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# ART AND THE COMMONS

*This special issue of ASAP/JOURNAL takes as its starting point the growing body of artistic work addressing the need to rethink collectivity in the late Anthropocene, particularly in relation to what seems a very familiar idea: the creation of commons. The issue challenges us to consider how the arts and contemporary theory structure “the commons” anew: how the commons becomes both a goal and a trope in post-millennial art and cultural theory.*

In everyday usage today, the commons is often made synonymous with “fair-use” space. Protest movements such as Occupy construct both material and political commons based on ideas of spatial and financial equity, whereas the migratory global precariat understands commons spaces as vestigial communal life.<sup>1</sup> Global ecological movements now use the commons to denote the planet itself, understood as an evolving, living ecosystem shared by all, rather than a discrete site or resource legislated by a particular community. By contrast, in an era when many people in overdeveloped nations spend most of their waking lives online, the commons is often redefined in technological terms so that working in the commons simply means navigating through cyberspace information hubs offering open, user-controlled features. In this context, the commons designates user-produced content for which copyright licenses define fair-use by others.

It is important to remember, however, that the rhetoric of the commons has been present, if not dominant, in the creative arts since the early twentieth century. As articulated by participatory and public art projects, the arts of the common are those that value inclusivity, the exchange of ideas, and play and creativity between human (and nonhuman) entities. The term designates arts that support and employ alternative spaces and public performances; that encourage public participation in the making of art; that wish to undermine or redefine the authority of institutions such as museums, universities and, ultimately, markets in order to allow the public to engage with and

control art production and interpretation; and that use art as a means to facilitate the creation of new models of community and sociality. Projects built upon these ideas can be found in the modernist avant-garde and through different strands of twentieth-century movements, from Fluxus interventions to Allan Kaprow's Happenings and Augusto Boal's legislative theatre, and through the late-century's relational aesthetics and participatory art movements.<sup>2</sup> After the 1990s, artists, curators, and cultural theorists increasingly asserted the urgency of creating new social models and political collectives based in commons logic.

While many artists and theorists today continue to center twenty-first century aesthetics in an ethics of relationality, they often redefine the foundational concepts—such as anthropocentric humanism and principals of exchange—upon which older relational models and collectives were based, or which remained in those models in residual form. Older models of collectivity and exchange are seen as inadequate to meeting calls for more just and historically accurate definitions of “artist” and “audience,” to new techniques and platforms for artistic production, and to heightened challenges posed by impending environmental and political crises on a global scale. Scholars and artists today have sought to reconceive aesthetics through modes of relationality and subjectivity that might address these developments and, in turn, allow new social formations to emerge. Numerous strands of contemporary theory and aesthetics now engage in such reformulation: participatory art, collaborative art, practical aesthetics, the art of the everyday, posthumanism, affect theory, new materialism. Comprising a diverse and sometimes warring collection of thinkers and artists, the advocates of such practices nonetheless agree that reconceiving the commons requires rethinking the relations between ethics, art, and politics in ways that take into account the hegemony of the world capitalist system and the marketization of everyday life as well as the ongoing degradation of the planetary ecosystem. The essays collected in this issue implicitly or explicitly assert that in our moment, the spatial logic of commons thinking and the temporal logic of publics seem to coincide in an unprecedented and urgent way.

The contributors to this inaugural issue of *ASAP/Journal* both assert and address the need for new commons and new thinking about the commons. For centuries, “the commons” denoted spatial territories owned by a legal entity and used for communal profit by specifically defined groups with a shared local goal—a

regulated resource in which all participants had an equal interest. In the forms of shared grazing areas, waterways, and hunting grounds, the commons was the spatial form of an agreement with others about the use of public space. It was a communal utility that allowed one to survive in the world: to feed one's family and balance use of ecosystems to ensure that resources were sustained for future years. After the dawn of modernity, the commons was the location of an uneasy *détente* between individualist and communitarian practices: the language of the joint-stock company slowly shifted the commons' discursive terrain, as commons stakeholders often were redefined as company shareholders. The eighteenth-century land enclosure movements in England and Europe helped to reconfigure the subsistence logic organizing commons territories into industrial capital's desire for surplus capital: land enclosure generated not only more efficient farming methods but also a new surplus of labor, available just at the moment when the Industrial Revolution ravenously hungered for factory workers. As economics drove new land management policies, nineteenth-century fences and deeds performed both legal and ideological work: they were the material and the licit scaffolding that supported ownership of private property, the backbone of industrial capitalism.<sup>3</sup> In the early twentieth century, ideas about the commons started to shift—for example, in debates in the US about conservation of national forest lands (by 1941 a Federal system of forest practice regulations was in place). But privatization and market imperatives continued to erode commons thinking and practice: an oft-cited example of the disastrous consequences of this erosion are the cod fisheries in the Grand Banks, off the coast of Newfoundland, which, after centuries of plenitude, were understood in 1994 to have collapsed from unregulated overfishing—devastating both the fish population and habitat and the local economies dependent upon them.<sup>4</sup> During the past thirty years, the work of Elinor Ostrom in public economy and teams of other researchers have clarified types of commons (including cultural commons) and how they work, and such research makes clear that even under the pressure of global markets and privatization, commons are still possible as economic alternatives and highly desirable as regulated resource management techniques.<sup>5</sup> A famous example of successful commons operation, for instance, is the Maine lobster fisheries, in which catches have been stable since WWII.<sup>6</sup>

While today's arts of the commons draw from this tradition of land management and spatial organization, they recognize that aesthetic production always hails an audience. They seem to intuit that the conventional commons demar-

cated public territory but was something different from “a public,” defined by Michael Warner as a *social imaginary* or product of “poetic world-making.”<sup>7</sup> Publics are modern creations, not located in space but constructed through language and thought. Unlike commons, which grow from communities engaging in formal or informal contractual relations, publics are communities of address, “the self-organization of the public as a body of strangers united through the circulation of their discourse.”<sup>8</sup> Interactive, relational, and performative, publics are brought into existence by being addressed as such. Nonetheless, they are dependent upon existing social structures, “preexisting forms and channels of circulation.”<sup>9</sup> While all commons are predicated on logics of space (as actual territories or as metaphors of space, such as in cyberspace), publics are predicated on logics of time. Public discourse must circulate.<sup>10</sup> What publics have in common with commons, however, is that they both are always contemporary—constituted by and through their iteration—yet also are always directed to future action.

Taken together, the writers in this special issue on “Art and the Commons” suggest that reconceptualizing the relation between art and the commons today requires a radical reformulation of the relation between the commons and the public—the material and the discursive constructs of human collectivity. For we live in a moment when ideas, markets, and people circulate—indeed, when they are recognized by their very circulation and movement. As it reaches what may be its zenith in neoliberal finance capital, the world system is virtually untethered from property by a mutation that has made that system into an intensity, a mediation of all social relations. To concentrate on property relations alone as the basis of rethinking the commons is to start from a position that is associated with a outmoded stage of capital: it is now clear that world system can redefine its (and our) relation to private property *as well as spatial logics* and remain not only viable but also spectacular. “In short,” notes the Raqs Media Collective, “the abolition of private property is not the abolition of capital.”<sup>11</sup> Moreover, we live in a moment when the circulatory imperative of capital is concurrent with the circulatory imperative of public discourse; both often use the same technological means of transmission.<sup>12</sup> Determining when an instance of their collusion is emancipatory, and when it is not, is difficult. One thinks, for example, of the simultaneous construction of commons, subjectivity, and capital that takes place in a “commons space” of circulation such as Facebook. When we use this technological

commons to form wider and more meaningful publics, we are also fine-tuning the set of algorithms according to which we become targets of marketing and subjects of information-mining precisely because this commons space is private, corporate space as well. Circulation of information and circulation of capital coincide, and much ink has been spilled in debates about whether such social networking sites offer a commons that will lead to a freer *demos* or to an increasingly surveilled and privatized webspace.

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Constructing new commons involves constructing publics in new ways, and both artistic and critical practice today seeks to make visible previously unseen vehicles of discursivity that may lead to redefined conceptions of the commons. Affect theory and queer theory, for example, turn to proprioception and the pleased/pleasuring body to posit a *somatic* discursivity that forms collectives, multitudes, and affectspheres (and colludes with art and the aesthetic to do so) in a manner akin to how discourse was said to construct older publics—especially with the aims of critiquing capital and creating new commons spaces.<sup>13</sup> Allison Carruth’s essay in this issue points to another vehicle of discursivity: seeds and other products of the earth, which now circulate through both discourse and packaging networks and can be the basis of politicized public art projects.

Thus to rethink the spatial logic of the commons in the present is, by definition, to rethink the discursive logic of publics as well, particularly the publics addressed by artists and art collectives. New forms of the commons today are debated in relation to networks enabled by (as well as resisting) circulation *itself* as a new frontier, a new commons space. The contributors to the Forum on “The Networked Commons” in this special issue make different cuts into this question of how commons are or are not “networked relations” today. For example, whereas André Lepecki privileges living encounters over network connections because, he claims, networking today “reinforces self-interests,” Patrick Jagoda points out that networked connections can also productively point to missed connections that remind us of our shared “marginality and intense struggles to connect with others.” Imre Szeman, Doris Sommer, Grant Kester, and Tom Lutz identify and discuss different political and eco-

conomic implications of such connections, while other contributors such as Susan Leigh Foster, Kimsooja, and Petra Kupperts emphasize how networking involves the movement and interaction of bodies in space and time. In turn, Claire Tancons, Hsuan L. Hsu, and David Raskin remind us how networking toward a commons is evidenced in specific art forms and scholarly practices.

Such contributions indicate ways that art and theory point us to what are arguably among the most urgent questions facing the arts today: What (political, ethical, and aesthetic) emancipatory possibilities emerge when the spatial logic of the commons merges with the discursive logic of a public? And how can the arts of today help us to imagine or reimagine these emancipatory possibilities?

In this issue, Chicago-based artist Theater Gates and art historian/critic W.J.T. Mitchell address these questions head-on. The commissioned artist for the 2012 New York Armory Show and winner of the UK's *Artes Mundi 6* prize for international contemporary art,<sup>14</sup> as well as the director of the University of Chicago's Arts and Public Life initiative, Gates has worked throughout his career with material archives (including those of the city landscape) and through performance to redefine how art and artist communities can construct and project relational commons. Gates is founder of the non-profit Rebuild Project "that endeavors to rebuild the cultural foundations of underinvested neighborhoods and incite movements of community revitalization that are culture based, artist led, and neighborhood driven" and whose sites include Black Cinema House, The Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative (DA+HC), Dorchester Projects, and the Stony Island Arts Bank (a location for site-specific contemporary art exhibitions, residencies, and Rebuild's archives and collections).<sup>15</sup> Gates creates art that speaks to urban experience and civil rights, and his method of "critique through collaboration"<sup>16</sup> is apparent in the projects discussed in his dialogue with Mitchell—such as "Raising Goliath" (2012) and "My Labor is My Protest" (2012)—as well as works such as the live performance "Temple Exercises" (2009) at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and events such as the two-day "Black Artists Retreat [B.A.R.]" convened in 2012.<sup>17</sup>

In their dialogue, Gates and Mitchell take on the implications of monetary currency—a term that makes money synonymous with circulation in the temporal present—as well as the cultural currency that solidifies artistic reputations in art

markets today and the problem of how to *make current* the excluded and erased histories of peoples and social spaces. In the dialogue, Mitchell brings theory to bear on the complicated relation between art and capital, while Gates notes of his art that “there have to be lots of different currencies bearing witness. Bearing witness, or it is another kind of utopic.” Bearing witness, for Gates, includes revitalizing nearly defunct urban spaces with deeply sedimented histories into living commons that encourage neighborliness, cultural contact, art, and communal interaction for users—“hang spaces” that connect users to history, city space, art, and one another. The interlocutors explore how Gates’s projects (such as his neighborhood radio station) *détourne* the hierarchies of cultural capital through modes of collective activity that remain necessarily open-ended and habitual. Gates is blisteringly honest about the possibilities as well as the paradoxes of such practices of the everyday, noting that his “relationship to capital is actually a growing relationship with the knowledge of how currencies work.”

What these and other contributors to this issue make clear is that today, rethinking the commons as discursive as well as physical territory inevitably involves considering alternatives to the world system.<sup>18</sup> In her interview with Kim Stanley Robinson—at the time of this writing the acclaimed author of fifteen novels as well as short fiction, novellas, and essays—Ursula Heise notes how Robinson’s science fiction novels develop a utopian projection concerning “the future of nature and the future of the socio-economic order” as they try to envision a system beyond capital and are undergirded by the most current scientific knowledge. Robinson makes clear, however, that such writing is based on an informed realism, defined here as historical literature that traces a logical line from the present into the future. This future includes an aesthetic drive that matches an ecological imperative; beauty results when sustainability becomes possible, when an extremely powerful human species creates a beautiful biosphere hospitable to living and nonliving things. The urgency of the project of reimagining the future is, for Robinson, insistently real in the face of climate-change predictions, and it is precisely science fiction that can express “the present’s feeling of future possibilities” for a future commons that will express sustainable beauty.

Writing from a more immediate perspective, Stavros Stavrides stresses the necessity of contestatory politics to commons constructions and how urban architecture can express contending social needs, particularly those of the



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Stavrides writes, “Displaced, marginalized, or disempowered populations in world metropolises reclaim their right to the city through struggles that emphatically redefine the area of the common.” Emphasizing the need for architecture to be materialized and to forgo defining itself *merely* as public discourse, Stavrides maintains that we must ask how to direct architectural research and action toward the needs of specific populations and specific, real-time spatial constructions. He observes that a turn to the common is what is new about the present moment’s protests against controlled space. And thus like Robinson, Stavrides asks how art can gesture toward possible urban worlds that are beautiful, functional, and liberating for all.

In their essays for this special issue, Allison Carruth and Lee Konstantinou extend this consideration of art and the ethico-politics of commons construction by examining discrete works of cultural performance. Carruth analyzes the workings of transgenetic seed markets that engineer seed production and privatize seed distribution, defining the “enclosure of the seed commons” by agribusiness in our time. She sets against this “an emerging set of activist and art communities who reimagine seeds as agents of public knowledge, exchange and cultivation” and activate what she terms “open-source foodways”: food production that is ecologically attuned but that also adapts “the lexicon of a digital commons to agricultural projects that mix environmental science, amateur knowledge, and . . . socially-engaged participatory art.” Presenting examples from the writing of Ruth Ozeki and the bioart of Natalie Jeremijenko, she asks us not only to consider the present as the crisis point of the Anthropocene but also to consider the ecological ramifications of a digital culture in which biotech corporations gain increasing control over food commons and other resources.

underprivileged, unheard, depoliticized, or overlooked. Controlled urban spaces attempt to project an image of cohesion, peace, and unity—and thus an image of a certain kind of public—through their built environments of enclaves and ceremonial structures. It is in protesting the particular functions of such environments—urban transportation, housing, health and education facilities—that politics is born. Through acts of “insurgent citizenship,”

Lee Konstantinou focuses on the economies of literary production. He turns to Lewis Hyde's novel *The Gift* (1983) and examines how Hyde attempted to articulate for the literary artist the conditions of compatibility between capitalism and a gift economy—seeing gifts linked more to a commons than to economic markets—and how Hyde understood his own text as a gift in these terms. Konstantinou analyzes how Zadie Smith engages with Hyde's ideas of art-as-gift in her novel *The Autograph Man* (2002), and then discusses the implications of such a view not only for definitions of the artist as cultural worker but also for other nonprofit institutions that rely on gift-economy rhetoric. He asks us to consider how our attitudes toward art intersect with our definitions of the political and economic sphere in which those attitudes are fostered, and how we are to understand the novel—as commodity or gift—within an economy supporting and dependent upon neoliberal values.

In the final article of this issue, curator and art historian Mary Jane Jacob discusses her work in a now-famous and groundbreaking public art project, *Places with a Past*. Organized in 1990, *Places with a Past* was held in Charleston, South Carolina as place-based exhibition within the city's annual Spoleto Festival. Jacob worked with local as well as internationally acclaimed artists to produce a show that “afforded the chance to commission work that directly acknowledged histories left out of the canon” of art and of national histories and that also challenged the authority of museum-based exhibition sites. She details how the exhibition attempted to answer key questions related to a revisionist appraisal of history: “Could an exhibition provide a space for silences, long cloaked in Southern courtesies and traditions of servitude, to be broken? . . . Could artists as outsiders open up a space for residents and visitors alike to come into dialogue with these histories, at least for a time?” The church shootings in Charleston on June 17, 2015 make clear that these questions, and art's attempt to intervene in the volatile territories of race and class politics, are still very much relevant to our own moment, much to our horror and dismay. Jacob invites us to think about the role of art in politicized, and politicizing, real-world contexts. Yet she does not negate the aesthetic, as some critics claim participatory and relational arts are wont to do, but sees it as a powerful force that eludes paraphrase, summary, and instrumental value even as it forces us to consider the complex roles of both curator and artist in relation to place and history.

The contributions to this issue work through the contradictions of contemporary capitalist forms of circulation to identify how art today may theorize, construct, or reenergize conceptions of the commons. All recognize that arts concerned with commons articulation and preservation negotiate a tricky, paradoxical, and sometimes even dangerous territory between politics and aesthetics. All seem fully cognizant of the precarious situation of art today, poised between markets that destroy commons' ethos yet preserve art as well as artists' livelihoods and a larger public that seems unconcerned with art's passing but on whose behalf the arts of the commons act. Is an art of the commons—or, conversely, a commons of art—conceivable today? And if so, what are the terms, for us, of its instantiation?

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> One thinks, in this latter case, of the now forcibly depopulated squatter community in Venezuela's Tower of David, an abandoned, unfinished forty-five-story skyscraper in downtown Caracas that housed families on twenty-eight of its floors.

<sup>2</sup> See discussions in Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experiments* (Oakland: University of California, Press, 2002); Mildred L. Glimcher, *Happenings: New York, 1958-1963* (Pace Gallery, New York: Exhibition Catalogues, 2012); Augusto Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Les Presse Du Reel, Franc, 1998); Robert Atkins, Rudolf Frieling, Boris Groys, and Lev Manovich, *The Art of Participation* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> See Oliver Razac, *Barbed Wire: A Political History* (New York: The New Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> For a popular account, see Greenpeace, "The collapse of the Canadian Newfoundland cod fishery," (May 8, 2009), <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/oceans/seafood/understanding-the-problem/overfishing-history/cod-fishery-canadian/>, accessed October 24, 2015. See also Lenard Milich, "Resource Mismanagement Versus Sustainable Livelihoods: The Collapse of the Newfoundland Cod Fishery," *Society and Natural Resources*, 12, no. 7 (1999), 625-42.

<sup>5</sup> See Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For a discussion of Ostrom's theory and of digital commons, see Amy J. Elias, "The Commons . . . and Digital Planetaryity," in *The Planetary Turn: Relationality and Geoaesthetics in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015): 37-69.

<sup>6</sup> The lobster fisheries are not without their controversies and problems, but they are generally understood to be a successful and economically viable commons collective. See

James Acheson, *Capturing the Commons: Devising Institutions to Manage the Maine Lobster Industry* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2004); Jennifer F. Brewer, "Revisiting Maine's Lobster Commons: Rescaling Political Subjects," *International Journal of the Commons* 6.2 (2012): 319-43, <http://www.thecommonsjournal.org/index.php/ijc/article/view/336/278>, accessed October 24, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 49-90. Theories of what a public is and how the public sphere functions include thinkers from Plato to Habermas; Warner differentiates "publics" from "the public," the latter a unifying construct instantiated by hegemonic ideology.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-6. Because publics are built upon such structures and also need to include strangers as active participants but cannot avoid setting criteria for membership (even at the level of idiolect and topical knowledge), "[p]ublic discourse circulates, but it does so in struggle with its own conditions."

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>11</sup> Raqs Media Collective, "A Knot Untied in Two Parts," *eflux journal* 65 (May-August 2015), <http://supercommunity.e-flux.com/texts/a-knot-untied-in-two-parts/>.

<sup>12</sup> Warner is cagey on whether Internet culture inhibits or facilitates publics-as-discourse. "It may even be necessary," he writes, "to abandon 'circulation' as an analytic category" (69). Why this is so, when the Internet is fundamentally about (if not comprised of) circulation, is not clear.

<sup>13</sup> New forms of the commons appear in many versions of new materialist theory, affect theory, and posthumanism. Examples are numerous, but one might point quickly to Lauren Berlant's discussion of the construction of an affectsphere as an active intimation of the common in *Cruel Optimism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011); William Haver's discussion of the possibility of a common of the pleased body outside the bounds of subjectivity in Foucault's writing, in "A Sense of the Common," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 111:13 (2012): 439-52; and Jane Bennett's "vital materiality" as a discursive as well as materialist route to a new (or, rather, hitherto unperceived) vitalist commons in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010). The commons means very different things in these texts. My point is that through analysis of the interrelation of the aesthetic, the material, and the political, all posit a form of common that merges the spatial logic of commons with the discursive logic of publics.

<sup>14</sup> The Artes Mundi Award was "created to celebrate artists who work with ideas of the human form or presence, producing art that adds to our understanding of humanity." Gates chose to split his £40,000 prize between the nine shortlisted finalists. See *artesmundi* homepage at <http://www.artesmundi.org/en/exhibitions-prizes>. As noted on the White Cube website ([http://theastergates.com/section/328620\\_Holding\\_Court.html](http://theastergates.com/section/328620_Holding_Court.html), accessed October 25, 2015), at The Armory Show "Gates performed "SEE, SIT, SUP, SIP,

SING: Holding Court” at the booth of Chicago and Berlin gallery Kavi Gupta and in the café on Pier 94. . . . *Holding Court* has since been exhibited in *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art*, the first comprehensive survey of performance art by black visual artists.”

<sup>15</sup> From the Rebuild Foundation website, <https://rebuild-foundation.squarespace.com>, accessed October 25, 2015. Gates discusses the Stony Island Arts Bank at White Cube, [http://whitecube.com/channel/in\\_the\\_studio/theaster\\_gates\\_on\\_stony\\_island\\_arts\\_bank/](http://whitecube.com/channel/in_the_studio/theaster_gates_on_stony_island_arts_bank/), filmed in Chicago, August 2012.

<sup>16</sup> See Carol Becker, Achim Borchardt-Hume, and Lisa Yun Lee, *Theaster Gates* (London: Phaidon Press, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> See a description of “Temple Exercises” at “Theaster Gates: Temple Exercises, Jan 6–Feb 1, 2009” at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago’s website, “Past Exhibitions,” <http://www2.mcachicago.org/exhibition/theaster-gates-temple-exercises/>; see a description of “Black Artists Retreat [B.A.R.]” at Theaster Gates, “Projects,” “Black Artists Retreat [B.A.R.],” [http://theastergates.com/section/382198\\_B\\_A\\_R\\_Black\\_Artists\\_Retreat.html](http://theastergates.com/section/382198_B_A_R_Black_Artists_Retreat.html), Website, 2006–2015. Gates’s fall 2012 show *My Labor is My Protest* at White Cube Gallery, Bermondsey was “a multi-faceted installation that investigated themes of race and history through sculpture, installation, performance and two-dimensional works exhibited both inside and outside of the Bermondsey site” (White Cube Gallery Bermondsey website, [http://whitecube.com/exhibitions/theaster\\_gates\\_my\\_labor\\_is\\_my\\_protest\\_bermondsey\\_2012/](http://whitecube.com/exhibitions/theaster_gates_my_labor_is_my_protest_bermondsey_2012/)). The show is documented in Bill Brown, Fred Moten, Honey Luard, Theaster Gates, *Theaster Gates: My Labor Is My Protest* (White Cube, 2013). Mitchell and Gates refer to a number of Gates’s projects and installations in their dialogue in this issue. “Raising Goliath” (2012) was an installation at the White Cube gallery that “used theatrical pulleys to suspend a classic red fire-truck from the ceiling of South Gallery II, counterbalancing it with a huge metal container, housing hundreds of leather bound issues of African American magazines such as *Jet* and *Ebony*” (White Cube Gallery, Bermondsey website, [http://whitecube.com/exhibitions/theaster\\_gates\\_my\\_labor\\_is\\_my\\_protest\\_bermondsey\\_2012/](http://whitecube.com/exhibitions/theaster_gates_my_labor_is_my_protest_bermondsey_2012/), accessed October 30, 2015); “The Arts Incubator” is a building housing space for artist residences and arts education; “BING” is Chicago’s first art-focused bookstore (on which Gates is collaborating with curator Hamza Walker) and will stock both high-end and free books; and “The Currency Exchange” is a restaurant in Washington Park, a neighborhood with one of the highest vacancy rates in Chicago.

<sup>18</sup> While artists and theorists in the humanities do not shy from revolutionary politics, revising from *within* the system—in a kind of Situationist *détournement*, using circulation and consumerism against themselves—seems important as well. For example, Kojin Karatani’s “New Associationist Movement” depends upon the worker *as consumer* to define a new “economic-ethical movement”—predicated not on overthrowing capitalism but on working through it by envisioning a global network of consumers/producers that is

not a return to a premodern community but to a different form of market economy. See Kojin Karatani, "The Principles of New Associationist Movement (NAM)," Reading for the Princeton Graduate Symposium "Authenticities East and West," sponsored by The Society for Intercultural Comparative Studies, Princeton University, 2001, [http://web.princeton.edu/sites/sics/NAM\\_principles.pdf](http://web.princeton.edu/sites/sics/NAM_principles.pdf).