

Aesthetics and Its Discontents

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Problems and Transformations of Critical Art

In its most general expression, critical art is a type of art that sets out to build awareness of the mechanisms of domination to turn the spectator into a conscious agent of world transformation. The quandary that plagues the project is well known. On the one hand, understanding does not, in and of itself, help to transform intellectual attitudes and situations. The exploited rarely require an explanation of the laws of exploitation. The dominated do not remain in subordination because they misunderstand the existing state of affairs but because they lack confidence in their capacity to transform it. Now, the feeling of such a capacity presupposes that the dominated are already committed to a political process in a bid to change the configuration of sensory givens and to construct forms of a world to come, from within the existent world. On the other hand, the work which builds understanding and dissolves appearances kills, by so doing, the strangeness of the resistant appearance that attests to the non-necessary or intolerable character of a world. Insofar as it asks viewers to discover the signs of Capital behind everyday objects and behaviours, critical art risks being inscribed in the perpetuity of a world in which the transformation of things into signs is redoubled by the very excess of

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interpretative signs which brings things to lose their capacity of resistance.

Critical art's vicious circle is generally seen as proof that aesthetics and politics cannot go together. It would be more valid to see in it the plurality of ways in which they are linked. On the one hand, politics is not the simple sphere of action that follows an 'aesthetic' revelation about the state of things. It has its own specific aesthetics: in other words, it has its own modes of dissensual invention of scenes and of characters, of demonstrations and statements, which distinguish it from, and sometimes even oppose it to, the inventions of art. On the other, aesthetics itself has its own specific politics, or rather it contains a tension between two opposed types of politics: between the logic of art becoming life at the price of its self-elimination and the logic of art's getting involved in politics on the express condition of not having anything to do with it. The difficulty of critical art does not reside in its having to negotiate the relationship between politics and art. It resides in its having to negotiate the relationship between two aesthetic logics that, insofar as they belong to the very logic of the aesthetic regime, exist independently of it. Critical art has to negotiate between the tension which pushes art towards 'life' as well as that which, conversely, sets aesthetic sensoriality apart from the other forms of sensory experience. It has to borrow the connections that foster political intelligibility from the zones of indistinction between art and the other spheres. And from the solitude of the work it has to borrow the sense of a sensible heterogeneity which feeds political energies of refusal. It is this negotiation between the forms of art and those of non-art which makes it possible to form combinations of elements capable of speaking twice over: on the basis of their legibility and on the basis of their illegibility.

Combining these two powers, then, necessarily involves adjusting heterogeneous logics. If collage has been one

of modern art's major techniques, the reason is that its technical forms obey a more fundamental aesthetico-political logic. Collage, in the broadest sense of the term, is the principle of a 'third' political aesthetics. Before combining paintings, newspapers, oilcloths or clock-making mechanisms, it combines the foreignness of aesthetic experience with the becoming-art of ordinary life. Collage can be realized as the pure encounter between heterogeneous elements, attesting *en bloc* to the incompatibility of two worlds. The Surrealist encounter between the umbrella and the sewing-machine, for example, manifests – in contrast to the reality of ordinary everyday life but in accord with its objects – the absolute power of desire and dream. Conversely, collage can present itself as that which brings to light the hidden link between two apparently foreign worlds, as can be seen in the photomontage by John Heartfield titled *Adolf, the Superman, Swallows Gold and Spouts Tin*, which reveals the reality of capitalist gold in Hitler's throat, or in Martha Rosler's *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful*, in which photos of the horrors of the Vietnam War are combined with advertisements of American comfort. The issue here is no longer to present two heterogeneous worlds and to incite feelings of intolerability, but, on the contrary, to bring to light the causal connection linking them together.

But the politics of collage has a balancing-point in that it can combine the two relations and play on the line of indiscernibility between the force of sense's legibility and the force of non-sense's strangeness. This is so, for example, in the stories about cauliflowers in Brecht's *Arturo Ui*, in which an exemplary double game is played between denunciations of commodity rule and the forms of high art's derision that came with the commercialization of culture. They play at once on the ability to discern the power of capital beneath an allegory of Nazi power and on the buffoonery that reduces every grand ideal, political or

otherwise, to some insignificant story of vegetables.^{16a} The secret of the commodity to be read beneath great discourses is equal to its absence of secret, to its triviality or radical non-sensicality. But this possibility of playing at the same time on sense and non-sense also presupposes that one can play simultaneously on the radical separation between the art world and that of cauliflowers *and* on the permeability of the border that separates them. This requires both that cauliflowers bear no relation to art or politics and that they are already linked to them, that the border is always there and nevertheless already crossed.

In fact, by the time that Brecht employed them for the purposes of critical distantiation vegetables had already had a long artistic history. We might recall their role in Impressionist still-life painting. We might also think of the way in which Zola's novel *Le Ventre de Paris* (1873) elevates vegetables in general – and cabbages in particular – to the dignity of artistic and political symbols. This work, written just after the Paris Commune's crushing, is in effect constructed around a polarity between two characters: on the one hand, the revolutionary who returns after deportation to the new Paris des Halles and finds himself overwhelmed by masses of commodities, which materialize the new world of mass consumption; on the other, the Impressionist painter who celebrates the epic saga of cabbages, of the new beauty, contrasting the iron architecture of les Halles (the central markets) and the piles of vegetables it houses with the old henceforth private beauty of life, symbolized by the neighbouring Gothic church.

This twofold Brechtian play on the politicity and a-politicity of cauliflowers is possible because there already exists a relationship between politics, the new style of

^{16a} Brecht's play *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (German original, 1941) is a parable on the rise of Hitler and the complacency of those who enabled it to happen. The play is set in the gangsterland of 1930s Chicago in the midst of economic turmoil and presents Arturo in his bid to gain control of the Cauliflower Trust (the representative of German Capitalism and the Junker Class).

beauty and commodity displays. We can generalize the sense of this history of vegetables. Critical art, as art which plays both on the union and the tension of aesthetic politics, is possible thanks to the movement of translation which, for quite some time already, had crossed back and forth over the line separating the specific world of art and the prosaic world of commodities. There is no need to imagine that a 'postmodern' rupture emerged, blurring the boundaries between great art and the forms of popular culture. This blurring of boundaries is as old as 'modernity' itself. Brechtian distantiation^{16b} is obviously indebted to the Surrealist collages that introduce into the domain of art the obsolete merchandise of Parisian passages or magazine illustrations or *démodé* catalogues. But the process extends much further back. The time when great art was constituted – and, with Hegel, declared as its own end – is the same time when it began to become commonplace in magazine productions and corrupted in bookstore trade and the newspaper – or so-called industrial literature. Once again, however, it was at this same time that commodities started travelling in the opposite direction, crossing the border separating them from the world of art, in order to replenish and rematerialize the very art whose forms Hegel considered to have been exhausted.

This is exactly what Balzac demonstrates in the cycle of novels *Illusions perdues* (1837–43). The muddy and dilapidated stalls of the Galeries de Bois, where the deposed poet, Lucien de Rubempré, goes to sell his prose and soul, surrounded by stock exchange deals and prostitution, turns at once into the site of a new poetry: a fantastical poetry born of the abolition of borders between the ordinariness of commodities and the extraordinariness of art. The sensory

^{16b} Translator's note: 'distantiation' is my term for *distanciation*, the common translation into French of Brecht's neologism *Verfremdungseffekt*. The subtleties of the original German are perhaps best captured by the more literal 'estrangement effect', but I have chosen 'distantiation' to fit the context of Rancière's discussion.

heterogeneity on which art feeds in the aesthetic age can be found anywhere at all and most especially on the very terrain from which the purists want to divert it. For by becoming obsolete, unfit for consumption, any old commodity, any object of use whatsoever, becomes available for art, and in diverse ways that can be separated or conjoined: as a disinterested object of satisfaction, as a body ciphering a story, or as a witness to an inassimilable strangeness.

Whereas some people devoted art-life to the creation of furniture for the new life, and some denounced the transforming of art products into aestheticized commodities, there were others who took note of this double movement blurring the basic opposition between the two great politics of aesthetics: if art's products unceasingly cross over into the domain of commodities, conversely commodities and usable objects do not cease to cross the border in the opposite direction, to leave the sphere of usefulness and value behind; they then become either hieroglyphs bearing their history on their bodies or disused, silent objects bearing the splendour of that which no longer supports any project, any will. It is in this way that the 'idleness' of *Juno Ludovisi* was to communicate itself to any obsolete object of use or publicity icon. This 'dialectical work within things', which renders them available to art and subversion by breaking the uniform course of time, by putting back one time in another, by changing the status of objects and the relationship between signs of exchange and the forms of art, is the illumination Walter Benjamin had in reading Aragon's *Paysan de Paris*, wherein the obsolete walking-stick store in the Passage de l'Opéra is transformed into a mythological landscape and a fantastical poem. And the 'allegorical' art to which so many contemporary artists claim to adhere is inscribed in this long-standing filiation.

It is by this crossing over of borders and changes of status between art and non-art that the radical strangeness of the aesthetic object and the active appropriation of the common world were able to conjoin and that a 'third way' micro-politics of art was able to take shape between the

contrasting paradigms of art as life and as resistant form. This is the process which has nourished the performances of critical art and which can help us to understand its contemporary transformations and ambiguities. If there is a political question in contemporary art, it will not be grasped in terms of a modern/postmodern opposition. It will be grasped through an analysis of the metamorphoses of the political 'third', the politics founded on the play of exchanges and displacements between the art world and that of non-art.

From Dadaism through to the diverse kinds of 1960s contestatory art, the politics of mixing heterogeneous elements had one dominant form: the polemical. Here, the play of exchanges between art and non-art served to generate clashes between heterogeneous elements and dialectical oppositions between form and content, which themselves served to denounce social relations and the place reserved for art within them. Brecht gave a stichomythic form to a discussion in verse on the affairs of cauliflowers so as to denounce the interests concealed behind big words. Dadaist canvases had bus tickets, clock springs and other such items stuck on them as a way of ridiculing art's pretensions to separate itself from life. Warhol's introduction of soup tins and Brillo soap boxes into the museum worked to denounce great art's claims to seclusion. To name only three further examples: Wolf Vostell's mixing of images of stars together with images of war revealed the grim side of the American dream; Krzysztof Wodiczko's projections of homeless figures onto American monuments pointed to the expulsion of the poor from public space; and Hans Haacke's act of sticking small plaques onto museum works pointed up their nature as objects of speculation. The collage of heterogeneous elements generally took the form of a shock, revealing one world hidden beneath another: capitalist violence beneath the happiness of consumption; and commercial interests and violence of class struggle beneath the serene appearances of art. In this way, art's self-critique became involved in the critique of mechanisms of state and market domination.

The polemical function, produced by the shock of heterogeneous elements, is still the order of the day when it comes to legitimizing works, installations and exhibitions. Nevertheless, this discursive continuity covers over a significant transformation which a single example shall suffice to grasp. In 2000, in Paris, an exhibition entitled *Bruit de fond* placed works from the 1970s and contemporary works opposite one another, some of them sound installations, hence the title's allusion to white noise. Figuring among the former were photomontages from Martha Rosler's series *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful*. Hung on the wall close by was a sculptural collage by Wang Du, also devoted to the hidden face of American happiness:^{16c} on the left, Bill and Hillary Clinton are shown as figures from a wax museum; on the right, the artist depicts another sort of wax figure, a plastification of Courbet's *L'Origine du monde*, which, as is well known, is a close-up representation of female sex organs. Both works also played on the relation between an image of happiness or of greatness and the concealed face of its violence or profanity. But the Clinton couple could not be invested with a political stake by the mere relevance of the Lewinsky affair. Precisely, the news was hardly important. All it presented to us was the automatic functioning of the canonical procedures of delegitimization: the wax figure that turns the politician into a puppet; the sexual profanity that is the dirty little hidden/obvious secret underlying every form of sublimity. These procedures still work. But they work by turning in on themselves, just like deriding power in general has taken the place of political denunciation. Or else their function is to make us sensitive to this automaticity itself, to delegitimize the procedures of delegitimization at the same time as their object. Thereby does humorous distantiation take the place of the provocative shock.

^{16c} Wang Du, *Les Temps du monde* (1988).

I chose the significant example of Wang Du's work, but many others could be cited as proof of the same shift from yesterday's dialectical provocations to the new figures of the composition of heterogeneous elements under the apparent continuity of artistic *dispositifs* and their textual legitimizations. More, it seems possible to classify these multiple shifts into four major figures of the contemporary exhibition: the play, the inventory, the encounter and the mystery.

First the play [*jeu*], that is to say the double play. I have evoked elsewhere the exhibition presented in Minneapolis under the title *Let's Entertain* and rebaptized in Paris as *Au-delà du spectacle*.¹⁷ A double game was already at work in the American title, with a wink to intimate its denunciation of the entertainment industry and a pop-style denunciation of the division between great art and popular consumption culture. The Parisian title introduced an extra twist. On the one hand, its reference to Debord's book (noted above) reinforced its rigorism concerning the critique of entertainment; but, on the other, it recalled that in Debord's work the antidote to the passivity of the spectacle is the free activity of play. This play on titles of course was also a reference to the undecidability of the status of the works themselves. Charles Ray's merry-go-round and Maurizio Cattelan's giant baby foot were equally open to being symbolized either as pop derision, the critique of commercial entertainment, or the positive power of play. It required all the conviction of the exhibition's curators to make clear that the mangas, publicity films and disco sounds reprocessed by various authors, provided us, by their very reduplication, with a radical critique of the alienated consumption of leisure activities. Instead of the Schillerian suspension of relations of domination, the play invoked here marks the suspension of the signification of the collages on display. The value of their polemical revelation

¹⁷ Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott, London and New York: Verso, 2007, p. 25 (French original, 2003).

has become undecidable. And it is the production of this undecidability that is at the core of the work of many artists and expositions. Where the critical artist depicted the lurid icons of commercial domination or imperialist war, the video artist slightly deflects [*détournes*] video-clips and mangas. Where giant marionettes were once used to present contemporary history as epic spectacle, today balloons and soft toys 'inquire into' our lifestyles. A slightly deflected reduplication of spectacles, accessories and icons of everyday life no longer invites us to read signs on objects in order to understand the mechanisms of our world. It claims at once to sharpen our perception of the interplay of signs, our awareness of the fragility of the procedures of reading these same signs, and our pleasure in playing with the undecidable. Humour is the virtue to which artists nowadays most readily ascribe: **humour, that is a minimal, all too easy to miss, hijacking or deflection in the way of presenting a sign sequence or arrangement of objects.**

In their passage from the critical to the ludic register, these procedures of delegitimization have almost become indiscernible from those spun by the powers that be and the media or by the forms of presentation specific to commodities. Humour has become the dominant way in which to exhibit commodities, with advertising now increasingly used to play on the undecidability between a product's use-value and its value as a sign- and image-support. In a society which functions within the accelerated consumption of signs, playing on this undecidability is the only remaining form by which to subvert the meaning of protocols for reading signs.

A consciousness of this undecidability works a displacement of artistic propositions into the second form, that of the *inventory*. The encounter of heterogeneous elements no longer aims to provoke a critical shock or to play on that shock's undecidability. The same materials, images and messages, once scrutinized according to the rules of suspicion, are now subject to a converse operation: repopulate the world of things, seize back their potential for

the shared history that critical art dissolved into manipulable signs. The arrangement of heterogeneous materials becomes a positive recollection, and in two forms. First, it forms an inventory of traces of history: i.e. objects, photographs or simple lists of names testifying to a history and a world in common. In 2000 an exhibition in Paris called *Voilà: Le monde dans la tête* endeavoured to sum up the twentieth century by means of various installations and photographic exhibits. The point was to reassemble experiences in such a way that indeterminate displays of objects, names and anonymous faces would all speak and interact in structures of reception. First welcomed under the rubric of play, the visitor encountered a multicoloured bed of dice by Robert Filliou, then proceeded through an installation by Christian Boltanski, *Les Abonnés du téléphone*, which consisted of telephone directories of various years and countries that anyone could, at leisure, pull off the shelves and peruse at the tables set up for that very purpose. There was also a sound installation by On Kawara which, for the artist, was evocative of some of the 'last forty thousand years gone by', as well as Hans-Peter Feldmann's presentation of one hundred photographs of one hundred persons aged from one to one hundred years. Among other works were a glass-covered photographic display by Peter Fischli and David Weiss, *Monde visible*, resembling a family photo album, and Fabrice Hybert's collection of bottles of mineral water.

In this logic, the artist is at once the archivist of collective life and the collector/witness of a shared capacity. In bringing together the art of the plastic artist with that of the *chiffonnier*, the inventory gives a prominent place to the potential of objects and images in terms of common history; it also shows the kinship between inventive acts of art and the multiplicity of inventions of the arts of doing and living that make up a shared world – bricolage, collections, language games, materials for demonstrations, etc. In the space reserved for art, the artist strives to render visible the arts of doing which exist scattered

throughout society.¹⁸ With this twofold vocation of the inventory, the political/polemical vocation of critical art tends to transform into a social or community-oriented vocation.

The third form marks this shift. I have baptized it *encounter*, but it would be just as appropriate to call it *invitation*. Here the artist acts as a collector who sets up a reception area and appeals to the passer-by to engage in an unexpected relation with someone – for example Boltanski's installation of telephone directories, in which the visitor was invited to take a phone book off the shelf and sit down at a table to consult it. Later on in the same exhibition, he or she was invited by Dominique Gonzales-Foerster to take out a book from a pile of paperbacks and sit down to read it on a rug depicting a desert island reminiscent of a childhood dream. In another exhibition, Rirkrit Tiravanija made sachets, camping-gas and a kettle available to visitors so that they could prepare themselves a Chinese soup, then sit down and engage in discussion with the artist or other visitors. Corresponding to these transformations of the exhibition space, diverse forms of intervention into everyday urban space have also emerged: the altering of signalling at a bus shelter to transform the trajectory of everyday necessity into an adventure (Pierre Huyghe); inverting the relationship between the autochthon and the foreigner by placing electronic graffiti in Arabic letters or a loudspeaker in Turkish (Jens Haaning); or making an empty pavilion available to a suburb's inhabitants for their socializing wishes (Groupe A 12). Relational art thereby aims no longer to create objects, but situations and encounters. In so doing, however, it relies on a simplistic opposition between objects and situations, effecting a short-circuit where the point is to carry out a transformation of those problematic spaces that once contrasted conceptual art with art objects/commodities. The former

¹⁸ Michel de Certeau, *Les Arts de faire*, Paris: Union G n rales d' ditions, 1980.

distance taken with respect to goods is inverted and a proposition made about a new proximity between individuals, about building new forms of social relations. Art no longer tries to respond to an excess of commodities and signs but rather to a lack of bonds. As the main theoretician of this school puts it: 'Through little services rendered, the artists fill in the cracks in the social bond.'¹⁹

The loss of 'social bond' and the incumbent duty of artists to repair it – these are today's directives. But the report of loss may be given a more ambitious gloss. Not only are we alleged to have lost forms of civility but also the very meaning of the co-presence of beings and objects constitutive of a world. The fourth form, that of mystery, sets out to remedy exactly that. Wanting to apply it to cinema, Jean-Luc Godard brought the category of mystery back into fashion, a category which, since Mallarm , has designated a certain way of linking heterogeneous elements. Mallarm 's work, for instance, combines the thought of the poet, the steps of a female dancer, the opening of a fan, the foam of a wave and the undulating of a curtain blown about by the wind; while Godard juxtaposes Carmen's rose, a Beethoven quartet, the foam of waves on a beach evoking Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, and the elan of amorous bodies. The sequence of *Pr nom Carmen* as summarized here aptly betrays a shift in logic. The selection of linked elements in fact belongs to a tradition of *d tournement*: the Andalusian mountain becomes a weekend beach; romantic smugglers crazy terrorists; the tossed flower of which Don Jos  sang is now only a plastic flower; and Micaela murders Beethoven instead of singing songs by Bizet. But the *d tournement* here no longer has great art's function of political critique. On the contrary, it effaces the picturesque imagery to which critique was attached in order to revive Bizet's characters from the pure

¹⁹ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, Paris: Presses du R el, 2002, p. 36 (French original, 1998).

abstraction of a Beethoven quartet. It makes gypsies and toreadors fade out into the fusion music of images which unite, in one and the same breath, the noises of strings, of waves and of bodies. **In contrast to dialectical practice, which accentuates the heterogeneity of elements in order to provoke a shock that reveals a reality riven by contradictions, mystery emphasizes the connection between heterogeneous elements.** It constructs a play of analogies in which these heterogeneous elements testify to a world in common, in which the most disparate realities appear to be cut out of the same sensible fabric and are always open to being linked together by what Godard calls the 'fraternity of metaphors'.

'Mystery' was the central concept of symbolism. And Symbolism is without doubt back on the agenda. By this term I am not referring to the spectacular and somewhat nauseating forms such as the resurrection of Symbolist mythologies and Wagnerian fantasies about the total work of art in Matthew Barney's cycle *Cremaster* (1997–9). **I am thinking of the more modest, sometimes imperceptible way in which the arrangements of objects, images and signs displayed in contemporary exhibitions have shifted from a logic of provocative dissensus to that of the mystery testifying to co-presence.** Elsewhere I have discussed the photographs, videos and installations presented in an exhibition called *Moving Pictures*, held at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2002.²⁰ This exhibition aimed to point to the continuity of contemporary works with the artistic radicality of the 1970s *qua* critique of artistic autonomy and dominant representations. But, like Vanessa Beecroft's videos exhibiting nude and inexpressive feminine bodies in museum space, the photographs by Sam Taylor-Wood, Rineke Dijkstra and Gregory Crewdson showing bodies of ambiguous identity in uncertain spaces, or the light bulbs illuminating walls carpeted with anonymous photographs from Christian Boltanski's darkroom,

²⁰ Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, pp. 63–4.

the still-invoked interrogation of perceptual stereotypes veered towards a wholly indifferent interest in the indefinite boundaries between the familiar and the foreign, the real and the symbolic that had fascinated painters at the time of Symbolism, metaphysical painting and magical realism. On the upper level of the museum, a video installation by Bill Viola beamed onto the four walls of a dark room flames and floods, slow processions, urban wanderings, wakes and ship embarkation, to symbolize, in addition to the four elements, the great cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. Experimental video art thus manifests in plain language the latent tendency of many of today's *dispositifs* by miming, in its own way, the great frescos of human destiny so admired by the Symbolist and Expressionist age.

These categorizations of course remain schematic. Contemporary installations and exhibitions confer on the couple 'exhibit/install' several roles at once; they play on the fluctuating boundary between critical provocation and the undecidability of its meaning, and between the form of the exhibited work and that of the instituted space of interaction. The *dispositifs* of contemporary exhibitions often either cultivate this polyvalence or are subject to its effects. The exhibition *Voilà*, for example, presented an installation by Bertrand Lavier, *La Salle des Martin*, which gathered together fifty-odd paintings, many of which came from the storerooms of provincial museums, with only one point in common, that of an author's name, the most widespread family name in France, Martin. The original idea behind this installation was to undermine the meaning of works and the hallmarks of conceptual art. But in this new memorial context the installation took on a new signification, attesting to the multiplicity of more or less ignored pictorial potentials and registering the lost world of painting in the memory of the twentieth century. The multiplicity of meanings ascribed to the same works is sometimes presented as testimony to the democracy of art, refusing to disentangle any given complexity of attitudes

and labiality of boundaries insofar as they reflect the complexity of the world.

The contradictory attitudes that today are being drawn from the great aesthetic paradigms express a more fundamental undecidability in the politics of art. This undecidability is not due to a postmodern turn. It is constitutive: aesthetic suspense immediately lends itself to being interpreted in two ways. Art's singularity stems from an identification of its own autonomous forms both with forms of life *and* with political possibilities. These possibilities can never be integrally implemented except at the price of abolishing the singularity of art, that of politics, or both together. Today, coming to terms with this undecidability sparks differing sentiments: with some, a melancholy relating to the world in common that art once carried in it, if only it had not been betrayed by political enlistments and commercial compromises; with others, an awareness of its limits, a tendency to play on the limitation of its power and even the uncertainty of its effects. But the paradox of our present is perhaps that this art, uncertain of its politics, is increasingly encouraged to intervene due to the lack of politics in the proper sense. Indeed, it seems as if the time of consensus, with its shrinking public space and effacing of political inventiveness, has given to artists and their mini-demonstrations, their collections of objects and traces, their *dispositifs* of interaction, their *in situ* or other provocations, a substitutive political function. Knowing whether these 'substitutions' can reshape political spaces or whether they must be content with parodying them is without doubt an important question of our present.