

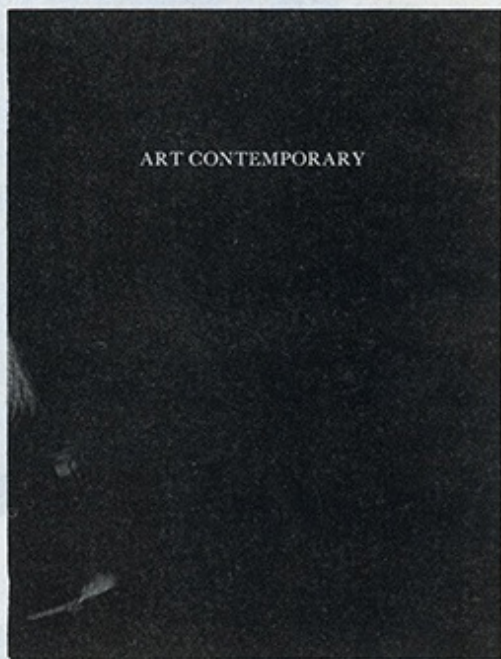


ART

CONTEMPORARY



LA MAMELLE
NUMBER FIVE \$2



Subscriptions: \$7 - 4 issues, \$12 - 8 issues
La Mamelles Inc.
P.O. Box 3123
San Francisco, CA 94119
USA

ART CONTEMPORARY

NOTES AND STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITY

TORONTO, 1977

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Introduction

What is currently known as the Art & Communication group was founded in Toronto in 1970 by Suber Corley, Amerigo Marras and Jarold Moldenhauer. Its first initiatives, through the publication Body Politic, were clearly negativist and neo-marxist in ideology and were implemented within a larger militant collective working towards a praxis of liberation: feminism, gay liberation, children's liberation, anti-psychiatry, anti-ageism, and radical design.

The initial group expanded into a large loose collective active in the criticism of the repressive social organization of the capitalist society's mode of production. The collective attacked society's specialization of roles and its homophobic sexism; specialization as practiced in such models as the nuclear family and the all-dominant labour ethic.

The centre, where the journal, a marginal bookstore, discussions and meetings were realized, emerged as the focus for the organization of other radical groups, vigilantly questioning the political social milieu. The centre was, in fact, a continuous collective experiment in living and in sociological infiltrations with practical demonstrations. Its self-operated, self-supported geo-cultural location was a challenge to the practices of a fragmented society. With time, changes, and subsequent dislocation, its expanded premises articulated a role in the realm of art and social practice.

To speak of the group is to refer to its localization as a resource centre, to refer to its external exchange and to its publications and the journal Art Communication Edition, which is its diary of local and external interventions.

Praxis

The group's critical elaboration was concen-

trated in the teaching of children in 1972-73. This experiment was a failure as far as the initial objective of the programme was concerned. But it made evident the all-pervading nature of bourgeois language which dominates the working class concept of culture. To find a new language was to delude oneself. However, to create an influence within the social fabric was to operate within precise micro-social contexts with a quantitative strategy of interventions. A new group, formed in 1973 and headed by the author, worked methodically in relation to the existing pattern of society. In collaboration with Yona Friedman (France), it developed a mechanism that could be implemented according to self-defined and self-regulated requirements of the users themselves.

The mechanism was introduced publicly as a manual for children (though some experiments had been made the year earlier in Toronto and Paris). Using this method, a number of important issues and behaviour properties were found. Among others, the method represented a political tool for the collective or individual alteration of a physical environment. A model of society was presented as the relationships among the individuals forming that society, with the relationships being regulated quantitatively. More importantly this work discovered the principle of self-determination and the existence of multiple societies, to which we all belong depending upon the situation. This stance rejects the utopistic nuclear (single) mini-society that some thinkers proposed in the 60's. It also rejected the totalitarianism of much left-wing doctrinary approach to 'society'. In short the idea of society had to be a concrete set of entities for each individual and not, as is the custom among socialist and marxist militants, an universal and abstracted sense of society. To localize the multiple societies is to localize our roles within the materialist collectives of people with whom we are dealing on a day to day basis.

An intervention is a change produced within a precise social set, defined and bounded by its function and work/value exchange, which therefore determines the ontological assessment of our role in that 'society'. Such a quantitative approach for re-evaluating language and/or social relationships has a materialist character which appropriates meaning in pragmatic contexts. To fix the occasional observation within a precise (quantitative) context is to reveal and to construct the framework and the interface of behaviour and the levels we select to be ground, whether they are political, social, economical, anthropological, semantical, or otherwise. The selection of an observation point and the selection of the limitation of the paradigmatic context outlines the ontology of a situation fixing our meaning to it and vice versa. The context is then exemplified by the structure we recognise in a pragmatic reality, which reality possesses subliminal elements not always recognisable. The structure we construct (in the recognition process) molds our perspective and further locates us in the reading of other meanings. Which means that an appropriate fragmentation and re-assessment of a situation 'fills in' reality as if it were an empty infrastructure.

The deep structure of language interplaying with its possible variants of surface formations engages in a dialectical definition of pragmatic reality. The fragmentation of whole situations (in particular language situations) was perceived as contextual or quantitative systems. The term contexturalism, coined by Beth Learn in her first language investigation in 1974, was applied to the fragmentation of written language and systematized as a composite of elements in the form of mappings. These mappings, analogous to Friedman's mappings, give an immediate pattern that has lost the meaning held within the original structure. The quantitative approach I proposed indicated the possibility of going from one system to another by using contextual outlines or structures that formed multiple reference systems or empty frames. The ontological location in each context or structure was also dictated by a quantitative relationship of elements within each pattern. That is, the meaning was an allocation of use which would reiterate a codification dependent upon the structure. Contexts became observable and from a ground function they became dominant figures to be studied.

Any re-iteration of a specific context would allow for definite readings biased by the position of our role in each structure, molding the value judgement for our validation of moral, political or perceptual viewpoint.

At a larger scale, this approach tends to identify concrete social situations, quantifiable under epistemological relationships. Ideologies in art practice and social criticism find a ground of objectively understandable (subjective) choices. In other terms, reality is understood as dialectical paradigms, permitting doubt and hence allowing a change of their own ontology. An increasing activism in the praxis and ideological intervention by artist collectives was widespread between 1973 and the present. The group Strum's entry for the exhibition 'Italy: Domestic Landscape' at the Museum of Modern Art in New York as a 'fotomontaggio' series represented an ideological intervention in the relatively reactionary discipline of architecture. The other participants' entries to the exhibition were less relevant and less critical of the socio-cultural situation in Italy in its post 1968 re-organization with the possible exception of Archizoom's theoretical text about the 'use of the city'. Strum's work, adopting a popular format for an Italian audience with the language used in Italian mass media, documented the discontent of the proletariat seen through the eyes of a group of young professionals who were also struggling to denounce the inactivity of the political class. "The only solution is to get involved in the class warfare starting a big front of mobilization against repression and for the defense and the enlargement of the political space won by the mass movement." The movement was the taking charge of one's own position within the labour force with the continuous accruing of social and economical benefits and also the striving for solidarity among workers (in factories and other work places). This means the rejection of the division of labour and the reconsideration of the common uses of the city, of the factory, of the housing question, and of the educational and political processes above all.

In France there developed an involvement into the sociological interrogation of the actual conditions of a society governed by the bourgeois political programme of class distinction and sectarian government. With

hin the artistic milieu, the Collectif d'Art Sociologique has attempted to stimulate a different consideration of mass values. The Collectif, composed of Herve Fischer, Jean-Paul Thenot, and Fred Forest, make interventions through sporadic actions in newspapers, television broadcasting, posters and live actions. Their effect, though they claim a large response to their initiatives, is rather limited and naive, as they are directing their efforts against the main power structures operating in France and elsewhere. Their actions are exercised in good faith and with good intentions, and prove their responsive presence in a very convoluted social condition. Other notable interventions within the realm of 'art' are some of the 'terroristic' writings of Guerrilla Art Action of New York and the occasional limited actions of some South American artists.

The core issue is the 'emancipation' of the worker, that is, of the ones that do not own the means of production. At this point the discussion becomes obscured by the more refined and polished interventions, or rather studies in anthropological evidence of the artists' world as presented by the New York imperialist regionalism, through 'The Fox', for example. Other journals dealing with similar attitudes and ideological positions, such as 'Left Curve', 'MayDay' were in a less authoritative role since they could not base their diffusion upon the remarkable notoriety of some of the writers as in the case of 'The Fox'. 'The Fox' was in the position to dominate as one important vehicle for an authoritative teaching to others of the reactionary state of affairs in capitalist economies. 'The Fox' sent codified messages compiled by Joseph Kosuth, the numerous members of Art Language (both British and North American branches), and other luminaries. Within its scope, 'The Fox' proposed a complete artistic/intellectual journal and opened with "It is the purpose of our journal to try to establish some kind of community practice". If on the one hand, the group developed an interesting 'community' and strength which is enviable, on the other hand, it reinforced the concept that one has to pass through New York 'culture packaging' to gain any credibility. As admitted by some of its own artist-writers, the group found itself entrenched in its own condition of 'white middle class' imperialist artist role

Comparatively small efforts are being made elsewhere, including Canada, which suffers from colonial inferiority, having little to match the influence of the New York media and art market. In reaction to this inferiority complex, Canadian artists are turning their attention to those situations in Europe which might be more sympathetic to a fair exchange of opinions and information. In Europe, the Canadians do not find the arrogance of an intensely egocentric culture like the one in New York. First with the encounter at the I.C.C. on 'communication and video' and later, in 1976 with the 'First Canadian Performance Art Tour in Europe', the CEAC group found relationships with a cultural reality little known or little appreciated by the conceptual hegemony of New York. The connection of shared opinions were far greater than expected between the Canadians working in social praxis and contextual considerations and the then homogeneous 'contextual art' group from the Polish centres of Lodz, Warsaw and Wroclaw. Two countries, with different histories and geographical conditions, have developed two very compatible propositions that reject conceptual art and the art market paradigm dictated by the New York gallery system. At the time of their first collective exhibition outside Poland (in Lund, Sweden in February, 1976), the Poles formed a large cohesive group that interplayed the individual findings as support material for their reciprocal historicification. The theories of contextual art (the term was adopted in 1976 by Jean Sellem of Galerie S:T Petri, Lund) were elaborated by Jan Swidzinski and Agnew Dlubak. A partly contradictory ideological position was elaborated by the Film Form of Lodz (headed by Robert Obakowski), though the contradiction was not too noticeable in 1976 since both tendencies were related to the materialist approach (the contextualists to photography and the study of models of art in the twentieth century and the Film Form to the field of structural cinema, based upon the elaboration of Peter Kubelka, Peter Gidal and the New York structural independent cinema). The common links between the two Polish propositions were their refusal to accept the fictional orientation of much art produced in the West and their attack of Social Realism as the official expression from the eastern countries. Similar to the Canadian position, they emphasized the contextual/situational expression and the materialist stance. Also common to both the Pol

ish and Canadian situations is the practice adopted in the exemplification of their paradigmatic position. It is necessary to note here that what constitutes the language and the definition of the position does not constitute the essence of the position itself. What I mean is that the meaning one gives through words is not evident in the words themselves, if we are using words to define the proposition. In fact, words, or any other tool for communicating, are empty signs forming structures on which we assume and give meaning. This observation is important, since a lot of confusion has arisen in some situations involving contextual propositions. The readers were known to have been giving weight not to the use of the constructed structure or model but to the visual configuration of their explanatory appendixes. That is, a style was sought in a case where the arguments were not about styles but about attitudes and the importance of viewing one's own in a different perspective. Art theory and practice had at this point reached a different role. Its (art) function had been questioned once more and the process of readjustment is continuing.

To verify the commonalities and the divergencies in the Polish and Canadian positions, and also to provide a wider discussion on the 'contextual' position, I called for a series of seminars around the issues raised by the theoretical text by Jan Swidzinski. He had developed a complete model that opposed the models of art constructed in the twentieth century since the 'modernist' art movement: the theoretical interventions made by artists in the twentieth century, in particular Duchamp, the structuralists, and the propositions of Art & Language, J. Kosuth and H. Fischer. He was sympathetic to the intentionally self-conscious analytical position of the early Art & Language but attacked the others as naive even in their most recent 'marxist' examinations. Some of his textual assertions are dictated by (a) the exigency of overstating a point with the intention of raising a debate, and (b) the relative isolation as a Polish artist not directly participating in the New York dominated art world.

To better juxtapose the two (Polish and Canadian) positions, a series of exchanges was started with the seminars in Toronto during November, 1976. The original seminar panel was composed of Joseph Kosuth, Sarah

Charlesworth, Anthony McCall, JoAnne Birnie-Danzker, Ellen Maidman, John Scott, Anna Kuter, Herve Fischer and Jan Swidzinski. Ian Burn, Karl Beveridge and Carole Conde participated from the floor (since there were 'political' problems between them as members of the recently dismantled Art & Language (provisional) and the original editors of 'The Fox' (Kosuth and Charlesworth). The presence of Peter Gidal in between the sessions of the seminars was an attempt to have a first hand proponent of the 'materialist cinema'. Two papers had been formally prepared by the time of the seminars. JoAnne Birnie-Danzker read an attack on the elitism and extreme self-referential writing of 'The Fox' and Anthony McCall read a report on his recent position as a film-maker working within a collective. Though marginal at the time, Herve Fischer's anger towards New York imperialism within Europe, the U.S. and Canada was the strongest instance leading to further discussions on contextual and sociological art practice. The Toronto seminars were simply the beginning for a platform of a new consciousness emerging in various countries with the same intensity and similar directions. There is a need to question and to redefine the function of one's own practice in a dialectical manner at this time when the art system and the avant garde tradition have failed to communicate and to change the direction of a programme that would affect the political consciousness of both participants and non-participants.

Subsequent to the seminars, the Collectif d'Art Sociologique opened their Ecole Sociologique Interrogative with a series of events and discussions on various topics organized by Herve Fischer. This is a remarkable achievement in a city where almost no opposition to the official culture exists even among the students and where the new Pompidou Centre, which is absorbing an enormous part of the economical support for contemporary arts in France has just opened. Culturally the Pompidou (Beaubourg) has re-proposed the location of Paris as the cultural centre of the Western World, by playing with the hegemony of the New York art market for the establishment of its own credibility. As an internal political manoeuvre, the centre is also the fulfillment of the public expectations of the 'avant garde' image as realized by a reactionary government to the further destruction of self-determined socio-political organization

In May, 1977, the Ecole hosted the second 'contextual' seminars which drafted a common intentional statement for a Third Front against/outside New York. The participants to this seminar were representatives from the CEAC and Paul Woodrow and Brian Dysin (Canada), Peter Dunn and Lorraine Leeson (England), Frank Gribbling (Netherlands), E mile Cesar and Jan Swidzinski (Poland), Herve Fischer, Jean-Paul Thenot and Fred Forest (France).

Following the meetings in Paris, three series of meetings were held in Poland. The first meeting at the Galerie Remont in Warsaw exposed for the first time the Canadian position to a Polish audience. The second situation was a week long seminar at Kazimierz between representatives from the CEAC and the large contextual contingent from Poland. The Polish artists from five centres combined forces to form the Polish Front. The creation of this Front has a different significance from the one formed in Paris. For the Poles, it was essential to withstand governmental repression and to form a visible unity that would benefit the marginal artists working there. Historically, that meant a validation of their position in opposition to the established governmentally supported network of the official avant garde centres. The process of forming the front was in part obscured by generalization and in part by divergences in viewpoint among three positions: Jan Swidzinski, Agnew Dlubak and the weaker coalition of younger artists. The last Polish seminars at the Remont in Warsaw during July, 1977 was to re-expose the panelists and positions of the first seminars in Toronto following eight months of individual developments and activities.

The text I prepared for those last seminars, was a verbalization of my own skepticism about developments since November, 1976. My questioning is concerned with the pretextual motivation of art practice, while I attempt to locate means of regulating organizations and not just individual lives of exploited and exploiter.

On Organization:

In my experience of playing the role of artist, within the paradigm of 'art' and taking part in 'art' activities, I am approaching the toleration limit to any further internalization of the notion of 'art'

and/or of 'art as something else'.

Any discussion on the function, the structure, the internal principles, the theories, the media image, the strategies, the internal politics of art is a cover-up for the true motivations.

When we discuss 'art', we are actually using the discourse as a pretext for establishing relationships in a class structure.

In capitalist societies, the hegemony of specialized artists as the cultural heroes, the high priests of alienated discourses, is the manifestation of a definite economical and social 'domination': class ideology. The discourse and such manifestations of art are internalized and continue to be marginal for other members of this society.

To an extent, the art discourse is also marginal and pretextual to the artists themselves.

It would be useful to investigate the process used in acquiring a role within the territory of art. How, in fact, do we recognize the role of an artist? How has the artist achieved access to the means of cultural production? Obviously each individual has a different personal history and a personal development, making it difficult to identify such a process as an overall pattern.

The artist's identification can be located in relation to the means of production and in relation to the remuneration one receives from one's society.

The institutions of the class society impose the ideology of recognition of roles, as is manifested in schooling(1); as is imposed by the behavioural code of the dominant class; as is operated by the division of labour in all of its violent competitive ethics.

The recognition of the artist's role is re-affirmed by the law of 'scarcity and reward' in a hierarchical society.

In the art world, culture is defined and controlled by a value system directed by experts (artists, dealers, curators, critics, collectors, grant officers). These experts control the access to the means of

production and channel the consumption of a multi-billion dollar operation: the art industry, which sustains the idea of the artist-as-genius. The belief that art is the work of the few 'enlightened' ones mystifies the system of exploitation and prevents the access to the means of cultural production by non-specialists.

Non-specialists are eliminated from the cycle except as passive viewers of the mythology of heroes and the history written about it.

What perpetuates the reactionary mystification of the role of the artist is the 'world of scarcity' and the 'incapacity to survive' in a capitalist society. The artist defends the privilege and the entitlement he/she holds in the capitalist society. Also symptomatic, even and not less so among the vanguard, alternative and co-op artists' groups(2), is the sense of hopelessness for social change, as these same groups mimic those repressive methods of economical capitalization adopted by the art world.

Artists' co-ops, although to be praised for their attempt to self-organize, reflect the art mythology and the product of advanced mercantile class structure. Here, it is important to ponder the meaning and the effect of collaborative work, that is, to evaluate the sharing of labour and the sharing of the surplus value of such labour.

Paradoxically, even the discussion of the division of labour (the reactionary aspect of specialism in our culture), does not deal with the immediate time and circumstances. The class division and the cultivation of petty-bourgeois ideas are calmly maintained, allowing a smoother and more productive flow of the same contradiction without resolving it.

Among radicals, marxists, and self-proclaimed vanguardists, we notice elements of persistent sexism, class defense and specialism.

As is often observed, the contradiction of the artist's condition(3) is left unresolved. Such an attitude discredits marxist theory and practice, and the increased confusion about the positivism among false radicals (the ones who do not make a

choice within a contradiction) delays the process of actual change in the value system towards a new culture(4).

One of the motives for withholding self-criticism is self-serving careerism, camouflaged as 'irresponsive' creative behaviour.

Careerism is activated through the proceedings of back-room politics and the cultivation of the 'art-star' syndrome.

This attitude is very noticeable in most of the New York community of artists, who are caught up in the tendency to produce neutrally directed work, which is consumed by the media mechanism that hypes their significance(5). In less developed 'consumer' societies, such as the ones in most of Europe (east and west), the tendency is for the local artists to long to be a part of that media mechanism and to achieve the same access to the means of distribution as in the New York art market. However, as the economy of the European context is in a different stage of development than the U.S., the results are quite different. In Europe, there is still a nineteenth century mercantilistic tendency to 'art', (justified by a semiotic and symbolist interpretation). The European situation is far less aware of the mechanisms for creating a market and the media construction of a history of modernist heroes, though young militant students from the far left are attacking their own art structure(6).

In Canada there is a tremendous influence from the U.S. cultural hegemony due to the physical proximity and the presence of U.S. media which is circulated in the major educational and mercantile circles(7). However, in Canada, a more mature stage of self-organization and collective association of artists exists, creating yet a different attitude from the European and U.S. The group orientation of the large number of 'alternative' art centres and galleries serves the petty bourgeoisie with their stated intentions and with their extreme conservatism through lip-service work to the 'system' by most of them.

Artists, traditionally educated and seldom exposed to self-criticism, operate in a way similar to the mercantilistic method of dealer-worker relationships.

Participation to the network of alternative galleries is seen as the early stage of careerism and promotional advancement, that starts from the alternative galleries, then goes through the major, respected dealer galleries and finally ends up in the arms and the glory of the large-museum racket, the Art Bank, and the corporate collection systems. The formation of a collaborative group is seen as a method of providing the artist with a device for continued survival, but not as a method for providing full access to the means of production and distribution.

In relation to our geo-social viewpoint and historical location, we recognize three distinct cultural groupings, which we can broadly define as: the enemy, the allies (and potential allies), and the ones that we have contact with on a daily basis our people.

The enemy is made up of those who hold the hegemony of the cultural ideology, as well as the ones who maintain direct control over the economic base of the art market. The enemy is the merchandising of intellectual issues. The enemy is the entire art-world market that is presently directed by the New York cultural imperialism.

The enemy is the class system that capitalizes upon our work and divides us.

It preserves the conflict of unresolved contradictions, made hazy by the smoothness of the system, as indicated by Herbert Marcuse(8).

In the category of (potential) allies, we include all artists who have not been absorbed by the art market and those that fight for their rights to survive and those that are oppressed within the capitalist system (under which we are also subjugated).

The allies are those individuals/groups who have made a decision about their contradiction, attacking the perpetuation of the commodity system.

The allies are those that share the language and the issues we are exposing(9)

Ourselves and those that work closely with our daily operation are the ones with

whom we must form new relationships. Each case, each 'distance' shares particular interests. We should recognize the intention, the practice and the effect of the practice.

To recognize means to index the relationship and the commonality and/or the conflicts arising from their roles and ours within the contexts where we communicate, relative to the locating of a common economical base.

When indexing the enemy, we include those institutions that with their ideologies dominate the idea of commodity culture. This class of specialists is the group of mandarins who advocate 'qualitative judgement' as the criteria for 'survival'. The same mandarins support the rarification of access to the means of production (the Artforum mentality), and in this list we should include most art magazines, most galleries, most museums, most schools. The enemy class historicizes itself through a string of heroes, the wealthy painters and sculptors. Their history is the careful construction of a logical progression of heroic intervention, theirs is not the history of the class struggle. As a comprehensible pattern, a miniaturized reality, the experts, the granting officers, the police even, historicize the perpetuation of the dominant class.

The story is common, but not the same, everywhere.

We should be aware of this class and be able to spot it, for our role here is to expose it for its false consciousness and the imminent danger implied. Our role stands antithetical to this careerism.

Along with the exploited class (the allies who maintain a relationship with the art market), we have to keep our critical view, pointing to the trap of the 'alternative' position in which a large number of marginal artists are placed: they are the raw material for the market place, the appendices to the constructions of history (10).

The meandering art students and artists in the streets of Soho, the obsessed readers of Artforums, the pathetic pilgrims into the white walled sanctuaries are all forms of dependence upon the art market

t. The galleries present functionless, meaningless, merchandise that is sold off as 'aesthetic', lyrical and well-balanced. The repetition of the stylistic qualities of the artists' best selling pieces, the careful covering of the gallery walls with 'designed for the gallery' items, and the one-man's shows are all variants of the same industrialization of the human intellect: the ideology of an alienated class system. The absurd belief, held by a large number of gallery curators and artists, that art is not related to the economical system of exploitation of a country over its inhabitants or over other countries is the classic rime of those who lie or are afraid of admitting the true motivation of their artistic 'career'. The same will admit that art is a system of rewards for the most talented.

In reality, no one is more or less endowed than anyone else; it is simply a matter of perspective and economical position in the system.

It is our role to question, to initiate a debate, to expose the role we inhabit. We cannot expose issues by hiding behind the privilege of cultural production. We might end up playing the role of the exploited in one context and the exploiters in another, depending upon how we define the geo-historical boundaries, depending upon our economical base in each context.

For me to say that I come from Canada is a truth and a lie. It is an incorrect statement to assume that I only maintain local contacts, since the effects are felt everywhere, whether I want it or not. When I refer to Canada, I refer to it as a concrete reality: the economical base that allows my work to happen but not my revolt (since I should be able to revolt without its economical support).

When I speak of a relationship to reality, I mean the location where I realize myself economically: the economical base from which I benefit and of which I am a victim.

The critical stance towards the socio-historical group with which we are more closely related is more difficult to make clear. With our people, we share the same exploitation from the situation (economical, political, social) wherever we choose

to live. The relationship with this group should maintain its continuity, its persistence, without fear of chastisement.

In Canada, among the parallel art centres and collectives, there is the constant threat of being eliminated by the governmental agency at the whim of an arts officer. The funding agencies do have the power to end their support to any of the groups, whose budgets are kept low and expansion is controlled. The repressive 'containment' is subtle and seldom exposed. The artists associated with this system of galleries do not hold open political power or opinion and depend heavily on the 'system' for their access to the means of production and distribution. A recent operation from the main Canadian funding agency was the establishing of an official network, governed by the members of the galleries themselves (in reality controlled by the major two or three gallery members). The creation of this front was justified as a strong lobby for further governmental support. In reality, it constitutes another institution, too busy for its own survival to provide any significant lobbying for its members. Once more the economical motivation of the artist's survival is camouflaged and hindered by 'art' structures that leave the economical base unchanged.

The context of art is the pretext for survival.

In the Canadian pretext, the artist faces the lack of a guaranteed income while his work functions as the filler for a meaningless business mythology. I mean that in reality the merchandising of art in Canada is transacted in a very limited way, since there is no tradition to support such a consumer habit (although this habit is increasing). The major collector, the supporter of 'art' production in Canada is the government itself with its system of purchase, rewards, granting and other programs. But, no system exists to openly guarantee the economical survival of the people. CAR, the Canadian Artists' Representation (artists' union), views the issue in terms of artists' fees, the fee scale and copyright protection. In a cultural and economical climate where the sales of artworks have become more and more irrelevant for the majority of the artists (except, of course, the few linked to the Art Bank and museum sales), where there is an increasing pub

lic disinterest in the gallery oriented exposure, and where the proliferation of instant photocopying and reproduction of images for which we quickly lose the original source, it is obsolete to frame the question as a question of fee scale. Even if such a scale could be set up in a well-controlled (policed) manner, it would never compensate nor support the artists that CAR has in mind, never mind the ones who are occupied with other manifestations such as 'performance', seminars, didactic and activist work. Canadian artists cannot under the present circumstances make a living out of their 'privatized' internalized activity. The mercantile market rewards only the few heroified artists, supported by the media hype of the few active 'critics' (who, themselves, have a close economic bind to the gallery they support), since the market itself is perpetuated by the law of scarcity and the rarity of the merchandise. The short-comings of this unbalance is obvious as it is elitist and therefore unjust.

The point I want to underline here is to be capable in recognizing the enemy and the allies and this is the reason why I deny an alternative role for any system. Our people are critical of dominant ideologies.

We search the antithetical ground, along with those sharing our problem.

Obviously we are not talking about 'art' alone, nor about reality alone.

Art (culture) is an integral part of our consciousness of reality.

When we are talking about behavioural and social parameters, we are implying also other levels of reality: its economic structure, its ethics and its language of repression. The reality that we perceive and fight is the one that we encounter day to day, it is the contradictions that we recognize and require us to make a decision. This reality is validated by the relationships we maintain with other people and institutions, placing our role(11), within economical situations.

What interests us is the widening of the discussion to include further findings in the antithetical position to the dominant ideology.

Amerigo Marras
Toronto, July, 1977

Notes:

1. The practice of segregation according to age, similar to the class segregation according to the division of labour, is the device used in modern societies which encourages the practice of compulsory 'training' or 'education' which society forces upon each individual during his/her lifetime. See, for example, the writings of Ivan Illich.

2. See TRA, Milan, Spring issue, 1977, Special Canada, and also Studio Internazionale, Feb., 1977, article by Jennifer Oille. Her report has been compiled from a distance without first-hand investigation of the situation and is therefore inaccurate and out of date.

3. See activity and position of former Art & Language (U.S.), in particular THE FOX, 1, 2, & 3, 1975-76.

4. It is interesting to note that 'artists' consciousness about issues like feminism, Gay Rights, and social analysis are surfacing in art journals and major 'art' events rather late, when the struggle and the public demonstrations have already modified the mass consciousness, with little support by the art community and the vanguard class when the transformation was occurring. Note the persistent lack of actual involvement by the art vanguard even today, revealed by the language adopted in 'exhibitions' such as the recent 'Social criticism and art practice' at the San Francisco Art Institute, August, 1977, where the artists do not implement a 'social practice', but an 'art practice'.

5. Characteristic of the perspective artists have of themselves, is their response to invitations to be involved in 'gallery' situations by asking for information about the 'size' and the physical make-up of the space, by requiring historical information about the previous activity of the space, and by giving credentials such as 'reviews' and newspaper coverage on their own behalf.

6. During the International Performance Series in Bologna, June 1-6, 1977, all the

artists participating to the events were either not aware or showed no response to the bloody events occurring in the city of Bologna which left one student killed by the police just outside the doors where the performances were taking place. The artists' refusal to understand the local situation typifies the classical neutrality of the art world towards the human condition, limiting human experience to an aesthetic or visual game playing.

7. See the persistent presence of U.S. based art periodicals outside the U.S., in particular Artforum, Art in America, Arts Magazine.

8. H. Marcuse, One Dimensional Man, Beacon, 1964.

9. This includes the spectrum from the Italian left wing students, fighting in Bologna; the artists fighting the Pompidou Centre in Paris; isolated artists in Czechoslovakia and Hungary; Argentinian artists who have abandoned their discipline to help the fighting in the countryside.

10. See Tom Wolfe's article "The Printed Word" in Harper's Bazaar, 1975.

11. See Art Communication Editions, as the ongoing manifestation of the growth and the information over which we have no control.



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