-reflexivity, the gratuitous rendering of normally unstated and unconscious motives, and a sometimes casual, sometimes aggressive, attitude toward her audience" (Léger, 2012, p. 34). For Fraser, working through social structures in a critical way is to transform "what is hierarchical in that structure and the forms of power and domination, symbolic and material violence, produced by these hierarchies" (Fraser, 2006, p. 306). While Fraser overidentifies with dubious socio-cultural positions specific to the museum, she simultaneous undermines them through a series of slippages that reveal these positions obscene and ridiculous. Such a transformation, I argue, requires a definitive point of negation described by Hito Steyerl as reclaiming "autonomy along the lines of what used to be thought of as artistic autonomy", to operate within that structure and "rearticulate its uses, to make it non-efficient, non-instrumental, non-intentional, to disable its utility, capacity of being efficient, utilitarian and a tool for social coercion" (Steyerl, 2011, p. 6).

I was half expecting *Double Agent* to breakdown at some point and similar slippages to occur in the process. Perhaps it did during the post-conference drinks gathering where session convenor Marnie Badham suggested to a "hyped-up" Renato to "tone it down a little" to remain in keeping with character. Allowing Renato to roam free as "me" at the conference could have easily turned into career suicide; however, all reports point towards Renato doing an amazing job. In fact, I have little doubt that in terms of general performance, or "labour-as-performance", he did far better than I could have ever done.

In reconsidering the agency of negation in this context, I turn to a question asked by critic and cultural theorist, Jan Verwoert:

> What would it mean to put up resistance against a social order in which performativity has become a growing demand, if not the norm? What would it mean to resist the need to perform? Is 'resistance' even a concept that would be useful to evoke in this context?' (Verwoert, 2008, para. 2)

In reflecting on this, perhaps the agency of *Double Agent* came more subtly and, for the most part unnoticed through the act of resistance. While the work overidentified with the pressure to self-perform, at the same time it rejected it through my absence. It negated the economy of presence. In this way, it functioned in a similar manner to *Virtual Employee* where I simultaneously produced a site-specific intervention and fulfilled a strict artist brief, but in doing so entirely refused performing to these parameters. This undecidability as to how the works operates produces a mix of affirmation and negation, distance and proximity, pragmatism and critique, autonomy and heteronomy. The contradictions the performances produced is what might facilitate "a questioning of how the world is organised, and therefore the possibility of changing or redistributing that same world" (Bishop, 2012, p. 27).

In concluding this chapter, what *Double Agent* revealed, therefore, is how autonomy can be positioned in proximity, where negation acts on a 1:1 scale. But it also brings into focus the question of how that negation exists as a series of contradictions, where the artistic appropriation of the condition of self-performance saw this form of labour rearticulated. The conjunction of artistic labour and non-artistic labour here produce a contradiction to functionality that could be understood as a reimagination of autonomy dialectically. In the following chapter, I will further explore this contradiction to functionality through the final performance of my research.

CHAPTER 6:
GOING PUBLIC

The analysis of the works discussed in the previous chapter clarifies the methodology of my practice which involves an identification and disidentification with labour. What becomes apparent is that non-artistic labour and artistic labour need to meet in careful contradiction to produce a rupture to their symbolic and functional order. Rancière (2009) would term this contradiction as "dissensus", a requirement for the occurrence of politics within aesthetic experience. Through the examination of my final performance, I explore how far this contradiction between artistic labour and non-artistic labour could be pushed and the consequences of doing so. In many respects, this final performance could be considered a failure. In this chapter, I consider the nature of this failure as an unexpected articulation of the research methodology, where the contradiction between artistic labour and non-artistic labour produce a functional breakdown.

At the end of 2018, an opportunity came to present a paper as part of the AAANZ Conference, *Aesthetics, Politics and Histories: The Social Context of Art*, held at RMIT in Melbourne. Conferences are a platform for artistic labour that I have become increasingly interested to engage in as my research has evolved. As alluded to in the previous chapter, they represent for me an example of performative labour involving networking, meetings and greetings, the collapse of work and leisure, and the commodification of subjectivity. The conference is also relevant as a platform that would become more prevalent for me in the future as a mode of dissemination. Treating them as a site for production also allows for a seamless intersection between theory and practice.

The theme of the 2018 AAANZ Conference focused on the relationship between the arts and social life. The session that interested me was *Artistic labour under Post-Fordism* convened by Benison Kilby which looked for papers to explore how "artistic labour has changed under post-Fordism and whether it should still be considered distinct from other forms of labour". As discussed in the previous chapters, under the conditions of post-Fordism, artistic labour has been described as an occupational role model (Holmes, 2002a; Steyerl, 2011), providing the blueprint for new forms of management (Hardt & Negri, 2001). This context is aligned with my research which considers the implications of this lack of distinction and how agency can be acquired through the negotiation of its collapse. Or in other words, I have asked how I can identify and disidentify with a proximity to labour through a dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy to produce a productive contradiction between the two.

As the research evolved, it became clear that the production, reception, and distribution of art is itself heavily politicised via its proximity to the workings of labour and capital. There now appears to be no autonomous space of resistance inherent within artistic labour. As an artist dealing with this context, I saw the conference as an opportunity to not just talk about it through the delivery of a paper but to create a situation where these concerns were enacted. This process of "enacting" draws from the methodology of past works. Rather than seeking a position of critical distance, or representing politics as happening somewhere else, my methodology involved avowing and overidentifying with the conditions of labour that occur within my means of production. These concerns are therefore reproduced on a "1:1 scale" rather than through the symbolic representation associated with art as a separate field from life (Wright, 2013). The critical efficacy of creating such proximity is what this research has explored. I saw this conference presentation as an opportunity to enact a collapse of

autonomy of artistic labour into the heteronomy of economic rationality that my research reveals surreptitiously accompanies the merger of art into life (Martin, 2007b).

My idea for the session culminated in the work *Going Public* (Brazier, 2018), which used the conference to present a sales pitch to sell 49% of my social practice. The pitch involved selling 49 shares in my practice valued at $100 each which would be owned by investors for a 2-year period. I made a share certificate (Appendix A) and prospectus (Appendix B) detailing the opportunity which involved investors being credited with the practice's achievements. I also set up a board which was comprised of myself and my PhD supervisors. Monthly meetings were to be held as they normally are within PhD research, but the minutes of those meeting were then to be sent to investors who were then invited to participate in the decision-making process. In this respect, I was interested in creating a collision between a corporate framework and a socially-engaged process of participation. Drawing from the analysis of previous works, I was looking to produce a contradiction between these two forms, negating them to prompt a critical reflection of both.

On the one hand, in a world where everything has been reduced to the logic of exchange, selling 49% of my practice seemed a sensible thing to do. It made sense in accordance with an instrumental rationality and overidentification with the demise of art's autonomy. If art no longer occupies a space of critical distance, then selling my practice would take this lack of autonomy to its logical conclusion. Selling my practice asks the question raised by BAVO: why "should [art] be an exception when it comes to manipulating the laws of supply and demand for self-enrichment [?] ... Or, put differently, why art cannot be as ruthlessly self-interested or nakedly capitalist as everybody else?" (BAVO, 2007).

On the other hand, if claims for art's autonomy remain, then selling 49% of my practice would create a sense of contradiction to the logic of art's economic exceptionalism

(Beech, 2015). While aligning art with the corporate rationality of a share market would suggest that there is absolutely nothing that separates art production from capitalist production, the incompatibility and absurdity of this juncture would suggest otherwise to produce a contradiction at the heart of my research.

Through an identification and disidentification between artistic labour and productive labour, I wanted the proposition to oscillate from the serious to the absurd, functional to dysfunctional, productive to counterproductive. I wanted to occupy the space of artist as a model entrepreneur, but at the same time I wanted to negate that position and disidentify with it, revealing this juncture between artist as an entrepreneur structurally incompatible.

Christoph Büchel is an artist who occupied similar territory in his work *Invite Yourself (Büchel, 2002),* where he sold his participation rights to Manifesta 4 on eBay to New York artist Sal Randolph for $15099US. While Büchel took home a sizable pay cheque, there was a sense that his entrepreneurial stance contradicted the systemic expectation of the artworld. So, while I was fully prepared for *Going Public* to be a success (even to the point of having share certificates and accepting PayPass), because of art's systemic expectations I was also predicting it to be a failure. If art still holds claim for exceptionality, at some point it would need to fail.

In keeping with my research methodology, I therefore saw the agency of the work laying in this point of contradiction or incompatibility. On one hand, the work expanded into the heteronomous conditions of finance capital and general performance that sees the commodification of creativity and subjectivities. However, it leverages the residual autonomy of an art practice to potentially disable the utility of these conditions, to facilitate a functional breakdown, to reclaim a space of "autonomy along the lines of what used to be thought of as artistic autonomy" (Steyerl, 2011, p. 6).

I wrote a paper about the sale of my practice and decided to hire a corporate actor, Raj Sidhu, to deliver it in the form of a sales pitch. While this action brings into focus the relationship between participation and outsourced labour described in chapter 4, I specifically chose a corporate actor because they embody the notion of labour as performance. The corporate actor's performative skills have been instrumentalised to function in the corporate world, harnessed as a productive tool. They provide an example of how the qualities of artistic labour have become the sought-after attributes of the contemporary workforce. In this sense, it embodies a contradiction relevant to my research methodology. Raj strongly related to the themes of the paper and was prepared to relate his own experiences during question time providing a real-life example on a 1:1 scale.

Figure 9: David Brazier, *Going Public* (Raj Sidhu performing) AAANZ Conference, RMIT, Melbourne, 2018.

I decided to include transcripts from the paper itself which was written in a way that looked to rationalise the sale of my practice within the context of this research. The paper ties many of the research strands together and includes sections from the past chapters of this thesis. While there are too many slides to feature here, I have included some of the more

relevant images to give an indication of the vernacular of Raj's presentation. I have also included the prospectus and share certificate as part of the practical component of the research:

The *Going Public* Transcript

In the context of this conference, the phrase "going public" brings to mind the practice of art in the public sphere. It suggests a participatory or social practice that engages the public as its modus operandi. It implies an interaction with non-arts-based audiences and issues outside the domain of the artworld. It could likewise conjure up the merger of art and life and forms of artistic production which tackle social issues on a 1:1 scale. When art goes public, it begins to interact with the world around it; not through symbolic representation, but through a direct engagement within society. There is an emancipatory zeal to this notion of going public that at once removes art from its former autonomous framework and allows it to have traction in the real world.

In the world of commerce, however, "going public" means something entirely different. In this context, the term "going public" refers to a private company's "initial public offering", or IPO. It is where a company will make its stock available to the public for the first time, thus becoming a publicly traded and owned entity. This type of going public is used to raise capital for a business's expansion or is practised by venture capitalists as an exit strategy or a way to cash in their investment. It would seem that this type of going public is directly opposed with the rhetoric of "going public" in an artistic context.

Where the going public of commerce engages its citizen in adherence to a strict economic rationality, the going public of socially-engaged art looks, to quote Claire Bishop, to rehumanise "a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalist production" (Bishop, 2012, p. 11).

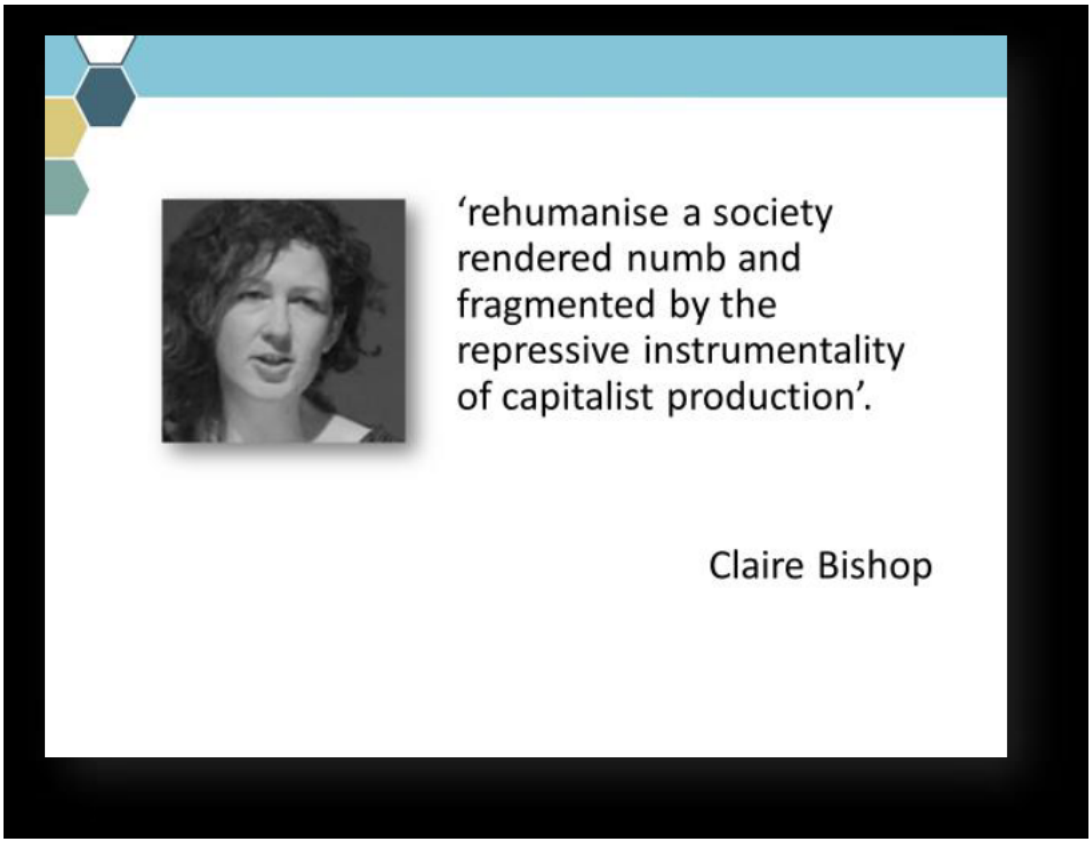

Figure 10: David Brazier, *Going Public* (PowerPoint slide) AAANZ Conference, RMIT, Melbourne, 2018.

While the ideologies of these two forms of going public contradict each other, today I will look to bring them together albeit in uneven alignment.

My name is Raj Sidhu and I am here today representing my client, David Brazier, to sell 49% share of his social practice … I am here to facilitate his practice going public.

In this “initial public offering”, for as little as $100 you could receive a 1% share of David’s social practice. You will effectively become a shareholder which will give you ownership of a portion of the practice for a 2-year period. You will have the right to transfer ownership at any time and you will be paid in dividends through the symbolic capital his practice generates. By that I mean your name will be included in all publications, reviews, artist statements etc that feature David’s practice in that 2-year period. If David produces a work for a Biennale, for example, you will be accredited a percentage of that work. You will feature in all the works publications such as, but not limited to, the biennale catalogue, reviews, web journals, and so on. Likewise, if David presents at a conference such as the AAANZ, you will be accredited a percentage of that presentation.

…

The details of the investment have been carefully articulated in the practice’s prospectus which includes a letter form the director, an investment overview, industry background, and information on the board. Upon purchasing a share of the practice, you will receive a certificate and contract that stipulates the terms and conditions of the investment. These are also yours to keep forever as record of your transaction.

…

So, let’s get down to business. To briefly introduce David’s practice, he works as a socially-engaged artist. Rather than the production of objects, he has a practice that is dematerialised and performative, focusing on the production of experiences and facilitating public participation. … He is currently a PhD

candidate and Australian Postgraduate Award recipient at Curtin University where he is researching a critical labour practice for the socially-engaged artist. David is due to finish his PhD in 2019 and investment in his practice will facilitate his research into the field of critical labour practices for the social practitioner. This research will see the competition of his PhD and fuel his labour practice for many years to come. An investment in David now will likely see his stocks rise post-graduation plus investors will receive acknowledgement within David's exegesis itself.

…

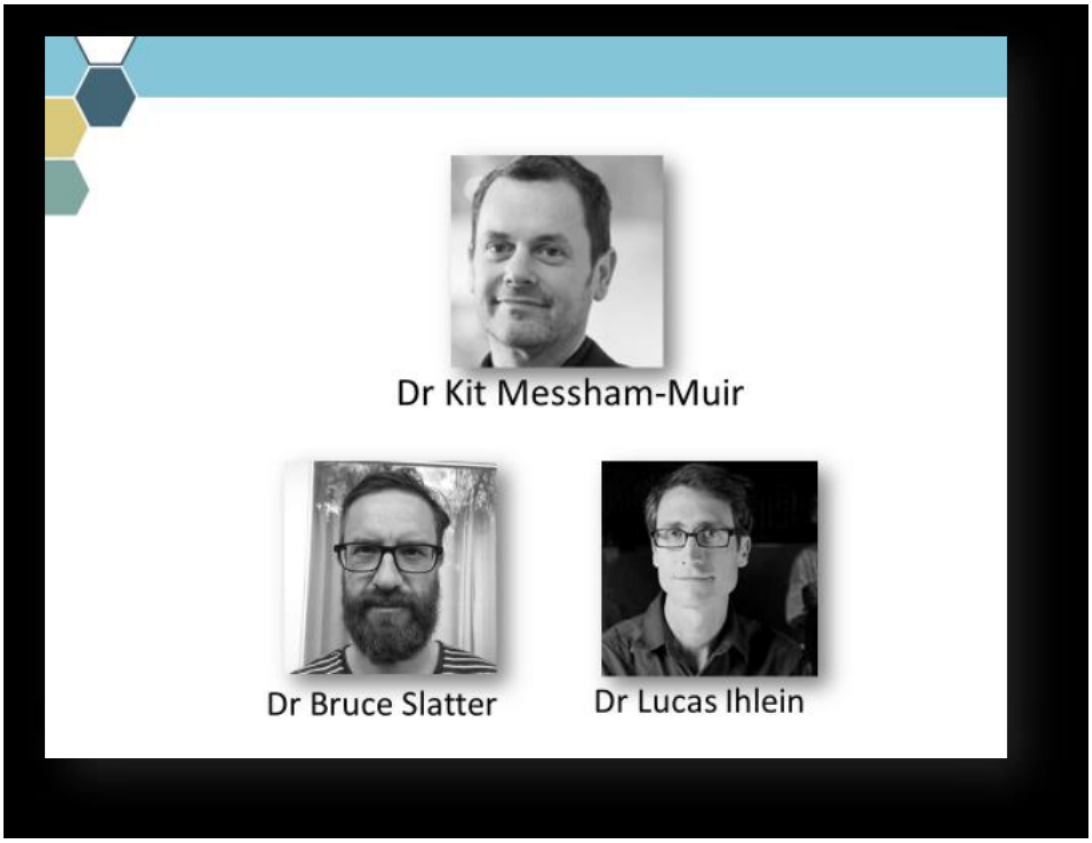

Figure 11: David Brazier, *Going Public* (PowerPoint slide) AAANZ Conference, RMIT, Melbourne, 2018.

Sitting on the board of David's practice are his PhD supervisors, Dr Kit Messham-Muir, Dr Bruce Slatter, and Dr Lucas Ihlein. Board meetings are held on a monthly basis with minutes provided for shareholders in the form of a quarterly newsletter. Shareholders, of course, have the option to provide input and influence the trajectory of David's practice. As with any public acquisition, it is important that shareholders feel their investment is heading in the best possible direction.

I'm sure many of you are asking where the value of this investment lies. If David's practice is socially engaged, only producing social relations, where is the saleable commodity to generate return? Perhaps the best way of addressing this question is to critically reflect on what this proposition means, what the sale of 49% of his practice actually signifies. If David's practice has now become the selling of his practice, it would seem the best way to sell it is to critically reflect on its sale. As we all know, criticality is nothing today, if not a consumer pleasure. And while I almost feel guilty about selling his practice at such a reasonable price, there is nothing quite like aligning oneself with a critical social practice to clear one's conscience.

In many ways, the sale of 49% of David's practice is symptomatic of broader evolution in the way we labour today which has in turn implicated the way the artist labours. Nato Thompson describes in his influential text, "Seeing Power", that the ultimate commodity today has become ourselves. When we labour today, what we are effectively selling…is "us" (Thompson, 2015).

In selling his practice, David is reflecting on the nature of artistic labour, and labour per se, in a post-Fordist economy where we talk about "work" using

terms such as “creative labour, network labour, cognitive labour, affective labour and immaterial labour” (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 26). These types of labour make productive our personal attributes; they mine our subjectivities. In defining immaterial labour, Maurizio Lazzarato describes how: “The worker's personality and subjectivity have to be made susceptible to organization and command … What modern management techniques are looking for is ‘the worker's soul to become part of the factory’” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 2)

In the context of deindustrialisation, certainly in the West, work is now more in line with the production of services and experiences than that of commodities. It has now primarily become about putting in a perfect performance. Work now makes productive personal attributes such as communication skills, flexibility, creativity, innovation, autonomy, charisma, and so on.

The crucial point in the context of selling David’s practice is when work is based on our affective qualities, the whole person becomes labour power, and working time becomes living time. As Isabel Graw notes, the market “reaches into areas that were formerly considered ‘private’ and sheltered from its evaluative logic, such as the body, health, social relationships, one’s look, one’s friendships” (Graw, 2010, p. 103). Today, there is very little of the worker the market doesn’t use for the extraction of profit. The condition of work has therefore become totalising with work collapsing into non-work, into leisure, and effectively collapsing into life.

The implications of this for the criticality of the artist are profound. If immaterial labour sees the collapse in the distinction between work and life,

this happened at the same time as we saw the increased collapse in the distinction between art and life. Artistic labour once leveraged its critical agency from its autonomy; its separation from an economic rationality. However, the proliferation of the culture industry and the commodification of "flexibility, creativity, networking and conviviality" have collapsed the "critical difference between artistic labour and wage-labour" (Beech, 2010, p. 34).

As Liam Gillick laments: "Artists are people who behave, communicate and innovate in the same manner as those who spend their days trying to capitalize every moment and exchange of daily life. They offer no alternative to this" (Gillick, 2010, para. 2).

…

Indeed, the creativity and innovation of the artist are now the commodifiable attributes of enterprise culture. Their nomadic and flexible labour patterns "free" from the encumbrances of full-time employment, their propensity to work for very little or no remuneration, their self-reliance, their insecure career trajectory, their ability to scrap, to self-promote, to network, and make productive social capital and formerly non-productive moments. These labour characteristics of the artist are now the sought-after attributes for the neo-liberal worker. Always creative, always alert, working like an artist is what is required to prosper in our current deregulated state of crisis.

Far from the critical distance formerly associated with artistic labour, autonomy now stands for a mode of governance and control. To be autonomous like an artist now effectively equates to being self-sufficient, self-

determined, and self-reliant. The autonomous individual is the ideal neoliberal citizen, independent and able to live their lives via the logic of the market. To be free like an artist now neatly translates to embracing deregulation. Freedom stands less for an artistic call to arms but the rationale for dismantling social welfare. To be "free" is to be separated from anything that might restrict the creation of profits such as environmental protection or workers' rights.

The question raised today is: if art and life have in fact merged, "have they merged not at a moment of triumphant communal utopia" (Sholette, 2015) but as a "deregulated nightmare" (Byrne, 2016b) that sees the construction of the artist as a model entrepreneur (Gill & Pratt, 2008)?

David's practice is a reflection on this question. In the past, this has seen him outsource his New Delhi residency to a virtual employment company where virtual employee Ashish Sharma worked for a month as an international artist in residence. In a follow-up performance, David wrote a paper about that residency for last year's AAANZ conference for which, unbeknown to the audience, its delivery was given over to actor Renato Fabretti who played the part of David for its presentation and beyond. Today, a reflection on this question sees him hiring me, a corporate actor, to sell 49% of his practice for the very reasonable introductory AAANZ price of $85 for each 1% share.

David's research asks how a social practitioner can critically navigate their labour practice alongside its co-option with novel forms of surplus-value production. His practice looks to re-examine the status of artistic labour within the cultural turn of our world economy. It queries what it means to labour as a socially-engaged artist when social relations and networks are now

commodified to their core where, as Isabell Lorey makes clear, "Subjects and their capacities to socially interact become both the resource and product of the new paradigm of political economy" (Lorey, 2016, p. 40).

In Going Public, art practices not only liberate art from its restrictive and insular definitions, but they put art in close proximity to the very forces that critical art has traditionally taken the role of delegitimising. To quote Stewart Martin, "the dissolution of art into life is not simply emancipatory but a dissolution of art into capitalist life" (Martin, 2007b, p. 373). When I facilitate David's practice "Going Public" today, when I sell shares in his practice, I am asking you to participate in a critical reflection of what the implications of a going public now means.

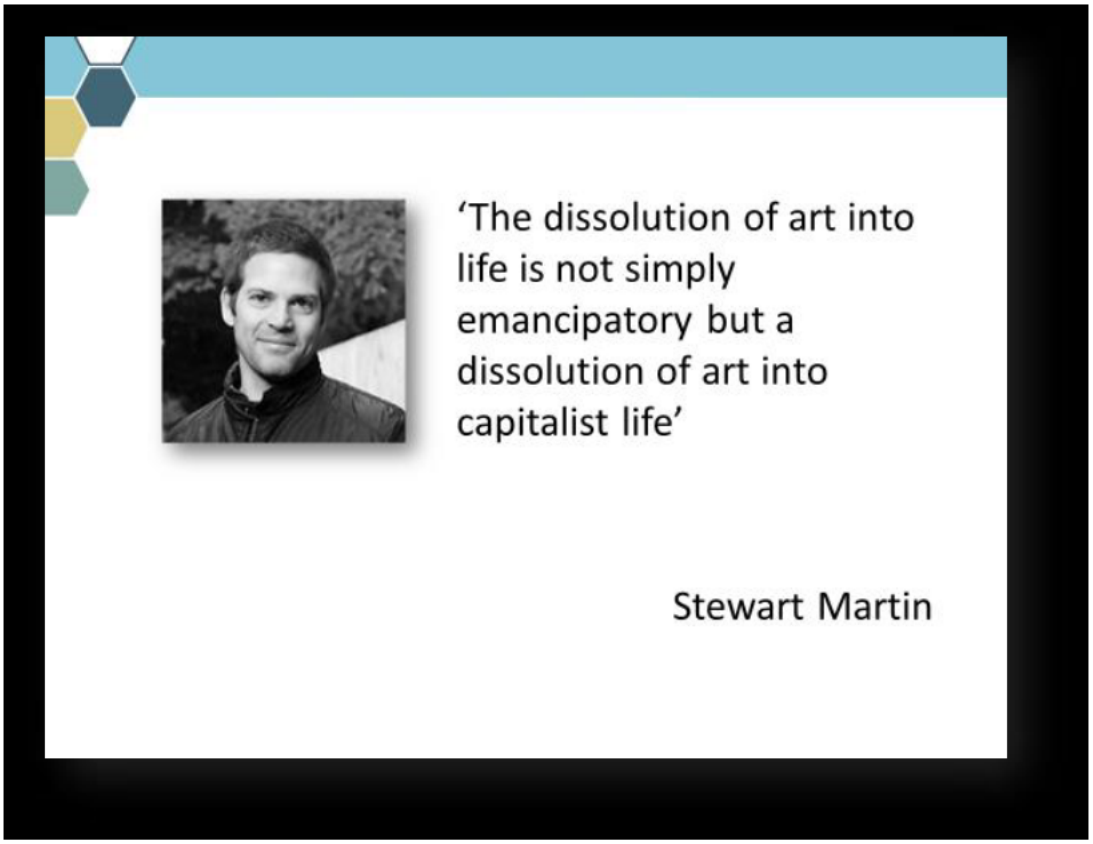

Figure 12: David Brazier, *'Going Public'* PowerPoint slide, AAANZ Conference, RMIT, Melbourne, 2018.

> Before I ask for any questions, let me remind you that in being here today you have already committed to an investment in a critical cultural discourse. Why not take that one step further and participate in critical cultural practice? Please take the time to read this prospectus and let me encourage you to organise a meeting and secure your participation in this exciting socially-engaged proposition. David accepts "PayPass" so you could receive your very own share of the practice without delay.

An Analysis of Autonomy as Failure

While Raj produced a dynamic performance, unfortunately the presentation failed to attract investors. On one hand, I was expecting this outcome. The performance looked to negate itself from the outset, to negate a certain rationality. Why would you invest in a social practice, after all? On many levels, it remains an absurd proposition no matter how well it is contextualised. Nevertheless, I still felt a little disappointed that the project did not have the life it could have had. I thought it could have been a critical way for participatory practice to be made. I was excited by what investors might do with my practice and felt it raised questions of artist remuneration that tied in with my research into the proximity art has with today's precarious labour relations. I had a vision that the structure and rationality of corporate investment could be employed to create a range of projects that themselves were counter to that very rationality. In other words, it could have been a way to insert autonomy

into heteronomy and thereby contradict the rationality that dominates our lives and ways of being.

I was also interested in what the implications would be for my output; how investment could provide new themes and shape surprising directions. Allowing participants to influence the practice's trajectory aligns it with an emancipatory critique of authorship. However, these emancipatory claims are thrown into question by the corporate logic from which the participation is founded. In the work, participation becomes directly related to the commodification of networks within late capitalism which is this type of contradiction I was looking to produce through my research.

There are several reasons I could come up with for the lack of investment. There was a sense that the work was perhaps more cynical than it was serious, that it wasn't a sincere attempt to generate participation in my practice. There were humorous elements in the paper and Raj's delivery that might have confused the work intentions, making more of a parody than an actual proposition. If the work looked to tread that line between the serious and the absurd, perhaps it lent too far toward the latter. Raj also left the session early to catch a flight, giving the audience no access to invest in the work even if they had wanted to. The prospectus was never distributed, and the audience were not given an adequate sense of the work's desire to function beyond the presentation. In hindsight, the work may have required a stronger presence throughout the conference, or at least beyond Raj's performance.

While Raj gave his all, he also came up against a guerrilla performance that involved two performers entering the conference space to slowly walk in front of the projection and through the audience. It was a major disruption Raj never really recovered from, losing track of the PowerPoint projection in relation to the talk, which remained two or three images out

of sync for the rest of the presentation. I remember thinking at the time that the performance was seriously compromised and that a lot of hard work gone to waste.

However, it is worth reflecting on this disruption to examine how it relates to fundamental conclusions of this research. The guerrilla performance titled *colonise/decolonise* (Clarke, Evans, & LeFère, 2018) was comprised of two women, Maree Clarke and Megan Evans, silently walking in through conference presentations in a collaborative work with wãni LeFère. The performers interrupted nearly every session I attended at the conference. On each occasion, Evans, a white woman holding a hand mirror and dressed in Victorian Gothic mourning attire, takes on the role of coloniser leading Clarke, a 'Mutti Mutti, Yorta Yorta, BoonWurrung' woman holding a cluster of bones, who represented the colonised. The performance looked to "confront the impact of colonisation [and] asks the audience to locate themselves in the ongoing violence of the colonial mind" (AAANZ, 2018). Beyond the symbolism of the performer's costumes was the act of colonising the structure of the conference itself, forcing presenters and audience to deal with their uninvited intrusion. In an art context, however, this type of intervention is not unusual. Blogger Audrey Schmidt noted that for the most part "the performance didn't 'disrupt' the sessions, barely soliciting a break in presenter flow, but did provide a welcome, fairly unobtrusive spectacle that allowed me the opportunity for small attention-focussing breaks - actually renewing my interest in sitting in a lecture theatre for three days straight" (Schmidt, 2018, para. 9).

Interventions like this feel like a standard procedure for art audiences. They risk producing a familiar set of signifiers for a well-trained audience that might nullify a capacity for agency. For Raj, however, who works in the corporate world, it produced a powerful rupture to "business as usual". After his presentation, a flustered Raj recounted how he didn't know to react, whether to continue, or cease until the performers had vacated. His smooth,

confident, professional demeanour came up against something in the corporate work he was completely unaccustomed: the work of an artist, or specifically for my research, artistic labour. The themes of *colonise/decolonise* were extended by this recontextualisation as the two performances collided in opposition. Raj was overidentifying with the colonisation of art by capital, while *colonise/decolonise* "responds to the impact of … [colonial] violence through the traditional practices of mourning" (AAANZ, 2018). Together they formed a bizarre intersection of colonial signifiers. As a man of Indian decent with the name "Raj", Raj himself produced his own colonial connotations. Hiring Raj to deliver the paper extended this, and the content of the paper which involved our increased subjugation to capital took the theme of colonisation another step further. While *Going Public* identified with these neo-colonial formations of labour and capital, *colonise/decolonise* almost appeared to annul them. Raj's inability to manage the intrusion produced a proper glitch in the system that my research has been looking to locate, giving *colonise/decolonise* a different meaning from their forays into other conference presentations.

While at the time I was a little annoyed that *colonise/decolonise* had derailed Raj's performance, in hindsight the methodology of my research was played out in an unexpected way. The corporate actor, as an embodiment of "labour as performance", came up against artistic labour in the form of Evans and Clarke's artistic intervention. While I was expecting a contradiction to occur in the work between my artistic practice and the attempt to float it as a public company, the unexpected interruption of *colonise/decolonise* saw it occur at the point of Raj's performance itself. The insertion of a corporate logic into an art conference saw that logic begin to unravel and fall apart in unexpected ways. I will address the precise nature of this failing further in the conclusion of this thesis, paying close attention to it in relation to the colonial signifiers discussed above.

Figure 13: David Brazier, *'Going Public' and 'colonise/decolonise',* AAANZ Conference, RMIT, Melbourne.

What becomes clear is that the work's failure to attract investors does not necessarily make it a complete failure. I would like to consider this through the nature and function of autonomy and the agency of placing these two conflicted forms of labour together. If autonomy enacts a condition of negation, if it produces counter functional and counter normative action, or a glitch in the system (Lütticken, 2016), then perhaps this can be considered in relation to works' inability to function in alignment with a corporate investment. Failure was the necessary ingredient to negate to the forces that selling 49% of my practice would have complied with. Its inability to function established a limit between the exceptionality of artistic production and the heteronomy of a capitalist means of production where, rather than collapsing into each other, they remained incompatible.

I am drawn here to the ideas of Paul Chan, who is an artist for whom autonomy has played a crucial role in his thought and practice:

> This is what art is like. Art appears when what is made feels as if there is a profound misunderstanding at the heart of what it is, as if it were made with the wrong use in mind, or the wrong idea about what it is capable of, or simply the wrong set of assumptions about what it means to fully function in the world. A work works by not working at all. By not obeying the law of any system or authority external to the process of its own making, a work emphatically expresses its own right to exist for itself and in itself, and questions—by merely existing—the rule of law that works to bind all to a semblance of the common good. Art is a lawless proposition (Chan, 2011, para. 10).

Chan's assertion that "a work works by not working at all" produces an idea of how autonomy can operate today. While *Going Public* failed to sell 49% of my practice, it is paradoxically a work that propositioned failure from the outset. It needed to fail at some point in order to work. The agency of work then came from negating the heteronomous "laws" of labour and value. At some point the work needed to fall apart to negate the expectations of labour as performance and to expose the limits of a practice pressured by an instrumental reason.

While it would have been interesting to see the outcome of selling shares in my practice, I could argue that had the proposition been a success, it would have given weight to the complete demise of the autonomy of artistic labour. Success would signify a seamless dissolution of artistic labour into the logic of capital where it would offer no structural resistance whatsoever.

At some point, the work needed to produce a glitch or an interruption to business as usual. The proposition needed to break down and oppose the framework of the commodification of subjectivity that established the works' parameters. The point of this

breakdown, or failure, is the point of autonomy. Paraphrasing John Roberts (2015), it is the moment the work produces the quality of being out of joint with its place in the world. It is the point where such a proposition refused its heteronomous context and ceased to function. "In today's performative economy, something as unplanned and unwilled as a burnout can become an act, a reclamation of self-legislation" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 10).

Initially, I imagined that this refusal might have arrived at a different point. Perhaps during the consultation process with shareholders, or in board meeting with supervisors, or even my own inability to compromise my practice to the expectation of others. Nevertheless, all these refusals can be analysed in terms of the incompatibly of two forms of labour colliding. When their disparity creates a "dissensus" (Rancière, 2016), the "spaces of occupation" (Steyerl, 2011) are ruptured to reclaim, or reimagine, a space of autonomy.

This analysis is not to suggest that by failing to achieve what a work sets out to achieve it becomes an automatically successful project. What *Going Public* shows, however, is that on some level this quality of not working, of refusing to comply, could be a necessary component of reimaging autonomy dialectically. In other words, if this research positions art practice as post-autonomous, operating in proximity with capitalist modes of production and contemporary modes of labour, then artistic autonomy needs to be enacted *within* these spaces to rupture the manner in which they function. *Going Public* points toward a methodology where this rupture becomes a defining characteristic of aesthetic experience. This occurs via a reimagination of autonomy as a refusal, a glitch, within a practice firmly embedded in its heteronomous frame.

CONCLUSION

For the purpose of this conclusion, I have divided the research into the three stages of context, methodology, and practical output. The context is about understanding the contextual frame my practice moves through and addresses questions I've had in my practice for a number of years. As discussed in the introduction, this essentially involved an exploration of the politics of artistic labour from two opposing positions. On one hand, I was interested in understanding the critical claims of the autonomy of artistic labour that positions art as non-work, producing a critical distance from labour. On the other hand, I was contextualising the interdependencies and interrelationships that existed within my practice which positioned it as work, existing in close proximity with labour.

My methodology involved a plan of negotiating this dichotomy and looked to mediate these ways of working through a dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy. Rather than casting one position aside, I was consciously trying to develop a way of thinking of them together and considering the critical implications of having them operate in opposition with one another.

The final area of my research that tied the context and methodology together came through my practical output. Producing work while so heavily involved in understanding context and formulating a way to negotiate this context wasn't always easy. During the research, I found my perspectives rapidly changing as I discovered new content and moved in unexpected directions. This is exactly what I sought from my PhD. However, this didn't always allow for a solid ground for production. Work produced early in the research inevitably related to a different contextual frame and methodology compared with work produced later. Nevertheless, an analysis of my practical output along the course of the research allowed new contexts to emerge and facilitated the development of new practical

methodologies. To make this evolution more understandable in this conclusion, I have divided my practical output into three areas which are produced at different stages of this research. I have also included a brief reflection on how the research might be applied in the future, which I think is a vital part of this study.

The Politics of Critical Distance

The initial phase of my research involved an exploration of the politics of autonomy within artistic labour. Here, I examined how art has developed a position in opposition to labour and what the agency of this position is. As this task evolved, I was struck by the numerous associations of autonomy that I had never considered. For many it is now completely redundant, while for some it was a term that was "associated with apolitical isolationism, with a retrograde ideology of High Art" (Lütticken, 2014, p. 1). And for others, it was no longer a project of the radical left but now appropriated by the right as a mode of governance and control (Demos, 2017a; Lorey, 2015). On the one hand, I needed to understand these slippages and on the other hand clarify the definition of autonomy I was interested in applying to my own research.

The understanding of autonomy I had coming into my research was that it allowed art to stand in opposition to a means-end rationality and, in doing so, negated the conditions of labour that reduced all other modes of production to the rationality of exchange. I was also attracted to the notion of autonomy because it stood against my experience of the pragmatic expectations of socially-engaged art which seemed so easily instrumentalised by political power (Bishop, 2012). Even working as a socially-engaged artist, I still harboured a belief that art was a space where "non-productive, dysfunctional and pointless experimentation can still take place" (Esche, 2011, p. 6). In producing something without a specific purpose, for example, I believed that art could somehow contradict, or stand in opposition to, the

rationality of capital that dominates our experience of the world. The notion of autonomy for me, therefore, allowed art to be irrational, to produce ambiguity, and sustain contradiction to the world around it.

While initially this all seemed a little ambiguous, my research was able to clarify key areas of this understanding of autonomy, historically locate them, and position them in association with "negation" as a critical field of operation (Fraser, 2012; Roberts, 2015). Here, the distance that autonomy provided artistic labour from the labour relations of the capitalist system could negate normative modes of capitalist production. What the opening chapter makes clear, therefore, is that the criticality of the artist is inherent within their modes of production. The purposelessness of their output, their refusal of the division of labour, their lack of specialisation seen in other fields, and their free, flexible, and unalienated ways of working negated the laws governing labour relations within the capitalist system.

The Collapse of Autonomy

While I was, and still am, attracted to these political claims for the autonomy of artistic labour, my further research revealed that such a critical separation between art and labour seemingly no longer exists. The next phase of my research looked to understand how these critical claims for autonomy have collapsed and consider the implications of them having done so. This is a collapse that I have experienced in my practice for a number of years, and while I moved onto the specifics of that later in the thesis, my initial focus explored the departure of autonomy on three interrelated areas: the critique of autonomy as socially inconsequential, the critique of autonomy as illusionary, and the appropriation of the critical autonomy of artistic labour as a neoliberal occupational role model.

The first area explored how the notion of autonomy has been questioned for relegating art to the status of socially inconsequentiality (Bürger, 1984). The same separation

that gave art criticality was seen to prevent it from having an impact in the "real" (Wright, 2013). The historical avant-garde were the first to abandon autonomy for these reasons, looking to merge art with life. This merger was an attempt to emancipate art, allowing it to produce a greater degree of agency beyond ideology reflection. The rhetoric was that without the limitations of autonomy, art could impact the world with a "revolutionary jolt" (Steyerl, 2011). This impulse continues today in the field of social practice where autonomy is viewed as reducing art's capacity to create social change and, by abandoning autonomy, the artist can go about the business of making the world a better place (Wright, 2013). A consequence of this is a departure from the critical notion of artistic labour as separated from "work". As artists look to produce tangible outcomes and work in close alliance with other professions, the autonomy of artistic labour from the structures of labour no longer exists.

The second area where I have explored a departure from autonomy is via claims that autonomy is merely illusionary. There is an acknowledgment that art's claims for autonomy from the economic are simply no longer, or never have been, real (Jackson, 2011). Because of this illusionary nature of autonomy, any claims made for its existence require a degree of "disavowal" (Jackson, 2011; Lorey, 2016). In reality, however, art and culture have emerged as economic driving forces. As the major player in the culture industry, attracting huge sums of money through the market, and instrumentalised as a productive tool within neo liberal economic restructuring, any claims that art produces an autonomy from an economic rationality would appear untenable. On these grounds, the autonomy of art has been cast aside as ideological leftover, and artistic labour can no longer stake a claim for producing critical distance in negation of the economic (Stakemeier, 2016).

While these points present an obvious problematisation of the notion of autonomy, I placed a focus on the collapse of the autonomy of artistic labour in the face of the changing nature of work. As Lars Bang Larson succinctly puts it: 'Work has changed and taken on the

semblance of art … [and] relations that were once defined as ‘disinterested’, and categorically separated from production, are pulled into the commodity sphere” (Larsen, 2010, p. 18). For Dave Beech, the commodification of “flexibility, creativity, networking and conviviality”, synonymous with the labour of post-Fordism, has collapsed “the critical difference between artistic labour and wage labour” (Beech, 2015, p. 340). Exploring this apparent collapse required an understanding of how the notion of “labour” has been restructured under post-Fordism and the proximity this produces with artistic labour.

Theorists of immaterial labour became useful for this task as they have shown how work now makes productive formerly non-productive moments, where the “whole society is placed at the disposal of profit” (Negri, 1989, p. 79). Labour has become increasingly deregulated and decentralised. There has been a collapse of the distinction between work and non-work, with labour now involving the mining of our subjectivities through the condition Sven Lütticken describes as “general performance” (Lütticken, 2014).

What previous research into the new labour of post-Fordism revealed - which was of particular concern - was how the autonomy of artistic labour, which once presented an unalienated ideal, now exemplified the model contemporary worker. Artistic labour’s critical refusal of the division of labour, for example, is now “integrated into neoliberal modes of production to set free dormant potentials” where “multitasking” and the “fusion of professions” has increasingly become the norm (Steyerl, 2011, p. 5). Freedom, flexibility, and autonomy have in fact become the dominant ideology which provides the means for implementing neoliberal deregulation. As Franco Beradi states: “Workers demanded freedom from the life-time prison of the industrial factory. Deregulation responded with the flexibilisation and the fractalisation of labour” (Berardi, 2003, para. 10). The “social refusal of capitalist disciplinary rule”, which artistic labour exemplified, was thereby appropriated in “capitalist revenge, which took the shape of deregulation, freedom of the enterprise from the

state, destruction of social protections, downsizing and externalisation of production, cutback of social spending, de-taxation, and finally flexibilization" (Berardi, 2003, para. 11).

Rather than a straightforward collapse of autonomy, therefore, what my study unexpectedly uncovered was a complex struggle around autonomy which provided a broad context for the rest of my research. Artistic labour's defining characteristics of freedom and critical distance understood by the term autonomy now stand for oppression and deregulation. Autonomy is thereby torn between a model of nonalienated freedom on one hand and insecurity and precarity on the other. This puts the inherent criticality of artistic labour, as it has evolved through modernism, in a highly contradictory position. But it also produces the type of contradiction that my research looks to make critically productive.

As the context of my research undeniably suggests, the grounds to consider the possibility of autonomy have dramatically changed. The notion of autonomy within artistic labour needs reconceptualisation if it can produce any form of critical resistance today. On the one hand, it would almost seem logical to abandon autonomy altogether as many in the field of socially-engaged art and activism have already done (Demos, 2017a; Kester, 2011; Wright, 2013). But the fact that autonomy seems so helplessly lost to us, and that the changing conditions of work are now increasingly exposing us to the heteronomy of the market, points towards it being an ever more urgent and pressing problem (Lütticken, 2016). My research thereby reveals autonomy as a complex site of struggle that art practices need to continue to wage. Such a task requires a complete renegotiation of autonomy's terms which has major implications for the construction of a critical art practice.

The Politics of Proximity.

> A standard way of relating politics to art assumes that art represents political issues in one way or another. But there is a much more interesting perspective: the politics of the field of art as a place of work (Steyerl, 2010, para. 1).

While the politics of art making appear to have shifted with the demise of autonomy, the above quote of Hito Steyerl (2010) points towards a new opportunity to think about art production in political terms. While the construct of autonomy made art production political through its critical distance, my research paradoxically considers art's lack of autonomy as giving artistic labour a politics. In other words, it is not political through its distance but through its proximity. "Contemporary art is no unworldly discipline nestled away in some remote ivory tower. On the contrary, it is squarely placed in the neoliberal thick of things" (Steyerl, 2010, para. 2). It is therefore precisely the proximity it has with the working of capitalism that makes it a political space of production. The mimesis of artistic labour with evolutions in neoliberal capital labour relations can therefore be viewed as an important site of politics because it so accurately reflects the workings of late capitalism. The production of contemporary art can now be viewed as an exemplary representation of the capitalist system, linked to market speculation, meritocracy, to "bling, boom and bust" (Steyerl, 2010), to hype, excess, hedge funds, credit addiction - all the while feeding off the uneven distribution of wealth created by a new neoliberal economic order. The very structures of success in the artworld are neoliberal to the core, encouraging entrepreneurial forms of risk that rewards a very select few and sees the rest remain as what Gregory Sholette describes as an unseen mass of "dark matter" (Sholette, 2011).

This is a proximity between art production and the workings of capital which is, however, not readily acknowledged. Despite producing a departure from autonomy as a

distinct social subsystem to merge with life, socially-engaged art's mimetic relationship with capital and labour still produces a form of disavowal. Autonomy therefore exists even with those practices that "dare not speak its name" (Lütticken, 2016).

> Even though political art manages to represent so-called local situations from all over the globe, and routinely packages injustice and destitution, the conditions of its own production and display remain pretty much unexplored. One could even say that the politics of art are the blind spot of much contemporary political art (Steyerl, 2010, para 13).

Stewart Martin makes the observation that if art has merged with life, as the avant-garde had hoped, it would appear to have done so via a merger with capitalist life (Martin, 2007b). It has merged at a time when life is marked by insecurity and precarity, where autonomy is no longer an artistic call to arms but the rationalisation for the deregulation and flexibilisation of labour. Far from separate from an economic rationality, artistic labour not only reflects this rationality but has become an active participant within capitalist order. What my research came to consider was whether this is where a politics of its production, or "labour", now lies within its "post autonomous" forms.

Through this contextual frame, it became apparent that autonomy can no longer operate as a position removed from the economic order. In other words, the politics of critical distance appear to be lost. However, acknowledging art's proximity reveals it to be a political field of production via its entwinement with that order. Specifically, relevant for my research, is acknowledgement of the now mimetic state of artistic labour and viewing this as a site for autonomy to be reconceptualised and reimagined within a space of proximity.

Methodology

If artistic labour does in fact produce a mimesis with neoliberal labour practices, then renegotiating a position of autonomy within this mimesis becomes the point of departure for the practical methodology of my research. On the one hand, autonomy has revealed an illusionary ideology that relegates art to a state of social inconsequentiality. On the other hand, an abandonment of the critical concept of autonomy all together sees it merge completely with the system it has traditionally looked to delegitimise. I have looked towards a renegotiation of autonomy as straddling these opposing positions articulated by Theodor Adorno:

> If art cedes its autonomy, it delivers itself over to the machinations of the status quo; if art remains strictly for-itself, it nonetheless submits to integration as one harmless domain among others (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 237).

The position of art within the "neoliberal thick of things" (Steyerl, 2010, para. 2) gives it a certain kind of politics via its representation of that order. This mimetic state does not, however, necessarily make it hopelessly complicit. On the contrary, it gives art proximity to the very thing that it has traditionally looked to negate, contradict, or throw into question. This proximity effectively prevents art from becoming "one harmless domain among others" (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 237). If artistic labour now provides a role model for the way we work, then a reapplication of autonomy within this space allows its powers of negation a political context to work against.

In developing a methodology for negotiating the context of this research, I used the dialectical theories of Adorno (1970/1997) and Rancière (2009) and the example of the "readymade" to show this dialectic working in practice. Together they allowed me to construct a methodology for negotiating the context provided by chapter 1 and chapter 2 of

this thesis. Importantly, a position of reimagining autonomy dialectically comes not through a position of critical distance from labour but via a proximity with it.

Adorno's (1970/1997) ideas were constructive for this methodology through his concept of autonomous artwork as form of modernist autocritique. Contrary to popular belief, for Adorno, the autonomous artwork is entwined with the commodity form. It is autonomous for its social functionlessness but heteronomous for being "faits sociaux", dependant on the "social structure" of the commodity (Adorno, 1970/1997). It is the ability of the autonomous artwork to produce a contradiction through this proximity that gives it its critical efficacy. What is important for my research is that this contradiction is reliant on a proximity rather than the assumption that autonomy operates through its separation from an economic rationality. "Only by immersing its autonomy in society's imagerie can art surmount the heteronomous market. Art is modern art through mimesis of the hardened and alienated" (Adorno, 1970/1997, p. 21). If the production of art is enmeshed in the "neoliberal thick of things", as Hito Steyerl makes a compelling argument for, my research considers this proximity as the grounds for a similar contradiction to take effect. The proximity of artistic labour with neoliberal ways of work can be thought of in a way where the residual autonomy of artistic labour contradicts that given order.

This reapplication of autonomy within a space of proximity is echoed within the ideas of Rancière's "aesthetic regime of art". For Rancière, "critical art has to negotiate between the tension which pushes art towards 'life' as well as that which, conversely, sets aesthetic sensorality apart from other forms of sensory experience" (Rancière, 2006, p. 46). Like Adorno's (1970/1997) concept of autonomous artwork as modernist autocritique, agency here derives from the contradiction or rupture between autonomy and heteronomy which Rancière constitutes as aesthetic experience. It is through aesthetic experience that our perceptions of the world can be altered. In other words, like Adorno's theories, autonomy imparts a

contradiction within a heteronomous order, giving rise to new ways for that order to be reorganised. Autonomy is not therefore something that puts art in its own "ivory tower" but operates in tension through its proximity with life. Applying this to the context, my research allows the proximity of art with labour to produce the grounds for aesthetic experience via the conflicted relationship this convergence produces.

As my research focuses on the dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy through the lens of labour, I used the example of the readymade through Duchamp's *Fountain* (Duchamp, 1917) to apply Rancière's (2006; 2009) theories. In *Fountain,* the artistic (autonomous) labour of Duchamp's gesture, and productive (heteronomous) labour embedded in the production of the urinal, meet in contradiction. As John Roberts suggests, in the readymade the "homogeneity of productive labour is marked and transfigured by the autonomy of artistic labour" (Roberts, 2015, p. 35). The contradiction of two forms of labour coming together allows for a redistribution of the way these forms of labour are perceived and organised. Artistic labour becomes liberated by opening itself to the heteronomy of "life", while the order of "life" becomes redistributed by the autonomy of art. Agency, therefore, is not produced by their separation but via their coming together in dialectical contradiction.

While the readymade provides a useful example of the dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy occurring through the lens of labour, its relevance is perhaps limited by evolutions of labour we have experienced since Duchamp's time. Labour and art production have changed dramatically since then which required this analysis of the readymade to be updated. Nevertheless, through Adorno, Rancière, and the readymade, a methodology could be applied to the struggle around autonomy outlined as the context of the research in the opening chapters. Autonomy here becomes not the distinct social subsystem espoused throughout modernism, but an acknowledgement and negotiation of proximity.

The process of avowing art's proximity with labour has therefore emerged as an important part of this methodology. Through identifying and acknowledging art's proximity to labour, the site for a dialectic autonomy can be reimagined. As the research evolved, my methodology emerged as a process of identification and disidentification with labour. Through this process, I looked to produce a dialectical understanding of autonomy where art's state of proximity could be both acknowledged and disrupted to produce productive states of contradiction.

Practice

I will explore the application of my methodology of a dialectical autonomy within my practical output through three distinct phases. The methodology evolved as the research developed, along with my understanding of the contextual frame outlined in the opening chapters. My output has reflected this evolution which I am sure will continue for many years to come. Even as I write this conclusion, new ideas and ways of negotiating the context of my research has come into focus.

Khoj Residency

The first phase I will analyse came from the residency I undertook at Khoj International Artists Association in Delhi. Through this residency, I identified two areas related to my artistic labour that I wanted to examine. I wanted to analyse the artist residency model as a site of production and the process of artistic participation (synonymous with socially-engaged art) as a means of production. I wanted to explore these through their proximity to labour as the first stage of my methodology.

The artist residency was therefore analysed not just as a site to produce work relating to new political contexts but analysed as producing its own "politics" through its mimetic

relationship with the new labour of post-Fordism. As discussed in chapter 4, residencies embody the logic of flexibility and freedom that have now become not so much the hallmarks of a critical autonomy but the defining characteristics of deregulated contemporary labour. They produce the instability and precarity of "just-in-time" production, short-term employment, and habitual mobility which necessitate a highly adaptable subjectivity. On further analysis, a residency in India magnifies this relationship to labour, particularly for a socially-engaged artist. Any practice that uses people in their production will begin to replicate the social constitution of labour. In India, however, with the associations of outsourcing and the exploitation of third world labour, this becomes pronounced as the contextual frame of artistic production.

As a socially-engaged artist, my output on artist residencies have often involved the process of participation as the means of production. In chapter 4, I identified how participatory art carries with it anti-capitalist rhetoric that critiques authorship by giving over production to others. However, examined through the lens of labour, it becomes linked to the immaterial and managerial labour of post-Fordism and entwined with the practice of outsourcing. While socially-engaged art looks towards participation as a means of rehumanising interpersonal relationships, this is exactly what capitalism does through the service-based sector of the economy (Martin, 2007b). Social engagement through participation is revealed through this research as replicating "the social constitution of capitalist exchange, exposing it directly" (Martin, 2007, p. 379). While this relationship is hardly acknowledged within dialogue surrounding socially-engaged art, my research explores whether an avowal of it can give such practices a politics via a proximity to labour.

This analysis of the residency and participation, therefore, produced a specific context in India through an entwinement with global labour processes. At this early stage of the research, what was important was identifying and avowing these relationships in my practice.

While the works could be analysed through several perspectives, I examined them through these criteria with my focus on how they identified with contemporary structures of labour. *Khirkee's Strongest Man and Woman Competitions* (Brazier, 2017c), for example, could be analysed in terms of convivial social engagement, a community event, or through the lens of a local vernacular. However, I have concentrated on an acknowledgement of the division of labour that the events produced. As a Western artist orchestrating the events in India, I was aware that the work reproduced specific labour relations between the two regions. My working process involved liaising, organising, mediating, and promoting. I sent emails, staged meetings, and talked with residents on the street. This cognitive labour provided a contrast with the connotations of a physical labour produced by the act of arm wrestling itself. Through this analysis, a division of labour was revealed as an undercurrent to the more community orientated, convivial, and emancipatory parts of the project. What I argue is that through an avowal of this relationship, the work reproduces a political context that exists within the production of the work itself. As Sven Lutticken describes: "It situates the dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy in the practitioner. He/she is part of the problem, which is in fact the condition for his/her agency" (Lütticken, 2012, p. 94).

During this first phase of practical output made on residency at Khoj, I also produced the work *Division of Labour Chowk* (Brazier, 2017a) which involved hiring workers to make a set of bleachers that were then used to watch the video of the bleacher's making. If the presence of labour was partially concealed behind conviviality in the arm-wrestling competition, in *Division of Labour Chowk* an avowal of labour was the primary focus of the work. In the work, the process of participation was inseparable from the act of hiring labour, and my socially-engaged practice was also that of employer. The function of the bleachers was purely about revealing the embedded labour processes within the production and dissemination of my practice. It thereby becomes a political arena via the proximity it has

with these labour processes with the social hierarchies they produce that are clearly on display in the video. The contradiction between the real existing labour of the labour chowk and the non-labour of artistic production was mobilised to produce a productive reorganisation of the critical divisions between these two processes.

This analysis of the first phase of the practical research was highly influenced by the context of being a Western artist working in India. Both works reproduced a division in labour in relation to this context, inheriting the politics within this division which includes complex colonial histories that I will address later in this conclusion. However, two important insights arose from this first phase which became instrumental for the future research.

First, I became conscious that an avowal of labour was not enough to rupture or redistribute it. What came into focus was the need to, on some level, disidentify with labour, to contradict it, to redistribute the way it was perceived, or re-enact a position of autonomy within that space of proximity.

Second, the works in this first phase of practical output adhered to a division in labour between manual and cognitive production. Such a division of course still exists, particularly between the first and third worlds, although this itself is often disavowed by theorists of immaterial labour. However, as my contextual research evolved, I became interested in exploring art's position within the new labour of post-Fordism which, for Sven Lütticken, is marked by the condition of general performance (Lütticken, 2014). Future, practical outputs looked to incorporate this definition of labour as the context for the methodology.

Virtual Employee and Double Agent

The second phase of my practical output looked to incorporate this context and apply a more pronounced methodology of disidentification to it. For this purpose, I analysed a work

Virtual Employee that involved the outsourcing of my New Delhi residency to a virtual employment company. The work used a process of overidentification with labour but simultaneously disidentified with it through the counter-functional manner in which labour was utilised. In other words, by outsourcing my residency, the rationality of outsourcing was stretched by the autonomy of artistic labour, while the autonomy of artistic labour was problematised by the mimetic relationship it produced with the labour of outsourcing. The result was a contradiction of functionality together with a rupture to the order of both the artist and a contemporary labour process.

On closer reflection of this rupture, my work contradicted the expectation for the artist to be present or to perform their presence. The "contemporary economy of art [now] relies more on presence than on traditional ideas of labour power tied to the production of objects" (Steyerl, 2015, para. 5). Like many platforms of artistic production, the residency requires that the artist be present and that they are in the residency location producing their work. Autonomy is therefore enacted in *Virtual Employee* as a refusal, or negotiation of the expectation of this type of labour, as a kind of refusal of the economy of presence. Delegating participation to another, therefore, provided the means to refuse the expectation to perform when "performativity has become a growing demand, if not the norm" (Verwoert, 2008, para. 4).

This negation of the economy of presence was taken a step further in the work *Double Agent* (Brazier, 2017b). For this performance I hired an actor, Renato Fabretti, to play the part of me and deliver a talk about *Virtual Employee* at the AAANZ Conference in 2017. While the work seemed to identify with the abstraction of time, space, and subjectivity produced by contemporary labour, it also negated the "cult of presence" (Steyerl, 2015) that presupposes the condition of general performance. By handing over my presence to a proxy, I

looked to contradict, disidentify with, or provide autonomy from the social order of "performativity" in new labour.

Going Public

The last stage of the practical output came from the work *Going Public* (Brazier, 2018) which was performed at the 2018 AAANZ Conference. The work was an ambitious attempt to bring together the various strands of my research and revolved around the attempted sale of 49% of my social practice for a 2-year period. The performance looked to identify with some key relationships between the artist and the evolutions in labour my research was exploring. Not only was it an entrepreneurial act but it replicated the type of market speculation that defines the generation of wealth today. Frederick Jameson describes this speculative shift that easily translates to the speculation of the art market:

> Now this free floating capital, on its frantic search for more profitable investments will begin its life in a new context; no longer in the factories and the spaces of extraction and production, but on the floor of the stock market, jostling for more intense profitability, but not as one industry competing for another branch, nor even one productive technology against another more advanced one in the same line of manufacturing, but rather in the form of speculation itself (Jameson, 1998, p. 142).

The sale, which involved hiring a corporate actor to deliver a paper detailing the context of the research, was performed as a corporate sales pitch. The performance used a methodology of overidentification, revealing the artist as "model entrepreneur" (Gill & Pratt, 2008), inseparable from an economic rationality. In the performance, artistic production, reception, and distribution was deeply immersed in the "neoliberal thick of things" (Steyerl, 2010, para. 2). This became the context of proximity, a dystopian, post-

autonomous merger between art and life that sees artistic output morphed within the neoliberal workings of capital. I looked to avow this relationship by exposing the proximity art finds itself in, while reflecting on this proximity as a political space of operation.

What has emerged as a defining part of my research was exploring ways to disidentify with this proximity. In doing so, the research looked to bring into focus how autonomy could be reimagined dialectally, producing a contradictory space, negating the proximity art now finds itself. The task becomes about working in this state of proximity with labour "to rearticulate its uses, to make it non-efficient, non-instrumental, non-intentional, to disable its utility, capacity of being efficient, utilitarian and a tool for social coercion" (Steyerl, 2011, p. 6). Autonomy as a form of negation, therefore, acts as a glitch from *within* the system, problematising the politics art reproduces through its proximity.

This process of negation occurred in *Going Public* at a different moment than expected. While I thought it may occur via the contradiction of employing a share market strategy to produce a participatory practice, the negation occurred when the performance was interrupted by a guerrilla performance as part of the conference proceedings. Nevertheless, the collision of a corporate world with the guerrilla art performance began to see things unravel, articulating the methodology of my research in a surprising way. Through this collision between the artistic labour of the guerrilla performance and the performative labour of the corporate sales pitch, what occurred was a breakdown. Unable to comprehend the logic of the guerrilla performance, the corporate sales pitch began to fall apart. This "falling apart" produced the point of rupture I had been looking to facilitate, enacting the methodology of the research at a moment I had not planned for or expected. It occurred on a 1:1 scale from within the labour relations of the conference itself.

In analysing the performance, I paid close attention to the failure of the work to achieve its goals of floating my practice as a company. I considered this failure as providing a possible space of autonomy from a rationality that attempts to extract value from every opportunity, every social interaction. Paradoxically, failure became the necessary component for the work to function. Through this failure, the work produced the quality of being "out of joint" which serves to produce functional limits to a rationality that shows no bounds. In short, it produces a space of autonomy "along the lines of what used to be thought of as artistic autonomy" (Steyerl, 2011, p. 6).

Failure was therefore an expected outcome of the performance because without it, the seamless relationship between art, capital, and labour would remain unchallenged. On some level, failure was necessary to produce the functional contradiction my research was looking to facilitate. However, it is the precise nature of this failing that I would like to reflect on here because it ties many of the strands of the productive output of the research together. It is the specific way *Going Public* clashed with the guerrilla performance of *colonise/decolonise* that I would like to consider. The clash produced a range of contradictions, ambiguities, and estrangements that constitute the rupture of aesthetic experience (Rancière, 2009a) that my research has been looking to locate through the lens of labour.

While this clash articulated the methodology of the research, it did so through a colonial context that was present in all the practical output of the research and embedded in the structure of labour itself. I would like to consider this in my conclusion because it produces a possible line of inquiry for future study.

The neo-colonial associations of labour run throughout the three phases of production in this research. Colonisation is inherent in the division of labour between India

and the West, for example, and specifically present in the process of outsourcing. A deconstruction of this provided an impetus for *Virtual Employee,* where the colonial nature of the *1 Mile Squared* residency provided the impetus for the adoption of the neo-colonial power structures of outsourced labour. The links between participation, labour, the site of production in India, and my presence as a Western artist are held together through their colonial connotations. The methodology of avowing labour, therefore, involves an avowal of the colonial nature of labour which gains further specificity when applied to production in India.

Colonial connotations were also evident in *Going Public*. It was not just through the delegation of the presentation to Raj, a corporate actor of Indian decent, that brought about its colonial context. Instead, it was the ability of capital to colonise formerly non-productive moments as the content of the paper and the sale of my practice both suggest. As Raj stated in his presentation: "Today there is very little of the worker the market doesn't use for the extraction of profit". Capital functions on this basis in its search of sites for the extraction of surplus - value labour colonises every aspect of our social and private lives. It now even colonises our subjectivity (Lazzarato, 1996). It is this ability for capital to colonise everything in its path that makes the notion of autonomy so redundant on one hand but also an ever more urgent and pressing problem on the other (Lütticken, 2014).

The decolonisation of capital is, of course, different to the decolonisation that *colonise/decolonise* was referring to in their AAANZ performance. For them, the process of decolonisation is situated against an Australian specific history of white settlement. Nevertheless, the legacy of this types of colonialisation remains throughout the world in different forms and, as shown through this research, carried forth via global labour relations such as outsourcing and was clearly evident in neoliberal nonreproductions of human resources and the environment.

In this context, the clash between *colonise/decolonise* and *Going Public* not just articulated the research methodology but expanded it in areas worthy of future reflection. Raj's performance, and the paper he delivered, looked to overidentify with art's proximity with labour and in doing so situated it within an expanded colonial context. *colonise/decolonise* looked to "confront the impact of colonisation [and] decolonise both space and body" (AAANZ, 2018). *Going Public* operated through critique via overidentification and *colonise/decolonise* through disidentification. While they are certainly not completely aligned, they can be held together through this colonial context that is strongly evident within art, capital, and labour.

The trajectory from colonisation to globalisation, and the colonial nature of contemporary labour, is too much to consider in detail at this stage of the research. However, it points toward further investigation, particularly in relationship to the Australian colonial context where these histories continue to inform a collective way of operating in the present. Colonisation appears as a manifestation of a way of relating to the world and the "other" which can be seen within contemporary structures of both art and labour. This process can therefore be extended beyond the immediate signifiers of white settlement to encompass a broader acknowledgment of forms of power and domination.

While this may appear as a slight digression, it is used here in a way to illustrate how the research methodology can be applied to different contexts. There is a definite parallel between the act of decolonisation and the position of a critical autonomy that the research explores. In fact, the methodology of *colonise/decolonise* is strikingly similar to the one I have employed through an identification and disidentification with labour. Both involve a representation of power and a simultaneous negation of it. My study presents artistic labour, therefore, as a decolonising tool; it holds the capacity to negate the structures of the dominant power which is something my research looked to mobilise. But it also colonises. It

continues to reach into areas, contexts, and locations it once looked to remain separate. "It pollutes, gentrifies, and ravishes. It seduces and consumes" (Steyerl, 2010, p. 2). Even practices that engage in processes of decolonisation risk recolonising decolonial themes for the heteronomous agendas of artistic labour such as the furtherance one's career. In short, art is now entwined with the power structure in need of decolonisation. It is a "major player", reflecting the structural inequalities of neoliberal global capitalism.

This would appear to render art production politically ineffectual, and at the very least so entwined that is seriously compromised. But this also sees it producing blinding contradictions and ambiguities that occur within its very means of production, where a desperate desire for resistance occurs amid an increasing state of mimesis. It is, in other words, a site of struggle where the political polarities that define our times are played out within its production, reception, and distribution. This is, I argue, where its agency now lies, and what constitutes it as an aesthetic practice. Post-autonomous practices, such as socially-engaged art, are perhaps privileged in this regard, not because they can represent the political as happening somewhere else, which they so often do, but because their expanded modes of production take them into political arenas that art's relative autonomy once provided separation. Autonomy as a complex site of struggle is played out within these practices, and the task remains to make the contradictions that enact both autonomy and heteronomy within them productive. This is what the dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy that my research examined through the lens of labour looked to achieve. It looked to the contradictions within the production process unique to art as a means of reconsidering the positions of both art and labour.

Coming into my research, I wanted to understand my practice as a place of non-work, on one hand, and mimetic of work, on the other. Although these spaces have been revealed to occupy opposing political positions, my research explored how their coming

together can produce a contradiction that lies at the heart of art's production process. Rather than weakening art's polarities of criticality, the question became how to make this contradiction critically productive. Through a careful identification and disidentification with real existing labour, the research explores how such ambiguities within the production process can be performed, allowing for the limits of art and labour to be articulated, and the perception of each reorganised. The negation of artistic labour is mobilised here, but it is used to produce an autonomy within a space of proximity. What this methodology necessitates is an avowal of the proximity within one's practice, implicating oneself within the structures of labour and capital. While these are relationships art routinely looks to disavow, it is through an acknowledgement of them that gives the production of art a political context. And it is within this context that that artistic labour can negate existing disciplinary boundaries, not only of labour, but also that of the production of art itself.

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Appendix A

Going Public Share Certificate

GOING PUBLIC

SHARE CERTIFICATE

Share no: _____ of 100 total shares

This is to certify that _____

is the registered holder of a share(s) as shown above in David Brazier's *GOING PUBLIC* subject to the constitution of the Shareholder's Agreement.

This certificate is hereby issued by the practice

Director: David Brazier

Signed: _____

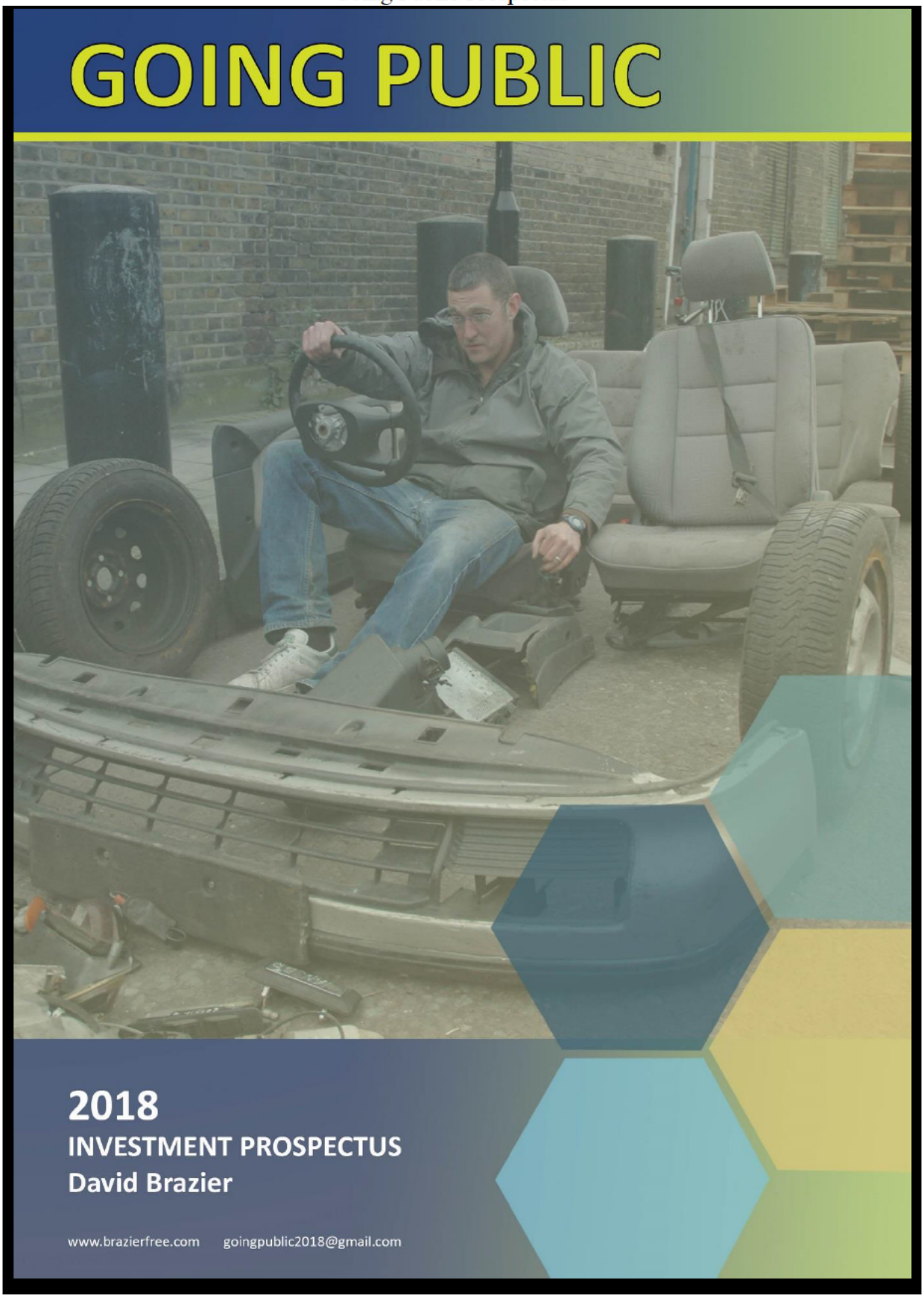
Date of issue: _____

DAVID BRAZIER *GOING PUBLIC*

goingpublic2018@gmail.com

Appendix B

Going Public Prospectus



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Dear Investor,

In the field of art, the phrase 'Going Public' brings to mind the practice of art in the public realm. It might suggest participatory or social practice that engages the public as its modus operendi. It may also imply the merger of art and life, allowing art to have traction in the real world. In the world of commerce, however, 'Going Public' refers to a private company's 'initial public offering', or IPO. It is where a company will make its stock available to the public for the first time, thus becoming a publicly traded and owned entity.

As director and chairperson of this practice it is with great pleasure that I announce the time has come to bring these two forms of 'Going Public' together.

The board and I feel that investment now, comes at an opportune moment with this practice at the culmination of a rigorous stage of research and development. Your investment will support the completion of this vital stage, bringing to the public this exciting socially engaged practice.

This is therefore an opportunity not only to invest, but to participate in a portfolio which promises a unique rate of return. Being accredited with the practice's achievements pays you dividends in both symbolic and social capital all the while your share accrues monetary value.

As a shareholder, your opinion is highly valued by the practice and its board, and you will be encouraged to participate in the important decisions it makes in the immediate future. As a 51% shareholder, I will work with you to ensure the practice maintains its trajectory. The board's ambitions over the next two years are impressive and together we can bring them to realisation.

This prospectus details the Industry and practice's background, information on the board and investment overview. Investors should regard 'Going Public' as an exciting participatory investment proposition.

I encourage you to read this Prospectus carefully before making your investment decision. I look forward to welcoming you as a shareholder of this practice.

Yours sincerely,

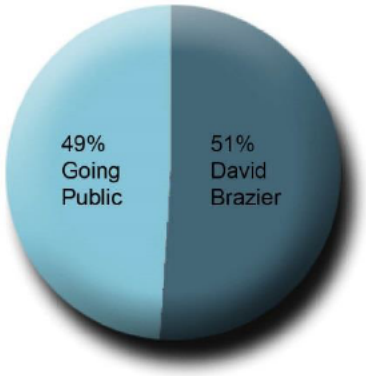
[redacted]

David Brazier

INVESTMENT OVERVIEW- DETAILS OF THE OFFER

3

- Going Public looks to make an initial public offering of 49% of David Brazier's socially engaged practice for a 2 year period between 5th December 2018 and 5th December 2020.



- Each share constitutes 1% of the practice and is valued at AU$100, giving the practice a total valuation of AU$10,000.

1% = $100

TOTAL VALUATION
$10,000

- Each shareholder will receive dividends in the symbolic capital that the practice generates, with their name reproduced as a footnote every time David's name is mentioned in relation to his social practice in written format during the 2 year period.

- Shareholders will be accredited in reviews, catalogues, publications, websites or any written format where David or his work are mentioned in the period of Going Public.

- Shareholders will receive quarterly updates into the practice which will detail issues discussed in monthly board meetings.

- From these updates Shareholders will be encouraged to participate in David's socially engaged practice.

GOING PUBLIC

SHARE CERTIFICATE

Share no: _____ of 100 total shares

This is to certify that _____

is the registered holder of a share(s) as shown above in David Brazier's *GOING PUBLIC* subject to the constitution of the Shareholder's Agreement.

This certificate is hereby issued by the practice

Director: David Brazier

Signed: _____

Date of issue: _____

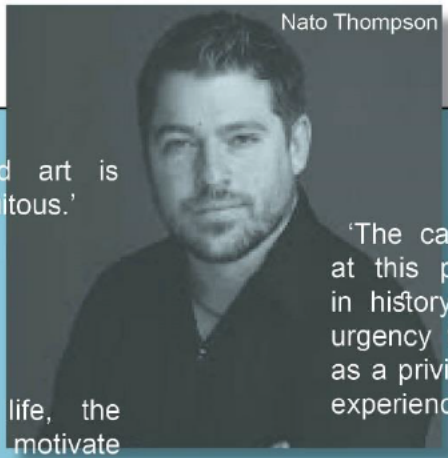
DAVID BRAZIER *GOING PUBLIC*

goingpublic2018@gmail.com

DAVID BRAZIER - *GOING PUBLIC*

INDUSTRY BACKGROUND

5

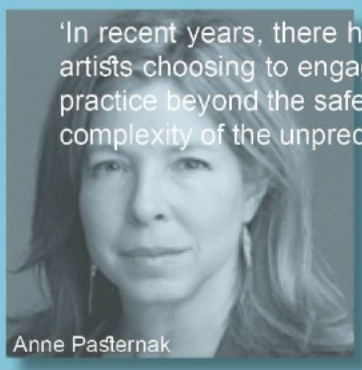

Nato Thompson

'Socially engaged art is growing and ubiquitous.'

'The call for art into life at this particular moment in history implies both an urgency to matter as well as a privileging of the lived experience.'

'As art enters life, the question that will motivate people far more than What is art? Is the much more metaphysically relevant and pressing What is life?'

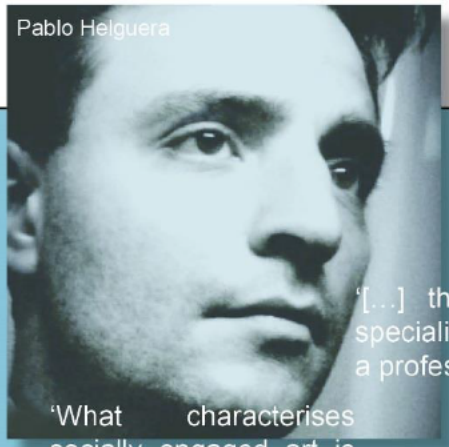
'In recent years, there has been a rapidly growing movement of artists choosing to engage with timely issues by expanding their practice beyond the safe confines of the studio and right in to the complexity of the unpredictable public sphere.'


Anne Pasternak


Claire Bishop

"[…] a surge in artistic interest in collectivity, collaboration and direct engagement in specific social constituencies […] less likely to be works, than social events, publications, workshops, or performances'

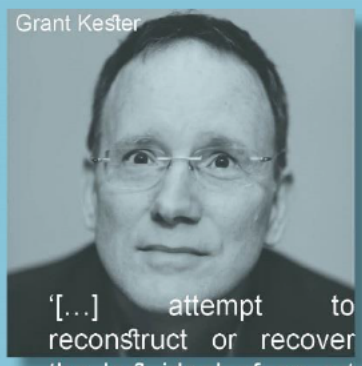
DAVID BRAZIER - *GOING PUBLIC*



'[…] the making of the artist whose speciality includes working with society in a professional capacity.'

'What characterises socially engaged art is its dependence on social intercourse as a factor of its existence.'

'[…] art that's socially engaged, where the social interaction is at some level the art'



'[…] attempt to reconstruct or recover the lost ideal of an art that is integrated with, rather than alienated from, the social'

'At the core of social practice is the urge to reformulate the traditional relationship between the work and the viewer, between production and consumption, sender and receiver'

BACKGROUND OF THE PRACTICE

7

'David's projects combine an innovative use of social forms and gestures with a very focused sense of political inquiry. While they are not "political" in terms of activism, their interest lies in the narration of highly specific moments of social and economic power set in a context of globalization. At times, this included an examination of the artists own power, which leads to a very complex set of works.'

Ted Purves

David is currently a PhD candidate at Curtin University, Western Australia where he is researching a critical labour practice for the socially engaged artist. In the past, his social practice has seen him work with a variety of professionals ranging from security guards to a psychic medium, a death metal band to Japanese hula dancers. His works frequently facilitate participation of the public and provide provocation into the nature of artist labour today.

David gained his MA from Goldsmiths College in London. He has been awarded high profile residencies including KHOJ New Delhi through the British Council and Australia Council, ARCUS Japan, Aberystwyth Arts Centre Wales, Gertrude Contemporary Melbourne as well as an associateship at Delfina Foundation London.

He has taught MFA Social Practice students at California College of the Arts, has had his work reviewed in Frieze Magazine, featured in the 'Urban Performance' edition of Kunstforum International and has received a write up in the book 'What We Want is Free: Critical Exchanges in Recent Art' (Purves and Selzer).

The next stage of David's practice will see him complete his PhD in 2019. 'Going Public' marks the culmination of David's PhD research. Investment in 'Going Public' will provide Shareholders an exciting opportunity to participate in a socially engaged art practice and to critically reflect on what it now means to 'work' as an artist.

DAVID BRAZIER - *GOING PUBLIC*

Dr Kit Messham-Muir is an art theorist, educator and researcher. He is the Lead Investigator on the 'Art in Conflict' project, a three-year ARC linkage project in partnership with the Australian War Memorial and the National Trust (NSW), with a team of researchers from University of Melbourne, University of NSW and University of Manchester.

Since 1997, he has taught art history at universities in Australia and Hong Kong and is currently Associate Professor in Art at the School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry, Curtin University, Western Australia.

Dr Bruce Slatter is the Discipline Lead of Art within the School of Media, Creative Arts and Social Inquiry. Curtin University, Western Australia. Bruce completed his BA (Fine Art) in 1992, Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Secondary) in 1997, Bachelor of Arts (Art) (Honours) in 2000 and a Master of Arts (Art) in 2003. He has a PhD (Art) from RMIT University.

Bruce has held solo exhibitions at Galerie Dusseldorf and exhibited in many group exhibitions. His work is included the collections of the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Artbank, Bankwest Art Collection and others.

Dr Lucas Ihlein is ARC DECRA Research Fellow and Senior Lecturer in the School of The Arts, English and Media, Wollongong University. He uses a creative-practice based research methodology (including blogging, printmaking, public events, and scholarly publication) to explore complex environmental management issues, with a particular focus on Australian agriculture.

His current research project: Sugar vs the Reef – Socially Engaged Art and Urgent Environmental Problems is the focus of his ARC DECRA Fellowship from 2016-18.

NOTES

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