Coming together differently: art, anthropology and the curatorial space.

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What we mean when we use the term 'curator' obviously encompasses a broad spectrum of practices. Like all disciplines the activity of curating is continually being redefined. This is a process that is pushed, challenged and accelerated in correspondence with artists and various sites both within and beyond the gallery. In my own circumstances, this way of working was simply a continuation of art school experiences. Suffice to say that in the late 1980s critical discussion concerning 'the curatorial' came largely through practice and courses in departments of art history or those primarily concerned with the museum sector. There were a few notable exceptions for postgraduate students, including the 'Independent Study Programme', affiliated with The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, which brought together those pursuing studio practice, exhibition-making and critical writing, and Michael Asher's 'post-studio art' course at the California Institute of the Arts, Santa Clarita. These experimental programmes explored the historical, social and intellectual conditions of artistic production. They were exemplary artist-led models. However, to my knowledge, the first courses dedicated to critical curation began with 'The Center for Curatorial Studies' at Bard College, New York (1990) followed by the Royal College of Art, London (1992) and De Appel Curatorial Programme, Amsterdam (1994).

In thinking about the professionalization of curating and the more recent expanded use of the term 'curate' beyond the museum and gallery, it may be helpful to return to the roots of the term, which means deeply nurturing, from the medieval Latin *curatus* (to cure) and equivalent in Latin *cūrātum* – to take care of, to take trouble, to be solicitous or attentive. Traditionally, those charged with the role of 'curator' were custodians or 'keepers', who gathered all manner of artefacts and curios from across the fields of natural history, geology and archaeology as well as different cultures. From historical finds, to everyday items, initially these materials were held in wunderkammer or cabinets of curiosity. Over time they grew, becoming idiosyncratic collections that later were to be ordered into encyclopaedic resources, which form the basis for connoisseurship and academic studies. The history of collecting, conservation and museology leads off from these traditions, while contemporary approaches to 'the curatorial' emerged out of questions concerning the politics of representation and mediation of lived experience. For the curator and anthropologist, or for that matter any interlocutor, this is the basis of critical study that explores the social, historical and ideological forces that underpin a discipline. For those working in experimental ways with artists and participants, 'the curatorial space' remains an ambiguous location, one that is integral to the creative process and emerges through response to practice, described most insightfully by the curator Maria Lind,[1] as 'a way of linking objects, images, processes, people, locations, histories, and discourses in physical space' (Lind 2009).

Around 1997, I recall being drawn into discussions about the location of the curator, artist and diverse publics. I am ambivalent about defining this moment as an 'anthropological turn' in contemporary art. It seems almost too obvious to state that art and anthropology continue to share a discursive space and a common concern with human existence, creativity and social organization. What remains interesting is how the conversation is heightened at times when we need to come together to reimagine alternative futures or answer significant ethical questions – whether social, environmental or technological. However, when I listen to recent discourse among academics and arts professionals, what I hear are counter-attempts to define new territory, or defend our 'professionalized' world.

Recently I was introduced to Roy Wagner, who describes the discipline of anthropology as a form of digressive practice, one that opens up our relationship between experience, thinking and writing. Wagner is best known in anthropology circles for *The Invention of Culture,* published in 1975, which proposes that imagination and creativity lie at the heart of anthropology. As such we invent our cultures, and this takes place through a dialogue between people and the social world; and it is in this unfamiliar and unpredictable space that art and anthropology converge to imagine other ways of knowing and being. This perspective will not resonate with everyone, but what I propose is that this ambiguous space shifts attention away from academic strictures or institutional conventions and opens up a location to speculate rather than contain or contextualize life.

Keeping things alive: resisting containment

In following these thoughts, I am reminded of the writing of the artist Robert Smithson (1938–73) who described the invention of the art institution as one where the 'lived world' is displaced. The artist challenged the curator and audience to question the impulse to re-present or objectify life. He speaks of the museum as 'asylums and jails' and how art 'placed in a gallery… loses its charge, and becomes a portable object or surface disengaged from the outside world' (Smithson 1972: 39). The artwork in these terms is in convalescence – looked on as inanimate, waiting for critics to pronounce them curable or incurable. One understanding of the curator stems from the impulse to mediate or contextualize the lived world, while another quite different understanding is related to the act of curing, as a way to allow things to transform, grow or take on a new life.

A series of ephemeral site works, which highlight these ideas, involved Smithson pouring large amounts of construction materials – asphalt, glue, concrete – over a ravine and embankment where industrial waste products were usually discarded. As the materials were released, they were unbounded, finding their own way into the world without undue control. For the artist, these 'material flows' speak of life as unpredictable, an exploration of decay and renewal. Narrated over a film documenting these works, Smithson describes in great detail how he is 'prone to mine regions, volcanic conditions and wastelands. He uses the example of approaching hurricanes, the sense of anticipation, followed by the violent experience of trees being torn and uprooted from the ground, and how this moment then gives way to a sense of calm equilibrium. As such, these works contradict our impulse to fix conditions. Or for Smithson, they disrupt the usual mechanistic world view, they are 'entropy made visible', spotlighting 'the way natural forces interact in a kind of anthropic way.' (Smithson

and Cummings, 1972). For those attempting to keep the practices of Smithson and his artistic collaborator, Nancy Holt,[2] such works also challenge intermediaries to find ways beyond the objectification of the world and the impulse to canalize or petrify human life.

I was reminded of these kinds of material experiments while compiling photographic documentation for the exhibition *Out of Sight, Out of Mind* at Lisson Gallery, London (1993). The gallery was returning to its foundational ethos and considering ways to present to a new generation those practices that pushed the boundaries of exhibition-making in the late 1960s. It was here that I was introduced to many individuals who were working *with* artists in undefined territory – not curator – not gatekeeper – not translator, but as 'critical others' whose role was to find the right conditions to bring works into being. It occurs to me that these kinds of 'facilitators' had often been practitioners and studio assistants and were closely related to both the artist and the site. This way of working emerged out of what the historian Rosalind Krauss described as the expanded field of sculpture. This space and approach was anthropological at core, concerned with lived experience, material processes, environmental conditions and temporality. For the discipline of sculpture this described a locus of practitioners who were exploring 'the juncture between stillness and motion, time arrested and time passing' (Krauss 1977: 5). This move beyond a static, idealized medium to a material that was continually in-forming made palpable the world as one that was unpredictable and unstable. A place where both viewer and artist stand 'before the work, and the world, in an attitude of primary humility in order to encounter deep reciprocity' (Krauss 1977: 283)

In the photographic documentation of *Glue Pour*, 1969 (https://vancouverartinthesixties.com/archive/691), I am drawn to Lucy Lippard, who appears on the right of the image. Lippard is a writer and activist who became a significant role model for many emergent artists, writers and curators working in the 1990s. Lippard invited Smithson to participate in the exhibition *955,000*[3] for the gallery at the Vancouver Art Gallery, 13 January to 8 February 1970. What most interested me, then and now, about this kind of practice is how relevant these projects are to current debates concerning collaboration, and in particular the relationship between art, anthropology and material studies. Participants were drawn together in the process of making, including writers, filmmakers, social theorists and a broad range of students, as well as suppliers of materials, technicians and 'incidental others' connected with a specific location. *Glue Pour,* for example, involved support of UBC students Ilyas Pagonis and Duane Lunden and Smithson's collaborator, Dikeakos, describes the event in his own résumé as '*Glue Pour and the Viscosity of Fluvial Flows as Evidenced in Bottle-Gum*'. The bright orange drum of liquid adhesive, literally binding itself with the landscape, was donated by the National Starch and Chemical Company – at the time, this was Canada's largest manufacturer of consumer glues, a subsidiary of UK giant Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI). The work was documented by Vancouver-born artist/filmmaker Dennis Wheeler,[4] who struck up an important friendship with Smithson, sharing many interests in cosmology, anthropology, philosophy and geology.

It may be helpful for those working in fields outside the arts, to understand more about the possibilities of working in these responsive ways. I became aware of this approach through Lippard's publication *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*,[5] which gathered together a diverse array of practices, the inclusions and

exclusions of which were idiosyncratic and personal, devised to expose the chaotic range of ideas that were 'in the air'. While the book's content and title would provoke questions around materiality – authenticity, permanence and aesthetic experience – Lippard was also concerned to avoid the continual issue of being defined. The front cover of the publication transgresses its own labelling by speaking directly to the issue – it includes various terms being thrown around in the art world – the 'so-called' conceptual or information art with vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth or process art. In the preface for the second publication Lippard comments:

> since I first wrote on the subject in 1967, it has often been pointed out to me that dematerialization is an inaccurate term, that a piece of paper or a photograph is as much an object, or a 'material' as a ton of lead. Granted. But for lack of a better term I have continued to refer to a process of dematerialization, or a de-emphasis on material aspects (uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness). 'Eccentric Abstraction', 'Anti-form', 'Process Art', Anti-Illusionism' or whatever … (Lippard 1973: 5)

As someone searching for new ways to work with artists, this book was a revelation to me and, together with essays published in 1971 entitled *Changing,* proposed a different way of working *with* artists that explored life as a process and art as a living force. Other exemplars that I discovered at this time included, in Europe, Konrad Fischer and Hans Strelow's *Prospect 68* and the *Skulptur Projekte Münster*, co-founded by Kasper König and Klaus Bußmann in 1977; and, in the US, ephemeral, performative and activist practices that were given visibility through niche publishing initiatives, such as printed matter[6] that in turn created a locus for many transatlantic connections between artists and facilitators (curators, writers, arts professionals) beyond the art institution.

These projects were ephemeral and as such made tangible through documentation. They resonated with those interested in the overlooked, abandoned or less visible spaces beyond the art institution. For instance, Smithson's *Asphalt Rundown*, Rome 1969, is an experiment that takes place in a gravel quarry, and follows from ideas that had been percolating from around 1967, when the artist began exploring industrial areas around New Jersey and became fascinated by watching dumper trucks excavating tons of earth and rock. He writes about these anonymous industrial processes as the equivalents of *The Monuments of Antiquity* and these experiences also informed the first series of *Nonsites*, in which earth and rocks collected in one location were then installed in a gallery as sculptures.

Growing up and working in northeast England, in a region synonymous with process industries – iron, steel and chemicals – I was particularly drawn to Smithson's practice, which explored the symbiosis between environment, materials and production. In 2005, while working as inaugural curator at mima (Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art) I was able to visit the artists' retrospective organized by Eugenie Teal and Cornelia Butler at the Whitney Museum, New York. The *Nonsite*, took on new relevance once understood as drawings, or cartographic models – 'abstracted, three-dimensional maps that point to a specific location, leading somewhere' (Roth 2004: 92–3) or, more accurately, 'elsewhere'. By making visible the parameters of what was meaningful, undermining the assumptions concerning where art was to be found, artists such as Smithson countered the prevalent voice of the art world. For Smithson, the 'ready-made' of Marcel Duchamp or the pseudo-factory system set up by Andy Warhol had

both elevated everyday objects into works of art through relocation or reworking for the commercial art world. Duchamp and Warhol thus emphasized the role of the artist and their ideas and removed attention from production to consumption. Returning to Middlesbrough, the works also highlighted the politics of representation, with questions concerning centre and peripheries and with debates that ensued about the separation of the gallery from the economic realities and conditions of the region. Reading the catalogue for the exhibition on the return flight, I turned again to the interview Smithson had with the art historian Moira Roth in March 1973, who set the scene:

> It was a period when art-world figures were not only fine-tuning their various readings of Duchamp – who had died in 1968 – but also when people were both puzzling over and wanting to define the many shifts that had occurred in art-making during the late 1960s and early 1970s. (Roth 2004: 81)

This resonated with many of my contemporaries, who were inspired by the legacy of Duchamp, whose readymades removed the preoccupation with traditional or artisanal skills and turned their attention to the changing meaning of making art it was reconfigured to take into account post-industrial production and DIY culture. In accord with Smithson, many artists were questioning the isolation of objects from their means of production, transcending the lived and natural world in a kind of pseudo-practice that Smithson described in the interview as a 'Voltairean sarcasm' (Roth 2004) by which I understand him to mean relevant to the art world itself (an inside joke).

Artists working in the 1960s and 1970s offered future generations an alternative way of working beyond the institution. Superficially there are similarities in the documentation of such projects with those working in visual anthropology. Such practices are understood through the ephemera that now exists in archives and museum collections and includes notes, postcards, film, photographs and drawings made during road trips and site visits (alone and with others). However, the material gathered and collected is not a result of 'research'. For Smithson and other land artists the world is a studio, a field of practice, where understanding grows through relationship, intuition and encounter. By extending beyond the boundaries of the studio or limits of the canvas, such artists perceive the world as 'an arena in which to act' (Rosenberg 1959: 22). There is no overarching research question or predetermined methodology, the approach is always relative to the principles of the artist and unfolding conditions.

In these terms, the work is always an invention that corresponds to specific conditions and therefore unpredictable, unknown and always incomplete. *Asphalt Rundown*, for example, came about following a conversation with the gallerist Fabio Sargentini at L'Attico. The role that he played is integral to the work, as a site for discourse and negotiation; locating the suppliers of 1,000 tons of asphalt, securing the open-mine quarry and a team of anonymous production workers. L'Attico emerged from a small private gallery, opened by Bruno Sargentini (Fabio's father) in 1957 and devoted to Art Informel[7] in Italy, and this relationship to chance is also relevant to the kinds of artists invited to work in the space. Through the early 1960s Fabio started to make exhibitions alongside peers and contemporaries who were pushing at the walls of the gallery space and challenging the norms of a previous

generation. Many of the works reflect wider social and political concerns. The gallerist plays host to peers, artists, curators and writers visiting Italy from the US, creating ephemeral, time-based events and performances.[8] This inheritance affords the possibility of retaining the ethos of and performances.[8] This inheritance affords the possibility of retaining the ethos of independence, funded through freelance projects, art sales and niche publishing. By taking this approach L'Attico expanded the parameters of the space by creating off-site events and actions and, later, in the 1970s, the gallery became increasingly nomadic. By way of contrast, Smithson's *Concrete Pour* was a response to the exhibition *Art by Telephone* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois. Curated by the temporary director, David H. Katzive, who drew on the work of Chicago émigré, artist and educator László Moholy-Nagy's 'telephone pictures' of 1923[9] as a insipiration for the exhibition and off-site projects. Invited artists were asked to communicate new work using the protocol of telephone communication and avoiding all blueprints or technical plans. The work was then carried forwards by a technical crew under the guidance of Katzive. In common with the abstract paintings of Moholy-Nagy the exhibition created a space for discussion concerning authenticity, or what Walter Benjamin described as forms of mechanical reproduction that dissolve the 'aura' or ritualistic function of art, 'its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be' (Benjamin 1973: 214). The continuum of these questions – the exploration of how technology, industrial production and high-speed travel have changed our experience of the world, both spatially and temporally, is also clearly linked to a growing understanding of the part artists, architects and designers have played in shaping the modern world. It is no accident that Katzive used the work of Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946) as a trigger. Moholy-Nagy was a seminal figure in the Chicago art scene, having emigrated to America in 1937 and set up the New Bauhaus. His American struggles to create a modern art school were highly respected by the creative community, with Moholy-Nagy continuing to implore the industry (and whoever would listen) to think 'not only aesthetically, but morally' stating that 'we must control the application of our materials, technique, science and art in creating for human needs' (Moholy-Nagy 1936). In turn Smithson's *Concrete Pour* corresponds with these ideas and with Chicago as a city synonymous with a modern spirit and concrete as the leitmotif of aggressive modernism.

Reimagining these ways of working, I am interested to know what they might tell us in the present time. Pouring concrete into a ravine interrupts the material's association with construction, returning the material to its volcanic origins as liquid rock. As the anthropologist Michael Taussig described after Vitruvius, 'You start with stone. You make a powder. And then in the process of building, you add water and end up with a new form of "stone" in accord with the shape desired. It sounds like magic but we call it technology' (Harkness, Simonetti and Winter 2015). There is an interesting relationship here between concrete production and ways of curating. Concrete that is forming is said to be 'curing', which is an almost imperceptible state. Although at first glance the material may appear to be solid, it still requires attention; asking to be kept liquid by being misted with water. What can be discovered is that the longer the concrete remains in this formative state, the longer its crystals continue to grow and meld with other materials. The strength of the material comes through its relationship with iron, aggregates and atmospheric conditions. Smithson's archives for this work suggest that it is the way materials cure that really matters – the care and attention to specific conditions that are relevant rather than the way they are objectified. For the

curator David Katzive these experiences 'fresh out of University of Chicago', were ones that allowed works to remain free from institutional demands, and it was through these ephemeral projects that there were 'amazing things happening out of this notion of impermanence'.[10] (Katzive and Firmin 2009)

Un-learning in correspondence with artists and sites

The interview with Katzive echoes with my own formative experiences. In 1989/1990, immediately out of art school, I worked at Riverside Studios, London, with the curator Zoe Shearman.[11] At this time Riverside was an experimental public gallery that supported both emergent artists and those who had played a significant role in challenging institutional frameworks. It was a modest space, whose ethos was both critical and artist-led. In 1990, I continued this journey through postgraduate study, with the idea of deepening my knowledge as part of the first cohort of 'sculpture studies' students at the University of Leeds, under the leadership of the art historian, Benedict Read (1945–2016).[12] The course combined history, theory and criticism, but, more significantly, it emphasized understanding through conversation. All studies were augmented through studio visits with artists, curators, conservators, technicians, archivists, and so on. These ideas were intensified through its association with the Henry Moore Institute, that drew on the vibrant site-specific exhibitions, talks and events developed by Robert Hopper (1946–1999) at Dean Clough, Halifax, that linked students to contemporary artists, curators and writers and opened a door into working in the arts.

What I recognize from these practices is how differently they were played out in a pre-digital age. They required a working rhythm that was orchestrated through material handling, direct working relationships, analogue systems such as archiving and written correspondence; and, as such, daily routines were often unpredictable, requiring different forms of response and judgement. Communications were rarely instantaneous and photographic documentation for publishing demanded slow and careful negotiations, and, often, physical travel between the studios of artists, photographers, designers and printers. Strong and lasting associations were forged through patterns of working life and social relations that were implicit in each and every project. It is worth remembering that the internet didn't enter common use in the UK until the mid-1990s when Microsoft announced internet mail and a few fledgling companies started to offer free use-anywhere internet. It is hard to imagine, in an age of digital communications, how much this altered correspondence and ways of being and knowing. In the gallery, research remained relatively active, involving discussions with artists, pouring through vast amounts of original printed matter or hours tracking down material in libraries and archives. First and foremost, gallery assistants, curators and writers were expected to engage with artwork directly. It was through these daily routines that one followed histories, theories and critical others.

It was through these practical experiences that emergent artists, curators and writers were exposed to critical discourse. In 1996, for instance, I recall listening to Catherine David describe a way of working for documenta X,[13] Kassel. As the first woman to be appointed as artistic director for perhaps the most significant barometer of contemporary art, what she voiced was received as a provocation that was able to

reach the conscience of the art world, offering a critical assessment of the political, social, economic and cultural issues that informed artists and curators. Five years later, returning to Kassel, I recognized that these events marked the end and beginning of new centuries and they brought into stark view the skewed perspective of institutional authority. This experience then fuelled my return to documenta 11, which was led by artistic director Okwui Enwezor and co-curated with a team of six – Sarat Maharaj, Octavio Zaya, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez and Mark Nash – who explored the location of culture and how this was changing through the global knowledge systems. The simultaneous presentations were formed through a series of preceding events: 'transdisciplinary platforms' entitled: *Democracy Unrealized* took place in Vienna and Berlin; *Experiments with Truth: Transitional Justice and the Process of Reconciliation* in New Delhi; *Créolité and Creolization* in St Lucia; and *Under Siege: Four African Cities* emerged through dialogue in Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa and Lagos. When looking at the way that these exhibitions were curated and presented one can clearly see the lines of communication and the opportunities to create rich and meaningful debate across disciplinary fields.

Experience drawn from working with artists and visiting exhibitions and events with arts professionals, was invaluable to my own curatorial approach and informed my ways of working as I moved from small-scale, artist-led initiatives to public spaces: from mima to Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA). For example, at documenta 11, I recall the sculpture park created by the artist Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, *A Plan for Escape*, that consisted of objects with their own stories. The work made tangible the imaginary, historic and invented meanings that merge with our immediate experiences. The artist was not documenting the harsh and complex realities created through the failure of modern architecture, nor was he drawn to upholding the modernist or superficial aesthetic style – instead the work revealed the nascent potential of modernity, charged as it is with dreams and promises for future reimagining.

Directly related to my curatorial programme at DCA, was Thomas Hirschhorn's ephemeral and accumulative Bataille Monument, built in a social housing estate in a mainly Turkish neighbourhood in the Nordstadt area of Kassel. This was a walk-in container that hosted a visual archive of the writer, philosopher and essayist Georges Bataille (1897–1962). I was aware that the artist had previously made similar kinds of anti-heroic artworks, homages to philosophers Spinoza (Amsterdam, 1999) and Deleuze (Avignon, 2002). These projects were situated in spaces not dedicated to art, in overlooked and forgotten localities, and produced using readily available cheap or discarded materials (cardboard, brown tape, plastic, etc.). These hypersaturated environments overwhelm those implicated in the work, through a sense of data and knowledge overload. The material grows during the lifetime of the temporary monument, it is constantly in-forming through a correspondence between artist and residents. Given the situation of Kassel, this created a deeply uncomfortable experience for those who ventured beyond the centre of the town – professional art world, critics and scholars alike – it made palpable the unfamiliar, uncertain or 'other'. Forgoing the traditional terms of knowledge production, the work kicked back the gallery's ritualistic role of displaying, collecting and consuming social realities. Later, visiting The Gramsci Monument in Biljmer[14] (2009), I was able to ask the artist about the relationship with residents, how the work comes into being? 'the process is very straightforward – a call to residents who want a temporary job, each [is] … paid a wage to produce the monument, it requires a commitment …' (Hirschhorn 2009). Occupying the monument over a few hours one started to understand more about the relationship between aesthetics

and politics – transgression, imagination, creative freedom, and so on. The link here to anthropology no doubt will be familiar, Bataille had been influenced by Marcel Mauss's publication *The Gift,* an anthropological study of reciprocity. His analysis of the *Potlatch* ceremony inspired Bataille to write *The Accursed Share* and, in turn, this led to a conversation with the artwork. What seems relevant here is the notion of art as something that implicated others, underpinned by obligations – the obligation to give, the obligation to accept and the obligation to reciprocate. It struck me that this temporary monument was also working as a curatorial space, a 'total social phenomenon – one whose transactions are at once economic, juridical, moral, aesthetic, religious, and mythological' (Hyde 1983: xvii), and its meaning, therefore, cannot be adequately described from a singular perspective. As such the work triggered a field of references that led back to various avant-garde tendencies in the early twentieth century, that tell of the unspoken hierarchies of attention in Western institutions, the search for ways of coming together to explore authentic and immediate experience.

Countering research methodology

In 2012, I returned to Kassel for documenta 13. I was particularly interested in the curatorial framework devised by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, dedicated to 'forms of imagination that explore commitment, matter, things, embodiment, and active living in connection with, yet not subordinated to theory'. Organized from four simultaneous positions or states (stage, siege, hope and retreat), described as 'phenomenal spatialities' that mirrored the conditions that artists and critical others find themselves navigating. A key concern was how to move beyond the art world, to acknowledge the way creative practices help recalibrate and shift our ways of working. I was particularly drawn to a series of small publications produced under the collective title: *100 Notes – 100 Thoughts* and the contribution made by Michael Taussig, which I read on a train journey between Kassel and Berlin. Between its pages, I recognized this imaginative travel; weaving in the thoughts of artists and critical thinkers (including Benjamin, Didion, Genet and Burroughs, among others). Far more than a mere 'thing', Taussig proposed the site of the notebook, that created a life of its own, as he states, 'chance determines (what an odd phrase!) what goes into the collection, and chance determines how it is used' (Taussig 2012: 5). I took this as a provocation to his own field of anthropology, to 'Imagine a social science that not only admits to this principle but runs with it!'. This is a space that 'retains loyalty to feelings and experience' (Taussig 2012: 6). Here, intuition plays a key role; not as some spurious gut feeling, based entirely on chance, but a way of working that is described by Deleuze in his reading of Henri Bergson (1966). For Bergson and Deleuze, intuition is a legitimate approach, not just a 'disorderly sympathy'. It is a decisive turn in a given duration or state of responding with things. That provides us with precise ways of knowing and differentiating lived experiences and reality itself (Deleuze 2011: 13–14). Writing at completely different moments in time, these philosophers recognize that intuition is deeply problematic phenomenon for twentieth- and twenty-first-century organizations. In our present world where human judgement is being circumnavigated through automation and institutional frameworks the discussion seems prescient. It also may provide some suggestions to why the present order and representation of the world is deeply unsettling, particularly for those who lived and worked in different ways in a pre-digital epoch. In accord with Bergson, intuition accompanies a plurality

of meanings and irreducible multiplicities. These multiplicities require participants to ask questions: What is the problem or challenge? How do we differentiate what might be a problem from what seems a given or is conventional? How do I consider the issues that present themselves as a continuum in the unfolding of time? It is here, in the borderlands of art and humanities, that there is created a space to explore the changing world and speculate about our collective futures.

This more ambiguous space is not one that is associated with current debates concerning art and anthropology, which focus on a 'critical' understanding around many complex issues of representation. Although, in our present time, this has offered an alternative to the superficial and unmediated knowledge that circulates through popular media (social, state-owned or commercial) and has enabled artists to move beyond historicism by focussing attention on present conditions, it might also be argued that 'anthropology' is in danger of being prized as the social science of 'alterity'. As art critic and historian Hal Foster was to foresee, this resonated with artists who were working beyond the gallery and led to the appropriation of methods and strategies outside the frame of the art world, including social systems and the conflation of anthropology with ethnography. My understanding is that Foster's key concern is that many emergent curators and artists are not critically questioning or acknowledging the location of intermediaries and thus are in danger of turning the materials associated with specific communities into 'cultural proxies'. Such a critique is directed towards participatory or socially engaged models, where the artist is typically utilized as the 'outsider', or sanctioned to engage with 'the locals' in the production of 'their self-representation' (Foster 1995:171–204). In accord with Foster, it was these issues that Hirschhorn addressed, by revealing the paradox of such 'quasi-anthropological roles' and by making visible an alternative to ethnography that avoids the issue of hiding behind the voices of others or speaking on their behalf.

These discussions concerning the issues of representation and the relationship between theory and practice stretch back through the twentieth century and inevitably challenge participants to consider freedom, intellectual authority and social responsibility. While this may create a sense of déjà vu, conditions, of course, are never quite the same. This also echoes with the critical discourse in the mid-1980s where perspectives were deconstructed, pushed and provoked by a generation of visual theorists and art historians (Berger, T. J. Clark, Griselda Pollock, Rosalind Krauss, Fred Orton, etc.) whose writing found a platform in the academic journal October (founded in 1976), an influential vehicle for discussions around cultural production, making and interpreting art. Together with *Artforum* and early *Artscribe*, these publications became markers of 'criticality' and relevant touchstones for practices that were embracing an expanded field of art described by Krauss. By attempting to understand the phenomenon of modernist art, in its historical and theoretical context, a generation of art students were beginning to find common ground with critical others. In reality many artists of this period were also discovering their voices, through turning attention towards those avant-garde experiments that challenged institutional structures throughout the twentieth century, including Situationist International (SI), Asger Jorn's Imaginist Bauhaus, Process art, Fluxus and the Artist Placement Group, and so on. In common with these experimental critical theories, my own curatorial journey was allowing me to connect to those artists who were telling of the ambiguities of language, the inadequacy of representation and how histories were complex and contradictory.

Most recently I came across an interview with the academic and activist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, around critical intimacy, that describes a way of un-learning, 'a sort of stream of learning how to unlearn and what to unlearn' (Paulson and Spivak 2016:24–50) Spivak reveals how our present conditions create a new challenge for academics and intellectual authority. By acknowledging that our positions are growing and changing, she states: 'I don't really work from within an expertise. I have to really be on my feet learning new things all the time, and as I learn these new things my positions change' (Op. cit.). These values past and present coalesce as a search for the 'possibility of imagining' that resonates with artists and anthropologists 'as a training for the ethical impulse'. This kind of un-learning somewhat surprisingly recalibrates our relationship to modernity, by echoing with early artist/educators, searching for ways to escape the political atmosphere of Nazi Germany and find ways to encourage a new generation to make their own critical judgements: 'One can suffocate with knowing but never with experiencing. We lose easily what we have heard or read or learned, but we do not lose what we have experienced' (Albers 1935).

The notion of un-learning accords with current thought about the relationship between art and anthropology, rooted in educational philosophy rather than ethnography. Un-learning also reminds me of my experiences working with the Berlin-based artist Manfred Pernice at DCA and curators Mike Stanley (1975–2012) at Modern Art Oxford and Frank Maes at the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK), Ghent. Pernice's work exists in an ambiguous space, a form of travel that explores the complex borderland between sculpture, architecture and human stories of time and place. This was a project that began as an incidental conversation about how to link three different locations while also challenging the convention of touring exhibitions. Elements from each iteration of the journey were to be incorporated into the work via text, autobiographical references and collated ephemera. Each journey was given a distinct title. At Oxford: 'baldt1', 'Brei' in Ghent, and 'déjàVu' at DCA,[15] referring to the repetition of exhibition-making, but it also connected the viewer to objects and artefacts that may seem familiar, even though clearly displaced and continually shifting their meaning. One of the works, entitled *Tutti*, was a large reel-shaped container that could be entered and climbed via a spiral staircase to give a view of the work within the space it occupied – an exhibition space within an exhibition space – neither sculpture nor architecture; the contents and display of each quadrant reconfigured. In Oxford, the curators worked with the anthropologist Dan Hicks, from the Pitt Rivers Museum, who created an evening bringing together twenty writers, artists, critics and musicians to respond to the work. From a vantage point, literally on top of the work, I read some pages from my own notebook that described the journey taken with the artist while co-curating the exhibition: a series of entangled thoughts threaded together from recollections of early visits to Berlin just after unification, through to experiences of visiting Pernice in his studio and living space in former East Germany, and finally my own position on the viewing platform of the structure inside the gallery space. In Scotland, we created a more low-key event with the anthropologist Tim Ingold. What struck me was how the structure *Tutti* facilitated such different conversations and questions. Its outer walls peeled open and, rather than containing objects, it occupied a space, clearly unfinished or incomplete, always waiting for those who wished to participate.

What I have noted about this shared space, is that meaningful experiences are often formed like unsanctioned or unplanned travel (with the same sense of risk, tension and enjoyment). In this undefined location individuals are given licence to push against the confines and walls of a particular location. This places the artist and curator, as much as anyone else, in active tension between institution and self-identification. Michel De Certeau emphasized this idea in his observations around the devices, actions and procedures that individuals use on a daily basis to subvert disciplinary powers. These 'tactics' are not intended to be destructive, but are launched with the aim of retaining some sort of self-control. In this way, everyday life is made up of endless attempts to navigate that which we know will otherwise be closed down. This ambiguous and shared space beyond professional identity 'makes use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected' (De Certeau 1984: 25). This is a location where we are able to retain freedom, that allows us to reclaim or reimagine those things that are beyond our control. It is a locus that the artist Moholy-Nagy describes as inspiration, a moment when 'conventions and inhibitions of the daily routine are broken through' (Moholy-Nagy 1938: 15).

I am thus interested in the possibilities of this kind of unsanctioned space, which has been described by those who have a deep commitment to their respective disciplines, but I want to ensure that dialogue continues beyond academic confines and disciplinary boundaries. Here one can return to Roy Wagner's *Invention of Culture*, which begins by asking what happens if we think about the 'inversion of conventional identification' (Wagner 1975: 79). It is this space that echoes 'the curatorial space' described by Maria Lind, a way of working that is ambiguous, that allows for detours and, as such, is integral to the creative process.[16] These ideas resonate in practice rooted in anthropology – for example the research initiative Knowing from the Inside (KFI). This was an experimental research project, funded by the European Research Council, that I was part of for the last five years, set up to explore the common threads that link *anthropology, art, architecture and design*. Its central premise was how to reconfigure the relation between practices of inquiry and the knowledge to which they give rise, by experimenting and trialling a range of procedures that allow knowledge to grow from direct, practical and observational engagements with people, places, materials and situations. Led by the anthropologist Professor Tim Ingold, this project involved researchers and associates from across the globe. It countered the general approach to academic research and specialism and instead revealed a way of working that challenged traditional ways of knowing, by establishing a space where different disciplines could correspond with each other. This location then was one that was clearly educational and speculative, that allows different ways of working and different voices to come together and challenge assumptions, or move beyond their own self-imposed limits. Of course, for anthropologists, artists and curators this kind of invention is subject to the traditions and ethical responsibilities, but for some it may offer a way to temporarily jettison convention. As Roy Wagner points out, many of the stories that have been passed down through generations (Herodotus, to traveller's tales of the Middle Ages, to anecdotes from participants) demonstrate that culture is always an imagining of sorts, and he reminds his peers that 'an "anthropology" which never leaves the boundaries of its own conventions, which disdains to invest its imagination

in the world of experience is in danger of turning stories into an ideology' (Wagner 1975: 3). And as Ingold reminds us 'There can be no invention without convention, else it would be meaningless. And vice versa, there can be no convention without invention, for how else could it arise save from past improvisation? In life, conventions are never given but are the hard-won and always provisional outcomes of our incessant and never wholly successful attempts to make ourselves understood' (Ingold 2016).

Notes

1 See: Lind, M. (2010) *Maria Lind: Selected Writing*, Sternberg Press, London. Lind is a curator and writer based in Stockholm. She was the director of the graduate program at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York (2008–10); director of *Iaspis* in Stockholm (2005–7) and Kunstverein München (2002–4); curator at Moderna Museet in Stockholm (1997 to 2001); and co-curator of Manifesta 2, Luxembourg in 1998.

2 Smithson died in a plane crash in Amarillo, Texas, 20 July 1973, after photographing the site for *Amarillo Ramp*. His work continued through the support of the artist Nancy Holt (1938–2014), who he collaborated with and married in 1963. The two artists' work is intertwined, and further details can be found at the Holt-Smithson Foundation, an organization that exists to continue the creative and investigative spirit of the artists.

3 The exhibition followed on from *557,087,* at Seattle World's Fair Pavilion. This was a radical new approach to curation that consisted of sixty-nine artists and was sponsored by the Contemporary Art Council of the Seattle Art Museum. It was followed by *955,000* held in Vancouver. The titles refer to each city's population in 1969. The third number show took place in December of 1970 and featured artists that Lippard had previously never worked with. This exhibition, titled *2,972,453* took place in Buenos Aires at the Centro De Arte Y Comunicación.

4 Wheeler may be familiar to visual anthropologists. He made the film *Potlatch: A Strict law Bids Us Dance*, 1975, that was restored and distributed in 2007. The film was made in collaboration with the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations of Alert Bay, British Columbia.

5 The front cover of the book serves as both a title and a descriptor of the book's contents. It reads 'Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972: a cross-reference book of information on some esthetic boundaries: consisting of a bibliography into which are inserted a fragmented text, art works, documents, interviews, and symposia, arranged chronologically and focussed on so-called conceptual or information or idea art with mentions of such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art, occurring now in the Americas, Europe, England, Australia, and Asia (with occasional political overtones), edited and annotated by Lucy R. Lippard'.

6 Printed Matter is a non-profit organization dedicated to the dissemination, understanding and appreciation of artists' books. First established in Tribeca, New York, in 1976 by Sol Lewitt, Lucy Lippard, Carl Andre, Edit DeAk, Walter Robinson, Pat Steir, Mimi Wheeler, Robin White and Irena von Zahn. As an independent organization it presented forms of ephemeral, performative and distributed artwork and explored the possibilities of publishing as a curatorial site.

7 *Art Informel* is a French term, used to describe a wide range of responses to abstract painting across Europe through the 1940s and 1950s. The common thread being the use of informal procedures, improvisation and gestural movement. An important source of this kind of painting was the surrealist principle of automatism – creating art without conscious thought through the immediacy of experience.

8 'A decisive step towards a new conception of the exhibition space occurred in the meetings that Sargentini had in Rome with Italian-American dancer Simone Forti, who was a former pupil of Anna Halprin in the US and introduced Sargentini to the latest developments of the New York music and contemporary dance scene' (Cerizza 2014).

9 *Art by Telephone* paid homage to a work by László Moholy-Nagy who claimed to have ordered five paintings of porcelain enamel by telephone. Their production was dictated to the director of an enamel sign factory. 'I had the company's color scheme in front of me and I sketched my pictures on graph paper. On the other end of the line the director of the company had the same squared paper before him' (Moholy-Nagy and Gropius 1969). The transmitted artwork was executed in three different sizes to explore modifications and how the scale altered the space relationships. This was an experiment in art and mechanical reproduction that used ways of working that reflected the modern age (communications) and anonymity of production.

10 Interview with David Katzive, Oral History Transcript, Art Spaces Archive. Interviewer: Sandra Q. Firmin, Curator, UB Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, Wednesday, 11 November 2009. For further information see David Katzive Papers: Smithsonian Archives of American Art.

11 Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, London was a pioneering art centre situated in the complex of the Film Studios. Zoe Shearman was curator of the gallery (1990–94). She curated or co-curated the first UK solo exhibitions in a public institution of Eric Bainbridge, Louise Bourgeois, Mat Collishaw, Peter Fend, Yoko Ono, Bethan Huws, Tania Kovats and Simon Patterson, among others; 'off-site' projects by various artists including Judith Barry; and the seminar series Legitimate Practices in partnership with Artforum (with Thomas Crow, Isabella Graw, Hans Haacke, Chris Dercon and others). She introduced British audiences to various artists including Ida Applebroog, IRWIN, Ilya Kabakov and Tim Rollins + K.O.S (1987–90).

12 Ben Read, art historian and authoritative writer on British Victorian sculpture and son of the art historian Herbert Read. From1990 to 1997, he was director of the Sculpture Studies Programme under the auspices of the Henry Moore Foundation.

13 Documenta, Kassel, Germany. Founded in 1955 by Professor Arnold Bode with the express aim of bringing Germany back into dialogue with international trends in the arts following the Second World War. Bode's aim was to represent works that had been deemed by the Nazis to be degenerate, as well as present works that had never been seen in Germany, in the destroyed Museum Fridericianum. The first documenta was a retrospective of modern movements and individual artists that included: Kandinsky, Matisse, Klee, Picasso and Henry Moore. Over 130,000 visitors flocked to Kassel, which acted as a forum for contemporary art. A second exhibition was organized for 1959 and this then developed into the exhibition cycle: documenta. A new format for the exhibition was introduced in 1972 by Artistic Director Harald Szeemann. Each documenta is curated by a different artistic director and curatorial team. Much more than a survey of contemporary art, it sets out to create a dynamic discourse that is intended to provoke discussion around the role of art in contemporary society.

14 Conversation with Thomas Hirshhorn while planning the exhibition: *It's Burning Everywhere*, DCA (Dundee Contemporary Arts), Scotland, 19 September to 29 November 2009. Recreated in 2011 by Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany. Supported by Creative Scotland, Pro Helvetia and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London.

15 Manfred Pernice: *Déjà Vu*, Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA), Scotland, 5 March to 8 May 2011.

16 Many curators have proposed similar ways of working that emerged at the end of the 1990s and early 2000s. For further information see: M. Lind (ed,) 2011, *Performing the Curatorial,* Berlin: Sternberg Press. The anthology came out of a series of public seminars in 2010 and 2011, supported by the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

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