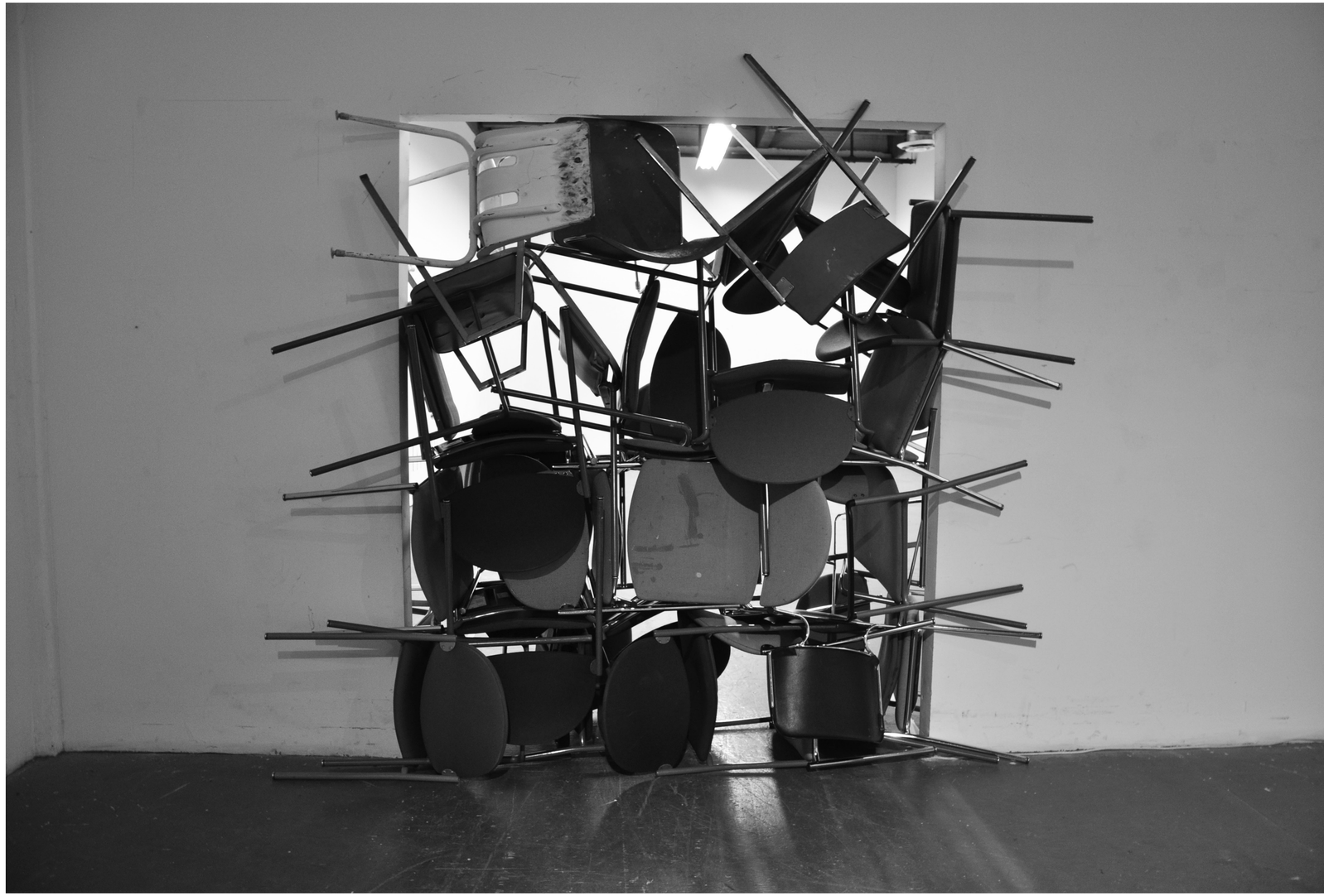
2007).
xx See Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood"; in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1998)
xxi Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), 2. In light of the discussion of "inside" and "outside" below, Mouffe's discussion of the "Friend/Enemy Relation" is also worth acknowledging: "The specificity of democratic politics is not the overcoming of the we/they opposition but the different way in which it is established. What democracy requires is the drawing of the we/they distinction in a way which is compatible with the recognition of the pluralism which is constitutive of modern democracy." Ibid, 19.
xxiiJacques Ranciere, *Dissensus* (London/New York: Continuum, 2010), 42.
xxiii d., *Elements of a Barricade* (n.p., 2012). I am deeply indebted to the author of this text and the discussions which both preceded and followed its publication.
xxivIbid.
xxvBishop, *Antagonism*, 61.
xxviBorder walls, such as the one separating Mexico and the USA, the wall built by Israel in Palestine, and the former Berlin Wall, are powerful examples of a sculptural practice that attempts to refuse contingency in an embrace of fixity. Border sculptures such as the Korean DMZ and even monuments such as the Peace Arch between the USA and British Columbia, are also variations of the same approach to space making. The Great Wall of China offers an implicit critique of the illusory drive to mark on land lines which exist only what Lefebvre calls "Representational Spaces".
xxvii Blomely, 74
xxviii Anne C. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," *Arts Magazine*, vol. 64, no. 5 (January 1990), pg 274. xxix Ibid, 270.
xxx Anonymous, *The Occupation Cookbook: Or the Model of the Occupation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb*, trans. Drago Markisa, (New York: Autonomedia/Minor Compositions, 2010), 7.
xxxi At least, this is what Tom McDonough asserts in *"The Beautiful Language of My Century"*.
xxxii Cindy Milstein, "Organizing as If Social Relations Matter," *Outside the Circle* (website: http://cbmilstein.wordpress.com/2013/02/21/organizing-as-if-social-relations-matter/; last accessed 4-15-2013)
xxxiii Claire Bishop, "Participation and Spectacle: Where are We Now?", *Living As Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991- 2011*, ed. Nato Thompson (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 2012), 40.
xxxiv Jacques Ranciere, *Emancipated Spectator*, Lecture in Frankfurt, quoted in Bishop, *Participation and Spectacle*, 40
xxxv Mouffe, *On the Political*, 18.
xxxviThis is discussed to some extent by Michael Sanchez in "2011: Art and Transmission", *Artforum* vol.51, no.10 (Summer 2013). Sanchez suggests that contemporary art's production and exhibition is destined ultimately to be a JPEG on an iPhone, and this leads to an intensification of certain attributes including homogeneity or "consensus", a dependence on certain formal modes (surreal objects and the readymade) which lend themselves to fast production outside of the studio, and a dialog between contemporaries (artists, critics, gallerists and collectors) in near real time - "yet this increased speed also disables the judgmental element of consensus in favor of collective attention." I am making a similar argument about protest images. While I acknowledge that mediated images are never neutral, I would argue that we have the agency in what images we produce, in an art work or in a protest, and that this makes all the difference.
xxxvii Not necessarily a bad thing. See Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012).



GABRIEL SALOMAN CONTINGENT SCULPTURE / AXIS OF AGENCY

The Contingent Sculpture Workshop and *the Axis of Agency Workshop* were developed and implemented in the Spring and Summer of 2013, in Vancouver, BC, on unceded Coast Salish Territory. Both of these workshops were developed as part of my research and final exhibition in fulfillment of my MFA Thesis requirements at Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts. This publication and its related content correspond with work which was exhibited in *Disorientations* at the Audain Gallery in Vancouver, between August 28 & September 7, 2013. *The Contingent Sculpture Workshop* involved a series of workshops held over several months that engaged a material practice of student activism through the lens of artistic theory. These workshops considered how protest creates images and what artists can contribute to a theorization of that process. In addition to its pedagogical intent, it was hoped that this workshop might support the further development of a student movement at a time of relative inactivity. *The Axis of Agency Workshop* initially invited professionally trained dancers to explore a theory of political agency mapped onto the floor in a Cartesian graph. This graph functioned dually as a visual representation of a theory and as a piece of choreography. This workshop was later offered to a general audience that was likewise invited to engage the theory through embodiment and relational movement. These works are experiments in the embodiment of theory.

I would like to thank Sabine Bitter for her help and guidance through the production of this work. I would also like to thank Jeff Derksen, Judy Radul, Rob Kitsos, Allyson Clay, Am Johal, Brady Cranfield, the Audain Gallery, Ben Rogalsky, SFU SCA, Daisy Thompson, Juan Manuel Sepulveda, Andrew Curtis, Vanessa Goodman, my MFA cohort, all of the participants in these workshops, David Cunningham, and Aja Rose Bond.

CONTINGENT SCULPTURE

"... all art—whether immersive or not—can be a critical force that appropriates and reassigns value, distancing our thoughts from the predominant and preexisting consensus. The tasks facing us today are to analyze how contemporary art addresses the viewer and to assess the quality of the audience relations it produces: the subject position that any work presupposes and the democratic notions it upholds, and how these are manifested in our experience of the work."

- Claire Bishop, *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*[i]

The themes and issues explored by this text are expressed through a category that I may or may not have invented - "Contingent Sculpture". The not-so-secret purpose of this text is to rehearse, experiment with and possibly re-invent a radical practice of intervening in and producing space through the manipulation of materials inside and outside predetermined architectural structures. Explicitly I'm working with an expanded notion of sculpture to explore how it is used as a means of rupturing the everyday and tactically assisting anti-authoritarian political practices. I'll be considering the barricade as the principal model of this type of sculpture, but I'll be considering its use in a variety of contexts that produce unseen outcomes and create different kinds of problems. Importantly, we engage

argue that sculpture as we know it was traditionally in the service of the state and religious authorities. In this way, sculpture was often a hardening of cultural and social relationships - a monument to the hierarchically organized structures of society. As industrial production transformed economic relationships with materials, and as new materials themselves became available in the late 19th century, sculpture took on new subjects, new forms and new relationships with its viewers. Modernism, if we can situate it less in a period and more a process, sees a transformation of artistic production that, in the words of Rosalind Krauss, "operates in relation to [a] loss of site." For Krauss, this produces the monument's negative condition, "functionally placeless and largely self-referential."[v] This parallels changes in the status of national identity amidst massive trans-Atlantic migrations and the dismantling of older empires. Artists of this time embraced a cosmopolitan bohemia that thrived on emergent philosophies (anarchism, socialism, theosophy, among others) and defined itself by the communities they formed through migration rather than national identity. Under these conditions, sculpture progressively became abstracted, prefabricated and explicitly relational. Throughout this process, public sculpture, specifically the monument, remained the paradigm of sculpture to either be replicated or refused.

Intending to produce acts of refusal, the artistic avant-garde of Europe produced a "site-less" sculpture reflective of their own status as, in the words of Raymond Williams, "restlessly mobile emigres and exiles," naturalizing a contingency that at one time was particular but, through the calamities of genocidal war, imperialism and more broadly the globalization of capital, has become itself the generalized condition of art making.[vi] Thus a contingency based in necessity became a contingency based in ideology, but only in a limited sense. It could

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forgo a rootedness in space, yet remained wholly attached to an enduring relationship with history. The desire to produce auratic objects distinguishes this work from contingent sculpture. At the same time, these practices carried elements of auto-destructive impulses, an "agonistic futurism" that sees its labor as a form of self-sacrifice for the future artist.[vii] Within these contradictions, historical interventions into material and formal modes of sculpture might reveal a relationship between an avant-garde political practice (the barricade)and a contemporary artistic one.

A surplus of artistic activities exists amongst self-proclaimed Dadaists and their associates which we now could see as commonplace in the image-making practices of contemporary protest. The charged juxtapositions of Hannah Hoech's collages; the conflation of image and text in Dada's visual poetics; and its subversive use of everyday materials are taken for granted in the aesthetic lexicon of the 21st century. The interventionist approaches exemplified by collage artists associated with punk and D.I.Y. culture such as Gee Voucher, John Yates and Winston Smith, as well as the aesthetic form of street art and the politicized design collective Just Seeds, all point directly back to Dada.[viii] In respect to sculpture, Marcel Duchamp's The Fountain by R. Mutt (1917) produces the critical moment that materials of mass production, both found and appropriated, become conceivable as sculptural elements. Yet what is more easily forgotten is that they possessed a contingency premised upon an avant-gardist antagonism: "they were intended to shock - to tear the beholder away from the stagnant meaninglessness of his habitual attitude to art, his conventional artistic experience... such a shock is not

these structures not only through a lens of political and tactical efficacy, but as a concern of art as a category. As an artist I refuse to divide my actions between those that are "political" and those that are "artistic," and I propose that the theoretical and critical practices developed by the sphere of art are vitally useful to the sphere of radical politics. This text is an attempt to test the premise of this proposal and to think through its possibilities and problems.

To begin such considerations we must consider our context, because it is in part what demands that our sculptural practice be contingent. As a specific example, in Vancouver, where I'm currently writing this, I am on unceded Coast Salish territory, that is to say stolen land, and therefore in the midst of both an occupation and an ongoing colonial process. Most North American urban space has developed in some way through a process of displacement and the colonizing of territory, in its transformation of wild, rural and agrarian space, and the smaller dispossessions which commonly occur in the life of cities. For this reason whenever we discuss (positively or negatively) such things as "rights to the city" or "occupation" we have to recognize what privileges us to claim or enact such things. Even where these claims and acts are motivated by anti-colonial solidarity, I would argue that they must be contingent and temporary out of respect to anti-colonial demands for justice which for settlers such as myself may supersede our own.[ii] It's also critical that we consider local struggles for space - especially those in living memory. At the university where I currently study and work, our offices occupy a building which was squatted a decade ago by people fighting for the (apparently) impossible demand of an end to homelessness and poverty in one of the richest countries in the world. To intervene in this space is to resurrect this event, the "Woodsquat," and potentially the living memory of the many participants who have been displaced or have even died since its dismantling and reconstruction into its current state as a mixed-use development.[iii]

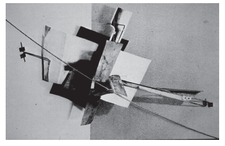
I foreground these particularities not to impede our exploration and experimentation, but to give us a sense of connection to a long history of struggle that is in fact situated right where we stand. The production of images needs to enfold these histories and to be complicated by them to be effective. Although the sheer multiplicity of these histories and their relationship to the present are necessarily specific and impossible to account for in the scope of this text, I will focus on an explication of Contingent Sculpture as a theory to be re-articulated, re-situated and reconsidered in whatever context demands it.

CONTINGENCY vs. MONUMENT

"The logic of sculpture, it would seem, is inseparable from the logic of the monument. By virtue of this logic the sculpture is a commemorative representation. It sits in a particular place and speaks in a symbolical tongue about the meaning or use of that place."

- Rosalind E. Krauss, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*[iv]

An abbreviated history of sculpture (situated in the obviously problematic boundary of western culture) might



repeatable... their artistic and anti-artistic content is reduced to nothing after the first shock effect... at this point they could be thrown away..."[ix]

Surrealism, birthed directly out of Parisian Dada, further enlivened the refuse of everyday life, not only through sculptural assemblages, but in the form of an intuitive roaming of the city street, a celebration and capturing of chance events, and the fetishization of the shops and arcades of the modern city already in decline.[x] Surrealism ultimately makes a claim for the legibility of abstraction, that the surrealist object can be read in spite of being a non-sensical or even non-representational image. Andre Breton's idea of the "Communicating Vessel" is highly useful in understanding how a contingent sculpture can transmit critical information without resorting to traditional ideas of language and signs. It is an affective communication that transmits via an obscured "capillary tissue", assuring "mental circulation... the constant interchange which must take place in thought between exterior and interior worlds."[xi] The praxis of dreams and unrestricted imagination.

Concurrent with the European avant-garde (and yet by virtue of culture and history almost wholly distinct) the early Russian avant-garde produced a truly wonderous variety of theoretical and practical models for art's intervention into everyday life, both as a reflection and an inspiration for revolutionary events which surrounded them. Inspired by Vladimir Tatlin's "Sythetostatic Compositions," a particular movement within the early Russian avant-garde sought to do more than create sculptural amalgamations of found material and static composition. Following the cue of other "anarcho-artists" such as Aleksandr Rodchenko and Aleksei Gan, a movement away from the pure laboratory of the pictorial plane and into lived space marked a break between what Nina Gurianova describes as "the early Russian avant-garde's aesthetic of anarchy" and "a utopianism we usually associate with the statist avant-garde of the 1920's."[xii] This break was not an ideological discontinuity, but it occurred at the moment when political anarchism in Russia was crushed. Constructivism was one of these "utopianisms," even though it eventually hardened into an ideologically driven anti-art. It produced important and still relevant ideas about how the makers of sculpture can relate material, its manipulation and the political (as it relates to its fabrication) into a triadic process called *konstruktsiia*.[xiii]

In their choice of materials - found, industrially produced, or simply transparent in their quotidian qualities - artists involved in all of these movements have opened a space for a provisional approach. At the core of each group a philosophical and theoretical current inflected their aesthetic dimension. By and large these practices never reconciled themselves with anonymity (authorial or historical), maintaining a contract with historicity and in effect clinging to the promise of monumentality as a temporal, if not spatial, concept. As later neo-avant-garde activities such as Pop, Conceptualism and Minimalism demonstrated, these sculptors were more interested in resisting the formal closure of the monument, but not the formal closure of time which it might have represented. As Rosalind Krauss points out, it did not matter if the work was "demonstrably contingent - denoting a universe held together not by Mind but by guy wires, or glue, or the accidents of gravity... the rage to historicize simply swept these differences aside."[xiv] If movements such as Minimalism, or at least its figureheads, failed to transcend the monument's production of temporality, what did emerge were important models and theories for the production of space.

both to reveal and critique similar processes, but also manifestly make them difficult and at times impossible. We aren't limited to these examples but they remind us that this practice has a remarkable capacity to be staged in widely different environments and even connect the realms of the urban, rural and wild.[xviii]

These particular sculptural constructions are distinguished from the monumental or the ornamental by their contingency, which is characterized by both their formal precarity and their indeterminate future. They are constructed with the materials at hand, often found in situ. Thus their qualities are hardly predetermined and depend completely upon the collective skills and relationships provided by a constituent community that acts here as artists. Other things which distinguish these sculptures include their situatedness within the moment which demands their construction. They are therefore both "context producing" and "produced by context." Their contingency is both necessitated and deliberate. This contingency of "necessity" is itself situated within the individual or the collective, and not based on universalities. That is why I might argue that seemingly apolitical or even post-politcal gestures within art can also be productively aligned with the sculptural practice of the barricade. As Tom McDonough has argued, the almost decorative work of Christo and Jean-Claude, in particular early proposals for the wrapping of public buildings and the building of barricades comprised of oil drums, implies the same logic of intervention in state power that is made explicit by similar obstructions.[xix]

Lastly we might consider the particularity of the presence of these sculptures and how this presence makes demands or enacts a dissensual politics within the loosely defined communities that aggregates on either side of the construction.

SITUATION & PRESENCE

"The size range of useless three-dimensional things is a continuum between the monument and the ornament. Sculpture has generally been thought of as those objects not at the polarities but falling between."

- Robert Morris, *Notes on Sculpture II*[xv]

Although Robert Morris' definition of sculpture is disputable, it remains valuable if we see this continuum as a measure of social relationship rather than scale, and if we define useless as being a quality of alienation from sculpture's production and a movement away from a use value of history. Thus we see two modes of production, one at the behest of the state (the monument) and the other of the market (the ornament) with sculpture broadly defined as that whose production is embodied - a work "made by hand" or at least by the will of an artist. Morris goes on to say that "the awareness of scale is a function of the comparison made between that constant, one's body size, and the object" and that space is "implied" by this comparison.[xvi] Again, I would purposefully misunderstand this to mean that our relation to the sculpture both produces space and makes us aware of the production of space by the art work itself. Morris' own work has at times demonstrated this, such as *Untitled (Concrete, Steel, Timbers)*, whose scale reinforces and makes visible the material labor required to produce not only the elements of the piece but its eventual situation in the Whitney Museum itself.[xvii] Similarly the work of Richard Serra, specifically the infamous *Tilted Arc*, functioned through affect to awaken a consciousness of its production through scale, while in this case intervening

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By presence I am invoking Michael Fried's anthropomorphizing of sculpture where it claims an abstracted sort of subjectivity or personhood.[xx] I would go further and say that beyond affect, contingent sculpture declares a position within a moment of flux that in fact enacts an argument. The sculpture itself engages in an agonistic relationship with the viewer, producing a dissensual space that is a materialization of democratic politics. In Mouffe's sense of the political, the relational phenomenology of the sculpture is "constitutive of 'the political'"[xxi], or as Ranciere claims "resides in the modes of dissensual subjectivation that reveal a society in its difference to itself."[xxii] It materializes not only in the physical space produced but in the social relations of the people involved. In a pseudonymous text, *Elements of A Barricade*, the author describes the creation of "insurgent-assemblages" in words that are as much about material processes as social ones:

"The barricade made of single objects working in cooperation with one another operates as an assemblage. The characteristics of the barricade-assemblage are the flowing, breaks and swerves of its autonomous components.

- d., *Elements Of A Barricade*"[xxiii]

What enables the creation of these assemblages, according to the author, is the "barricade consciousness" which is seemingly latent in all of us as we anticipate the situation of contingency, of necessity, or else is taught by the images of sculptures from moments past, "a template to enable, with minimal discourse or organizational continuity, coordinated points in the conventional reproduction of space as was demanded by the architects and users of its site, the Federal plaza. In both cases, the sculptures conspired to exceed the status quo of the institutions which commissioned them (in terms of stable power relationships and hierarchical determination of activity) while problematizing the relationships of the patrons, spectators and users of these relatively public spaces which they inhabited.

In citing these two examples I am implying that one critical purpose of a contingent sculpture is to make space and the social relationships that produce it visible. This is in direct opposition to forces which attempt (through public art and architecture among many other means) to make invisible these relationships. It is through this function that these formally distinct yet visually similar sculptural practices merge with the barricade, a sculpture which utterly disrupts the proper function of civic space and both normative economic and social reproduction. The celebrated anarchitecture of the urban barricade is exemplified by its various iterations during revolts in Paris in 1848, 1871, 1968 and 2006. A principal contemporary example of this might be blockades enacted by indigenous anti-colonial militants in North and South America, who's disruptions of flows on bridges, train tracks and along the pathways of proposed oil pipelines make visible not only their claim to territorial sovereignty but enact material disruptions that can at times put a stop to destructive industrial practices. A similar dual functioning is demonstrated by forest defenders in North America, Europe and Australia who use sculptural blockades

of rupture."[xxiv]

INSIDE and OUTSIDE

Sierra's return to the Venice Biennale in 2003 comprised a major performance/installation for the Spanish pavilion. *Wall Enclosing a Space* involved sealing off the pavilion's interior with concrete blocks from floor to ceiling. On entering the building, viewers were confronted by a hastily constructed yet impregnable wall that rendered the galleries inaccessible. Visitors carrying a Spanish passport were invited to enter the space via the back of the building, where two immigration officers were inspecting passports. All non-Spanish nationals, however, were denied entry to the pavilion, whose interior contained nothing but gray paint peeling from the walls, left over from the previous year's exhibition. The work was "relational" in Bourriaud's sense, but it problematized any idea of these relations being fluid and unconstrained by exposing how all our interactions are, like public space, riven with social and legal exclusions.

- Claire Bishop, *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*[xxv]

There is a distinction among barricades when its function is to redistribute possession or access to a particular architectural space, the built space of the *Urban*. This is commonly called an occupation and its unique characteristic is the repositioning of "inside" and "outside." These positions are

never entirely fixed, even under the regime of private property, but they are almost always determined by an already established power relation that privileges certain individuals and groups so that access and mobility becomes the locus of struggle. In fact, these positions are not neutral facts of geography or architecture but the outcome of the power relationship itself. "Inside" is a social relationship that is determined by power and underwritten by violence. It is against the naturalization of this distinction which an occupation struggles, attempting to disorientate through a defenestration of previously assumed rights to space.

As the example of Santiago Serra's work above suggests, the forces and powers that determine access are unevenly distributed. The re-distribution of these rights to access, and more crucially rights of exclusion and expulsion, problematic as this may be, is in of itself an act that can undermine the legitimacy of this power. Here Sierra is making visible forces of exclusion which arise from elaborate fantasies with real effects such as international borders: imaginary sites established by violence, maintained by social norms and most often made material by fixed sculptural elements.[xxvi] Occupational barricades attempt to invert this logic.

The occupation as a concept has become popularly tied to the 99% movement, the Movement of the Squares, events that began in many regards with the Arab Spring and have since continued to unfold relatively unabated through social uprisings on every continent. It is difficult to remember in the shadow of these world events that occupations as a mode of student protest against neo-liberal divestment in, and transformation of, public education were in many ways the direct precursor of these events in Europe and the Americas. In the Fall of 2010, for example, over 30 universities and colleges

principal at work. Hers is a demand that we imagine what else might take the place of these dominant and oppressive modes of expression. Can we succeed at making a prefigurative space that both negates the existing order and makes real a social practice that can perform a radical, if dissensual, openness. The materials we use will invariably be read as a language, but so will our labors which construct it. "The master's tools will never dismantle the the master's house" and nor will an occupation of that house unless we transform the social relations that built its walls, both in the relationships between those walls and beyond them. We then have to be wary of not only the means by which we seek the transformation of institutions, but the limits we set upon our imagination as we begin their transformation. A closed occupation, premised only on a symbolic refusing of the logics of private property, will ultimately consolidate the authoritarian mastery of that space as its temporary displacement is quickly erased, swept up like so much glass after a riot. It's survival depends on self-defensive violence, enclosure, exclusion and as a result isolation. The inhabitants become property owners until such time as it safe to return this property to the commons. Should that time ever arrive.

The alternative is the open occupation, where the doors are not barred but taken off of their hinges. The variety of vulnerabilities provoked by this action are immediately apparent but they reveal the real risk that is at stake in the elimination of private property on the one hand and the dissolution of the consensus of both vanguard and authoritarian political structures. This openness is not emptiness, an evacuation of social relationships. Quite the opposite, it is a bringing-to-life of the otherwise misanthropic hollowness of architec-

throughout California experienced a wave of protest, strikes and occupations. These in kind were influenced by the occupation of factories, abandoned buildings and (in the case of A.I.M.'s occupation of Alcatraz) whole islands in the period of the 70's. The use of occupations, and the resultant images of occupied campuses, combined with a flurry of theoretical writing by participants which spread rapidly through blogs and social networks, thus playing a large part in setting off a sequence of similar actions.

> "During the Fall, students occupied in order to cast the administration, its police, capital and the state as the outside—to reconfigure the sides—the "insides" and "outsides"—of a struggle."
> - Anonymous, *Introduction to After the Fall: Communiques from Occupied California*

To understand the logic of the occupations we must begin by questioning the foundation of our assumptions about the "openness" of the University to begin with, its numerous exclusions and enclosures that give such limited refuge to so few people based on relationships of class, gender, colonialism and cultural-political conformity. Of the many tools disposed towards this aggregation of power - bureaucracy, debt, surveillance, precarious employment - the affirmation of private property as a priori, ahistorical and beyond question is perhaps the most fundamental means of disempowering the public from its claim to rights of access. This relationship to space is in large part what any occupation reconfigures in its practice. Nicholas Blomley has suggested that collective claims for property ownership by a localized public can trump principles of private property, "sustained through acts of occupation, use, and representation."[xxvii] This opens up radical possibilities for

tural space. It is a house-warming party.

The potential benefit of this is approach is its ability to invigorate - to literally fill with life - an otherwise hollowed and policed architectural space. In Croatia, during the Spring of 2009, students at the University of Zagreb occupied their school for 35 days, refusing to let classes go on as scheduled and instead held alternative educational happenings in which everyone, students and non-students, were free to attend. Pointedly they did not attempt to stop the administration, the bookstore or other arguably "non-essential" educational facilities from continuing to function. With this gesture they clarified that their concern was with the act of education, and not its administration or management.

In *The Occupation Cookbook*, a publication released shortly after the democratically decided closing of their occupation in Zagreb, they speak of their occupation as an attempt to re-invigorate the school, to use the tactic of occupation as a tool for opening and "inhabiting" their university. In his introduction to the book's English translation, Marc Bousquet questions how a "public" institution can be said to be occupied when it is being accessed by the public itself? "A school occupation is an action by those who are already its inhabitants - students, faculty, and staff - and those for whom the school exists" and goes on to claim that "occupations" are "really re-occupations, a renovation and reopening to the public of a space long captured and stolen by the private interests of wealth and privilege."[xxx] The occupation is what tears down the fences of privatization which are further and further enclosing our commonly held public space, and leaves open existing, self-aware communities that are already accessing space. Many of the students occupying buildings had a more radically communizing agenda: "everything for everyone." It leaves open the question of what might those already given access to these spaces be willing to forgo, be it private property or standards and measurements defined by a bourgeoise notion of academic scholarship.

SCULPTURE as a SOCIAL PROCESS

Given the range of goals possible, we must ask, "what is the aspiration of these sculptures?" Do they intend to reproduce through their gestures, and thus make visible, the conditions of domination and exclusion which they at the same time aim to be liberated from? Is it enough to point to those expressions of power and violence, without prefiguring the conditions and relationships which might replace them? In Anne C. Chave's scathing critique of the rhetorical practices of the early minimalists, *Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power*, she accuses these primarily male artists of "equating the force of art with corporeal force, where what prevails or dominates is generally the greater violence."[xxviii] Chave points to the prolific writing of the Minimalists and the critics who champion them to further her point: "In art-historical parlance... it has long been common approbatory language, even the highest level of praise, to describe works of art in terms of the exercise of power: as strong, forceful, authoritative, compelling, challenging or commanding; and the masculinist note becomes even more explicit with the use of terms like masterful, heroic, penetrating and rigorous."[xxix]

If we might choose to evade the essentialist framing of these patriarchal semantics, we can still see the important

the realization of its transformation into something radically different.

This transformation, from enclosure to exposure, has already been prefigured within the visual realm of art. By example, the trio of conceptual sculptors from Monterrey, Mexico known as Tercerenquento practice an "anarchitecture" that takes the openings of artists such as Gordon Matta- Clark deeper into the institutional domain. From text cut into building walls, to doors which circumvent paid entry, their project walks the line of what incursions can be accepted by the Museum as an institution, living in a tension of gestures: those cutting more deeply and those servicing commercial recuperation. In *Trozo de escombro colocado para mantener abierta la puerta de un edificio* (2012) the artists retrieved building debris from marginal urban squatter villages around Madrid as props to hold open doors within institutional buildings such as City Hall, the Architectural Academy and the Stock Exchange. In an earlier work, *Escultura pública en la periferia urbana de Monterrey* (2003), they had built a cement foundation on the outskirts of Monterrey, Mexico and then left it to the surrounding community to use as it chose, without limitation. Picnics, political rallies, art shows and eventually a squatter shack took advantage of this undetermined space.

TO OUTSPECTACLE SPECTACLE

If different tactics open, close, defend or reclaim space - it is up to the "contingent sculptor" to decide what is appropriate, based on the moment, its situation and the aspirations and goals of the action of creation. While *Trozo de escombro colocado...* does not produce a permanent opening of these otherwise highly guarded and limited public institutions, its image produces a clarity around the disparity of access inherent in their current conditions of politics, education and economics. The relocation of the materials of bare life, and their use in such a manner, prefigure in the imagination the potential for a radical redistribution of space, for access and justice. A direct line may be drawn then between this work and that of the historical avant-garde. The redistribution of aesthetic purpose to the transformation of everyday life is realized by the autonomous manifestations of collective intervention into space by means of these sculptural practices.

Amidst the violence that erupted in Paris during the painful decolonization of Algeria, artists began to seek socio-political transformation in the terrain of public space rather than the salons and gallerys just off their streets. Artists like Daniel Buren, Christo & Jean-Claude and Yves Klein attempted to bring attention to the hollows inside and outside of the built environment which since *Haussmannization* had so over-determined social life. They did this through bringing into presence the void as a sort of strike against material production, or else covered the surfaces of both significant and quotidian buildings and signage in an attempt to denaturalize their existence and expose their role in constructing ideology. The voiding of content takes on new meaning in the contemporary era of post- modern architecture and the wholesale privatization of public space. To occlude and cover becomes as meaningful an act as the articulation of dissent, and at its most lucid moments achieves

a mediating object - a spectacle that stands between the idea of the artist and the feeling and interpretation of the spectator,"[xxxiii] or as Ranciere himself puts it, "the same thing which links them must separate them."[xxxiv]

Is it possible that barricades, occupations and blockades can "out-spectacle" the capitalist order? Neoliberalism, itself a contingent process, relies on the continuing enclosure of space, using mediating objects to corral those who populate its crisis. As Mouffe reasons, "things could always be otherwise and therefore every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities."[xxxv] Resistance to it must be more creative, more agile, and ultimately uncontainable. Yet these qualities, the same which are valorized by capital itself, describe the compulsive production of the contemporary artist. Contemporary art is siteless, disposable, defined by the speed of it creation and dissemination rather than the labor of its production and exhibition.[xxxvi] It shows none of the interdependency of place, relationships and situation that might produce a new social relationship. Our excess of creativity and imagination may be our best defense against recuperation, yet it may lead to exhaustion[xxxvii]. Where to then, to discover the limits - or limitlessness - of our potentials to reshape and reconfigure our forms of life? Where to, to pause the accelerations and dislocations of capital? Where to, to produce the world we desire and to live it in its raw imperfections in the here and now? Where to, but to the barricades?

ENDNOTES

both qualities. On the evening of June 27, 1962, Christo & Jean-Claude constructed *Wall of Oil Barrels - The Iron Curtain, Rue Visconti, Paris, 1961-62*, a temporary barricade-assemblage of oil drums spanning the titular street, constructed without permission from neighbors or the authorities. Functionally, it did no arise as the multitude of Parisian barricades before it - in the heat of an actualized revolutionary moment - but its significance in the political context of the moment was impossible to miss. [xxxi] It revived a very real potential in the imagination of artists who would find themselves returning to its form 6 short years later.

This form does return, and becomes reimagined in spectacular and more sophisticated forms which act both in the midst of its contestation and in the images and stories which circulate in its wake. In Oaxaca, an autonomous city space is created in response to the brutal suppression of a Teacher's strike,

producing a barricade of brightly colored children's desks to keep at bay the paramilitary, narco-gangs and police. In Oakland, after an encampment in front of City Hall is violently displaced by police, the community returns to tear down the chain-link fencing that bars their access and, with that fence, construct a staggering and precarious "house of cards." In Brittany, a community of farmers, environmentalists and autonomists over-turn a car, dig up a pit in the asphalt, and distribute fallen logs and branches across the roadway to impede the progress of their eviction from their land in order to make way for an airport.

When we look at these sculptures, what do we comprehend?
What do we know about the place these are situated in?
What do we know about the people who made these?
How committed are they to their struggle?
What do we know about the reasons for their struggles?
What do we understand to be their critique of their situation?

At the very heart of this practice is a creation of images by means of sculpture, a deployment of signs, which migrate away from the physical presence of the material object. The viewer is tasked with interpreting and comprehending an image that may be rent totally from its context. Beyond the technical knowledge of how to construct such work - knowledge to be practiced and shared - is a knowledge of how to make legible the contingencies which create these sculptures and lay bare the social conditions of their making. The work that is to be done is, in part, educating ourselves in how the practice of contingent sculpture might be done in our own place, and it is partly about practicing and exercising those skills that can make it possible, but arguably the most important thing artists could offer to this practice would be to develop a more sophisticated conception of how to produce legible, complex, performative and effective images in the process. Inspired by student strikers at Cooper Union, Cindy Milstein suggested that "the spectacle and end-run maneuvers" mobilized by neoliberal forces, the media and police "just get out-spectacled and outrun by the dynamism of the art students conjuring up new visuals, new visions, new strategies."[xxxii] It is contradictory compliment to artists who have worked tirelessly against alienated social relationships mediated through creative labors. Discussing Ranciere, Clair Bishop argues that "in art and education alike, there needs to be

i Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", *OCTOBER* 110, Fall 2004, pp. 51–79.
ii A strong articulation of these ethical demands can be found in Waziyatawin - , *What Does Justice Look Like?: The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (Minneapolis: Living Justice Press , 2008).
iii I'm speaking about Simon Fraser University who opened a downtown Vancouver campus for its School for the Contemporary Arts within the Woodwards development. Woodwards was a large department store and community hub whose closure in the 1980s contributed to the economic decline of the Downtown East Side neighborhood. A developer purchased the property with the intention to develop it as a market housing and commercial project, but was directly confronted by community members demanding social housing and other services be built on the site. This climaxed in 2002 with the "Woodsquat" where dozens of homeless and anti-poverty activists occupied the abandoned building and its surrounding sidewalks. An outcome of these actions and others was the creation of a mixed-use development with both market rate and social housing, commercial space and SFU's campus. Tragically, this development has accelerated a process of gentrification which is threatening to totally displace the low-income neighborhood that surrounds the building. For a thorough documentation of the Woodsquat, see "Woodsquat,"ed. Aaron Vidiver, *West Coast Line* no. 41 vol. 37/2-3, 2004. For background on this particular struggle see Nicholas Blomley, *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), 29-74. For a background from the perspective of the developers, architects, university and others involved in the project, see Robert Enright et al., *Body Heat: The Story of the Woodwards Redevelopment* (Vancouver: BlueImprint, 2010).
iv Rosalind E. Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA/ London: MIT Press, 1979/1986), pg. 280.
v Ibid,. 280.
vi Raymond WIlliams, "When was Modernism?," *New Left Review*, no. 175, May/June 1989, 51.
vii see Renato Poggioli, *A Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1968).
viiiMany of these artists are discussed in *Realizing the Impossible: Art Against Authority*, Josh MacPhee & Eric Reuland, editors (Edinburg/ Oakland, AK Press, 2007).
ix Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, 1964), 208
x See Walter Benjamin's "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Shcoken Books, 1986).
xi Andre Breton, "Communicating Vessels", *What is Surrealism: Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York: Monad Press, 1968), 71.
xii Nina Gurianova, *The Aesthetics of Anarchy:Art and Ideology in the Early Russian Avant-garde* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 230.
xiii"Through principles of 'organization' embraced by a science of konstruktsiia, Constructivists will effect 'an organic link' between political values, industrial techniques and the specific possibilities of manipulated materials. Tektonika is a synthesis of the first two; faktura is the latter. 'Konstruktsiia is formulating activity taken to the extreme.'" Alexei Gan, Declaration of the Working Group of Constructivists, 1921, quoted in Catherine Cook, *Russian Avant-garde:Theories of Art, Architecture and the City* (London: Academy Editions, 1995), 104. In some ways this process is reminiscent of the dialectical triads theorized by Henri Lefebvre. His opening up of the Marxist Dialectic into a triadic process is highly useful for interpreting contingent processes which never arrive at a fixed position. His triadic approach is exemplified in his theorization of "space" in his The Production of Space from 1974. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991)
xiv Krauss, 281
xv Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture II" *Artforum*, vol. 5, no.2, October 1966, pg 21
xvi Ibid, 21
xvii See Julia Bryant-Wilson, *Artworkers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010)
xviii Though they often seem to be situationally tied to a typically urban feature - the road - which even in rural and wild spaces denotes a development of urbanism.
xix See a further example below, both detailed in Tom McDonough, *"The Beautiful Language of My Century": Reinventing Language of Contestation in Postwar France, 1945-1968* (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press,

An AXIS of AGENCY

Debates around socially engaged artworks have been theoretically divided by the Atlantic Ocean and different conceptions, utopian or pragmatic, of practical democracy. Where one continent aspires towards a reconciliation of centuries of stark division within the basic framework of its self-conception, the other attempts to negotiate a unity that refuses totalizing ideologies. That North America is basically constructed on binary oppressions – settlers and indigenous, slaves and free citizens, the wealthy and everyone else – has resulted in a radical appeal for transcending or eliminating such distinctions. This has almost always been framed in terms of participation, be it in representation, access to property and accumulation, or as a voice in the public sphere. By contrast, Europe has learned to fear political consensus, or any hegemonic force that erases difference, as most often this has been achieved through imperialism and brutal violence. Here "consensus" only can exist under fascism or Soviet style totalitarianism. Thus any political act that fails to provide space for distinction and difference can only lead to the kind of social negation that comprises much of the 20th century and the intra-continental war that resulted from, and preceded, such events. That these attitudes point obviously to contradictions – that people of North America have fundamentally different ideas of what a resolution of these binaries might look like, and that the people of Europe have embraced a national erasure by economic means that has been more successful than war – does not stop them from being underlying attitudes which informs both artistic and political discourse around democracy.

Socially engaged and participatory artworks can appear in a near endless variety of forms and contexts but they are united by a few basic qualities: that they need the participation of others to fulfill the artwork, and that meaning is derived through those relationships and that activity. Any claim that there is a particular mode of engagement on the part of the participant that is the most politically efficacious or the most politically radical misses the point that the participant's agency within any given project is beyond the scope of the artist's determination. To judge an artwork by the audience's response is to assume that the artist has generated this response rather than simply a situation that the participant encounters and is then in relationship with.

I wanted to think through what it looks like for people to participate in an artwork in a way that doesn't privilege one type of result or one means of engagement. The outcome was a Cartesian axis depicting a range of actions, mapped onto a two dimensional space. It is a set of two polarities that intersect creating quadrants - interstitial space which lead in gradations from one pole to another. In mapping the agency of participants in socially engaged artworks I was mapping the spectrum of choices, responses and actions that might be taken by these participants at any given moment. Yet it was clear that this did not simply map agency in the context of an artistic project. This was a map of agency in any relational engagement, where choices have to be made and where people who have different positions and different relationships are trying to negotiate space. The *Axis of Agency* is a map of political agency that could as easily be applied to a protest, a meeting, an encounter, or any other enactment of relationship within a system. It is a way of comprehending how these dynamics are at play, how people putting themselves in one position in relationship to another actually can change everything within the field of action.

Agency is being defined as empowered choice. It's impossible not to acknowledge that everyone has different ranges of choice available to them, different privileges, different oppressions, different abilities and different social contexts. It should not erase these distinctions to say that within everyone is a capacity to make choices in relation to the realities they inhabit. My point is that in spite of the innumerable differences between contexts and conditions, that the character of these choices is in fact comparable and consistent. But this is only a theory and so it must be tested, attacked and subverted in order to prove itself useful. It must find its way into the "real" world, into bodies and into space. In of itself it is only useful as a means of setting terms for a discussion of what it proposes, yet it promises other potentials for understanding how we occupy space, how we alter space and how our own initiative is always interpenetrated by the actions of others.

The *Axis of Agency* contains the four poles (*Dissensus, Consensus, Participation, Non-Participation*) that produce four quadrants (*Commune, Exodus, Strike, Agonism*). I have taken some liberties with my use of these terms, defining them in relation to one another as polarities in the first instance and as a merging of concepts in the second. Many of these terms – *Dissensus* and *Agonism* in particular – are part of a larger discourse of post-politics of which Chantel Mouffe and Jacque Ranciere are my primary points of reference. Other ideas are borrowed from thinkers such as Georgio Agamben, Claire Bishop, and Claire Fontaine. Equally as influential is the use of this language in the discourse of North American leftist politics, both in the contemporary moment and dating back to Saul Alinsky, Tom Hayden and the New Left of the 1960s. The intention is not to unmoor them from their definitions but rather to bridge a gap between academic and general usage.

POLES

CONSENSUS occurs when with differing needs, desires, political views, social attitudes or ways of being work in some form of solidarity to try and achieve a mutually held end. The principle is not that everyone agrees but that everyone holds as a foundational value that no one should be excluded and that everyone should be accounted for in some way. Within *Consensus* there can still be a lot of disagreement – difference is not erased – but priority is collectively given to some form of solidarity, some form of mutual being.

DISSENSUS is a state of disagreement, argument and denial. It is negation in the form of distinction and difference. Relationships that embrace Dissensus find passion, meaning and catharsis in the joining of ideas, identities or actions that are generally excluded from one another, by one or the other. It is the potency of this unresolved union of difference that is the very imperative of Dissensus. In a sense Consensus and Dissensus are the same thing: they are communities negotiating space together, yet with different judgments of what constitutes a sustainable and just social order.

PARTICIPATION begins with the assumption that there exists a system or structure with which one is engaged. This structure may be material or immaterial, socially constructed or socially constituted, but it by default is inevitably relational. Participation acknowledges this structure and is willing to engage that structure on its own terms without seeking to escape or disable it in any way.

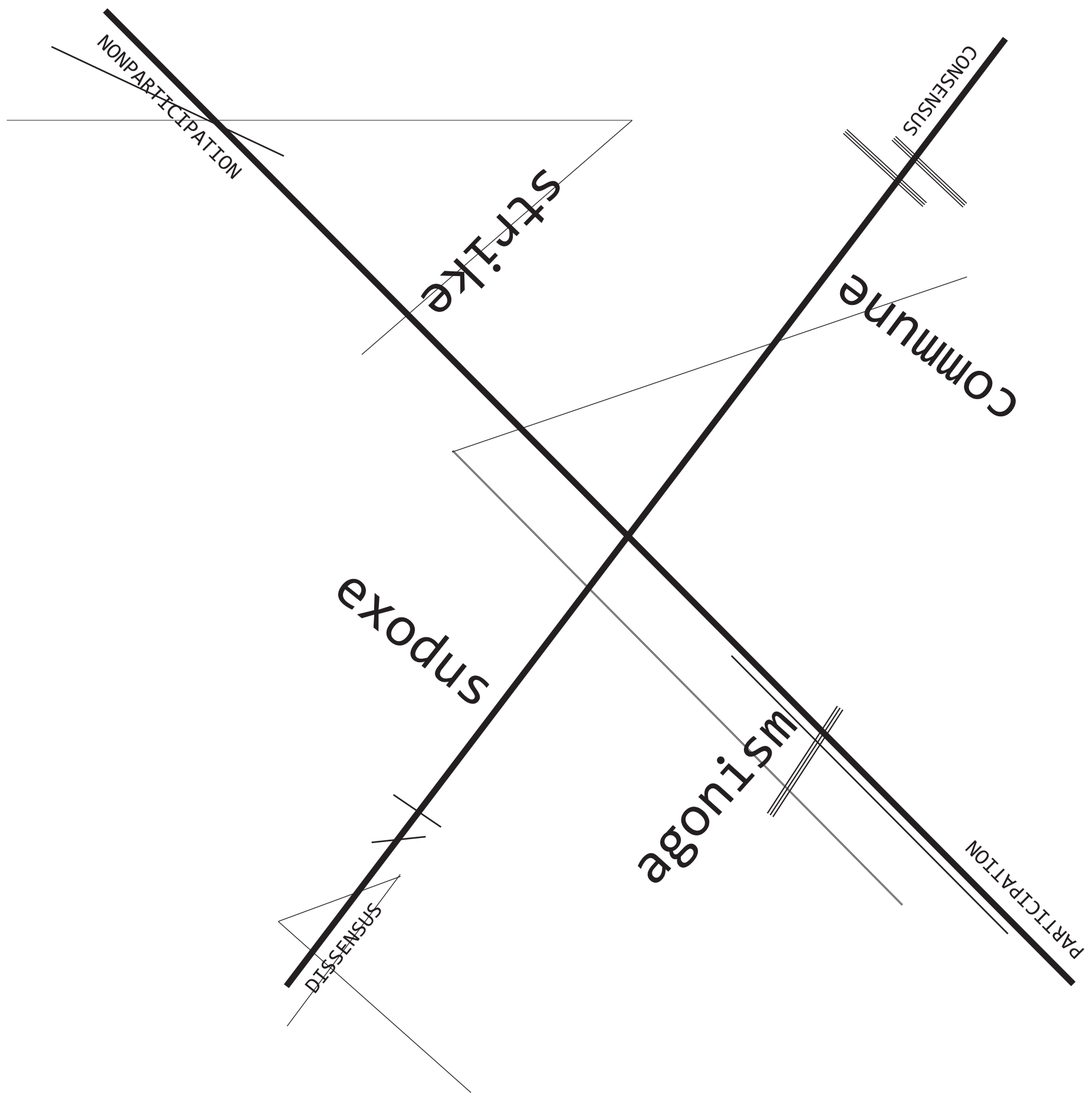
NONPARTICIPATION is a refusal of the system or structure, whether wholly or simply in terms of its claimed limitations. It is not apathy, or laziness, though those could be tactics of Nonparticipation when wielded willfully. It is still an engagement with the system it rejects, and the people who constitute those systems, as its own parameters are in part defined by what it enacts in contrast to what it refuses.

QUADRANTS

COMMUNE describes a space of co-habitation based on an aspiration of demi-utopian prefiguration. It is not in any way a space alien to conflict, yet people choosing to relate within this area are actively trying to achieve the seemingly impossible goal of meeting all of its constituents' needs. The choices one makes, even one's identity, is interdependent upon the collective. The needs of others are your own, but then again your needs are likewise held in common.

AGONISM is a space where differences of opinions, needs and desires, and their expression, are held in and of themselves as being more important than striving for *Consensus*. In fact what is valued primarily is witnessing those differences, exploring those differences and moving through those differences. The challenge becomes one of expressing and enacting these differences without seeing one-another as antagonists, or enemies, even when disagreement is fundamental. This disagreement may be over things that are vital, serious enough that they could rip apart a relationship, and yet it is the respect paid to, and value placed upon, those differences that can actually bring people together. Critically, it is a commitment to engagement within a structure that can contain this *Dissensus* that defines this space.

Exodus is an abandonment of any kind of engagement, critical or otherwise. It is not only a refusal to participate in a system but it is denial of the social relationships that can potentially be formed in such acts of refusal. It is to attempt to extricate oneself from society as an autonomous individual, indifferent to the desires for consensus which might arise from the need to relate to others.

STRIKE is the suspension of normative behavior for the purpose of realizing some desired end. It is an attempt to alter, halt, disrupt, destroy, challenge or negotiate with a structure and to do so in a society of others. It is the collective act of refusal that gives definition and force to a Strike. It requires a social body because without this its gestures remains invisible, and its ability to create an equivalency between its body and that formed by the system it is responding to is untenable.

If any one of these quadrants seems impossible to maintain, it's because it is. These positions are contingent, situational and momentary. They are inflected by the actions and choices of others and produce new meaning depending upon context. Each choice only leads to another choice and no decision is final.