

Rib - Mirroring productionism

Intro

What forms can cultural production take now? To what changes must it adapt in relation to how cultural production and its work are organized within the totality of life under capitalism, and within the frame of contemporary art? Having started in 2015 as a production-space for art, Rib takes the history and legacy of artistic production and the actual conditions of the current situation as points of reference, and lets itself collide with the tensions in this configuration. Rib positions itself as a smaller player in an institutional fabric that is made up of museums, medium-scale presentation-spaces and so-called small-scale 'independent' spaces. Its aim is to test this current institutional constellation of artistic production than can be characterized as having morphed into platforms for artistic production, incorporating the production of aesthetics and of knowledge-production -as form of internal critique-, extending the range of functions in artistic production, from which an enhanced potential of institutional production and of political ambition is presented: the ambition of contemporary art. Understood as the trans-global institutional production of art that is to accommodate the geographic and cultural differences in one binding format and time.¹ This approach is part of a more general development that can be observed where artists and institutes, reconfigure their modes of production as response, in an effort to reclaim a space of production under capitalism.

It is the multifaceted platform-function of the exhibition-space of Rib itself that is positioned towards this question as a performative medium of exploration, critique and expression. Rib's operation is to simultaneously address the possibilities and bottlenecks of artistic production now, and to extend on this through its production. What needs to be re-assessed, re-visited, re-framed qua the difference between the potential of art - as ambition towards the realization of conditions to production, and the conditions and operation of production in c a's current manifestation under capitalist subsumption? The system of contemporary art that produces the artistic object is understood here as the 'assemblage' of positions in production: curating, the institute, the artist and communication that jointly author the 'object' produced from this assemblage.² How are the characteristics of cognitive capitalism, as capitalism's most recent iteration, of effect in the realization of this 'object'? And how does it contribute to its form that accommodates this space for autonomy, and its subsequent agency? How can an exhibition-space be thought of as medium for production, and as medium for critique within

¹ I here refer to Peter Osborne's definition of Contemporary Art's commission. Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, Verso, 2013.

² Here I follow Peter Osborne's conceptualization of authorship in Contemporary Art artistic as issue of the cycle of positions in production, Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, Verso, London/New York, 2013

these conditions? How can the legacies of our artistic past, notably that of conceptual art, within our present conditions inform a trajectory for action. Rib does this by focussing on and deploying the characteristic elements in the current form of production: aspects of distribution and curating, of time and space of production, and the notion of 'work' as an integrated form of production, raising once more the problem of autonomy in production.

Conceptual art in the sixties and seventies contextualized the structure of art as issue of production of distribution information, digging deep into and recognizing the texture of production of our times: as society of institutions and distribution of information, of technocratic bureaucracy. Admittedly, the results of the critique, insights and knowledge produced in conceptual art and its practical implication, have been of little effect on our institutional politics of production in general and on our present conditions of life. It was the emphasis on the intrinsic values within the exchanges in our social relations rather than the value produced in capitalism through the commodity-form, that conceptual art contributed to the political-cultural discussion concerning the political-economical organization of life. In fact, this has even been turned against itself. The hegemony of capitalism -known as cognitive capitalism-, as the predominant relation between production and life exacerbates the discrepancy that exists between the form of capitalism and conceptual art in that it utilizes the same tools: of abstraction and conceptualization of value-exchange. The term 'cognitive capitalism' is used in the discussion on the alignment of art-production with the current stage of capitalism that is characterized by abstract labour and value-exchange. Art-production finds itself instrumental to and subsumed under this general mode of production.³ Osborne identifies the same basic premises within art-production to be still ongoing in our time which he coins as postconceptual.

As Italian philosopher Paolo Virno has analyzed: in post-Fordist production the traditional categorical division of labor, politics and intellect overflow in each other and does the division between labor (as poiesis), work (as politics) and action (as aesthetical and activist politics), in respect to human as political actor, laid out by Hannah Arendt, no longer hold.⁴ Where she takes intellectual labor to be delimited from these other categories, now this activity in post-Fordism, is imbricated in the spheres of politics and aesthetics.

Informed by this conceptual legacy than, how are the conditional and operational specifics in the current mode of production, identified as postconceptual, and that bind it to the infra-structural structure of

³ Yann Moulier Boutang in *Cognitive Capitalism* details the relation between capitalism and that of the creative industries and art, he describes how in economy there has been a shift from the exploitation of labour power to that of innovative and creative cognitive labour, qualities particular for art-production. Yann Moulier Boutang, *Cognitive Capitalism*, Polity Press 2012.

⁴ Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude, For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, Semiotext(e)/Foreign Agents, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2004.

contemporary art, to be considered critically? An important aspect, I argue, that characterizes contemporary artistic in the assemblage set-up of production is the issue of the co-authorial principle, and the (mis)translations and/or mistranslations, and their relationship to the overall structure, that exist in it. So how the different functions in production are related, how the production as ensemble of functions is organized, the roles of curating and of programming, and issues of authorship that embody and shape these relations, through which an ambition to agency is phrased. Furthermore: the element of authorship denotes, in such a critical analysis, a possibility and address of accountability. An instrument that can be used to investigate the division of labour that structures artistic production in its current form, analogous to the organizational principles of capitalist society. The assemblage or constellation of production as the general condition then becomes the critical issue of examination. How are these questions to be engaged with in practise, and how is such ambition conceivable to go beyond the constraints of institutional critique, where the limit of its reach is set by the fact that it remains within the structures of what is critiqued: the institute of art? How is the notion of artistic agency put forward by Boris Groys in *Politics of Installation*, as issue of sovereignty and agency in the artistic workplace to be understood within the current conditions of assembled authorship and the prominence of aesthetics which, as I claim, has become a quintessential and critical productive category?

In Rib's approach these aspects can be recognized as the central foci of its operation. By mirroring institutional practice, i.e. in an *exchange* with the conditions of ensembled production, Rib addresses the conditions for production from within tries to propose a new notion of 'work' by operationalizing the qualities of time and space of production, and the issue of accountability in production. It is this operational critical core address that I take -rather than solely its program- as central reflection and commission in this text. In taking Osborne's theoretical analysis of the postconceptual together with Rib's critique on the conceptual legacy in action, the two qualities of cognition and practice that constitute the conundrum of artistic production, can be reviewed in their relation. Where Groys focusses on the placement of the artistic object in the spatial infrastructure of artistic production, I will focus more on the organization of work in total, how this can be understood as aesthetical practice and as a politics of installation within the infrastructure of production. It is precisely the reformulation of the term 'work' that needs to be examined.

Context

As capitalist production under neo-liberalism, characterized by increasing market-oriented policies and precarization, has undergone changes, from material to immaterial -from the Fordist to a post-Fordist production mode-, consumption and production have become intimately entangled via processes of feedback and measurement. Through further abstractions in exchange-value, people act both as

producers and subjects onto which production is tailored. Through automated systems of feedback and evaluation the processes of work and of consumption are optimized, catering to the specific needs and wishes of the individual. Think for example how Facebook algorithmically determines and customizes the newsfeed and advertisements based on your browsing-behaviour. This tailoring has led to greater individuation and atomization of society, seemingly catering to an individual and autonomous life, yet keeping the totality of the capitalist economic principle intact by productive feedback to which individuation and liberalisation serve. This technologically enhanced, capitalist principle, affects the general socio-political structures of production including those of knowledge-production (the educational system, universities etc), and of the production of art,⁵ the presumed fields for the production of meaning.⁶

As a system that appropriates and absorbs its challenges, capitalism finds itself virtually immune to any challenge. Antonio Negri,⁷ Jacques Rancière and others have argued that art, under the present form of capitalism, finds itself in a diminishing space, since all it proposes against the domination of capitalism is immediately taken up by capitalism itself and becomes part of arts' commodification. Contemporary art as globalized form of quasi-unified trans-national presentation-spaces bound by the critical overall idea of the contemporary which must address the: 'sharing in production through different times and geographies', does not escape this grasp.⁸ This production of meaning, as political-aesthetical action then, is immediately entangled with cognitive capitalism, following Virno. Yet criticality towards precisely the domineering forces of our time, is and remains projected as contemporary art's institutional commission. The contemporary form of artistic production includes educational and discursive programmes, independent knowledge production in the form of symposia and seminars -heavily connected to the fields of critical theory-, and in-house publication and the operationalization of archival formats.⁹ As

⁵ See for a critique on the imbrication of cultural production in the general economy Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso, London/New York, 2007

⁶ See for instance how Baudrillard in *Transaesthetics* identifies how art is subsumed by the aesthetics of the capitalist order and thereby becomes -in its indifference- inert: "The system runs less on the surplus-value of the commodity than on the aesthetic surplus-value of the sign. There is much talk of a dematerialization of art, as evidenced, supposedly, by minimalism, conceptual art, ephemeral art, anti-art and a whole aesthetic of transparency, disappearance and disembodiment. In reality, however, what has occurred is a *materialization* of aesthetics everywhere under an operational form."

⁷ Antonio Negri argues that artistic production, that aims to picture our worlds, can only do so from within an absolute *inside-ness* of the world as it is, in which the synthesis of man and the capitalist machine is completed. Antonio Negri, *Metamorphoses: Art and immaterial labor*, in *Art and Multitude*, Polity Press, Cambridge UK, 2011

⁸ Here I follow Peter Osborne's conceptualization of contemporary art as the globalized institutional formation of artistic production as producing the contemporary by coming together in time, through different histories and geographies. Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, Verso, London/New York, 2013

⁹ Peter Osborne, *The Postconceptual Condition*, Verso, London, 2018

conglomerate form of these different functions it combines both art and aesthetics production, seemingly providing for greater institutional autonomy in respect to this commission of criticality. How though does this notion of internally organized autonomy of production relate to the context of conditions set by the external frame, the heteronomy of this platform-idea of production? Cognitive capitalism after all has precisely turned that what is produced in art- and knowledge-production within the circular economy of capitalism. The capitalist commodity has shifted from material to abstract, which has become the 'new' material of capitalism, in this change art and the humanities are particularly imbricated.

Work, object, authorship, accountability

These questions concerning autonomy and agency in the chain of artistic production, relate to the known notion of 'work' in a classical Marxian sense, where a distinction is made between work as self-realisation in self-determination: 'natural labour', and 'abstract labour' as quantifiable labour-production. Abstract labour invested is put to use to the realisation of value, and always provides surplus value somewhere else in the chain. This gives rise to this other well-known figure: the notion of alienation, as integral part of capitalist production (in the sense of work performed not for one's self-realisation, which causes effects of detachment and pathologies of subjectification). As such it is a measure, an index of power-relations. In contemporary art then, the notion of 'natural labour' as artistic expression becomes highly problematic, given the overall embeddedness in capitalism and the division of abstract labour within its structure, given the assemblage of positions.¹⁰ Peter Osborne captures this form of cultural production in this stage of expanding and deepening of capitalism, as *'The post-conceptual condition: or, the cultural logic of high capitalism today'*.¹¹ Osborne stresses the importance of capitalisms' continuation that shapes the conditions of artistic production, rather than art beyond capitalism's hailed end. This adaptation of Jameson's famous phrase: *'Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism'*, corrects the suggestion of capitalisms' supposed nearby end -evoked by *late-*, and the continued importance of the conceptual -as artistic form that has formulated and captured the critique on capitalism- in this respect. And that has morphed itself through the current conditions, to the iteration of the post-conceptual. After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, and by the adaptation of neo-liberalism by both Russia and China as economic models, this has become the remaining global ideology and system that shapes our world.

An alternative future to the hegemony of capitalist existed roughly until 1989. In this then still undecided space between the two competing ideologies of capitalism and socialism, the artwork functioned as the

¹⁰ I here use the Marxian and Hegelian definition of 'work' as natural labour and 'abstract labour' as that quantified labour towards value exchange.

¹¹ Peter Osborne, *'The Postconceptual Condition, Critical Essays'*, Verso London, 2018

demonstration of the role of commodification on life, in capitalist societies. The artistic object served (as issue of estrangement) as bridge between the heteronomy of capitalist conditions and the possibility of an autonomous space and of sovereign meaning production. (Since the dematerialisation of art and the emergence of conceptual art, 'object' here is understood in its widest sense as artistic proposition, the dematerialized and conceptualized art points to the processes of information-distribution and -dissemination). The artwork therefor understood in an Adorno-ian sense, as 'heightened estranged object' loses its relevance or agency in the absence of a possible alternative -since the establishment of neoliberalism as remaining ideological-political frame- to the capitalist condition to which it can no longer refer as viable alternative. Since art, loses its meaning as speculative proposition to life, it cannot be measured outside the metrics of economization, it can only affirm the dystopian situation as it is: as the combination of the desire for and the lack of autonomy.

With this assertion of art's subsumption under capitalism, also, the long-held notion of the of art's *exceptionalism* evaporates. This exceptionalism attributed to the production of art, was defined as a position outside of the regular economy and of conditions of production; as a special, shielded form that could, from this conditional outside-position, point towards the possibility of autonomous self-realization and -expression: a critical position in short. This criticality thus was phrased through its exceptional economic framework of production. Although Adorno himself already pictured this as a pessimistic and bleak frame of reference, it did hold such a possibility of a condition outside of capitalism as imaginable. However, as even the semblance of autonomy¹² is being absorbed as object in the economy of value exchange and as abstract labour via the condition of immaterial labour, any form of critical autonomist expression is nullified as artistic expression that can claim to contest the situation. Instead it is taken up in the general all-present workings of the culture-industry¹³, or phrased as Baudrillard would insist: into the totalized texture of aesthetics, where there remains no distinction between art and the operation of economy.

Work, as political-aesthetic object

¹² As Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have shown: the criticality of art as commenting on the capitalist condition has become absorbed in the regular economization of art-production within capitalism, either as innovation or as valorization of art as such in the commodity-market.

¹³ In the post-war (WWII) period until 1989, in Western Europe, the undecidedness between the communist and capitalist block, left the ideological space of an equilibrium between capitalism and socialism open, keeping also the idea of balance between autonomy, as viable force against the heteronomy of capitalism intact.

British writer, educator and art-theorist Marina Vishmidt and German professor of art-theory Kerstin Stakemeier argue that 'work' then becomes the pivotal subject of inquiry and focus of artistic attention.¹⁴ Since the conditions for the production of meaning via art are determined and subsumed by capitalism, the conditions under which work to this production is defined and controlled, becomes the object of aesthetical-political contestation. Their argument follows the rationale that it is only there, below this subsumption, that a remaining notion of autonomy and the potential of reclamation and recovery of an unalienated life from capitalism is to be and to be re-imagined. If we read this through Jacques Rancière, the artistic becomes condensed into a demonstration of the relation and tension between that what dominates versus a life understood as the possibility of an autonomous formation of communal space and activity. Art does so -according to Rancière- by arranging settings that are fully open and radically inclusive and equal,¹⁵ by which automatically the domineering and alternative forms become apparent (as that what prevents, covers and differentiates from this potential). Following Rancière's logic of art, as that what strives to political autonomy, it must do so ultimately on the basis of Radical Equality and the parameter of maximal inclusion as its base pre-condition. As such it stands for the democratic ideal of the organization of community in self-determination.

As all work -as the form of organization of life-, including the artistic, takes place under the conditions set by capitalism, it becomes the object of expression that embodies the relationship between the possibility of sovereignty and that of the heteronomy of the regime of capitalist production.

The activity of work, and the systems of control over its conditions, becomes the locus where a remaining notion (or more disparate: speculation or negative affirmation) of autonomy resides -and therefore what contains resistance as critical potentiality. It is the stripped-down and base version of the Adorno-ian object (the totality of estrangement and alienation) and the locus of the political fight Rancière speaks of. In this logic, and as recognition to the conditions of production, it is the commodification and appropriation that becomes art's basic object of concern and its point of departure. So in an artistic sense 'work' (or the potential to autonomously arrange conditions via the organization of production) becomes both what needs to be wrested away or re-thought from the current domination of life under capitalism; and it replaces the function of the Adorno-ian object to the realm of the organization or structure that shapes 'work'. Or, it at least re-orientates the 'objects' produced in art, not as indications of estrangement, but to the estranged or entangled condition as the default condition. It becomes impossible to consider artistic work without asserting the fact of it being co-opted by capitalism. In short: since capitalism manages even

¹⁴ Kerstin Stakemeier & Marina Vishmidt in *Reproducing Autonomy, Work, Money, Crisis, and Contemporary Art* theorize the notion of 'work' as the base object in artistic production under cognitive capitalism, and they lay out a strong foundation to the idea of solidarity between all sort of work as precarious condition, under capitalist subsumption. Mute Publishing 2016, London/Berlin

¹⁵ In *Aesthetics and its Discontents* Rancière identifies aesthetics as the interpretative mode of works of art as the process of meaning-production as social act. Translation Steven Corchoran, Polity Press, 2009

the criticality of any artistic production -under the semblance of autonomy- under its own regime of production, this regime becomes the base 'object' of critical address.

A further elaboration concerning the institutional structure of contemporary art, and the transnational and global communications and conceptions in it, that needs to be made in relation to what can be considered 'work', follows from its overarching mode of operation. Reading through Peter Osborne: within the structure of contemporary art, regarded as the extended scene of institutional and international artistic production, an amalgamation of authorship is produced, in which the authorship of or accountability for the produced 'object' becomes complex to pinpoint and to identify. This diffused authorship alternates between the positions of artistic director, artist, curator and/or institute/platform as binding, presumed collective and assembled author. Now in cognitive capitalism, I propose, also the theoretical should be included in this ensemble considering the immateriality of art-production: critical theory serves as medium of translation between the different positions in production. It therefore contributes to the aesthetical framework that is produced -the institute's outward aesthetics (its front-end), but also in the bureaucratic entanglement with governance and politics (its back-end), it serves as institutional agency.

The scene of production

The amalgamation of authorship as mentioned above, is closely related to the notion of the 'scene' as proposed by Rancière, in which the totality of reception and production, is considered as author to the artwork. Those who partake in its interpretation, be it artists, critics or audience, take part in establishing its meaning and artistic relevance.¹⁶ The proposition than of 'natural labour', becomes predicated by the possibility of the free play between aisthesis and poesis, so between that what is made and the meaning attributed to or established in it. In short it supposes the sovereignty of the art-aesthetics bind, as the pre-condition to be able to speak of 'a sovereignty' of an amalgamated author. Such a notion of the necessary conjunction of art and aesthetics in order to be become a politically sovereign form, can also be found in the ideas of Giorgio Agamben, where he argues that the language of philosophy (of logos) and that of poetry, have to be thought together, in order to be able to speak of autonomy.

Here the problematic relation to cognitive capitalism becomes clear, as capitalism dominates through economization and through abstractions in communications (poesis-logos), the processes of production. Throughout the layered structure of artistic production and by the division of labour -by which constantly

¹⁶ In *The Politics of Art* an interview with Jacques Rancière on the occasion of his publication *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art* (Verso, London, 2017) he describes art not as medium-specific nor autonomous realm but as a form of heteronomous aesthetics-formation.

ideas of function and operation become translated in fixed concepts that stand apart of what really transpires in the interactions and relations these represent. If not structured non-hierarchically and in recursive feedback where the addressee has a say in how it was perceived in communication, these become independent or stand-alone formulations of ends, of intent through what it supposedly contains as meaning. Considering the structural dominance of capitalism, the coherence of an artistic institutional commission is constantly interrupted by the language of capital that traverses its layers. Any chance of recuperation from this capitalist subsumption though, must necessarily be sought in the art-aesthetics bind (Rancière) or the philosophy-poetry bind (Agamben) since only this is where sovereignty can become manifest. Such recuperation thus also is an issue of the interaction between co-authors that make up the totality of the apparatus of production.

In the institutional settings of bigger and midsize presentation-spaces -biennales and non-commercial museums for contemporary art-, the notion of extended producer-ship has become the norm, at least in name, or is experimented with extensively. Inhouse production of reflection, outward communications, debate, symposia and critical theory accompany in function the presentations of art integrally.¹⁷ These adaptations can in part be retraced as the effectuation of the conceptual legacy, as in taking at hand the elements of distribution and of information-dissemination, as institutional functions. In that sense the institutes have not only become self-aware of the role of institutional forms, but also enact as accommodating artistic platform form.¹⁸ In contemporary art, professed as the core conceptual commission of these institutes, as the overarching manifestation of representing the *contemporary*, the language that has developed, reflects these functions of distribution and dissemination. Such a model of integrated production, initially identified and tabled as institutional matter by conceptual art, has, according to Osborne, developed into the actual global and professional institutional network, as post-conceptual mode of production. So the critique on notions of the roles of dissemination of information as general characteristic in conceptual and formal art, I argue, not only functions within art-production as local formal grammar within an artwork (seen as form of singular and localized expression), but is also to be applied to the language of the network of relations bound by institutional forms.

Within this institutional chain, transferences and transformations take place in the subsequent functions: from board, to director, to curator, to communications-personal, to education departments, to financial departments, to exhibition designers, to discursive and publication programmers, but within the overall

¹⁷ See for instance the introduction of the Venice Biennale 2013 by curator Massimiliano Gioni in which he states: "Blurring the line between professional artists and amateurs, outsiders and insiders, the exhibition takes an anthropological approach to the study of images, focusing in particular on the realms of the imaginary and the functions of the imagination."

¹⁸ The history of artists' experimentations with production as issue of institutional organization, pre-dates this development, and continues to be researched as mutual effort. Think for instance of Joseph Beuys' educational efforts in establishing a school, or Judd's Marfa, the Black Mountain College, or more recently the efforts of Tania Bruguera or Jonas Staal.

idea of its programmatic conceptual premise. Seen than from the art-aesthetics bind, and the 'scene of production' as stipulated by Rancière, all of these positions contribute to the artwork -understood as coherent aesthetical object- that is produced. And seen in respect to the scheme of sovereignty of production, this amalgamated author becomes accountable in artistic-political sense.

How much of this can be realized firstly internally, and secondly outward as aesthetic agency, though? Any attempt to localize, re-trace or process accountability as attempt or ambition to sovereignty, as 'natural labour' -within this web of accountabilities and regimes of quantification, in relation finally to the overall condition of capitalist production - becomes practically impossible, and critical matter to address. Notably by incorporating the element of the production of aesthetics as onboard function on an institutional scale, the issue of sovereignty qua respective accountabilities, shifts. The institute in a sense becomes more complete in that it prescribes it's reading (in critiques of its archive, exhibitions or research trajectories), and concludes this, its propositional reflexivity, as outward communications itself (most times in a hybrid form of promotional communication and as critical production presented as such). Its ambition as autonomous entity expands. Its internal organization, and its relation as coherent proposition towards its surroundings, as productional precondition then becomes the boundary, from which its claim to sovereign action arises (at the same time this also means that it is there where it can be critiqued and accountability arises).¹⁹ The different scales and functions in production, bound by a unified institutional commission, pass through different sets of criteria belonging to different commissioning instances and modes of production and evaluation. The board for instance is held to production-quota and public views, often categorized through a politically -governmentally- phrased objective and set of accountable criteria, while the program-director may want to explore notions that critically address these criteria whilst being bound to professionally and peered formulated criteria of production, while the communications- and knowledge outlets are again bound to yet other registers of production-criteria that are connected to visibility and reach that have their distinct modes and language of operation, compatible or incompatible with the overall institutional commission or the partial functions within it. With the incorporation of aesthetics-production that implies production in the sense of its meaning (but which itself is also bound to economic accountabilities) the total set of accountabilities, which are determined externally, becomes multiplied and obfuscated. On the one hand contemporary art claims in form a programmatic autonomy but in fact this is greatly obfuscated by the arranged mesh of accountability and subsequent heteronomous relations (dependencies/and co-commissions alike).

¹⁹ In the format of Contemporary Art-production as formulated by Peter Osborne in *Anywhere or not at all* (London: Verso, 2013), it is the amalgamation of the different functions in its totality: curating, distribution, the institutional platform, discursivity and -according to me- theory, that acts as author-producer.

Rib's Format

Program and time, convention

So, it are these issues: the formation of artistic production, and its political ambition, that Rib takes as reference for its operation, through critical reflective analysis and through action. The mode that defines Rib's operation consists of a mix of forms that are interrelated. There are the conventional presentations: installations in a white cube context, that are programmed in the commonly adopted timeframe of ca. 6 weeks on and off. This format has become the accustomed mode of presentation in both museums and gallery- and art fair-settings from the 1930's on, and still is the dominant form of presentation, isolating the artwork, enhancing its autonomous status as cultural object in the museum-context. The questions that are foregrounded most in this program often take production, the commodification of objects and work as its subject and theme. This at first appearance confirms a conventional subject and mode of production.

Even though the conditions of this classical mode of presentation in art-production have since long been contested, the vast majority of cultural institutional production is still formatted according to this pattern: exhibitions, subsequently programmed in time, organized, thematised and shaped by curators; the public partakes -from a distance- in the exhibition as onlooker, without having a curatorial say in how or what is presented. A persistent critique, notable phrased by Institutional Critique, that questioned the authorial dominance of this model and that called to implicate and engage the public in a non-hierarchical and co-authorial fashion has by now become the permanent critical counterpart in the tradition of exhibition-making. The question of democratization of the museum, of how to format the curatorial function in an egalitarian and non-hierarchical fashion, how a public can define itself is considered a permanent issue in artistic production. Despite continued criticism, building on Bourdieu for example, on how class and social differences determine the participation in culture via the museum, the traditional idea of the function of the cultural institutions as public place where society reflects on itself via the ideological (now: read capitalist) conditions in which it finds itself, is kept in place. The problem of the institutional form as authoritarian form contrary to democratic demand and development in general, where the museum acts as form that accommodates this exclusionary effect, is an ongoing problematic to which it tries to adapt. So the institute, as public function, still holds the authoritative and curated lead in formatting the cultural institute as the machine or lens that would accommodate processes of self-representation and self-authorization of 'a people', however fraught such a task is.²⁰ It is in this sense that Institutional Critique -as

²⁰ The ideal notion of the museum-space as the space where the bourgeoisie would educate itself through discussing the art displayed as developed after the French revolution, comes under pressure in the age of capitalism and the commodification of culture as argued by Jurgen Habermas.

addressing the problem without exiting its boundary, set by the problem that is referred to- finds its limitation as argued by Marina Vishmidt, in that it cannot exceed what it is part of, part of what is critiqued: the institute of art and the ways in which it manifests and formats itself. ²¹ It positions itself critically without changing it, or challenges its essential mode of 'showcasing objects of critique' and authoritative curatorial position. (This in the end is also a problem of the authoritative position the artistic institute and museum still hold. Artists -like Andrea Fraser- don't limit themselves to these institutes and carry their efforts into fields outside of these -as do numerous others-, still the institute is a catalyst in organizational agency, equipped to organize production and visibility. Self-managed artistic organizations that contest institutional formation, in the ambition to take up its role as societal agents of meaning in cultural production, automatically run into issues of institutionalisation. The role of institute therefor is and remains crucial in how these efforts get disseminated and critically resolved.)

Within Rib's programming there is a consistent line and recurring element of cooperation or of hosting involved, which means that the curatorial position is handed over to the invitee who can use the space to his or hers' intention, or where the installation on show results from a request to participate (as in the conjointly produced Julie de Graag work), sometimes it is a continuation of an earlier cooperation in which the roles of curating, participation and of production already were tested (as in the ongoing and continued cooperation with Sam Basu of *Treignac Projet*). Sometimes the project involves the introduction of a complete body of work that contains an earlier curatorial framework (as in the appropriation of the Hans Walgenbach archive and the *Art by Telephone* catalogue). Or simply by Rib literally acting as host for another initiative, as with *Books at Rib* where the mobile bookstore by Australian artist Matt Hinkley is inserted as mini-platform within Rib, performing at regular intervals.

By stretching the notion of curating in time and place, notions of curating and producing are constantly introduced and transposed from elsewhere and else-when, within the broader sphere of operations of Rib, through which the ambivalence towards or problematic importance of curating as authorial principle, becomes expressed. Maziar Afrassiabi, initiator of Rib and labelled as 'director', is nowhere listed as curator despite the obvious central role he has in all of it, a remarkable omission compared to the practice in the field of art-production, indicative of wanting to table the problematic role of curating in the conventions of production.

²¹ Marina Vishmidt In *Beneath the Atelier, the Desert: Critique, Institutional and Infrastructural*, in *Marion von Osten: Once We Were Artists* (A BAK Critical Reader in Artists' Practice)Eds. [Tom Holert](#), [Maria Hlavajova](#)

Curating.

The curator holds an exemplary role in the system of Contemporary Art. He or she is the nodal position through which the institutional commission and that of the artists is translated. In establishing the selection of artists and that of the theme or subject of the exhibition or program, the curator becomes an author of institutional expression, in his or her own right. This though is hardly ever acknowledged as such. In a conventional institutional setting, the role of curating is carefully mentioned separately, aligning production within the known division of artist as author, and the curator as mere accommodator or enabler towards the realization of the work. See for instance the communications of the *Stroom Invest Week 2018*, a public event at Stroom The Hague, in which curators are invited to discuss the role *intermediaries* i.e. curators and presentation-spaces have vis a vis the artist they represent or work with.²² The publicity mentions the task of these intermediaries as ‘accommodating towards the realization of the artwork’ which determines the interrelationship as geared toward the artist as final author, and there is no mention of the institution’s interest or choice for the artist, and the institutes preconditions from which the engagement departs, in other words its authorial point of departure. Or look at the division Anselm Franke, curator of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, draws between the role of curating and that of the artist, in which he assigns the artist to be necessarily anti-institutional and that of the curator to be institutionally formatted. So, as a Deleuze-ian communicative-noncommunicative binary: an artist’s position would be to resist the instrumentality of institutional communications.²³ Though this describes a dialectical and interdependent relation, the final authorial-artistic that is institutionally communicated is that of the artist. The content that defines the relation between the curator and artist, and thus the contextual frame of conditions of production -the Deleuze-ian dialects-, is not. The final object in the space of exhibition is presented as a sovereign artisterly object of production. The accord though that underlays the production-arrangement is, in the end I argue, the far more substantial content that is performed. Therein lies namely the deeper structural content and arrangement between artist and curator and institute as to what is produced.

The authorship of production of the artwork though, as it is communicated, is allocated firmly to the artist. The myth of creation rest with the artist, not with the curator or institute though these

²² Stroom: https://www.stroom.nl/activiteiten/lezing_symposium.php?l_id=7595775

²³ In an interview I conducted with Anselm Franke (Saas-Fee, Switzerland, 2016) I asked him about his curatorial ideas and the relations with the artists he worked with. “The curatorial task would still, in my eyes, be to... it’s more like an architect, it’s more like creating a space, and an artist is more the person who inhabits, and remakes and destroys, you know like... art I think needs to be largely anti-institutional, and I like to think institutionally, I like to think against all the evils and problems institutions create the task of curating is to create institutional spaces that are..”

are equally communicated, by which the specificity of the task to be performed within the chain of production, remains stratified.

The regimes of austerity -as normalized economic principle of the last decennia that force previously state-supported institutions to market-oriented schemes of financing, put an even greater emphasis on accountability towards the commissioning instances, be they governmental or private. Though the situation differs locally in Europe, and from the economic framework in the US, the underlying mechanisms of under-valorisation and precarious working-conditions are effectuated the same way, as consequence of neoliberal logic. See PBK/Parse text The division of labour, characteristic of capitalism, where workers are made responsible for and acquire self-valorisation from just a segment of the production process, which is maintained through self-management, is mirrored in artistic production, and where under the increasing pressures from austerity and precarization, the responsibilities for one's role in the whole of production becomes increasingly schizophrenic and pressurized.²⁴As instance, that has to bridge -in the commission that is (partly) put by governance and the ideas and input of the artist, the curator-position captures all the inconsistencies and tensions that these different perspectives formally contain. The regime of accountability for visitor numbers or groups of publics that the governmental instance formulates for instance, or a more general political or ethical discord with financing bodies, may counter the intent of an artist for example who would want to challenge such a regime of accountability, of visibility or production as such. Two sets of the overarching concerns for production clash, which would consequently lead to further examination, if the conditions for production that land in the artwork (as resultant from the working-conditions), would be taken seriously. Such response then would constitute the Rancière-ian free play between poiesis and aesthesis, in the sense that a perceived change in the conditions of production (an aesthetical assessment) informs or aligns poetical production (the act of making through an aesthetical assessment) as act of communal interest (do we wish to participate in these conditions) and the political consequence (and if so how?).

Such consequential institutional scrutiny however gets blocked by the stratified regimes of accountability to which the workers are subjected, that becomes an internalized mechanism which translates as care for the whole of the institution. Since all institutions are just as precarious as the curator and the artist alike- the division of labour is solidified in the commission (or threat) of survival. So all have to perform optimally and most efficiently, and subsequently adhere to the productionist principle of maximizing outcome, according to the built-in underlying

²⁴ Isabell Lorey, *Virtuosos of Freedom, On the Implosion of Political Virtuosity and Productive Labour*, EIPCP, 2008

<http://eipcp.net/transversal/0207/lorey/en>

frames of accountability, that ultimately are governed by the neo-liberal frame.²⁵ This renders all suggestion of independence and autonomy as senseless, if these preconditions are not challenged, resisted or mere questioned. As Pascal Gielen remarks in *'Institutional Imagination'*²⁶: the regime of austerity and precarization has turned the creative labourer in self-administrated entrepreneurs who -rather than problematizing the conditions of production, have turned into problem-solvers. Ends that are formulated lead the production processes. Whereas the function of questioning and problematizing are symbolically allocated to that of the artist, within such an assemblage of production, - so limited to the artisterly position- the artistic ability to do so disappears for either position (and what needs to be remarked is that neither curators nor artists are very willing to contest this condition, leaving no difference qua this impediment to either position). This 'myth of creation' thus, that is part and parcel of the exceptional role of the artist and artwork, is instrumental in deflecting critical scrutiny of production processes that thus gets contained within the totality of artistic production. It acts as a lightning-rod for critique on capitalism, obfuscating the economy of production it is supposed to critique.²⁷

The importance of curating as function of distribution in technocratic societies has since long been recognised in artistic practises, and is the pivotal focus in works like that of Andrea Fraser or that of Seth Siegelaub that have stressed this function as the quintessential distributing function of labour-processes in capitalist production, in which labour, material and information are disseminated vis a vis the totality of production, and the objects that are produced. In the case of Seth Siegelaub, important front-runner in shaping art-practice in response to cognitive capitalism's conditions, frustrated with the art-world's inability to match the knowledge and insights produced in conceptual art and Institutional Critique with the practise of the art-world, had led him to exit the art-world as practitioner early on.²⁸

²⁵ Jack Segbars, *Artistic Production in the Context of Neoliberalism*, PARSE journal, Issue 9 Work, 2019 see:

<https://parsejournal.com/article/artistic-production-in-the-context-of-neoliberalism-autonomy-and-heteronomy-revisited-by-means-of-infrastructural-critique/>

²⁶ Pascal Gielen, *Institutional Attitudes: Instituting Art in a Flat World*, Valiz, 2013

²⁷ For an in-depth analysis on the pitfalls between affirmation and critique, where a critical opposition in the production of art, through its power of abstraction in the end hides what is critiqued, see Benjamin Noys' *The Persistence of the Negative*. "The social order produces the ideology of creativity that imputes powers to the artist or worker which she no longer possesses, dissimulating the intensified production of capital by making the abstract disappear. In this situation negativity appears, at best, superfluous or, at worst, commensurate again with the logic of capital. As we have seen, however, the creative ideology produces exactly those models of ontological creativity and primacy that we have been contesting under the name of 'affirmationism'. It is not a matter of abandoning negativity; what is required is its re-figuration away from the dialectical conception that obeys the logic of abstraction." Benjamin Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2010, p166

²⁸ Seth Siegelaub was one of the first artists to coherently combine the elements of archiving, collecting, curating, reflection and presentation in one practice, thus appropriating the constitutive elements as structural organization of cognitive capitalism, as artistic act.

Care vs productionism

The motive of hosting and handing over as curatorial principle that characterizes Rib as mentioned before, resonates with the notion of *care* through as developed by Donna Haraway as organizational principle to resist capitalist subsumption and of productionism. The detrimental effects of productionism (as the unbridled and unleashed exploitation of nature and human by economization of production) can only be addressed in stepping aside from the anthropocentric viewpoint and to adopt a generalized notion of care, a care to what is outside of what is human, through a sense artificial self-alienation: of xeno-fication. In a similar vein Anthony Huberman explores this notion in art-production in the text *Take Care*.²⁹ Here he discusses the importance of the mode of institutional operation, on how to conduct oneself within artistic production. Against the negative exploitative role of curating Huberman formulates a counter model, via the curator's central situatedness in production. In conventional practice the role of curating too often is that of extraction of the artwork and to explain it to the audience by which the institutes' or curator's understanding becomes the exhibited object. Huberman advocates a more subdued and distanced handling of what transpires between audience, institute and artwork. Care would also mean to resist the new as the driving objective in production, and to focus on how a slow appeal on curiosity and interest can organize milieus or ecologies of self-determined values in exchange. Care here is to be understood as a mutual investment of all involved. A similar idea, where especially the smaller scale of institutional practices could deploy such organizational idea of care, is voiced in *Peripheral Proposals* by Mark Fisher and Nina Möntmann.³⁰ They argue that the smaller scale of institutional organization would be better equipped to produce from under the radar of economized regimes, thereby channeling a different kind of care for the commons by fostering and promoting new and local alliances.

Time

Next to the conventional presentational format of producing on and off exhibitions as program, Rib engages also in co-production on a long-term basis. *Ghost Stories of the British Museum* initiated by Francis Gooding & Noah Angell is such a project, the research-results of which are shown in regular intervals at Rib. It is research into of the sightings by the employees (stewards or other staff) of strange and supernatural (ghostly) phenomena during their work there: guarding the halls, cleaning and repair-

Dissatisfied with the market-driven conditions and continued valorization of its objects of the artworld, he departed it in 1972. It was Joseph Kosuth who coined his practice as 'curator at large', combining all these function within the general idea of curating.

²⁹ See: <https://www.theshowroom.org/library/take-care>

³⁰ Mark Fisher and Nina Möntmann, *Peripheral Proposals*, published in: Binna Choi, Maria Lind, Emily Pethick, Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez (eds.), *Cluster: Dialectionary*, Berlin (Sternberg Press) 2014, 171-182.

and maintenance work at the British Museum. The accounts of these sightings, in the form of interviews with these employees, are presented as audio-work in the gallery. The lower echelon of workers that is approached for these interviews, thus provides for a counter-account to an official and canonized art history that is normally communicated by the official directorate and institutional communications, art-historical department and curators of the museum. These accounts -as artwork- produce a parallel alternative history, that is established via time and work spent in and through, the vicinity of art-histories', official artefacts, - (and at the service of these) the artworks- that represents the material body of official art-history, collected and presented in the museum. The work invested by these laborers, as abstract labor performed in the service of the museum that is the official author of the nation's grand narrative, as laborers that maintain the museum's operation -and its authorship- going, is purposely redirected to a new narrative, by appropriating the work, that was originally performed in service of the host or master, into a new work: an alternative history or account as cultural work presented in Rib. It is an artistic strategy reminiscent of Institutional Critique's Hans Haacke or Andrea Fraser who instrumentalize and appropriate the actual sites of cultural production to critically reflect on the conditions of these sites, and to question the rationale leading to their hegemonic authority and the ideology to be found under these manifestations of authority.³¹ The normally regarded insignificance of maintenance- or service-work here is promoted to cultural authorial and art-productive work. Here though not so much an alternative is looked for to supplant the official history, to recolonize it curator-ally and author-wise, but rather to destabilize such a fixation at all. First an effect of estrangement and dislocation is produced by the ghostly and supernatural nature of the accounts, and secondly by the unstable status of the production of *Ghost Stories of the British Museum* as total project. The scope of authorships in the production: Rib, the museum-workers and the artists³², and the ambiguous finalization of form of the project, that will be concluded in a publication rather than in a definitive sculptural form or installation, undercut the possibility of the exhibited presentation to become fixed, commodifiable cultural artefacts.

The publication as form of artistic production has become very popular in recent year as extra-artistic platform.³³ It has proven a grateful model to address conflicting issues in artistic

³¹ See for example Hans Haacke's work *MomaPoll*, 1970 where plexiglass containers acted as ballot boxes on the issue of the Vietnam war and the politics of Governor Nelson Rockefeller, founder of the museum. This way the sculptural quality of the and site of the museum (MoMa, New York) were turned into modes of public artistic-political inquiry. Or Andrea Fraser's video *Little Frank and His Carp*, 2001, which is situated in the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum where Fraser can be seen performing a parodying critique on the Guggenheim's mode of communication, and how this is related to its expansion as global museum franchise and the architectural shape this takes.

³² See: <http://www.ribrib.nl/exhibitions/ghost-stories>

³³ To name some of many: Mousse, After All, etc. In the Netherlands alone there has been a big expansion in recent years of independent initiatives or institutions that produce publications and exhibitions in conjunction with each other or separate: Printroom, Publication House, Onomatopee, Walter PietZwartInstitute, WdW Review or that focus on aesthetics: Valiz, Octavo and MaHKUscript.

production as aesthetization, sovereignty and authorship where these elements can be researched and experimented with through self-organized editing and selection. Since it has practically become feasible and cheap to produce independently, it captures production issues that represent these issues in the economy at large, in a form that de-locates, de-institutionalizes, questions issues of authorship, that yet offers an objectifying distance as it is bound in a single, unifying form. In resisting hyper-commodification, it emphasizes estrangement of producing and curating as speculative projection. These become appropriated relics after the imagined, conventional economy of production, re-captured in the form of a publication as 'documentation' to life, as last resort to reclaim a notion of life, as miniaturized space, under bio-politics, as afterlife, as worded by Boris Groys³⁴. The portability and personal accessibility of any publication, as pseudo-reclaiming of autonomous production in total, recalls maybe here Marcel Duchamp's strategy of the portable down-scaled museums he hand-crafted, including his own works as miniatures, the so-called '*La-boîte-en-valise*' works.³⁵ Though these 'meta-objects' do not escape commodification -maybe even precisely not-, they refer to the scales of production, and to the relation between idea and value as malleable relations. Content is affordable and within reach on a human scale. Here with the inclusion of text as material of mediation, the discursive and of dialogue, and of all that partake in production rather than the singular artists' artefacts -as in Duchamp's case-, indicate the relevance of the wider infrastructure of producing as central address and as artistic material to be considered.

Another program-segment that responds to the current conditions of production, is *24/7* where artists present work that can only be witnessed online and that is broadcasted 24/7 or during times the gallery is closed. It is sent from a niche-location within Rib that is inaccessible and invisible to its regular gallery-visitors. The works shown, range from context and site-specific performances and installations, to existing video's that contextually fit the 24/7 idea that delineates the notion of constant temporal occupation by capitalism. This format expands the time of production and of visibility, while also diluting these and it relocates the consumption/reception of what is produced to the homely/virtual realm. One of the works produced within this format is *Tête à tête* by Clementine Edwards which was a performance-program, live-streamed daily from 10 to 12 AM, during a six-week period, outside the regular opening hours, performed from the 24/7 location in Rib. The subject addressed in the performances (communication and routine in the face of trauma), again, was captured through the lens of work: the laborious exercise of repeated performance. Probably few people have seen these performances, yet these were rigorously

³⁴ Boris Groys *Art in the Age of Biopolitics*, in *Art Power*, 2008 MIT Press

³⁵ Between 1935 -1940 and again between 1950-1960 Duchamp produced several versions of portable museums as modified suitcases, containing a selection of his oeuvre. Most were replica's but in each there was one original work.

executed. It relocates the realm of production to the delocalized and seeming unproductive space of the virtual and to the fragmented public's time of engagement. It gyrates towards an idea of negative production: time and labor are wasted, unvalidated at least in a capitalist sense. Thus, thinning and countering regular modes of production in de-production and resistance to visibility as production medium of our times. Self-precarization as internalized condition, brought on by the economic regime in which we exist, that enforces us to perform under precarious conditions of uncertainty and risk, and where the distinction between private time and work has dissipated, is taken up as the material to engage with.³⁶

The deliberate split in Rib's working formats: the regular opening-hours and that of the 24/7 format, mimics the regime of current labor-conditions we find ourselves in. The former format seemingly acknowledges a division between working-time and free-time to still exist, while we are in fact occupied by the non-stop work regime of the globalized digital economy as acknowledged by the 24/7 frame. It stresses the fact that we are constantly producing through processes of seemingly autonomous self-valorization extending to our free time. By executing this work within the 24/7 frame with its poor working-conditions and poor return of investment qua exposure and visibility, the importance of how we are compliant to formats (notably via self-administration) in production is emphasized (the work could easily have been executed in the gallery-space and -time), expanding on the notion of alienation through contemporary working regimes. In this sense the format can be seen in correspondence to the work *Closed Gallery Piece* that conceptual artist Robert Barry made in 1969.³⁷ This work consists of several iterations in gallery spaces whereby the gallery really is closed off for the exhibition-period, illustrated by a sign saying: *During the exhibition the gallery will be closed*. In this case the subject is a critique on the tension in artistic production between the ideology of the dematerialization of the artwork versus its commodification (as issue between artwork and gallery). In the Clementine Edwards work in the 24/7 format, the possibility to such a critique gets relocated to the gallery-space itself as platform and materialization of production, within the conditions set by the digital economy and its all pervasiveness and occupation of time. Where -now- the quality of dematerialization is absorbed into the economic circulation (in art as well as in cognitive labor) and where the return for the artist is equally poor. The gallery so to speak as resort and as space to reflect upon, has been absorbed into the economy at large. In the end as space it has dissipated as locus for critique, still it functions in a zombie-like fashion.

The last branch of Rib's production-outlets is *Squirting Wound—A peer-writing environment*

³⁶ As demonstrated by Isabell Lorey, the economy of continued neo-liberal and austerity policies produces regimes of working conditions where mechanisms of self-valorization are absorbed into exploitative modes of producing. Isabell Lorey, *Governmentality and Self-Precarization*, EIPCP.net, June 2001, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/lorey/en>

³⁷ Camiel van Winkel, *During the Exhibition the Gallery Will be Closed*, Contemporary Art and the Paradoxes of Conceptual Art, 2012, Valiz, Amsterdam

which is broadly directed at producing around the same general theme of artistic production but here (predominantly) by means of text. Authors are specifically invited, of which some also presented in earlier exhibition-presentations. The works that are presented on a specially designated part of the Rib-website, are either fully poetical texts or texts that often contain self-referential and -critical reflections on acts of 'making' or of becoming. These demonstrate text, following the idea of dematerialization of art -so also on the assertion of text as art-, as part of artistic production and how it has become a plastic material that can reflect on the wider structure of artistic production. As self-critical medium (and so as re-instating its autonomy in heteronomy) commenting on its (art's) coming into being, text as medium contains and evokes moments of discursive, as well as critical, and interpretative and poetical nature. Structurally this binds art and aesthetics in a conversation. These represent the moments in the artistic process in which the work is continued as conversation between these elements: they assess, suggest, invoke direction and aim and address a speculative viewer and move forward, and that circle around each other, without any of these taking the final lead or have a decisive say. Structurally this binds art and aesthetics in a conversation. See for example Nick Carr's work: *I can Help You Remember*³⁸ where a fictional protagonist can be heard -speaking through the interface of computer-code language, addressing a speculative viewer. Through the interaction, in which an effort is made to establish contact, likewise the question of the protagonist's reality is posed as is the language needed to do so. In the end it are the questions around technology, language and mediation that establish a position and frame that accommodate subjectivity, the work seems to postulate and test. The same can be said about another work on the website by Daniel Vorthuys *I am not Hyacinthus*.³⁹ This is a live registration of a performance in Rib in which Vorthuys adopts the myth of Hyacinthus to his performance in which he, again, is in search for a protagonist that might be speaking, a speculative narrator. The text proclaimed by Vorthuys speaks through the myth of Hyacinthus, the symbol of beauty who was unintentionally killed by his lover Apollo. His death was indirectly caused by an intervention of the god of the west-wind Zephyrus, in an act of jealous competition over the love of Hyacinthus. This mythical narrative pictures beauty as accidental victim of both reason and logos (Apollo) and of desire and the acknowledgment of love, which subsequently constitutes the unfolding of drama. Vorthuys here uses the historical narrative as aesthetic lens to his performance: poetry negotiated through aesthetics, laying out the interrelationship between poesis (the time of performance) and aesthesis (the intelligibility that is produced through historical frame and reference).

38 <http://www.ribrib.nl/squirting-wound/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/ICANHELPLYOUREMEMBER-NCARR.pdf>

39 <http://www.ribrib.nl/squirting-wound/daniel-vorthuys/httpswww-youtube-comwatchv6evl-cwavek/>

The exchange between the registers of aesthetics and art, refers strongly to what Agamben lays out in his publication *The Idea of Prose*⁴⁰. In this text the interconnection is explicated between poetical texts -that do not convey an idea but convey an experience- with philosophical texts -that are able to transmit memory and content- as interdependent forms of text. The argument goes that both rely on each other's quality and operation to obtain one's respective relevance: poetry is able to break and undercut the authority brought on by logos, and logos is capable of being poetry's memory (which again can -or must- be undercut by poetry). In conjunction it breaks down *a text* from becoming authoritative, dominant and sole sovereign over the rest, and gives way to the immanence of becoming, in a dialectical cycle, in a form that becomes stable in communication and in time.

As introduction on Rib's website to this section, this format's intention is to present the potential of text to go beyond the assumed conventional deployment of text in art-production: as mere reflective and critical production of text.⁴¹ A statement that clearly assumes text, in the realm of institutional artistic production and representation, to be limited to a passive-receptive, critically discursive position, and of missing the required *poiesis* in production as pendant of the logos emanating from discursive and recruiting texts. The critical argument that is made, is that art's institutions -in total, including its communication- should be thought of in line with the logic of art itself, and not be severed from it. Its outward aesthetics should follow from its self-stated artistic commission as such. Implicitly it is suggested -and critiqued- that text, in an institutional context, is used more as tool of institutional promotional governance than of (self-) critical artistic production. In Duchamp's case the institutional handling was displayed implicitly through his *boites* as critical objects, now the criticality shifts to the institute. Institutional aesthetics here is negatively pictured by Rib as the mere instrumental to the institute's self-declaration and as instrument to its hierarchical position. This suggests that the institutional form here undercuts the promise or ideal of institutionally produced art. Following Agamben, the poetical is missing in institutional production in the 'productive' altercation between aesthetics and poetics.

Text

The role of textual production usually takes, in the institutionalized manifestations of Contemporary Art, is instrumental to the whole of the institute's production-processes. As outward communications, it is most times aimed to inform and to commend the institute's

⁴⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *The Idea of Prose*, translated by Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt, 1995, State University of New York Press, Albany

⁴¹ As taken from the website: "*Squirting Wound* is directed towards new voices in literature within the context of the plastic arts as an arena that gives a unique perspective from which to explore the politics of poetry, poises, and linguistic ontology. The writing platform seeks to expand on the relations of thought to the invention of new language games with special attention to their relation to the World and not only as reflection and critique."

production to the public, and so to maximize its output. In the back-end of the institute, kept from the public, the layered structure of production equally is shaped through text. The institute's role and purpose are formulated in year-programs that serve as frames for funding, and that meet requirements that are set out by governance and politics. These frames provide the feedback in which the institute inscribes its model for production. Here the governmental directives (publics targeted, required audience numbers, education-functions, thematic requirements etc.) are translated in the different registers of the institute. The effects these may have, and that possibly contain political contentious implications qua the institute's self-commission from those phrased externally, are hardly ever outwardly communicated. These tensions are buried in the bureaucratic interiors of the institutes while these arguably contain quintessential information on the nexus between art and politics. Under increasing neo-liberalization this has meant that the institute accommodates and allocates a greater part of its operation towards financial self-sufficiency and market, yet it has to maintain -in public communication- its artistic societal purpose. Under financial pressure caused by the general trend of austerity and a decline of funding towards the arts, competition for scarcer resources among institutes has grown significantly. The tension that exists, between the outward communication, and the lack of communication of its internal considerations -representing the shift in operation that is ordered by politics-, constitutes a black hole qua the missing exposition of the tension between its supposed autonomy and that of its external commissioning instances, its heteronomy. So, this lack, is also *a lack of text*. Opening up of this lack in text may halt or disturb the regime of production, or at least table the political shift that affects production. Failing to do so, the institute is thus in the end compliant with the normative production-regime that we have, and thus with the regime of subsumption. Coming back to Rancière's art-aesthetics bind in this respect: the exchange between aisthesis and poiesis that Rancière speaks of, would need the space and arrangement of free play between them, in order to produce a true political space.⁴²

The production of theoretical and public discourse, in the meantime, characteristic media of cognitive capitalism, has become an important institutional asset: with the introduction of discursive knowledge (most times in the form of education and symposia, but also in connecting to the fields of science and humanities) new audiences are produced, that along with the expansion of curating and other art related educational forms, led to a need for new discourses in

⁴² De Appel, Amsterdam may be mentioned here that in its current formation and program explores a daring mode of production, where production itself is established through self-critical reflection. It must be noted though that this mode has been forced by a crisis of funding.

which critical-theoretical discourse became prominently present.⁴³ Besides these developments, in conjunction with the changing role of art-history that has stepped down from its role as authoritative voice towards meaning and interpretation (incidentally resulting from the same critical attitude towards the normative, following post-structuralism), and the rise of cultural studies, the institutes have begun writing their own archives through aesthetic production, that are in fact self-commissioned and self-produced.⁴⁴ Thereby shortcutting the production-interpretation divide -or the poiesis-aesthesis divide, appropriating it through self-management. These act as the extra outlet platforms of institutional production, by which they -partly as side effect following the formal logic of production -and open up to the public-, partly out of opportunism- guarantee themselves of the audience requirements as stipulated by governmental decree for continued funding. Knowledge-production and criticality become part of the economy of institutions, that are imbricated in the larger economic constellation.

In the end this resulted in a proliferation of text that is diverted and disseminated in the different registers of the art institute: the artistic, the archival, the administrative, the critical, the public and towards commissioning instances. In this 'complex of text-production' it becomes extremely hard to detect or retrace the relation between what is critically or analytically asserted, how such assertions can be made operational (to put to work), or how its production itself is operational (works) in the conditions in which it is produced, to begin with. The aesthetic component here in the Rancière-an art-aesthetics bind is infinitely compromised.

In this diffused complex it becomes impossible to have control over, gain autonomy over one's segment in production -organized through division of labor that produces a mode of self-administration-, given the numerous regimes of accountability in the other segments of production. The *lack of text* that I mentioned earlier is therefore an infrastructural issue. The *organization* of production then becomes the focal point that Walter Benjamin speaks of in *The Author as Producer*, where there is no single author -or an author- that can speak vis a vis the 'object' that is produced, but rather the organization as authorial principle, in our times.⁴⁵ The distribution of information in cognitive capitalism is a social act of 'handing over', yet in these transferences accountability is lost. Or in the sense Agamben words: there is no poiesis

⁴³ The last decades have shown a big expansion of curatorial courses and with the introduction of notably the master-structure in education after Bologna, the need for theoretical discourse has grown extensively.

⁴⁴ See for example the numerous publication- and/or platform-formats in the higher educational-presentational-curatorial fields, to name a few: Afterall, On-Curating, E-Flux, Mousse, BAK etc. that all produce their own archives instantly, as these produce knowledge. As seeming strategies to reclaim autonomy, these produce their own modular isles of production.

⁴⁵ In *The Author as Producer* Benjamin deflects the question a works' political meaning to the question of how it is situated in its time, in its technological infrastructural embedding.

transference through the philosophical-aesthetical to act as container, memory or carrier for it and the poetics of the institute does not materialize.

Text -in its two-registered institutional use: as bureaucratic communications that designates and manages functions, and text as critique, as critical content, that is partly absorbed into the first register, blends into a diffused authorship. In an infrastructural sense, it becomes a two-folded curatorial instance in its own right: next to its critical exterior and as translation in the bureaucratic register, it serves to allocate, direct, select, and establishes the framework of means and ends in production.

By having each production-segment in its own regime of accountability⁴⁶ yet in concordance towards the whole, its resistance through concerted aesthetical operation vs capitalism becomes muddled, leaving the capitalist machine unhindered. As text is both artistic material and the material tool of cognitive capitalism, to disentangle the issue of text-authorship then becomes the task at hand.

This entanglement has been described by Paolo Virno as caused by the transformation of capitalism, by the introduction of cognition and language in our production-processes. According to Virno the inclusion of intellectual labor, or cognitive labor also entails the introduction of a political agency to the work-floor, in that it orders and arranges social relations: it acts therefor politically. This political agency through seemingly sovereign, creative and independent actions - which also means it has an aesthetical component in that it is performed-, still is very contained by the limits posed by the infrastructure of organization. This he describes as the autonomy that capitalism allows its workers, a partial autonomy that is needed in the end to become more profitable for capitalism itself. Creativity and autonomy therefor are subsumed under capitalism in a constant cycle of reining in. As the qualities of intellect, language and of collaboration are the foremost qualities of social prosperity -of 'the general intellect' as he calls it-, but that also constitute the means of production, this is where who holds the control over these, meets the hold capitalism exerts over these. For Virno it then is the quality of art that can express the *dismasure* between the hold capitalism exerts on the forms of life and those subjected to this rule: the effects these have and these not fit with the self-determined ideas and desires people have qua measures of life. Art may propose new standards of living through investigating and indexing new forms of living.⁴⁷ This complicates the question on how to identify the disparity,

⁴⁶ In our bureaucratized societies, the different strata of production are structured through different sets of criteria aligned with different ends, designated to each stratum. This is how Dave Beech identifies the theories of Max Weber to effect art-production.

⁴⁷ *The Dismasure of Art*, An interview with Paolo Virno, by Sonja Lavaert, Pascal Gielen, nov 2009

<http://www.onlineopen.org/the-dismasure-of-art>

since these contain qualities, operation and positions that are imbricated in all categories and activities that make up life. Any idea of praxis -as political action- must therefore be thought from within this imbrication.

The textual outlet *Squirting Wound*, as structural part of Rib, can be interpreted as responding to the institutional practice of use of text. Most texts that are presented interlace both the element of poetics with the conventional form of institutional production or that implement quasi scientific art-historical or theoretical/aesthetical texts by which a sense of activating or outward aesthetics is evoked. This way it counter-mimics and addresses the discursive, informational and recruiting mode of texts of institutional artistic production. At the same time it also is a means to build a space for autonomous poetic production. Yet it does so, seen from a birds-eye perspective, in an act of (over)identification, to demonstrate the occupation of this mode of production by the more conventional, institutional forms, that are better equipped and have the resources, to produce these extensions. In doing so it identifies text and the objects of knowledge-production as the generic material of capitalist production, and the ways it functions in artistic production.

To use the term 'outlet' as I did, to describe this segment, ironically reflects the expansion of text in our current form of production that, though it aims at critique, equally is commodity-object and form of production in cognitive capitalism. As the 'outlet' is the unglamorous and profane point of dissemination - and thereby that of art's singularity-, it reflects the deflated quality text has in this respect.

The scene as a field of production / Institutional gathering of function as object of critique

This broad scope of production-forms that are generated and that that intertwine within Rib's operation, that mimics and deconstructs the current mode of institutional artistic production, becomes a means to critically engage with this model. The roles that curating and text hold, as symptomatic elements of cognitive capitalism in contemporary art vis a vis the notion of 'work' as self-organization and aesthetics, are specifically addressed in Rib's mode of production.

The underlying principle of the wider assemblage of positions and fields contributing to the aesthetics that is produced, resonates with the notion of the 'scene' as formulated by Jacques Rancière where he identifies the whole range of forms that partake in artistic production as contributing to the aesthetics in

case.⁴⁸ Included are all participants, without hierarchical division of medium-specific qualities: discourse, curating, publics, organisation and distribution all are part of the 'scene' of production. They are bound by the overall idea of participating in a general cultural political and ideological, though temporary and unstable, form of community. Within the idea of production of aesthetics as a matter of political action, as entering the arena of the *distribution of the sensible*,⁴⁹ 'the scene' is the notion of amalgamation and field of functions and positions -as form- that enables this political engagement. Art in its direct bind with aesthetics, art-aesthetics, is here organized as production format.

It is this format into which many of the institutions have been (self)transformed, or of which they have adopted many elements. It follows, generally speaking, the idea of artistic production to contain readings of art as the perpetuation of the artwork. This is in line with the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* as developed through Romanticism (Schlegel and Novalis) where reflection and critique are integral part of the experience of the artwork, and where critique serves to delve, discover the artworks' meaning in an act of actually finalizing it. This notion was further developed by Walter Benjamin in *The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism*.⁵⁰ Understood from such an overarching idea of production, critique and reading here being the discursive, educational and public-programming, that aim to critically assess the issues brought on in conjunction with the rest of the institute's program.

Summarizing, and as mentioned before: this development concerning this institutional formation contains a political ambition. By bringing the forms of production and reflection together, as in the Rancière-ian art-aesthetics bind, the notion of a complete institutional body arises, that would be catered and able to engage politically -and aesthetically- with the heteronomy of conditions (which usually also is expressed and identified as its societal ambition).

At the same time such an ambition follows or is constrained by the logic of capitalism, in that it does not or cannot step outside of the conditional frame of production, nor is the critical function really opened up to a public and does this inclusion of the critical function remain curated, and thereby limited, by the institute. These base problematics and conditions, that are at the root of the institutional apparatus, as

⁴⁸ In *The Politics of Art* an interview with Jacques Rancière on the occasion of his publication *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art* (Verso, London, 2017) he describes art not as medium-specific and autonomous realm but as a form of heteronomous aesthetics-formation.

⁴⁹ The distribution of the sensible, is the well-known Rancière-ian conceptualization of aesthetics as political form, by which registers and forms of expression, visibility and agency are arranged.

⁵⁰ Walter Benjamin, *The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism*, (GS I 65; SW I 151)

said before remain un-expressed and are not addressed enough.⁵¹

One can say that these tensions remain undisclosed as the institutional paradox that sits in the heart of art-production. As worded by Boris Groys in the *Communist PostScript*, the issue in this conundrum is that speech cannot ever speak paradox-free truth, similar to the problem that exists in philosophy (here Groys defends a maximal dialectical materialistic standpoint).⁵² The philosophers task then though would have to be, as Groys channels Socrates, to disclose the paradox as core fact of, here, as institutional praxis. The paradox has to be acknowledged and be made public though. I argue the *lack of text*, as mentioned before, to be the concealment of this paradox in artistic production in general.

Countering and mimicking – Estrangement as institutional opposition

By appropriating the institutional set-up of art production and by mimicry of the institutional format, and the effects of alienation these produce, alienation as structural given is taken up as instrument to engage with. As in the Brecht-ian theatre, where it was the classical theatre, with its distancing between audience and play, that was used as model reference-point to formulate a critique towards the commodification produced in capitalist economy, here the institutional set-up of artistic production is used -as mirror-object- to bring about an awareness of the alienation that is produced in it, in which we partake as consumers-producers. As James Williams argues in *Alienation*,⁵³ the demonstration of estrangement brought on by altering the accustomed working-conditions, as Brecht did by problematizing the distance between what was produced on stage and the audience, by annulling this distance, an awareness was produced on the alienation produced in capitalist production. In Rib's constellation of production all relational functions are re-organized critically demonstrating how these function under subsumption. The *dismeasure* that Virno speaks of, as image of the infrastructure of skewed social relations, skewed by the measure set by capitalism and the effects it has, is put on display in work. Such approach also resonates with the accelerationist notion of embracing alienation as fundamental state, which can be used to address issues of organization. This requires a mode of detachment, of seeing oneself from a third-person perspective in the world, from which the abstractions made by capitalism, and that are turned into subjective desires and commodity fetishization and subsequent self-administration, can be recognized.⁵⁴ This strategy of *xeno-fication* is developed amongst others by Armen Avanessian and Laboria Cubonics

⁵¹ There are of course exemptions that precisely aim at researching the groundwork and frame of conditions to their own production models, CASCO in Utrecht, W.A.G.E., Van Abbe Museum Eindhoven, Appel Amsterdam may be mentioned in this respect, that each in their own manner work through these issues.

⁵² Boris Groys, *The Communist Postscript*, Verso, London/New York, 2009

⁵³ James Williams in *Alienation*, in Posthuman Glossary, editors Rosi Braidotti & Maria Hlavajova, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018

⁵⁴ Marx develops this notion through the assertion that is human nature itself that requires man to look at him/herself as thing in the world, as subject-object composite, Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy in General*, 1959

who, each in their own rights, radicalize and absorb the notion of xeno-fication towards praxis, instrumentalizing the idea of xeno in aesthetical practices.⁵⁵

Rib takes up estrangement as institutional instrument by addressing the issue of **time** in which we produce, as all-pervasive as with the 24/7 format. The 24/7 form extends the depth and width of address that is sought: production takes place out of the accustomed focus of attention -the gallery as presentation-place-, and outside of the frame of regular working-hours; and thereby permeates into the tissue and duration of life as such. All our time is work, is working, is producing, and is consuming. It further mimics the complication brought on by the closed cycle of criticality and **overlap of function**, in both producing the objects and critical reflection. There is an overlap between the formats: artists that have presented in one of the formats -in the regular presentation format, may also perform in another as author-the writerly *Squirting Wound*. The idea of poiesis is put forward as self-referential cycle between production and reflection, and of a continued time and discussion with itself. This addresses the necessary and generative interaction between inside and outside, it demonstrates the bind of autonomy and heteronomy in producing. This is done by way of a conflation of the two, as Brechtian theatrical annulment of space between making and reflection, production and consumption.

The website becomes a **platform** in its own right, on which the archival, productive, and communications-function are combined. The *Squirting Wound*-**texts**, accessible through the website are simultaneously **documentation** and **reflection** on production. At the same time this is the place where these works are **experienced in real-time**. The website acts as combined outlet for further **dissemination, experience** and **distribution**. The documentation of the exhibitions instantly creates an **archive** and place of **experience**. This platform-*idea of* mediation is the overall *form* in which the much of the institutional communication have been turned into, here though it immediately is a space of experience, rather than referring to experiences elsewhere. Together it follows the same logic of total-production in which art and aesthetics are combined. Means and ends overlap, the website is a productive place, and not solely a promotional instrument to something else.

The critical view on **curating** -formulated by Rib- and the pivotal role it takes in artistic production now, likewise is elaborated upon by extending the notion of production beyond that of the limited space of presentation and its accustomed cycle of production. Curating as mediating instance between viewer and artist, and for consumption, (of the gallery-visit and -space) becomes expanded into the time and space

⁵⁵ See for example Laboria Cubonics, *Xenofeminism, A Politics of Alienation*, www.laboriacuboniks.net or Armen Avanesian, introduction in *Perhaps it is High Time For a Xenoarchitecture to Match*, forthcoming Sternberg Press, 2018

before and after the moment of encounter, in the form of its virtual **archive**, which de-commodifies the exchange. **Curating** as the generalized principle of **distribution of information** then not so much entails the unproductive **history** of the space and the **time** of production, it does however shape it as redundant, unproductive space, as a negative space. As we can visit the website on the works presented, as and when we like, the notion of work -and that of abstract labour- becomes infinitely stretched, to the point of the difference between them to become irrelevant.

If we all work under cognitive capitalism's conditions, and likewise partake in its distribution and in its historicization, any time -there is no centralized origin of work, no identifiable commissioning instance, and we also can and must consume/produce all the time, then work has become continuous, we have become continuous workers, is the xeno strategy Rib performs. This also means the total **dissolution of curatorship** then as understood in the tradition of conceptual art, exposing that of capitalism's curatorship as totalizing hegemonic form. A re-appraisal of the term '*Curating at large*' that Joseph Kosuth used to describe fellow artist Seth Siegelaub's practise, can be used to update the relevance and nature that curating has as central role in our time. Linking the historic line of conceptual art of the 1970's to the contemporary conditions of network capitalism. The formal notion of distribution has become the overriding principle that integrally organizes artistic production within capitalism.

Further close reading, the social relations in the infrastructure of production

4 works, 55 artists, one drawing

In the show ***4 works, 55 artists, one drawing*** (February 2016) many of the considerations put before, come together and can be identified. The exhibition consists of several elements, brought together in an installation-setting. One of these elements is an iteration of Sol Lewitt's *Equivalent of No. 26*, -executed by RIB-director Afrassiabi himself- a conceptual work by one of the masters of conceptual art. The work, to be executed, as a specifically defined and measured grid of lines (within which a space of freedom of execution is left), is made according to the instructions of the artist. The instructions refer to the one performing the work as 'local draughtsman'. This specific work though -executed at Rib- results not only from this source, it stems from other filters as well. It was intended as part of an exhibition that was never realized (due to technical problems that prevented its realization), and which would have been an exhibition of conceptual works executed strictly through instructions being given by telephone. The problems with the unrealized show resulted yet in a catalogue containing all the projected works. The catalogue hereby has become an archive of failure, documenting intended but never realized projects, an archive of failed speculative objects. On the other hand, apart from being a mere catalogue of works, it

can be regarded as the pinnacle of conceptual art, in its unrealized state, by remaining idea. This catalogue: *Art by Telephone*, 1969, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is exhibited centrally in the exhibition-space.

Another filter is the reference to yet another rendition of the LeWitt work, this time by David Platzker, Specific Objects/Publications and drawings curator of MOMA. The e-mail exchange between Afrassiabi and Platzker, that took place concerning this work, is posted on the announcements-page on the Rib-website of this show. It speaks of Platzker's admiration of the work, as what can never be the same, though it is repeated, it will always be different in each performance.

The work thus re-appears in multiple re-iterations, that account for its historic appearance -or failure to appear- in practice. It is revived again, paying homage to the conceptual legacy, and shown in its contextual variety of re-appearances, but likewise demonstrating the hick-ups of this legacy. As with the *Closed Gallery Piece* by Barry, Sol Lewitt's *Equivalent of No. 26* work can manifest both as critique and as productive work, as Camiel van Winkel notices in his analysis of Barry's works⁵⁶ It is both an expression of the impossibility of the realization of its immaterial value in the market of commodification, or it can establish itself as precisely the fact of unique and singular object of production via each manifestation of it, via its conceptual instruction. Here, by the fact that this binary of its effectuation (almost as issue of ethics and of choice in production) is framed through the curatorial (Platzker and Afrassiabi) and documentational (as information of these considerations on the promotional website), indicates the importance of the conditions of production now, in which this choice comes about: as curatorial and informational propagation and dissemination. In Barry's case the choice entailed a quasi-negation and of closure of the production-process: maximizing the conceptual gesture, by its almost total-dematerialization. As this nevertheless still needs the physical space and condition from which to negate itself from, the possibility of space as repository to formulate a critique from (as gallery-space), is honored.

Chicken and value

After Julie de Graag, Studieblad met kippen en kuikens, 1877–1924) -1

This emphasis on the conceptual legacy (and its institutional manifestations) is juxtaposed by another work in the show which addresses a similar problem of institutional artistic production. The work *After Julie de Graag, Studieblad met kippen en kuikens, 1877–1924* is a drawing made by several renowned and established artists from the direct social vicinity of Rib who were invited to participate by Afrassiabi and to respond to an existing drawing by Julie de Graag. This work is a study of chicken-, in which a number of

⁵⁶ Camiel van Winkel, *During the Exhibition the Gallery Will be Closed, Contemporary Art and the Paradoxes of Conceptual Art*, 2012, Valiz, Amsterdam

chickens are sketched and that is part of the collection of the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam. The artists were each asked to draw a single chicken according to the original the de Graag drawing. The result is a divergent, messy composition, made out of non-related, different styles. This new drawing is installed on one of the exhibition-walls, orderly framed and behind glass, thus mimicking and affirming conventional modes of art-presentation.

The idea that prompted this endeavor, was the fact that the conditions of the Rib presentation-space exclude the presentation of art-historical materials and artworks, like the original Julie de Graag drawing. This fact directly severs the realm of small exhibition-spaces from the bigger institutional presentation-spaces that are equipped to show and archive these materials, whereas the smaller lack the resources and infrastructure to do so. It cannot provide for insurance or the right climate control. As a critique this transformation from the singular and the historic (Julie de Graag as sole canonized author), to a form of the cooperative-, social- and production in the now -as effort to counter the capitalist commodification- cannot however repair the caesura that exists between the historic cultural artefacts and the present. As these would lose their attributed value brought on by the abrasiveness of use, this value is calculated by their historic form after all, that guarantees its value as scarce commodity, they cannot leave our museums, that become the financialized vaults guarding their accumulated value. How they might function and be of value as artefacts in living conditions, in use, as sensible objects and social artefacts, is a question that has become a non-existing proposition and therefor a non-question.⁵⁷ This new work immediately discloses this omission and the gap that exists between the financialized and valorized status of canonized cultural artefacts, and that of the artefacts produced in non-marketed contemporary art. The idea of the address of life and history, contemporary art ideally is said to undertake and take as its canvas and material (as representing the contemporary by juxtaposing, arranging different times and geographies in one fictional time), becomes only possible through their commodity-form.

The conditions of the now will never meet the artefacts that represent the conditions of the past (only as reproductions, archival material or as art-historical narrative maybe: as abstracted derivatives in short), while the conditions of the now require its history of coming into being. This at least is how, according to Walter Benjamin,⁵⁸ any transformation of history in the present, and thus of the workings of the past in the now, by which any sense of the contemporaneous comes into being -as opposed to the homogeneous empty time- is needy of access to its past artefacts. The cultural time therefore is schizophrenic: the now

⁵⁷ An interesting case to mention here is the *Picasso in Palestine* project by Khaled Hourani, in which precisely the financial hyper-valuation of the culturally canonized artefact was put in contrast with its use as spatial-experiential object. By transporting a Picasso from The Netherlands to Palestine the juridical and conservational conditions of the subsequent localities were exposed as normative for such artefacts to be presentable in the first place.

<https://vanabbemuseum.nl/onderzoek/bronnen-en-publicaties/artikelen/picasso-in-palestine/transportation-of>

⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, Selected Writings Vol. 4, 1938-1940, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England

of production, is imprisoned in the now of now separated from the past as stored capital/artefacts. Time remains divided between the time set by capital and the present.

The idea of the role of the museum as amplifier engine to estrangement, guarding and enabling the auratic of the artworks⁵⁹, operationalizing the problematics of its commodity-status, is a mere chimera as cover up for the iron economic logic behind it, that is demonstrated by the subordination to the logic of the law of the market. This is also the critique as voiced by Hito Steyerl on the condition of hyper-capitalism we find ourselves in. She describes how the financialized cultural objects not only are separated from our tactile surroundings but are even taken from the common economy, by keeping these in freeports that are exempt from taxation. Cultural artefacts here serve as the depository of the wealth for the few deducting their value from the common good, and separating them from our experience, a literal negative implementation of *the distribution of the sensible* Rancière speaks of.⁶⁰ The cultural archive then becomes a battleground, and contested site of extraction.

The activation of the archive as for example was tried, in the *WERE IT AS IF*-exhibition by Bik/VanderPol at Witte de With, Rotterdam, 2017, captured precisely such an effort to address the notion of the needed contact with the past, in order to structure a present. By re-assessing the institutional past -which was exhibited following the time and time of its excavation-, the exhibition-oeuvre as institutional work, evoked the suggestion of producing time in the contemporary. The work on show, result of the research on Witte de With's archives, confirms the hybridity of this worlds' artefact as composite between reality and its documentation, as re-assessment of the mixture of documentation, as well as actual works. Equally the 'archive' was assessed as an ephemeral entity to begin with, of which the origins and its entity as stored matter is uncertain and unstable in these times of transpositions occurring in virtual data-storage. The 'archive' should than be considered as a means to re-asses and possibly recuperate, in its instability, the registers of power-relations produced and expressed in it, as Doreen Mende, one of the contributors to it, argues.⁶¹ Time as history of artefacts and time as the historic documentation of production, gets re-assessed and re-produced. The question here remains though if the constellation of production: the artists Bik/Van der Pol were responsible for this archival re-assessment, commissioned by the curator WdW/Defne Ayas, doesn't leave the

⁵⁹ This is the idea of the function of the artistic object as focal point of the tension -the artworks' auratic-between commodification and value, as framed by Adorno.

⁶⁰ Hito Steyerl, *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War*, Verso, 2017

⁶¹ Doreen Mende argues for a vision of the archive, to be approached as *metabolizing*, processing and transforming the organization of history, qua the organization of the processes that constitute the archive.

division of labor qua accountability to the object produced, intact. This division is tested in the publication following the exhibition by having this co-edited by Witte de With's director Defne Ayas and the artist-duo Bik/Van der Pol together. This co-authorial gesture keeps the division of reflection and artist and commissioner intact though by not naming the reflective authors in the publication as its co-authors.⁶² Still it indicates a wish to transform the institutional production model and proposes a direction on how to change it by tweaking the relations between the producers and archive as curatorial media (as issue of dissemination of information, as its aesthetical operation in short) vis a vis the whole.

Chicken and instruction

After Julie de Graag, Studieblad met kippen en kuikens, 1877–1924) -2

The 'instruction' as quintessential critical element in conceptual art, intended to elucidate the power-mechanisms in our world within the principle of informational distribution (as value-production), is especially high-lighted in the *After Julie de Graag* work. As self-administration has become the tool in cognitive capitalism, since workers are put to work as autonomous creative and communicative laborers, 'the instruction', becomes a marker of delegation of responsibility. By re-producing this work according to the mechanisms of cognitive capitalism (the invited artists let themselves be instructed towards this work), but also by the recognition of its role in institutional handling and economy, the instruction becomes visible as political object. The conceptual masterpieces (as any other artwork) after all are equally monetized and canonized as cultural artefacts through the creative labor performed by the workers, by the same self-instruction.

Afrassiabi as initiator (as pseudo-director and -curator), together with the co-producers (as pseudo-artists) mix up the assumed functions in production, towards the realization of such a work. The responsibility and accountability of its totality is seemingly taken up by Afrassiabi, by turning the curatorial and institutional to the artisterly, the supposed division of function in positions is overturned, and the assumptions of autonomy and heteronomy revisited. Through a form of negative autonomy vs. the institutional, the occupation of our artefacts and production-model is set-up.

Seen in dialogue with the Soll Lewitt work -in which the director sets himself up to be put to work by an artist, as self-administration, self-instruction to work, together it speaks of wanting to reclaim the autonomy of instructions to a life. It acts through aesthetic practice, as critique on capitalism via art, that

⁶² The publication WERE IT AS IF follows the known format of distinction of production and reflection. It contains the documenting a work (images of the exhibition and its process of coming into being), a reflection of its commissioning instance (WdW/Defne Ayas) and textual analysis of this production by leading theorists. *WERE IT AS IF, Beyond An Institute That Is*, eds. Bik Van der Pol and Defne Ayas, Witte de With Publishers, 2017

is now hampered by the institutional, in which external instruction becomes internalized and automated and in which critique on precisely this has become absorbed.

In *Walgenbach, Faysal, Isabelle, Micha, Robin Hood and 100,000 past exhibitions* (May-July 2017) the issue of curating is researched further in depth. Three contemporary artists were invited to take the collection of invitations sent to Hans Walgenbach, former director of Centrum Visual Arts, Rotterdam as starting-point. Walgenbach received the invitations over the course of the years in his capacity as director of the city's institute. These invitations are the archival proof of work done, and are the material embodiment of their function of professional mediation between the field of artistic workers with the head and manager of an institution. A manager in our times can be said to be the curator: he selects, contextualizes and re-distributes the work. The collection itself is the archive of this function, and because this is a selection, a doubling of curatorial work occurs. By asking three new 'workers' -a curatorial gest in itself- to process, graze this archive, a multiplication of curatorship is organized, in which the in- or -exclusionary effects of this curatorial function become blurred or become irrelevant. The cyclical responses -in overproduction- are the subject of this work. And again, the origin of initiative, becomes redundant, or is moved to the back of what occurs.

The three invitees to this job, are themselves engaged in multi-functional practices: Micha Zweifel, Faysal Mroueh and Isabelle Sully mix sculptural art, writing, publishing and curating in their practices. The whole -as sequential cycle of curating, appropriations of authorship and the alluding to the multi-functionality of artistic positions- thus de-constructs further the notion of singular authorship to an issue of circulation in form (reflection, documentation, archive) and of responses. The whole is an overstated performance of de-authorization, mimicking the conventional layering of functions in production, whilst also simply working through this overstatement. In this cycle of production, the institutional is related to the historic (Walgenbach's function at the CBK as institutional form), and to the contemporary (Rib as production-site). The changes of conditions in production in time, the different 'times' of production, are thus connected in a process of re-examination.

In *Xenoclassic* (Jan-April 2017) the subject of curating likewise serves as tool to address issues of production and work. In this show Sam Basu and Liz Murray are featured, they are the initiators and organizers of *Treignac Projet*, a project-space in the countryside of France that produces exhibitions that result from workshops and residencies. Though it fronts itself as a quasi-institution, it is based on self-rule and precarious self-organization. Intensive workshop periods -researching production and cooperation as such- are concluded with presentations. As is the case in their own practice, the exhibition at Rib also is framed with the act of hosting. In their installation they present work of outsider artist Prophet Royal

Robertson (1936–1997), whose works they have in their collection, plus they invited a further artist, Daniel Vorthuys, who they commissioned to produce a work for this exhibition. As in *Treignac Projet* where the production process leads to some sort of de-authored and communal outcome, here the same principle is enacted.

Rib will present Sam Basu for the forthcoming *Poppositions* in Brussels 2018, side art-fair to the more official and formal Art Brussels. There they will present *NIS* (New International School) a gathering of artists between 2007 and 2010 that happened in the same Treignac, who came together with the ambition to cooperatively, and as a form of living, form a bridge between the institutional and independent forms of artistic production. Both Basu and Afrassiabi were part of this group of people. In dialogue with several other people, mostly artists, the idea to *Treignac Projet* as living production-model was born. The core idea that was developed, was to take the conditions, practices and lives of the artists as starting-point to the programmatic outline, in the redundant surplus space of time given by capitalism and to formulate a life amongst themselves out of their necessity of being together. So this was not formulated from a curatorial viewpoint extraneous to the conditions and production framework of the artist, or from a positional standpoint outside of these conditions -as in a curatorial or institutionally framed thematic (that would impose its rule from the outside)- but rather precisely from within these conditions. The regime that sets the measures of time and of space within the notion of production, were self-formulated through the gathering itself.

What space and time is there to begin with? Because of the precariousness of conditions, little of these ambitions were realized and little visibility of their work and efforts was effectuated. For *Poppositions*, Basu and Afrassiabi worked together to re-examine the groups ambitions and aim, through the little documentation that remains from that period. Within the jointly produced installation of the presentation, that consisted mostly of Basu's works that were works resulting from acts of labor and repetition- from almost artisanal logic, there was a sculptural addition by Afrassiabi. Again here, the division between curating and artist -by this curatorial insertion to the 'work'- was addressed and corroded, as indistinguishable within the notion of 'work'. This levelling of function even went against the commissioning frame of *Poppositions* that actually holds in its call for contributions, the known partition to work intact. In the call the 'institutional' entity, as applicant, was to present a single artist. This stresses the continued importance that is put on the 'artist' and 'artistery' as driving principle towards this end, whereas the division between production and art as work, has been questioned extensively by now. As 'alternative' fair countering the logic of market-validation and commodification of the 'official' fair Art Brussels, *Poppositions* adhered to the same logic it supposedly was to critically address, according to its

communicated PR and professionally reported thematic.⁶³ The formal logic here of what is critically sought as 'object' to be presented, does not extend to the logic of its communication, thereby not including the economics of its dissemination in the 'work', its aesthetical production, I claim.

What is notable here about the absence of documentation, is that it counters the practice of documenting one's activities, that has become an accustomed artistic strategy and part and parcel of the professional form and of the artists' toolbox. Where Groys speaks of documentation as artistic practice, as a form of reclaiming life vis a vis the overarching system of bio-politics, here this strategy as speculative future form of artistic action and expression (to future purpose and valorization), has greatly been discarded, and relinquished as professional form. Suggesting that the time of the now, as the time of the now, is in no need of its future speculative form of resistance, to be valorized somewhere and possibly to some-what's end elsewhere (which arguably this form of artistic production produces). To restore the history than -as exhibition-piece and as recollection of a shared time of production- becomes an act of speculation per se, an act of the immaterial that is materially and spatially condensed.

This cooperation between Afrassiabi and Basu establishes also the temporal lineage that exists between the two production-platforms, as form that Rib has taken, from the conditions in which it begins and that shapes its form (the Dutch and Rotterdam contexts in 2016 or so), and those of Treignac (with the conditions of producing in France a decade earlier) condensate in this presentation. Continuing the Benjamin-ian re-assessing of time, through the re-examination of the past, this time on the scale of platform and European geography and historic passing of time, funnels a new history.

Funneling = crafting space = performance of practice.

Dismeasure, aesthetical practice, institutional dialogue

This 'form of living' mentioned above discussing Treignac resonates with Paolo Virno's earlier mentioned notions on dismeasure, as the search for a life that is set by modes of living not defined by neoliberal, cognitive capitalism. In Treignac Projet this research is performed as aesthetic practice where the dismeasure between self-measured standards and the heteronomy of conditions define the research. Agamben's Idea of Prose then where poiesis is bound to philosophy, is here the bind between the sovereign organization of life (self-stipulated criteria for living) and that of its intelligibility as artistic practice as aesthetical propositional form. The research is by the nature of the performativity of art, automatically a performance of both art and as life. The seclusion into a space away from the immediate art-context -necessary to perform this research- does not mean it is intended as an exit of art. This time

⁶³ Though the call was open to all sorts of forms that intervene in the division, the division between applicant as presentational and production-entity was separate from the artist to be represented.

set apart from the context of institutional art-production, on the contrary, must be understood as heteronomous research: how are we imbricated, and what can we learn, and how can we re-invest? They are in this sense new avant-garde forms of artistic production.

'Form of living' also connects the legacy of conceptual art to its social proposition. It resonates with Agamben's exposition of the organization of life in his book *Highest Poverty*.⁶⁴ In this book he discusses the Franciscan monastic order and their ideal to life through abstinence to possession and the material. This ideal is linked to the emphasis of the immaterial and minimalism in conceptual art. As it stands for the resistance against commodification, conceptual art deploys self-referentiality of art -that doesn't refer to anything but itself- to demonstrate its autonomy (as self-determination), by self-formulating the conditions and rules that it sets for itself.⁶⁵ In the case of the Franciscan monks, this was to organize life as in the image of the order of the divine. This means a life in poverty and dedication to god, and in abstinence to the material -as god is the end-form and the dissolution of the means and ends-problem. For the Franciscan monks this meant to disconnect from the world. In materialist and secular terms however, in order to arrive to the sovereignty of man, as the ultimate reality of life in the absence of a transcendental ideal, this means to resist the extraneous rationale that forces the conditions to life. In cognitive and neoliberal capitalism this means to resist the occupation and extraction of the means of language and collaboration. Critical production, as agency and space towards self-measure is subsumed. This means that where conceptual art mainly focused on the de-commodification of objects in art-production via critique on production -which obviously failed-, the infrastructural organization of work as such, now should be regarded as the focal point.

There are more examples of independent artistic initiatives, that together with other forms of social organizations, emerge out of the critique to the temporary conditions of production and out of a necessity to self-produce according to self-set criteria.⁶⁶ Such initiative to mention is Performing Art

⁶⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty, Monastic-Rules and Form-of-Life*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2013

⁶⁵ I hear refer to the self-referential-aspect of conceptual art that in referring to nothing else but its constituent elements produce itself, and excludes heteronomous influence for its coming into being, and that supposedly would make it possible to escape its commodity-form. This of course has proven to be a much more complex issue. Take for instance Lawrence Weiner's work *Statement of Intent* which is at the same time a refusal to be validated, by questioning its exposition as such, yet it needs this exposition, including its conditional frame of production, to say so.

Statement of Intent

1. *The artist may construct the piece.*

2. *The piece may be fabricated.*

3. *The piece need not be built. Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.*

⁶⁶ The Autonomia Operaia in Italy must be named here as one of the most successful movements that managed to produce a coherent, yet not centrally organized network of social organizations, concerned with production conditions.

Forum, in the North-East of France for example. This self-run initiative located in France's North-East, is a place where the whole year through residents to the program, come together. These are from the fields of the arts and of academia, bound by the idea of coming together and exchange, as a form of living. As guests to the platform they are responsible for their own living conditions, and the social interaction (so how to come together) is an important aspect to the operation of PAF. It is financed through what the residents pay for their stay, no external funding is sought, on the basis of not-for-profit but just to maintain its program, via the idea of low-maintenance and small staffing the stay remains cheap and affordable. This year for the first time there will be no thematic program, in contrast to the previous years, within the idea to have the guests formulate their own needs and wishes for the topic to be discussed, out of the interactions that occur between them. The avoiding of theme, also means that a curatorial guidance is left-out, as pre-determined frame of conditions. The form its program takes, flows immanently from this set-up, that holds or gains no authoritative control but that can be reshaped or discarded according to the needs of those who partake. And it has to follow no regime of external quantifiable accountability. It may be repeated if desired. In this respect it clearly follows the formal aspect of self-referentiality as in conceptual art, but here it aims for a social and aesthetical practice, to a measure of life in Virno-ian sense. This form of organizational structure resonates strongly with Antonio Negri's notions of the *Multitude*, as proposition to think of a mode of coming together in exchange and production, where-in no effort is made, or ambition exists to unify a congregation of people into a People with a pre-assumed communal identity and ideology, including ways and rules how to interact, but to keep the singularity of each participant intact.

Treignac as well as PAF operate as semi-institutional, self-organized and self-sustainable platforms that mobilize autonomist modes of production, yet through their institutional form, they interact with the outside, as nodal Multitudinal institute among the institutional fabric of society, with which it is in dialogue. As critique on the professionalized structure of contemporary art and of academia, that are geared to maximal output and production, the ideal of the conceptual -as effort towards non-abstract labor and resistance to surplus-value- in these platforms, is effectuated in its operation and in its form of living.

Agamben formulates the *camp* as form in which the domineering force, captures and regulates its subjects by law⁶⁷ (the spatial and temporal capture by capitalism on society, its subjects). In dialogue with this domination, the notion of the extraneous-form of the camp in which measure is self-organized, it can act as its critical counter-form. The renewed cooperation of Basu and Afrassiabi within Poppositions can also be understood in the terms of the dialogue between camps -and their 'work' within it- as bridge. The

⁶⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1998

proposition of self-measure (as organization of and of work itself as institutional issue) is transposed, funneled to the fair, in the air of the dialogue, to be brought back, or to be reconfigured, to institutional life, maintaining the idea of organization and work according to the values of self-determination, as ambition.

Space than

All the forms in which Rib formulates and expresses itself in, produce their own and direct antithetical other. The freedom of space, authorship and time do not produce more freedom, they produce an all-pervasive sense of occupation space, and yet at the same time it produces an all-encompassing potentiality of movement, and of vacuity at the same time. In all direction links can be made, extra-terrain connected to. Time and labour that is invested though, produce no extra space. Rib's physical exhibition-space acts as axis around which the programmatic components gyrate spatially outward, and by which it is emptied out. Work as subject and operationalized as concrete space, delocalizes the space itself in that it is made abstract, and its materiality is rendered ambiguous.

Time than

Production now (through Rib as production-platform at Poppositions) is a revisiting of history, re-examining what was left under-expressed and unrealized. Not to represent what was, but to recognize the past's (seemingly) failure as means to reconsider the present, as it informs this present. Time in this project, is the focus of address, and binding medium that carries the reclaiming potential of the passing of time. The 'use' of the institutional misrecognition of Prophet Royal Robertson as the antagonism of outsider-art vs the institutional dictates, re-inserts the closed archive (the missed historic time of the dead artist) into the now, as it is re-used in the now.

Like with the Walgenbach show -where a seemingly closed and even insignificant and profane archive and history was revisited, the re-examination acts as measure and as formal procedure of how artistic ambition can, or cannot be re-instated in the now, and spatially institutionally realized. Nothing new is produced, to be put on stage, rather, that what has passed, is re-used as means for reconsideration as to what actually constitutes production: production as re-assessing time, producing the immanence of the now as the now.

The underlying principle of subsumption occupies institutional time in a Benjaminian sense. The archive of past history cannot be accessed by the division of labor, and thereby separates subjective experiences in time, and subsequently in differing discourses and histories. This unbinds social relations and it produces social alienation. In a Brechtian sense the alienation that emanates via these re-examinations, as Rib's characteristic operation, confirms this alienation as structural fact but aims also at reclaiming space and time.

Curating than

As in the **Walgenbach** show also, the role of curating, as axis around which in the conventional institutional, the translations occur, is emptied out. In **Xenoclassic** this was expressed in the hospitality of the exhibition as carrier to host someone else, curating is stepping aside. In the follow-up of the cooperation, in **Poppositions**, the cooperation and curatorial emptying out as probed in **NIS** and its archival remnants, even becomes the lens to production, via an anew cooperation. The numerous emptying out of the curatorial -through work and through negotiation, is -next to the past as negotiable matter- the object on show. The structure that carries this de-authoring cannot be totally de-authored, it are Basu and Afrassiabi with their respective signatures that must stand for this structure. This structure though is not the object on show, it is the structure via which the whole operation of production is captured. The whole than -as embodied time and labor- gets strangely de-objectified, and thus de-commodified since there is an object of surplus exchange lacking.

The personal engagement of Afrassiabi -as nodal entity bridging, accommodating the processes in Rib- that would normally resist this notion of de-authoring, equally is countered in how the focus shifts to structure and production as totalized subjects. Embodiment, in production is something that normally is rare in the modus of production in Contemporary Art in which the professional division of labor, prevents close encounter with all aspects of production. The activities of the director are secluded from those responsible for finances or for publicity. Though there is interaction and conference, the specifics that are linked to issues of the totality of production, are affected by this division. Here, this embodiment likewise acts as artistic agent in Rib's model, that counters the institutional convention of operation. This embodiment, the personal engagement with all aspects of production equally teases out the distancing that occurs in the transitions in the chain of production. In capitalist production, the division of labor is organized via expertise pertaining to the specific functions designated in the chain of production. Within these limited and demarcated areas of work, the idea of 'creation' and 'production' are closely interlinked as the gratifying rewards of this labor, but by which demarcation these remain local.⁶⁸

Though the deconstruction of the myth of the exceptional, may be expressed as intention or aim within the segments of institutional production, the exceptionalism of art, as the final object on show, keeps being reaffirmed. Through the relegation of expression to that of the arts and the artist (as its exceptional worker) this myth re-surfaces through the gaps partitions that occur in production. This way the obfuscation of the conditions of work to that artisterly object is perpetuated. And consequently: the

⁶⁸ Isabell Lorey, *Governmentality and Self Precarization*, EIPCP, 2006

<http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/lorey/en>

phantasm of creation and creative work is performed as capitalism. As such this reconfiguration of work in Rib: the redressed notions of the curatorial -as general and un-glamorous principle of dissemination of information- and the artisterly position, refers back to and undercuts the notion of the exceptionalism of art.

The man on the floor -the Sol Lewitt-ian 'draughtsman' mentioned earlier, as the one performing work non-expertly as phrased by the term 'draughtsman' that emphasizes the notion of the non-exceptional of work at hand, here encompasses all stages of production, performed (mostly) by Afrassiabi and his team, without hierarchical division. This notion of performance, rather than that of creation also emphasizes the demystification of artistic labor. This time in a form of infrastructure that is structured through proximity and closeness of operation.

Infrastructure and conclusion

The post-conceptual mode of artistic production now and the condition of immaterial labour work well together, enhance each other. As Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello in *'The New Spirit of Capitalism'* have indeed shown, in the institutional form of capitalist production, where the curator performs the managerial role of production as a whole, under the assumption of collaboration and delegation and under the idea of independence and creativity,⁶⁹ the overarching frame of conditions is kept intact and honored. The flow of abstract labour perpetuates through self-administration, thus adhering in the end to the framework set out by the heteronomy of economy, as the conditional frame of our time (following globalisation and abstraction as material of production). Accountability within it becomes obfuscated: the content-delivery of the work of art as localized work, becomes countered by the institutional handling of it, possibly countering (or being unaffected to) the content of it. It fractures the possibility to a representative response that does justice to the specificity and singularity of conditions that would formulate a counterproposition to production.

The criticality of aesthetics, imbricated and following from the logic of conceptualism as logic of critique, is implied as paradox in the totality of infrastructure now. The issue now then becomes transposed to its bigger scale as paradox of the infrastructure, and the imbrication of the institute and its workers (artists, curators, managers, embedded knowledge-production/reflection, publicity) towards work under capitalism. These are all, in the dissolution of curatorship -apart from capitalism- active in distribution and production. Where Camiel van Winkel rightly speaks of conceptual art's core characteristic than as *idealization* of the art-object rather than its dematerialization as objective to its transformation, the

⁶⁹ Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso, London, 2005

objective of this idealization must be sought in its implementation in the wider infrastructure: its social materialization.⁷⁰

The issue of the difference between critical recognition and implementation equally applies to the Rancière-ian recognition of the art-aesthetics bind, that though it in itself maps the fabric of production, only becomes a vector out of this assessment through action. This difference between recognition and implementation has been identified by Suhail Malik and Andrea Phillips⁷¹ as insisting on the *division* of that what is and becomes politically sensible in Rancière's terminology of 'partage de sensible'. 'Division' at once indicates a shared space and faculty of recognition to our world and possible co-recognition of this world, but also -in its in-equal distribution of power- stands for the possibility, through this fabric, to maintaining this political inequality. The supposed communality is something that needs to be formulated and established constantly, in a sense of constant renegotiation (the permanence of 'dissensus' as ontology of 'becoming'). Translated to the legacy of conceptual art: the mere recognition of our societies as technocratic societies of information and institution requires the recognition of this distribution as agency of political action.

Such a critique may be applied also to the practise of the interdisciplinary as strategy to address the division of labour as singular answer to the conditions. Such a critique may be put to a publication such as WERE IT AS IF for example, that stands for an increasingly becoming more popular form of production in which theoretical and reflection in production is incorporated and recognized as the natural co-author in production. In the end though, this closed system, where institutionalized production-formats produce their own criticality, archive and presentation-forms by which the artistic object is disseminated and distributed, needs to address how it sits within the logic of cognitive and network capitalism. And whether there remains a space or entry-point to address the capture by capitalism. The conceptual idea of critique as conclusion to the artwork, stands for little though if the ramification of such a conclusion are not considered in its totality of form. The metabolism of the 'archive' Doreen Mende speaks of, should address the conditions of the real, of the social relations within it. 'The archive' as popular object of artistic scrutiny stands the change (or has become) an 'object' rather than a Thing in Latour's terms if it is

⁷⁰ Camiel van Winkel, *During the Exhibition the Gallery Will be Closed*, Contemporary Art and the Paradoxes of Conceptual Art, 2012, Valiz, Amsterdam, 112

⁷¹ We translate Rancière's phrase 'partage de sensible' as 'partition of the sensible' rather than the now more prevalent 'distribution of the sensible' to emphasize that partage is at once a sharing – a taking part – and a separation. Though it risks suggesting an underlying unity that is divided between participants – which is exactly what Rancière's conceptualization of politics and aesthetics precludes and which is anyway no less a problem with 'distribution' – partition seems to us to better capture in English the dual commonality and division of the aesthetic that is central to Rancière's undertaking.

not actively and recursively put to work.⁷²

A recent form of critical inquiry that takes the notion of 'work' as integrated form of production, where the whole scene of production is taken into account, has been conceptualized by Marina Vishmidt as *Infrastructural Critique*. A form of inquiry that is characterized as attempting to identify and dislodge the existing modes of valorisation within the current and assemblage mode of art-production.⁷³ Through this the institution of art, as the sum of its functions, its infrastructural set-up embodied in positions and forms in which different ideas on the relation between form and conditions of work and purpose occur, that mutually may or may not align qua subsequent ideas on commission, functionality or purpose in totality, can be critically considered as the 'object' under scrutiny.

The underlying premise Vishmidt applies to the rationale to an Infrastructural approach departs from the assertion in Kant that cognition (our perception and action in the world) is a function entangled with time, quote: *that both time and space are the intuitions that make cognition in general possible..*" and that *"time can be understood as infrastructure, in that it is the condition of possibility to perception and action by repetition"*. So, cognition as that form of abstract labour-production in capitalism, becomes intimately related to the infrastructural organization of space and time in our societies, by which a notion to counter the capitalist domination of the infrastructure of time and space arises.⁷⁴

This also resonates with Sami Khatib's extrapolation of capitalist production in relation to artistic production.⁷⁵ Since all time is subsumed under capitalism, and history has come to an eternal expansion of the same (and time has become irrelevant in a sense, since all conditions repeat themselves, in an update of Benjamin's terms: the occupation of homogeneous empty time has become a matter of self-administration), capitalism's next territorial expansion has transferred into the arrangement, occupation and division of space. As speculation and investment in spatial development and re-distribution is the more stable form of capitalization. Here the equation or transferability of labour=time=capital=space emerges. Since 'work' cannot be stored archivally, or be made productive according to self-measure, as

⁷² See Armen Avanesian's insistence on 'recursion' as activating criticality. Recursion here cannot contend with keeping the objects of knowledge as mere abstractions and objects of reflection.

⁷³ Marina Vishmidt In *Beneath the Atelier, the Desert: Critique, Institutional and Infrastructural*, quote "A move to infrastructural critique represents an attempt to mediate some of the closures of this position both discursively and pragmatically, with infrastructure focusing the link between the material and ideological conditions of the institution of art in a way that de-centres rather than affirms it." In *Marion von Osten: Once We Were Artists (A BAK Critical Reader in Artists' Practice)* Eds. Tom Holert, Maria Hlavajova

⁷⁴ Marina Vishmidt, *Between Not Everything and Not Nothing: Cuts Towards Infrastructural Critique*, details the particularities of an institutional critique in *Former West, Art and the Contemporary after 1989*, eds. Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh, MIT Press, 2017

⁷⁵ Sami Khatib, in *No Future, The Space of Capital and the Space of Dying*, in *Former West, Art and the Contemporary after 1989*, eds. Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh, MIT Press, 2017

argued in the beginning of this text, it is the remaining focus of contention, the infrastructural object per se as that what connects and formulates this contention, it becomes the 'Adorno-ian object of estrangement', the entry-point of artistic inquiry. And in the total occupation of capitalism, that yet leaves time (though unequally increasing for some and decreasing for others, and more unproductive at the same time in a general sense, in an increasingly more automated world) to its subjects, this time may be taken up against its system of control. 'Work' then becomes the binding activator regarding time and space.

Such an infrastructural approach necessarily focusses on the more material aspects of the organization of infrastructure, as almost technical issue, since these carry the relations that occur, rather than focusing on the mere abstractions of epistemes governing the processes in production (that arguably keep these in the realm of theoretical speculation in cognitive production), it emphasizes the 'what occurs' in a more material (temporally and spatially) fashion and in a sense of its social-relations (in which labor-relations and value exchanges are captured and expressed). Such approach would ground the post-conceptual analysis postulated by Osborne more to the concreteness of social relations and factuality of interactions in artistic production. The politics of installation Groys describes, then should likewise be expanded in an infrastructural sense as practice.

It is an approach that also resonates with Suhail Malik's⁷⁶ and Irit Rogoff's approaches who advocate a more implementational role of theory or theoretical ideas into artistic production. The role of theory in respect to 'general intellect' is maybe the element to be reconsidered especially. Given its central structural position in the apparatus of conceptualized communication, being the material that shapes life through work and as the qualitative material of communication, it has a quintessential role in respect a self-measured life. An Infrastructural approach further would take the issue of artistic production outside of the confines of its institutional manifestations since these are embedded in a far greater constellation of production. And would rather take *practises* as mobile, adaptable working-modules that can adapt to situations, irrespective of its field: as malleable institutional formation.

In almost all Rib projects the continuation of engagement in real terms (time and space are operationalized through work), stresses and updates the persistence of the paradoxes that exist in art as means to tackle the present tense of conditions and the occupation of space. Rib tackles these issues as an aesthetics machine which mirrors our condition. The exhibition-program (as the core function and

⁷⁶ In an interview with Suhail Malik in *Politics Of Study*, Malik explains the shortcoming of theoretical production in art-education if this is not tested and implemented immediately in the context of education itself. Here the ideas of 'production' and 'work' are not secluded from education as front-portal towards a future professionalism. *Politics Of Study*, Sidsel Meiniche & Tom Vandeputte (Eds.), Occasional Table, Open Editions / Funen Art Academy, 2015 (bought at Matt Hinkley's Bookstore at Rib...)

activity that conventionally structures the institutional presentation-platform, the exhibition-space), acts as the mere narrative of Rib, as narrative of the production machine. Its format of production on the other hand, it's structural model – which is in dialogue with the conventional production-formats- is Rib's real artistic-political action. Independency is not organized action in the pursuit of freedom, it is a dialogue with the promise of the institutional, as constitutive form of political space. Which confirms the high ambition of art as tool qua politics, and towards the political arrangement of our space.

As Gerald Raunig observes in *A Thousand Machines*,⁷⁷ despite man's implication in technology as hybrid man-machine, there remains space to manoeuvre since man also informs the machine. The problem between man and machine, is not a case of simple domination or utilitarian use of one over the other, it is rather a process of integrating into new ensembles via the exchange that occurs between man and the apparatus (concatenations these are dubbed), leaving room to negotiate and interfere via exchange (re-inscribing). From this frame, the apparatus of artistic production can be viewed as 'technical object' to be re-addressed, and to exchange with, in order to re-arrange it.

We are required to look for new institutional formations that can carry history, archive and visibility given the ever increasing precarity of the social as such. As the apparatus that produces and disseminates, as information and curating (knowledge and distribution) have congealed, a first issue must be to disentangle these as to their respective function and operation. Rib does so by deconstructing and showcasing these elements: distribution, time, space and labour as entangled. How to realign from this entanglement can only be approached via the recognition of its coherence.

It is this machinic approach that Rib engages with and how it operationalizes its material: its space, its time and its invested labor, in order to address the conditions that affect this self-desired arrangement of conditions, and through which its expression as ideological response is organized. Again: it is here where Virno's *dismeasure* would calibrate and index the differences that exist. It is in this tension that Rib strategizes its position and its operation, in a practice that demonstrates the institutional other, not by emulating the institutional mimicry of the sociable and of its authority, but rather by tweaking and emulating the institutional infrastructural of mediation and of production.

PostScript - Critique as part of production

⁷⁷ Gerald Raunig, *A Thousand Machines, A Concise Philosophy of the Machine as Social Movement*, Semiotext(e), 2010

Having been commissioned by Rib to write this text, the issue of self-organized aesthetical production incorporated in current forms of artistic production, is equally tabled through this examination. As being asked, to respond to Rib's model and artistic proposition, which will again be presented within Rib's context -either on the website or as publication-, the function of critique and reflection becomes a problematic position. I've pointed to several ways in which text and critique is imbricated in the economic logic of capitalism. It suffices to say that it equally is impossible for me to escape this context. This commission further points to several tensions: can critique be performed from within what is critiqued? How does such an effort relate to issues of authorship and agency? Can critique be understood as artistic author?⁷⁸ Can the object-subject relation be flattened?

This is where an analogy with Bruno Latour's conceptualization of the Thing as opposed to the 'object' can be made. In his essay *Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?*⁷⁹, he describes how critique can be appropriated and be put to use for any end, this by the fact that there is no limit to the critical dialectical method: anything can continue to be questioned. Where critique in the conditions it is situated in, become appropriated 'objects' themselves -as means to an end-, by which any criticality becomes lost, it would be the open engagement towards a 'thingness' of objects, as yet undecided but to be negotiated speculative entities, according to Latour, that may help to re-organize criticality. Needless to say, it is notably the theoretical here that can/or is instrumental in the formation of the objects in the entangled economy of cognitive capitalist production. Latour's own renowned Actor Network Theory itself for example, alternates between and exists both as Object (as theoretical construct and object in knowledge-industry) and as model for interaction, a relational analysis. And it becomes particularly a matter of the distributive handling of these objects and of those disseminating these, which constitutes accountability for its appropriation and subsequent objecthood. Rather than pointing towards the existence of the Thingness of these 'objects' it is a matter of how these are operational. This simultaneous appearing of the operation of the object of critique, requires it to be managed towards the condition in which it sits. Something Alexander A. Galloway has critiqued Latour for in: *Theory Hot and Cold*.⁸⁰ As Marx notes in *Theses on Feuerbach*⁸¹ following through on the materialist perspective: if we perceive and experience

⁷⁸ An argument for the logic of critique as artistic author can be found in the link between art and aesthetics as is conceptualized by Jacques Rancière. He presumes poiesis and aesthetics not to be adversary but complementary acts in art-aesthetics production.

⁷⁹ Bruno Latour, *Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern*, in *Critical Inquiry* - Special issue on the Future of Critique. Vol 30 n° 2 pp.25-248, Winter 2004

⁸⁰ In a rather stark critique Alexander A. Galloway blames Latour for the omission to formulate the effects hierarchical organization has on networks, and how his theory serves to uphold this hierarchy.

<http://cultureandcommunication.org/galloway/theory-hot-and-cold>

⁸¹ Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, appendix to *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Marx/Engels Selected Works, Volume One, p. 13 – 15.

the things in reality only as object of contemplation and not as experience of activity and practice, than its potential criticality is missed.

It also here where the *care* that Donna Haraway phrases as act of xeno-fication re-appears: in order to short-circuit the rationale of productionism one has to give up on the idea of a subject-object division, and to consider all faculty and positions and interaction as part of a negotiation towards the building of the 'self' and of 'us' that will have to remain xeno though, to resist the establishment of a new authoritative universality. There can be no a-priori knowledge that could be distributed since knowledge derives from the encounter, as dialogue in a process of social production.

As Agamben formulates: criticism is that point between philosophy and poetry that neither wants to represent the meaning on which it reflects (it cannot replace its meaning), nor reproduce the enjoyment of it (it cannot become its consciousness), then one can say that critique is the ultimate alienated position.⁸² It has no place and no time, only a point of reference. If we take another notion of Agamben to be correct, that of the interlocked dependency between poetry and philosophy, then we may say that philosophy alone -in the context of capitalist subsumption-, has no means, as partial politico-aesthetical agent, to counter this subsumption. Subsequently this means then there is now, actually no poetry -at least no substantial, communicable form of it. At least not from within the existing structures from which it formulates such a critique.

In capitalist subsumption no critique operates outside of it or can resist the commodification or appropriation of either the reviewed object of critique, or the critical object produced by critique.⁸³ As said, it is space and time that are effected by capitalist rationale of production that causes structural alienation. Yet this leaves the necessity of form and of aesthetics to resist capitalism intact. And if there really is no time and space for poetry, and I am inclined to say so, then the way to counter subsumption - to safeguard and recuperate the possibility to poetry- is to do so from the frame of the art-aesthetics bind that can propose counter-measures to the measures set by capitalism, as described by Virno .The expositions of dismeasure only become intelligible though through their communication as critique and as contestation and as speculative proposition.

⁸² Giorgio Agamben "Criticism is situated at the point at which language is split from itself—in for instance, the distinction of signified and signifier and its task is to point toward a "unitary status for the utterance," in which criticism "neither represents nor knows, but knows the representation" (S, xvii). Thus, against both philosophy and poetry, criticism opposes the enjoyment of what cannot be possessed and the possession of what cannot be enjoyed" (S, xvii).

⁸³ Here again Latour's Actor Network Theory can be mentioned which calls for an embrace of the heteronomy in production, but which fails to pinpoint -in my opinion- the power-relations and the lack of space that define subsumption where such acknowledgement of subsumption could be addressed.

It is through this assertion that the alienated nature of critique, as space-less object, as xenofied object may counter the alienation produced by capitalism.

The idea of continuing the dialogue via recursive reflection undercuts the idea of inside and outside in the assembly of production, or it cuts right through it. Speaking from within the art-aesthetics bind then is rather a function of reading along the discussed aesthetical proposition from equally affected conditions. It affirms its ultimate complicit-ness. My own position and the question of reviewing, critiquing or analysing Rib from within the issue of this bigger frame of production, becomes part of its aesthetical outwardness. And (my) eventual separate authorship becomes entangled and speculative. I dissolve in a speculative idea of purpose, of care, but don't yet know where or to what end this is. Maybe it could be understood as care and as risk, since it is in a state of uncertainty. Risk implies a not knowing yet, a state of expectation, and therefore it is yet in no need for space.

In giving up the distance between the object- and subject-position, but to rather engage with what is put forward -in Rib here- the notion of dialogue arises, in which hospitality towards the nature of the encounter stands before a critical stance (Latour's Object). Taken as yet a position in the dissemination of information -the formal conceptuality of art-production-, the critic holds no position different from that of artist, curator or institutional platform. Such a model of embedded production, then also directly addresses and counters the division of labor, as critically assessed characteristic of capitalist production. It overturns the critic-artistic-object relation, precisely as in the Rib constellation, where the curator-artist-critic relations equally are overturned. As Walter Benjamin proposed, the function of critique as the finalization of the artwork by assessing, and re-introduction of this assessment in the continuation of artistic production, erodes the art-aesthetics divide. A continuous cycle of responses where the question of origin becomes irrelevant. All positions contribute to the artistic proposition in a cycle of proposition-response-response-proposition in which the information is processed and transposed. Including this reflection.

The cases I have close-read, I have done so in a meticulous sense as to define precisely the social relations occurring in them, that Vishmidt stresses as the focal-points of operation, and therefore are of qualitative critical relevance. It was important to discern the factuality of what happens as social relations in production vis a vis the conceptual model that mobilizes the appearance of the relations. At the same time the duration of review itself -which are lengthy- touches upon a mode of de-production, of recuperation of time. As such the reading 'split off' from itself and the object it signifies once more and begot its own character and identity. It begs the reader to engage in boredom and exhaustion, and to engage in the waste of time in order to resist productionism, or to slow down the conventional time of engagement and investment, which invokes a sense of care for the object under scrutiny.