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### Delirium and Resistance: activist art and the crisis of capitalism

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Figure 1. The Illuminator/G.U.L.F. April 18 2016. Gulf Labor Coalition, Global Ultra Luxury Faction (G.U.L.F.), Occupy Museums and The Illuminator respond with a nighttime guerrilla projection onto the Guggenheim Museum New York April 27, 2016 following the museum's refusal to discuss with these activist art groups the improvement of wages and working conditions for migrant laborers in Abu Dhabi where a new Guggenheim museum has been in the works. (Image courtesy G.U.L.F./The Illuminator).

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## ii. General Introduction

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### Questions raised by this thesis.

The title of my study refers to the dizzying contradictions that have come to define contemporary art in the era of neoliberal capitalism. This includes rocketing prices that some art works command in the global market, but also the rising tide of artistic activism focused on social injustice (including seeking fair economic compensation for art workers themselves). All of this is compounded by the crisis of the so-called Great Recession and its aftermath, which may signal the collapse of the neo-liberal model itself. To address this often baffling situation this study argues that there are both new, as well as older, contradictions now haunting the field of contemporary culture as never before. However, these materializing conflicts are amplified when artists focus their practice beyond artistic concerns to address social and political concerns in the “real world.” Therefore two questions that this dissertation seeks to address above all include, first, how can a truly *critical and politically resistant* artistic culture be possible when art is becoming entangled and perhaps even subsumed within capitalist forms of production, marketing and financialization? And, second, what significant changes have taken place since the completion of my previous research into so-called artistic dark matter in 2008? In addition, a number of important subsidiary questions are also posed here. These include what links the field of art with urban gentrification, and how to respond to the effects of staggering student debt on artists (particularly in the United States context). The relevancy of these inquiries to the delirium and resistance of the contemporary political world seems all the more consequential following recent electoral outcomes that are moving many democratic nations towards increasingly xenophobic, nationalistic, and in some instances authoritarian state governance. While this General Introduction provides a compact description of my thesis investigation, and it also provides the scholarly context and methodological approach used in my research, it is within the body of the thesis itself that one will hopefully find a deeper exploration of the troubling, and often vertiginous conditions that make up contemporary art and society.

## **Autonomy and Heteronomy.**

If an essential feature of artistic practice has been its centuries-old autonomy (whether real or imagined) from worldly economic and political matters, then art's increasingly far-reaching and radical complicity with capital generates not only a dilemma, it forms a virtual ontological state of contradiction for all artistic practices. However, this problem is especially vexing for those modes of contemporary art that self-identify as socially engaged, interventionist, or activist in nature. Wait, you may be thinking. How does art that freely commit itself to a heteronomous cause –raising consciousness about human rights violations or seeking to improve precarious labor conditions for example– suffer when artistic autonomy is no longer viable? After all, isn't the collapse of autonomy precisely the attribute that separates engaged art from its art-for-art's sake brethren? Yes, certainly, this would be the case if we were living in an ideal society where we fished in the afternoon, wrote criticism after dinner, and perhaps made art the day after with no need for professional titles or the sale of one's labor to make ends-meet, to paraphrase the young Karl Marx.<sup>2</sup> Under those circumstances it is quite likely that the loss of artistic autonomy would be incidental, even celebrated. Therefore, what might have been embraced as the long-awaited success of the avant-garde's program to merge art with life now arrives at a moment when life itself is embroiled in a game of survival within a world dominated by the high-risk stakes of ultra-deregulated capitalism that is itself in crisis. In addition, given recent elections in the U.S., U.K., Europe and elsewhere, this crisis is spreading to the democratic social institutions of many once stable nations. In short, the stakes involved with merging art and life have radically altered today. For while all art encounters the contradiction of its own entrepreneurial marketization that follows and disciplines the artist herself from classroom to exhibition space and beyond, the committed activist artist must also contend with the paradox of producing work that is always already caught up in a system it openly opposes and deplors. The bulk of my investigation focuses on the complicity and antipathy, as well as delirium and resistance that these partisan art forms have expressed over the past thirty-five years of post-Fordist, enterprise culture.

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2 Karl Marx, Fredrich Engles, *The German Ideology*, Martino Books, 2011.

## **Dark Matter and *after*.**

The second contradiction investigated by this thesis overlaps with issue of artistic autonomy, but it also expands upon my past research about what I call the dark matter of the artworld, which asked: What if the majority of creative work produced within neo-liberal societies was invisible to the those who manage and interpret contemporary culture, the art historians, collectors, art critics, dealers, museum directors, curators and arts administrators? What if this other sphere of production made up an alternative shadow economy in which ideas, labour, and practices were rooted in notions of participation and pleasure, rather than strict hierarchies based on scarcity and class privilege? Who would stand to benefit from maintaining the invisibility of such shadow creativity? Perhaps most importantly, how would the hierarchical value structure of mainstream cultural institutions be affected if what I mischievously label the dark matter of the artworld began to rise to the surface and make its presence known?

These were the questions that propelled me to write the 2010 book *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (Pluto Press). In that study I explored not only what this so-called dark matter creativity might consist of –ultimately concluding that it was best understood as a surplus archive consisting of unremunerated art laborers and pre-failed art students (the 99% destined not to succeed in traditional artworld terms), activist artists, and also non-professional amateurs– but I also arrived at the conclusion that this marginalized mass of productivity was becoming brighter with potentially profound consequences. And ironically, this dark matter was getting brighter thanks to the socio-economic forces unleashed by, but also necessary to, highly deregulated capitalism and its agenda of privatization. Capital’s liberatory mechanisms included 1.) The just-in-time manufacturing processes that as Mario Tronti predicted in 1960s were transforming life into one enormous “social factory,” and 2.) The ever-expanding networks of communication technology that are so essential to global capital, but which also allow even the most obscure cultural practitioners an opportunity to identify themselves at some level of visibility within a broader cultural setting. Thus, the very-same unrelenting pursuit of profit extraction out of every corner of existence led to a condition in which peripheral or even suppressed cultural agencies were unconcealed, permitting this no-longer dark

matter to forge alternative economic systems and oblige self-actualized communities that sought to challenge the market itself (though sometimes these congealing dark forces were also regrettably disturbing, anti-progressive, misogynist, xenophobic or racist, and at several points in this thesis I address these circumstances as well.) All of this was further exacerbated by the financial crisis and its ongoing aftermath, a point addressed in the chapters on “bare art.” Therefore with regards to the artworld’s brightening the unconcealment of this creative dark matter was making manifest the presence/absence of a vast pool of largely (in)voluntary laborers who nonetheless are instrumental to the reproduction of high culture’s hierarchical institutionality. My prediction was that this long-repressed agency would emerge into self-awareness to take action against its paradoxical position within the artworld because the dark matter agency that most interested me then, as it still does now, is the politically engaged practice of art which disturbs the status quo.

Much has happened since the book *Dark Matter* was completed almost ten years ago (the dark matter thesis dates back to 1999, but the book manuscript was submitted just after the start of the 2008 global economic collapse). For one thing, progressive (as well as some regressive) cultural and political activists emerged on the world stage starting roughly in 2010 to challenge neoliberal capitalism from Occupy Wall Street (O.W.S.) to the streets and squares of Cairo, Madrid, Damascus, Moscow, Athens, but also institutions of learning including the University of Amsterdam, and most recently in the streets of St. Louis, New York, Baltimore with Black Lives Matter. All in all, the “brightening” of previously pent-up and shadowed energies has far exceeded anything my research in *Dark Matter* estimated almost a decade earlier. *Delirium and Resistance: Activist Art and the Crisis of Capitalism* is an attempt to address these circumstances, but it approaches this challenge by incorporating writings that preceded the book *Dark Matter* (approximately 60% of the total) into its investigation, as well as a substantial balance of completely new material intended to help contextualize both old and recent content.

Accordingly, the goal of this study is to focus this research on acknowledging the concrete contradictions of contemporary culture, while simultaneously rejecting a tendency found in many similarly oriented publications to wax nostalgic about a lost autonomous art practice,

or to normalize activist and socially engaged art either by claiming that these overlooked forms bring added aesthetic value to the field of high culture, or by insisting that within the ranks of socially engaged art unrecognized instances of artistic brilliance, if only we could overcome our cultural prejudices to see them as such. In contrast to both of these tendencies, my ambition is to present socially engaged artistic agency as a problem, or as a set of problems, rife with contradictions, and already fully present within, as well as necessary to, the history and practice of contemporary art.

The chapters that follow approach this objective by embedding the contemporary artworld and its delirious interplay of forces within a Matryoshka doll-like system of deregulated post-Fordist capitalism and high-risk enterprise culture involving issues of gentrification, art and labor, social injustice, and high cultural privileges. And as this process unfolded, so did a series of sub-questions crop up at each successive stage of investigation. These questions include: 1.) What effects has the liberalization and financialization of the global capitalist economy had on the working conditions of artists, pedagogical studies, urban culture as manifest within the artworld as a historical and also contemporary institutional real and symbolic economy? 2.) To what degree, and with what outcomes, have artistic practices –especially those self-defined as oppositional, activist, and/or socially engaged– been wholly or partially subsumed by capitalist modes of production and the hyper-entrepreneurial risk-economy which it has engendered over the past forty years? 3.) How do these conditions that veer from delirium to crisis and back again impact the (neo) avant-garde’s claims to be a force of creative resistance in light of the fact that key aspects of neoliberal policy parallel aspects of the artistic vanguard itself? 4.) And finally, are there new, or perhaps old but overlooked artistic possibilities that will allow art to again take up the mantel of an alternative to capitalism in the 21st century?

### **Context and Related Literature Review.**

For reasons that I hope become evident immediately, this investigation is not preoccupied with famous art careers, blue-chip galleries, familiar historical narratives or trending global museums. Instead, the approach taken here seeks out a critical examination of artistic practices and artistic conditions, especially those self-described as oppositional, collective and/or activist, as these forms have emerged, evolved, and sometimes collapsed during the rise,

institutionalization, and crisis of neoliberal capitalism roughly between the late 1970s and the present day (2016). Set primarily in New York City the perspective of this study draws upon my own experiences, observations and history as a politically engaged, and therefore comparatively marginalized artist, living and working in Manhattan for most of the past forty years (please see additional comments below about the location of this study). But this thesis equally profits from my activity as a long-standing and regularly published writer who is critical of the international contemporary artworld and its institutions. For these reasons my focus herein most often chronicles the overlooked, forgotten or suppressed activities and histories of cultural practitioners who have in many instances been systematically marginalized by the artworld, or who have consciously rejected the artworld, thereby problematizing the mainstream narratives of the contemporary artworld itself.

Interest in socially engaged and activist art has grown considerably in the past five to ten years. This interest is evinced by the many academic papers and conferences devoted to this type of work, but perhaps it is most profoundly evident in the two-dozen or more scholarly volumes that have been published on such practices in the past three years alone. A series of consequential books have recently appeared on this topic by such noted academic scholars as Claire Bishop, Boris Groys, Charles Esche and Matt Bradly, Tom Finkelpearl, Gavin Grindon, Brian Holmes, Shannon Jackson, Grant Kester, Marc James Léger, Yates Mckee, Gerald Raunig, John Roberts, Stevphen Shukaitis, Nato Thompson, Marina Vishmidt, Julia Bryan-Wilson and Stephen Wright among a growing number of others. Taken together these important works attest to a definite shift of interest towards what Bishop labeled in 2006 “the social turn in art.” Furthermore, this surge of scrutiny contrasts with the mere handful of books on the same topic found in the previous three decades combined.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, despite this new attention several unchallenged presumptions remain almost

<sup>3</sup> The writings of American critic Lucy R. Lippard were among the very few Anglo-American resources that focused attention on activist and socially engaged art practices beginning in the late 1960s, though primarily it was her work in the 1980s including the book *Get The Message*, and then in the 1990s with *A Different War*, and *The Pink Glass Swan* that underscored the importance of such art to me and to a relatively small group of other scholars. Lippard’s lonesome contributions were then joined during that same decade of the 1990s by critic Nina Felshin’s *But Is It Art?*, and artist Suzanne Lacy’s *Mapping the Field*, as well as by British critic John A. Walker on the U.K. scene as early as 2002, followed by Julie Ault’s *Alternative New York, 1965-1985*, 2003. However, starting with Grant Kester’s *Conversation Pieces* in 2004, and Thompson and Sholette’s *The Interventionists* that same year, a steady and growing stream of books about politicized art has began to find their way into print. Arguably, the recent period roughly between 2014 and 2016 marks a truly qualitative and quantitative jump in relevant research, as more than two-dozen relevant volumes were published during this time. (For more details

constant. With a few exceptions that include Roberts, Léger, Charnley and Wright, the general approach to studying socially engaged art today continues to be predetermined by existing, often unquestioned categories of artistic value and aesthetic judgment.<sup>4</sup> This is so despite claims made by most of these writers that their object of study is a *new* cultural phenomenon. There is also a shared tendency to ignore what I refer to as the “surplus archive” of previous, often failed art that is brimming with precedents to socially engaged art practices. It is my hope the case studies presented here may serve as a modest aide-memoire to this forgetfulness by offering activist a somewhat different genealogy, or genealogies, even if this is non-linear and riddled with gaps and ellipsis. Thirdly, and more complexly, when history is addressed in relation to socially engaged art it tends to be presented as a flat backdrop upon which contemporary artists and events are played out, rather than being grasped as a vibrant archival agency in its own right. This too I hope *Delirium and Resistance* provides some resistance to.

My approach also contrasts with that of those peers who remain invested in the methodology known as institutional critique. Without dismissing the important exposure of underlying artworld power structures that is germane to this procedure, my efforts pivot alternatively on exploring those artistic practices typically dismissed by the mainstream as essentially extra-institutional (for example activist art and amateur art), but also by simultaneously attending to the many internal “minor” creative agents whose very invisibility within the established artworld transforms them into intramural dark matter: a non-reflective though structurally necessary presence anchoring the institutional norms of visible high culture. In this latter category we find artists who manufacture the work of other, more successful artists, or those who manage biennial level artist’s studios while making their own work in off hours, as well as over-indebted art students (“pre-failed” artists), which is a topic dealt with at some depth in my investigation.

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on this phenomenon please turn to the bibliographic References section [viii.] at the end of this dissertation.)

4 Analysis of modern and contemporary art that does not explicitly pivot on matters of aesthetic taste or formal artistic qualities alone include Peter Bürger’s influential *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (English version 1984), and Theodor Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* (written between 1961 and 1969), as well as more recently Alain Badiou’s *Theses on Contemporary Art* (lectures from 2003), or Jacques Rancière’s *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2004) which belong to the dialectical tradition, but also Pierre Bourdieu’s *The Field of Cultural Production* (with material written between 1968 and 1989), and Howard Becker’s *Art Worlds* (first published in 1957) emerging from a sociological approach to art. Here my argument is focused on a new wave of art critical writers over the past ten to fifteen years whose work explicitly addresses politically engaged art or social practice art, as opposed to the field of art or the concept of the avant-garde in general, and who also tend to normalize such practices by applying contemporary art world notions of aesthetic quality including formal sophistication and artistic reflexivity.

A key argument made in this study is that these very same darkly marginal forces previously relegated to invisible status have in recent years begun to materialize as a fully present, often critical or even negative cultural force in their own right. This illumination of dark matter has led to both culturally positive and politically damaging consequences. For example, in the introduction to Section 1: *Welcome to Our Artworld*, I consider recent efforts made by otherwise inconspicuous artists to gain representation for their labor, including the demand of production fees from galleries and museums. But contrarily, I also consider in Section 3: Chapter 3, *On The Maidan and Imaginary Archive Kyiv* the way disenfranchised artists and activists found themselves temporarily aligned with highly nationalistic and reactionary political forces during the Ukrainian revolution of 2014, though I also describe how they struggle to articulate a critical distance from that contingency. Once again, the way forward is deeply marked by contradiction at many levels.

### **Methodology and structure of the thesis.**

The investigative approach taken here is a hybrid of theory, historical research, and empirical reportage. Its overall style is, I believe, closest to the essay format used by Walter Benjamin in such works as *Thesis on the Philosophy of History*, or by more recent artist-writers such as Martha Rosler or Hito Steyerl. Organized into three thematic sections its tripartite structure is designed to articulate key features of the overall research findings in the categories of 1.) *The Artworld* (how is the realm of high culture being fundamentally altered by its contradictory entanglement with capital, and how does this loss of autonomy impact the working conditions of artists and artistic labor?); 2.) *Cities Without Souls* (urban gentrification concentrates the contradictory relationship between artists, including even well-intentioned progressive and activist artists, and the social crisis caused by capitalist value production via real-estate, thus making gentrification like a petri-dish for studying the paradoxical forces being investigated in my project); and 3.) *Resistance* (what options remain open, or not open, to practitioners of socially engaged and activist art under such complex and conflicting circumstances?) Each of these sections contains a separate introduction that delves into the thematic topic while weaving together the content of the essays contained within. (Citations for previously published works are listed in the Acknowledgements section [vi.] at the end of the thesis.)

**Section One** begins with an essay on the artworld written almost twenty years ago in which I lament the then already evident failure of institutional critique. My melancholy rests on the assertion that even as a critic of the artwork we remain in love with the idea of the museum despite its actual shortcomings. Section One then leaps forward into the era of Occupy Wall Street when a new generation of artists formed the group Occupy Museums and unknowingly repeated actions taken in the early 1970s by Hans Haacke, Lucy R. Lippard and other members of Art Workers' Coalition. The final chapter of Section One focuses on a central motif of the entire dissertation by arguing that at this point in the 21st century the forces of capitalist production have, for all intents and purposes, subsumed artistic modes of production. Art's absorption by capital has happened despite the fact that it was traditionally predicated on its relative autonomy from the day-to-day concerns of the "real world." The result of this process of subsumption has left behind what I describe as a "bare" artworld: a field of cultural activity bereft of mystery or depth. Nevertheless, even as the scales of aesthetic mystification fall from our eyes, from within this state of artistic nakedness emerge new types of critique and resistance. The very transparency of "unconcealed contradictions" opens a space for prospective resistance, including amongst artist laborers increasingly made visible to one another and willing to demand fair remuneration for their work. This latter is a theme that runs throughout the thesis and refocuses both of the primary research questions including what happens to art after it is stripped of its traditional autonomy, and as creative dark matter materializes what new forms of critique open-up, and what past forms vanish?

**Section Two**, *Cities Without Souls* focuses on one of the central conundrums of contemporary art: the process whereby an influx of well intentioned, often politically progressive young artists flood into working class urban neighborhoods and communities of color, and yet by doing so they inevitably also lay the economic groundwork for the expulsion of these very same lower-income residents. It is not only a process that I have witnessed firsthand since arriving in the New York City in the late 1970s, but gentrification has also negatively affected my life and work, and it continues to do so to this day. Therefore, initiating Section Two on art and gentrification is a 1997 essay entitled *Nature as an Icon of Urban Resistance* that was written right on the cusp of New York's transformation from a rough, blue-collar city into a strange "neo-Bohemian" simulacrum of itself that caters to the F.I.R.E. (Finance, Insurance and Real Estate) economic sectors, as well as of course to the so-called creative classes of which artists arguably make up a small, though ostentatious fraction. The theme of the city's "vanishing soul" reappears in chapter 2.2, except

that now the case for resistance appears far less optimistic, but hope is rekindled somewhat in chapter 2.3, as Occupy Wall Street brings a moment of critical doubt exploding out of the very same ranks of artists and creative knowledge workers helping to gentrify the city. Too short in duration alas, the occupation of Zuccotti Park ended with a police raid and the final chapter of Section Two, entitled “Art After Gentrification,” examines the rise of regenerative social practice art in which cultural workers now join hands with entrepreneurial capitalism and the policy makers of so-called “creative cities,” but also manage to bring amenities to neglected parts of the inner-city neighborhoods in places such as Chicago, Pittsburgh and Liverpool respectively. *Cities Without Souls* simultaneously anchors the study in a particular time and place, while it explores the contradictions that emerge as heteronomy supersedes autonomy and a growing wave of socially engaged artists seek to identify with the displacement of low-income residents victimized by gentrification, even as these same artists gravitate towards regenerative art practices that in some high-profile instances contribute to the urban expulsion process.

Resistance is the rubric of **Section Three**. It contains the final five chapters of the dissertation within which a range of additional subthemes emerge including the nature of post-modernist collectivist art and tactical media interventionism, as well as an elaboration of my concept of artistic dark matter. It is in this third section that the contradictions raised in sections one and two are brought into the foreground, re-examined for their positive potential, and incorporated into what might be described as a counter-genealogy of activist art that includes tactical media and culture jamming, as well as socially engaged dialectical aesthetic models of contemporary art practice. By tracing and then re-imagining a genealogy for such art practices the dissertation ends on a note of cautious optimism.

### **Note on the location of the study.**

While the focus throughout this thesis is primarily with events and examples found in New York City (where my labors as an artist, activist, and researcher have been located during most of the past forty years), there are nevertheless two arguments for why this might be read not as a limitation, but rather as a generalizable research advantage. First, New York has typically played the role of harbinger, often quite negatively, regarding socio-economic transformations in urban areas of the developed and also developing world. One important example of this is

the detrimental impact of the city's cultural sector in fomenting urban gentrification. This is another reason why as a city New York is logical to my thesis since both public and private policy makers place great value on this population of so-called creative workers. But a more significant second factor is the convergence of financial interests and symbolic power situated within the city's arts and cultural sector, including the extraordinarily high concentration of gatekeeper galleries and internationally dominant museums, as well as cultural journals, arts related educational programs, and the overall level of municipal attention paid to the arts, which is not found elsewhere in the United States. Furthermore, the strong cosmopolitan atmosphere enhanced by a singular diversity of immigrants forces New York to confront the complexity of global diversity, whereas many other localities only encounter this cultural heterogeneity indirectly. Together these factors make the city an influential nodal point of the global arts industry, and therefore a natural target for my research.

In light of this several of my thesis chapters were first written in the 1990s, at a time when I began to notice New York beginning to metamorphose from a culturally complex working class metropolis into a top destination for the global luxury class and their financial investments and artistic preferences. This mutation, now almost complete, has systematically expunged the very memory of that "other" city and its counter-narratives of opposition and urban resistance, precisely the subject matter of my dissertation, and several of these chapters, both old and new, deal specifically with this erasure and its implications for dissident forms of culture.

### **About the cases studied.**

The artistic subjects studied in this thesis focus on a fairly broad array of projects ranging from individual art practices that critically address issues of gentrification on New York City's Lower East Side in the 1980s, as well as Chicago's South Side in the 1990s and afterwards, to the collective actions of Political Art Documentation/Distribution (P.A.D./D.); REPOhistory; Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Museums, as well as artists involved in the 2014 Maidan uprising in Ukraine. The dissertation also examines the staggering burden of debt that oppresses a younger generation of artistic practitioners, as well as the highly articulate forces of resistance that have sprung up amongst them in the wake of the 2008 near-global capitalist crisis and its austerity-loaded aftermath. Throughout this span of cases, some historical, others quite contemporary, one

constant link related to my central research questions remains present: how do artists not only survive, but generate critical opposition in a social, economic and political context that unceasingly captures selective examples of aesthetic resistance as part and parcel of its cultural hegemony? The fundamental underpinning of my analysis therefore is that while art has represented a non-productive form of human labor for at least a few centuries, that exceptional difference has radically shrunk in recent years, if not altogether vanished. It is as if the old avant-garde desire to merge art with life had succeeded, but at a time when the utopian aspiration of that century-old impulse has been severed from it. Meanwhile, this state of de-mystified everydayness brings with it new possibilities and limitations, new challenges and forms of potential critique. This is the frequently incoherent landscape explored by *Delirium and Resistance*.

### **Primary research sources.**

The sources upon which this study draws include the Museum of Modern Art (NY) Archive, including especially the P.A.D./D. Archive and Franklin Furnace Archives respectively; the Smithsonian Institutions Archives of American Art, including the papers of Lucy R. Lippard; New York University's Fales Library & Special Collections which contains the REPOhistory Archives; Interference Archive in Brooklyn New York, home to publications and ephemera on a wide range of oppositional movement cultures; as well as a thirty-five year old collection of archival materials in my own research archive. For the more current, less strictly historical topics represented in the most recent writings (the section introductions and final chapters of each section) I have had to rely on NGO reports and news articles to explore such topics as student debt, urban regeneration, and organized artistic resistance to labor exploitation, because few scholarly books or papers have yet to be published on these issues.<sup>5</sup> It is my hope that this dissertation will contribute to closing that gap.

Other sources drawn upon include extensive notes, discussions and several interviews made throughout the past few decades as part of my participation in various lecture trips and conferences throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, the Middle East and many European nations. Among the most recent of these research opportunities include: the thirteenth International Symposium on Contemporary Art Theory (SITAC) held in

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<sup>5</sup> Published books on the economic challenges of rising student debt by academic researchers (as opposed to journalists) includes Temple University professor Sara Goldrick-Rab's *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream*, University of Chicago Press, 2016; New York University sociologist

Mexico City (9/30-10/1/2016); a public discussion between myself and theorist Katherine Waugh at the Skibbereen Arts Festival in West Cork, Ireland (7/27/2016); as a panelist for Martha Rosler's "Art-Estate," Town Hall panel at the Mitchel Innes & Nash Gallery, NYC (6/14/2016); "House of Cards: Art Institutions Today," two-day seminar, Zagreb Croatia with the collective What How and For Whom? (7/8-9/2016) a one-day symposium entitled "Strijd: Art, Activism and the University," at BAK in Utrecht, The Netherlands (5/18.2016); the Athens Biennial panel "Acting Out: On the Body Politic" in Greece, (4/16,2016). Perhaps most representative of this source of research was the highly focused gathering "Transformative Art Production and Coalition-Building" organized by Rena Raedle, and Vladan Jeremic of Belgrade with Anne-Gro Erikstad of Norway, that brought together a trans-European group of participating collaborators for several days of concentrated conversation on issues related to this dissertation. Held in Trondheim, Norway between September 5th and 6th of 2015, this represents one example of the numerous international discursive opportunities that have directly and indirectly informed this dissertation over the past decade. <sup>6</sup>

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Andrew Ross's *Creditocracy: And the Case for Debt Refusal*, OR Books, 2014; and a contrarian position taken up by Skidmore College's Urban Institute Senior Fellow Sandy Baum in *Student Debt: Rhetoric and Realities of Higher Education Financing*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. On activism by indebted artists one finds thus far only CUNY Grad Center PhD candidate Yates McKee's *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition*, Verso, 2016, which I discuss in my introduction to Section One: *Welcome to Our Artworld*.

6 It is worth noting the diversity of participants present in Trondheim, and the institutions and/or places they represented included: Airi Triisberg (Tallinn, Estonia), Corina L Apostol (ArtLeaks, Bucharest), Danilo Prnjat (DeMaterijalizacija umetnosti, Belgrade), Gregory Sholette (Gulf Labor, New York), Ivor Stodolsky (Perpetuum Mobile, Berlin), Jean-Baptiste Naudy (Ateliers Populaires de Paris), Jelena Vesić (Belgrade), Jesper Alvær (Oslo), Jochen Becker (metroZones, Berlin), Kuba Szreder (Warsaw), Lise Skou (Aarhus), Lise Soskolne (W.A.G.E., New York), Marina Vishmidt (London), Marita Muukkonen (Perpetuum Mobile, Helsinki), Marius Lervåg Aasprong (Trondheim), Minna Henriksson (Helsinki), Mourad El Garouge (Ateliers Populaires de Paris), Noah Fischer (Occupy Museums, New York), Raluca Voinea (ArtLeaks, Bucharest), Sissel M Bergh (Norway).