

RAVING AND VIBING INTO WORLDS LONG GONE AND YET TO BECOME

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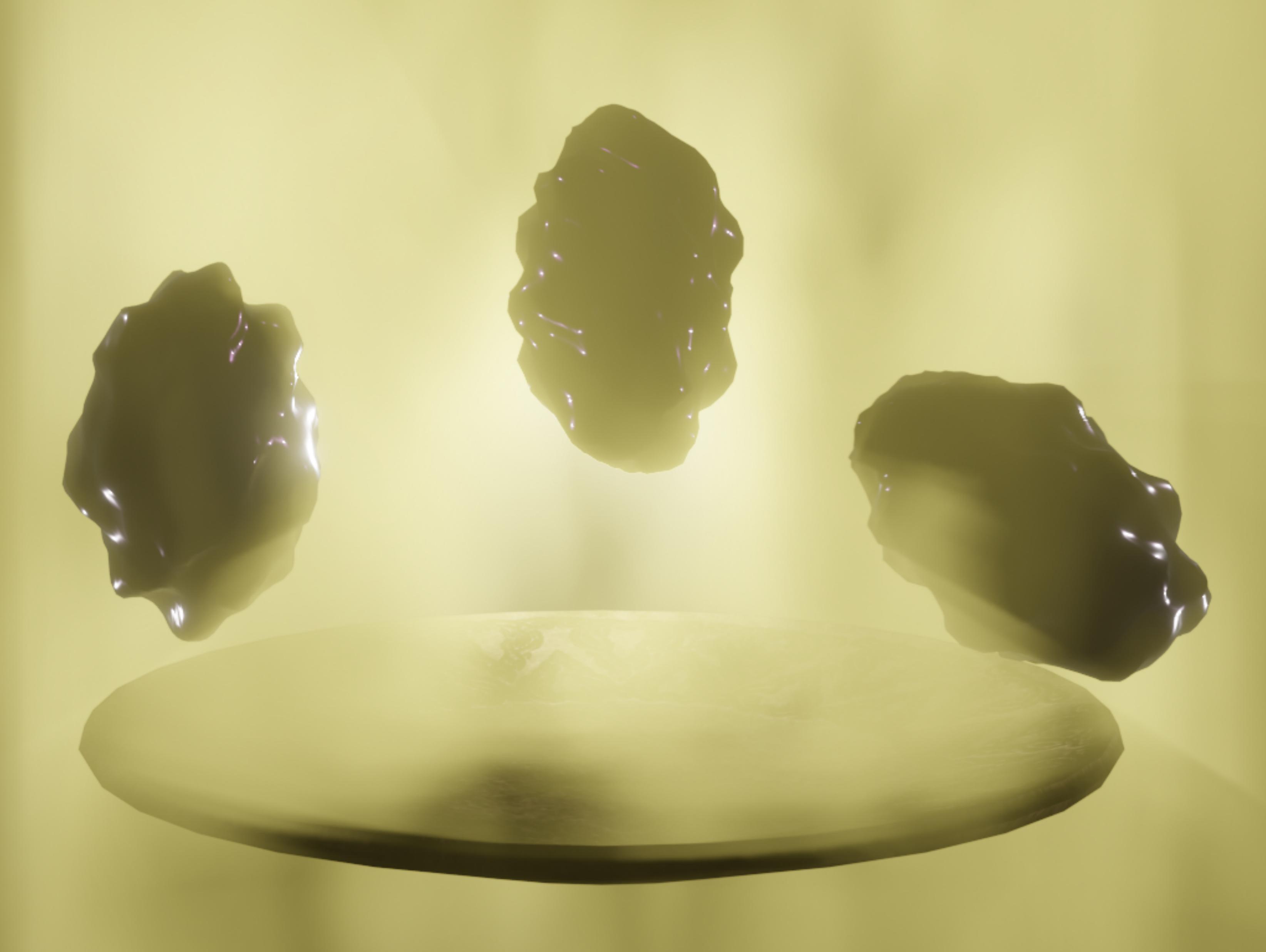
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INTRODUCTION Tautvydas Urbelis

This issue is not about a colour ... but about the glistening hue of a colour. It is also not about a theme, it is much more about the vibe; but the theme is also important, so it is also about that. The issue can be read as an invitation to claim agency and browse in different fields and worlds, if, and only if, one regularly allows moments of pleasure and forgetfulness to unfold. No place for hustle culture here. Maybe muted echoes in the distance. It is structured, because the days of 'anything goes' are long gone. Art is strategic and ready to pounce. Reluctantly, it is a hidden love letter to philosophy. If you know what I mean. Maybe it is about creatures who also happen to be friends. Creatures-friends without whom none of this would make sense.

We were still waiting for our drinks at a cafe on a warm summer afternoon. Together with Rupert residents at that time Yiou Peng (aka Penny) and Yen Chun Lin, we were sitting in the shadow of old trees, probably chatting about some things related to art, and some not. While being caressed by the warm July breezes, the topic of 'the theme' slipped into our conversations. What does it mean to work with a theme, especially in the context of an art institution? The question feels somewhat easier when it comes to the realm of science or, let's say, political think tanks. A question(s), methodology, measurements, KPIs, potential outcomes and an evaluation process: these are rough trajectories to follow, yet they become murkier and subject to more interpretation within the field of art. Yes, you can follow these trajectories and arrive at tangible results: a book, or a toolkit, or an artwork, or an event, the list can go on. They all are legit and important parts of a wider ecosystem often called the 'art world', although our conversation and my interest craved to dive into less explored, murkier terrains of 'the theme'.

As the afternoon sun was playfully choreographing scattered shadows on our humble cafe-cum-research table, Penny, with an enthusiasm reserved only for their wondrous personality, exclaimed 'What if Rupert worked with the theme of colour, like yellow?' The quote might be inaccurate, but the point is clear: how can we engage with something that oscillates between material and conceptual, leaving traces and hints in different sites of perception, while shaping sensibilities without carving rigid structures. 'Yellow' became a good starting point to think further, and an adhesive surface to stick and weave different ideas, senses and feelings that would otherwise not find their way to each other. It is transdisciplinarity par excellence, in a way that not only sways between different disciplines, but habitually leaves them all together in territories of the unknown.

Yellow the theme, digitally designed by Nick Delap, is also a pushback against the evaluation and legitimacy of certain knowledge, especially coming (and/or dominated) by academia. How one can do (artistic) research, and how one can write about art? Academic jargon, structured patterns, references and all the things that make something worthy to be considered legit. But how the mind-bending diversity of the world(s) can be submitted to a defined cognitive framework? Who can we open ourselves to different practices of world-travelling? Thinking about it becomes diligently personal: coming from a background of academic philosophy, it was quite a liberating, but not easy, journey to finally feel comfortable in different ways of expression and staying in and with different worlds. I want to share and imbue some of that journey and world-travelling into this issue. Maria Lugones will help me with this ambitious task.

Fast-forward to the autumn of the same year: a yellow hue of an ambient light welcomes me into a flat in Neukölln in Berlin. A gathering, a birthday (of one of the authors in this issue), a celebration, a pre-party: a moment that brought different people together without one fixed reason. In the midst of it all, appropriately without providing much of a context, Penny asks me 'What is your favourite colour?' Without thinking twice, I reply: 'The colour of a ripe plum.' An answer once again displays an intimate entanglement and interconnectedness of different worlds. Before coming to Berlin, I was reading a Rupert residency application by Kate Morgan with a proposal for a project on a queer interpretation of Phaul Thek's painting Three Elegant Prunes. While the ripped prunes themselves in the painting and in reality are a darkish velvet, red or even almost black, the background of the painting radiates yellow. I did not realise that until I started assembling this issue. Yellow becomes almost palpable and metonymic.

In this interpretation, yellow is also unconscious: the colour inserted itself into my brain through a clever trick, a cognitive sleight of hand. But I don't want to make this issue into a psychoanalytic web of endless connections and interpretations. Psychoanalysis, at least in its early versions, tried too hard to prove itself as a legitimate science, and this issue is not about insecurities. It is much more about the vibe. And nobody can speak better of the vibe than Laura Lotti and Calum Bowden, transferring the vibe all the way to the worlds of institutions and organisations. Yellow the theme, as much as it would like to be 'playful at all costs', at its core is well structured and strategic. This is a good quote by Calum and Laura: 'A vibe erupts beyond the singular and the static towards a multiplicity of heterogeneous elements and cannot be fixed or pinned down (attempts to name or describe a vibe always reduce its complexity).' Working with a theme, yellow or any other, also means responsibility to others and a readiness to take the heat when needed. Yes, we are all in it together, but we share and divide responsibilities, and we plan and strategise developments, regardless of how close or far they are. It can be an institutional strategy for the next five years, or a decision on which club is best to extend the yellow-hued gathering.

Another fast-forward to last week, the autumn of 2023, an early morning at Club Ost in Berlin. I find myself deep in multiple eruptions of multiplicities and heterogeneous elements, shared amidst moving bodies. Looking back, I cannot but think of this beautiful transition by McKenzie Wark (for this issue interviewed by Sara Sassanelli): 'Our pills pop. I'm on my back on the plywood platform, drawing him down onto me, into me, sweat breeding from flesh. Lean head back over the edge, see upside-down people watching us. Close my eyes. Open them twenty years later.' Being in that moment feels like opening my eyes a year later, with a slightly different crew alongside, but still running on ceaseless curiosity, desire and smouldering burnout.

We leave the club into the crisp and chilly air of October in Germany. It is a moment when all the multiplicities, eruptions and entanglements of the dance floor collapse into each other, creating a feeling like no other. I think Flora Yin Wong is good at unbundling and re-bundling these feelings through their sonic explorations. Hope you can hear it now. We all gaze, and some collect vividly yellow leaves, still persistently hanging on the branches of tall trees. It feels like the last moments before they give up and fall onto the dark pavements of East Berlin. Yellow keeps exposing itself, almost making a strange metaphysical joke about my weary perception. Maybe this capricious colour is beyond my comprehension, thematic harnesses or academic ponderings. Maybe it is contemporary alchemy, transforming burnouts and promises of a good life (as in Lauren Berlant) into dissociative hedonistic flickerings. While passing a cheerful morning jogger, I am dreadfully reminded of the fact that I am terribly late to submit articles to the editors of artnews.lt.

- 1 Lotti, Laura and Bowden, Calum. "Manifesting a Black Swan DAO" in Radical Friends: Decentralised Autonomous Organisations and the Arts edited by Ruth Catlow and Penny Rafferty. Torque Editions. 2023. p. 157.
- 2 Wark, McKenzie. "Raving". Druham and London: Duke University Press. 2023. p.16

On the edge of yellow // A letter to the colour of a ripe plum Yiou Peng

Ice ages pass... and although the world is frozen over we suppose someday grass and flowers will grow again...till the planet is peopled with cats, werewolves, bees, and goats. we all fervently hope that this will be an improvement on humanity which deliberately renounced the pneuma of the goddess....—

leonara carrington

dear t, the colour of a ripe plum,

once upon a time, when i directed my first theatre play, der tod und das mädchen—jackie, written by elfriede jelinek, at a small theatre in beijing, my dramaturg lb, published an article entitled writing her names down. in the opening of the article, he writes, "publishing a private letter is always problematic. just as problematic as tearing a monologue apart, exposing to all — a you from a me." some thousands of moons later, i find myself in a similar situation. though the world has changed, and it is hard to say for better or worse, i am now composing a to-be-published-private-letter to the colour of a ripe plum about the multiplicities of yellow — the "muted echoes here and there". once again, perhaps i will tear a monologue apart, yet i wish not to tear you apart from me. and with and without my own yellowness, this letter could certainly be problematic.

nevertheless, let me start with a confession: when i hear the word "yellow", i think about bananas. not the yellow cover of sylvia plath's poetry collection; not the fantastic creature 乘 cheng 黄 huang (rideyellow) whose name indicates its peculiar yellow magic, not the yellow submarine, certainly not the yellow emperor of china...but bananas — one of my favourite fruits: sweet, soft, tender, hearty, cozy, cute, all in a cosmic way, when i recall my life on earth, people have drifted away, homes were destroyed, species gone extinct...yet bananas are always there. and when i think about bananas, a story pops up: i moved to the so called u.s.a. when i was a teenager. my father sent me to a public high school at c, not so far from the h-yard. the intention was clear, he wished his daughter become one of those ivyleague elites to fulfil his american dream. but father's failed attempts are not the focus of the story. on the first day of school, i received enormous attention for (proudly) being the one and only chinese student from beijing. i remember that i was so nervous that i decided to hide myself in my most sumptuous outfit — a little cloak i stitched from my collection of feathers which fell from the dyslexic pigeons who used to nest in my grandma's backyard (which was then destroyed and turned into a skyscraper for the flow of hedgehog-funds in the early 21st century). evoked by my amusing presence, thousands of questions were shot at me like ecstatic arrows. apart from things like "where is beijing?" or "are you a communist?" or "do you eat cats"? the only question which my nerdyness couldn't comprehend was "do you have white chinese and black chinese?"

i regarded it as one of the transformative moments in my life — for the very first time, identity politics unfolds itself through a form of juicy, sweet, sharp, teenage innocence. impressed by the novelty of this question, i stuttered. i still remember how the class room fell into distinguished silence from the previous excitement. as if time stopped for a thousand years, and the entire world became windless. after a couple of thoughtful seconds in searching for the essence of my own manifestly fragile existence, some airy words jumped out of my mouth. "no." i replied sincerely, "we are all bananas…"

be it my curious sense of humour (which i never intended) or the pigeons' feathers casting a weird spell, for a range of reasons after that day i unexpectedly became one of the most "popular" girls in this high school, the one whom occasionally discovered (decently rotten) bananas laying in her locker — "the banana girl from beijing is notoriously funny", they would say. i considered it as a welcome ritual of this particular kingdom and learned to appreciate the cultural differences (in a pataphyscial way). till i get tired of bananas and asked everyone to call me mango or watermelon.

when i grew a little bigger after indulging myself completely into the so-called western ideological framework of everything, i realised that it would probably be considered as politically-awkward for "identifying" or "referring to" someone as "banana". but i did not mind at all. i did wish i have said something more psychedelic like unicorn or leafy-sea-dragon. but perhaps banana was just the right spirit to be summoned at that fruity moment — its yellowness was psychedelic enough to contemplate its own more-than-yellow presence. yes, the age of innocence. it was before hashtaginstagramticktokgtp3456 when phones were still connected by tele-(cater)pillars.

you see my dear t, (as you probably knew) in the human realms everything becomes a little bit more complicated. bananas are not just bananas, just like yellow has never been just a colour. the same thing goes for so-called art and literature. they might end up being those little ornaments for decorating politics, aestheticising human-centric socio-political fantasies. yet, they might also become portals that lead to unknown terrain with infinite uncertainties. they say that they were living in the "dark ages" overwhelmed by the higher, the faster, the stronger, the healthier, the prettier, and the seemingly better. but "dark ages" were also the times of magical thinking, or i'd rather call it "magical sensing" —the moment of wind-ing with the nearest meadow, or streaming into the intergalactic memories; or losing gravity, delighting in the momentary mode of levitation; or conjuring a bowl of pumpkin soup on a snowy night; or rolling slowly across the mossy ground on eclipse, or simply gazing into a piece of yellow leaf falling...— after all, worlds are happening and there is youme, hot, steamy, in motion (not over-dosed by bio-politics this time).

now i can hardly see a thing. my naughty eyes would only bring me geometries and fractals. i love it! it made me feel that i finally live in poetry! so when i hear "yellow", i think about bananas again because i can still remember its taste and smell. do you still have them around? i wish that they managed to survive on earth. oh and yesterday i asked ranca's dad, a giant moray who wiggles like a pink hippo, "what is the first thing that comes into your mind when i say yellow"? he said, "hope".

hope.

this might sound cheesy but it brought some little tears to my blind eyes.

my friend, i guess i will stop my foolish babbling now before you are fully turning into purple. it feels dark outside, and there come the sirens again. i am losing my sight but my hearing remains excellent—through the holes in my walls i hear that there are more and more kids getting arrested for speaking out truths. oh i feel exhausted. i am too old to re-experience all this chaos. my fairy goddess-mother used to tell me, "man muss alles mit humor sehen, sonst verzweifelt man. all these people, all these late trains, all these bad news, all these pains and sufferings ... " (she also told me that people under seventy and over seven are very unreliable if they are not cats.) therefore recently i spent most of my waking time experimenting with how to be invisible and enjoy the joy of being forgotten (now i only want to purr and cherish every drop of sun.

t, i suppose you are still casting those pneumatic spells that bring you hope. but don't work too hard. and don't forget to breathe. otherwise you will grow backwards (could be an interesting experience).

wish to embrace you soon. this time i promise that i won't over-sleep for catching my blue pacific rocket.

softly yours,

1

at the end of her times from the distant galaxy

p.s. when you feel sad, eat some bananas.

3 in chinese, 黃 huang means yellow.

"Worlds" and "World"-Traveling Maria Lugones

Frye (1983:75) says that the loving eye is "the eye of one who knows that to know the seen, one must consult something other than one's own will and interests and fears and imagination." This is much more helpful to me so long as I do not understand her to mean that I should not consult my own interests nor that I should exclude the possibility that my self and the self of the one I love may be importantly tied to each other in many complicated ways. Since I am emphasizing here that the failure of love lies in part in the failure to identify, and since I agree with Frye that one "must consult something other than one's own will and interests and fears and imagination," I will explain what I think needs to be consulted. It was not possible for me to love my mother while I retained a sense that it was fine for me and others to see her arrogantly. Loving my mother also required that I see with her eyes, that I go into my mother's "world," that I see both of us as we are constructed in her "world," that I witness her own sense of herself from within her "world." Only through this traveling to her "world" could I identify with her because only then could I cease to ignore her and to be excluded and separate from her. Only then could I see her as a subject, even if one subjected, and only then could I see at all how meaning could arise fully between us. We are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated; we are lacking. So traveling to each other's "worlds" would enable us to be through loving each other.

I hope the sense of identification I have in mind is becoming clear. But to become clearer, I need to explain what I mean by a "world" and by "traveling" to another "world." In explaining what I mean by a "world," I will not appeal to traveling to other women's "worlds." Instead, I will lead you to see what I mean by a "world" the way I came to propose the concept to myself: through the kind of ontological confusion about myself that we, women of color, refer to half-jokingly as "schizophrenia" (we feel schizophrenic in our goings back and forth between different "communities") and through my effort to make some sense of this ontological confusion.

Some time ago, I came to be in a state of profound confusion as I experienced myself as both having and not having a particular attribute. I was sure I had the attribute in question and, on the other hand, I was sure that I did not have it. I remain convinced that I both have and do not have this attribute. The attribute is playfulness. I am sure that I am a playful person. On the other hand, I can say, painfully, that I am not a playful person. I am not a playful person in certain "worlds." One of the things I did as I became confused was to call my friends, faraway people who knew me well, to see whether or not I was playful.

Maybe they could help me out of my confusion. They said to me, "Of course you are playful," and they said it with the same conviction that I had about it. Of course I am playful. Those people who were around me said to me, "No, you are not playful. You are a serious woman. You just take everything seriously." They were just as sure about what they said to me and could offer me every bit of evidence that one could need to conclude that they were right. So I said to myself "Okay, maybe what's happening here is that there is an attribute that I do have but there are certain "worlds" in which I am not at ease and it is because I'm not at ease in those "worlds" that I don't have that attribute in those "worlds." But what does that mean?" I was worried both about what I meant by "worlds" when I said "in some 'worlds' I do not have the attribute" and what I meant by saying that lack of ease was what led me not to be playful in those "worlds." Because, you see, if it was just a matter of lack of ease, I could work on it.

I can explain some of what I mean by a "world." I do not want the fixity of a definition at this point, because I think the term is suggestive and I do not want to close the suggestiveness of it too soon. I can offer some characteristics that serve to distinguish between a "world," a utopia, a possible "world" in the philosophical sense, and a "world" view. By a "world" I do not mean a utopia at all. A utopia does not count as a "world," in my sense. The "worlds" that I am talking about are possible. But a possible "world" is not what I mean by a "world" and I do not mean a "world"-view, though something like a "world"-view is involved here.

For something to be a "world" in my sense, it has to be inhabited at present by some flesh and blood people. That is why it cannot be a utopia. It may also be inhabited by some imaginary people. It may be inhabited by people who are dead or people that the inhabitants of this "world" met in some other "world" and now have in this "world" in imagination.

derlying "I." One does not experience any underlying I.

Being at Ease in a "World"

In investigating what I mean by "being at ease in a 'world,' I will describe different ways of being at ease. One may be at ease in one or in all of these ways. There is a maximal way of being at ease, viz., being at ease in all of these ways. I take this maximal way of being at ease to be somewhat dangerous because it tends to produce people who have no inclination to travel across "worlds" or no experience of "world"- traveling.

The first way of being at ease in a particular "world" is by being a fluent speaker in that "world." I know all the norms that there are to be followed. I know all the words that there are to be spoken. I know all the moves. I am confident.

Another way of being at ease is by being normatively happy. I agree with all the norms, I could not love any norms better. I am asked to do just what I want to do or what I think I should do. I am at ease.

Another way of being at ease in a "world" is by being humanly bonded. I am with those I love and they love me, too. It should be noticed that I may be with those I love and be at ease because of them in a "world" that is otherwise as hostile to me as "worlds" get.

Finally, one may be at ease because one has a history with others that is shared, especially daily history, the kind of shared history that one sees exemplified by the response to the "Do you remember poodle skirts?" question. There you are, with people you do not know at all and who do not know each other. The question is posed and then everyone begins talking about their poodle skirt stories. I have been in such situations without knowing what poodle skirts, for example, were, and I felt ill at ease because it was not my history. The other people did not know each other. It is not that they were humanly bonded. Probably they did not have much politically in common either. But poodle skirts were in their shared history.

One may be at ease in one of these ways or in all of them. Notice that when one says meaningfully "This is my'world," one may not be at ease in it. Or one may be at ease in it only in some of these respects and not in others. To say of some "world" that it is "my world" is to make an evaluation. One may privilege one or more "worlds" in this way for a variety of reasons: for example, because one experiences oneself as an agent in a fuller sense than one experiences oneself in other "worlds." One may disown a "world" because one has first-person memories of a person who is so thoroughly dominated that she has no sense of exercising her own will or has a sense of having serious difficulties in performing actions that are willed by herself and no difficulty in performing actions willed by others. One may say of a "world" that it is "my world" because one is at ease in it (i.e., being at ease in a "world" may be the basis for the evaluation).

Given the clarification of what I mean by a "world," "world"-travel, and being at ease in a "world," we are in a position to return to my problematic attribute, playfulness. It may be that in this "world" in which I am so unplayful, I am a different person than in the "world" in which I am playful. Or it may be that the "world" in which I am unplayful is constructed in such a way that I could be playful in it. I could practice, even though that "world" is constructed in such a way that my being playful in it is kind of hard. In describing what I take a "world" to be, I emphasized the first possibility as both the one that is truest to the experience of "outsiders" to the mainstream and as ontologically problematic because the "I" is identified in some sense as one and in some sense as a plurality. I identify myself as myself through memory and I retain myself as different in memory.

When I travel from one "world" to another, I have this image, this memory of myself as playful in this other "world." I can then be in a particular "world" and have a double image of myself as, for example, playful and as not playful. This is a very familiar and recognizable phenomenon to the outsider to the mainstream in some central cases: when in one "world" I animate, for example, that "world"'s caricature of the person I am in the other "world." I can have both images of myself, and, to the extent that I can materialize or animate both images at the same time, I become an ambiguous being. This is very much a part of trickery and foolery. It is worth remembering that the trickster and the fool are significant characters in many nondominant or outsider cultures. One then sees any particular "world" with these double edges and sees absurdity in them and so inhabits oneself differently.

one of the Anglo stereotypes of Latinas—and given that many Latinas, myself included, are genuinely intense, I can say to myself "I am intense" and take a hold of the double meaning. Furthermore, I can be stereotypically intense or be the real thing, and, if you are Anglo, you do not know when I am which because I am Latin American. As a Latin American I am an ambiguous being, a two-imaged self: I can see that gringos see me as stereotypically intense because I am, as a Latin American, constructed that way but I may or may not intentionally animate the stereotype or the real thing knowing that you may not see it in anything other than in the stereotypical construction. This ambiguity is funny and not just funny; it is survival-rich. We can also make the picture of those who dominate us funny precisely because we can see the double edge, we can see them doubly constructed, we can see the plurality in them. So we know truths that only the fool can speak and only the trickster can play out without harm. We inhabit "worlds" and travel across them and keep all the memories.

Sometimes, the "world"-traveler has a double image of herself and each self includes as important ingredients of itself one or more attributes that are incompatible with one or more of the attributes of the other self: for example being playful and being unplayful. To the extent that the attribute is an important ingredient of the self she is in that "world" (i.e., to the extent that there is a particularly good fit between that "world" and her having that attribute in it, and to the extent that the attribute is personality or character central, that "world," would have to be changed if she is to be playful in it). It is not the case that if she could come to be at ease in it, she would be her own playful self. Because the attribute is personality or character central and there is such a good fit between that "world" and her being constructed with that attribute as central, she cannot become playful, she is unplayful. To become playful would be, for her, to become a contradictory being.

I suggest, then, that my problematic case, the being and not being playful, cannot be solved through lack of ease. I suggest that I can understand my confusion about whether I am or am not playful by saying that I am both and that I am different persons in different "worlds" and can remember myself in both as I am in the other. I am a plurality of selves. This explains my confusion because it is to come to see it as of a piece with much of the rest of my experience as an outsider in some of the "worlds" that I inhabit and of a piece with significant aspects of the experience of nondominant people in the "worlds" of their dominators.

So, though I may not be at ease in the "worlds" in which I am not constructed playful, it is not that I am not playful because I am not at ease. The two are compatible. But lack of playfulness is not caused by lack of ease. Lack of playfulness is not symptomatic of lack of ease but of lack of health. I am not a healthy being in the "worlds" that construct me unplayful.

Playfulness

I had a very personal stake in investigating this topic. Playfulness is not only the attribute that was the source of my confusion and the attitude that I recommend as the loving attitude in traveling across "worlds." I am also scared of ending up as a serious human being, someone with no multidimensionality, with no fun in life, someone who is just someone who has had the fun constructed out of her. I am seriously scared of getting stuck in a "world" that constructs me that way, a "world" that I have no escape from and in which I cannot be playful.

I thought about what it is to be playful and what it is to play and I did this thinking in a "world" in which I only remember myself as playful and in which all of those who know me as playful are imaginary beings. It is a "world" in which I am scared of losing my memories of myself as playful or have them erased from me. Because I live in such a "world," after I formulated my own sense of what it is to be playful and to play, I decided that I needed to look go to the literature. I read two classics on the subject: Johan Huizinga's Homo Ludens (1968) and Hans-Georg Gadamer's chapter on the concept of play in his Truth and Method (1975). I discovered, to my amazement, that what I thought about play and playfulness, if they were right, was absolutely wrong. Though I will not provide the arguments for this interpretation of Gadamer and Huizinga here, I understood that both of them have an agonistic sense of play. Play and playfulness have—in their use—ultimately, to do with contest, with winning, losing, battling. The sense of playfulness that I have in mind has nothing to do with agon. So, I tried to elucidate both senses of play and playfulness by contrasting them to each other. The contrast helped me see the attitude that I have in mind as the loving attitude in traveling across "worlds" more clearly.

An agonistic sense of playfulness is one in which competence is central. You'd better know the rules of the game. In agonistic play, there is risk, there is uncertainty, but the uncertainty is about who is going to win and who is going to lose. There are rules that inspire hostility. The attitude of playfulness is conceived as secondary to or derivative from play. Since play is agon, then the only conceivable playful attitude is an agonistic one: the attitude does not turn an activity into play, but rather presupposes an activity that is play. One of the paradigmatic ways of playing for both Gadamer and Huizinga is role-playing. In role- playing, the person who is a participant in the game has a fixed conception of him- or herself. I also think that the players are imbued with self-importance in agonistic play since they are so keen on winning given their own merits, their very own competence.

When considering the value of "world"-traveling and whether playfulness is the loving attitude to have while traveling, I recognized the agonistic attitude as inimical to traveling across "worlds." The agonistic traveler is a conqueror, an imperialist. Huizinga, in his classic book on play, interprets Western civilization as play. That is an interesting thing for Third World people to think about. Western civilization has been interpreted by a white Western man as play in the agonistic sense of play. Huizinga reviews Western law, art, and any other aspects of Western culture and sees agon in all of them. Agonistic playfulness leads those who attempt to travel to another "world" with this attitude to failure. Agonistic travelers cannot attempt to travel in this sense. Their traveling is always a trying that is tied to conquest, domination, reduction of what they meet to their own sense of order, and erasure of the other "world." That is what assimilation is all about. Assimilation is an agonistic project of destruction of other people's "worlds." So, the agonistic attitude, the playful attitude given Western man's construction of playfulness, is not a healthy, loving attitude to have in traveling across "worlds." Given the agonistic attitude, one cannot travel across "worlds," though one can kill other "worlds" with it.6 So, for people who are interested in crossing racial and ethnic boundaries, an arrogant Western man's construction of playfulness is deadly. One cannot cross the boundaries with it. One needs to give up such an attitude if one wants to travel.

What, then, is the loving playfulness that I have in mind? Let me begin with one example: We are by the riverbank. The river is very low. Almost dry. Bits of water here and there. Little pools with a few trout hiding under the rocks. But it is mostly wet stones, gray on the outside. We walk on the stones for awhile. You pick up a stone and crash it onto the others. As it breaks, it is quite wet inside and it is very colorful, very pretty. I pick up a stone and break it and run toward the pieces to see the colors. They are beautiful. I laugh and bring the pieces back to you and you are doing the same with your pieces. We keep on crashing stones for hours, anxious to see the beautiful new colors. We are playing. The playfulness of our activity does not presuppose that there is something like "crashing stones" that is a particular form of play with its own rules. Instead, the attitude that carries us through the activity, a playful attitude, turns the activity into play. Our activity has no rules, though it is certainly intentional activity and we both understand what we are doing. The playfulness that gives meaning to our activity includes uncertainty, but in this case the uncertainty is an openness to surprise. This is a particular metaphysical attitude that does not expect the "world" to be neatly packaged, ruly. Rules may fail to explain what we are doing. We are not self- important, we are not fixed in particular constructions of ourselves, which is part of saying that we are open to self-construction. We may not have rules, and when we do have them, there are no rules that are to us sacred. We are not worried about competence. We are not wedded to a particular way of doing things. While playful, we have not abandoned ourselves to, nor are we stuck in, any particular "world." We are there creatively. We are not passive.7

Playfulness is, in part, an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred, and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight.

So, positively, the playful attitude involves openness to surprise, openness to being a fool, openness to self-construction or reconstruction and to construction or reconstruction of the "worlds" we inhabit playfully, and thus openness to risk the ground that constructs us as oppressors or as oppressed or as collaborating or colluding with oppression. Negatively, playfulness is characterized by uncertainty, lack of self-importance, absence of rules or not taking rules as sacred, not worrying about competence, and lack of abandonment to a particular construction of oneself, others, and one's relation to them. In attempting to take a hold of oneself and of one's relation to others in a particular "world," one may study, examine, and come to understand oneself. One may then see what the possibilities for play are for the being one is in that "world." One may even decide to inhabit that self fully to understand it better and find its creative possibilities.

Conclusion

There are "worlds" we enter at our own risk, "worlds" that have agon, conquest, and arrogance as the main ingredients in their ethos. These are "worlds" that we enter out of necessity and that would be foolish to enter playfully in either the agonistic sense or in my sense. In such "worlds," we are not playful. To be in those "worlds" in resistance to their construction of ourselves as passive, servile, and inferior is to inhabit those selves ambiguously, through our first-person memories of lively subjectivity.

But there are "worlds" that we can travel to lovingly, and traveling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants. The reason I think that traveling to someone's "world" is a way of identifying with them is that by traveling to their "world" we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. Only when we have traveled to each other's "worlds" are we fully subjects to each other. (I agree with Hegel that self-recognition requires other subjects, but I disagree with his claim that it requires tension or hostility.)

Knowing other women's "worlds" is part of knowing them and knowing them is part of loving them. Notice that the knowing can be done in greater or lesser depth, as can the loving. Traveling to another's "world" is not the same as becoming intimate with them. Intimacy is constituted in part by a very deep knowledge of the other self. "World"-traveling is only part of the process of coming to have this knowledge. Also, notice that some people, in particular those who are outsiders to the mainstream, can be known only to the extent that they are known in several "worlds" and as "world"-travelers.

Without knowing the other's "world," one does not know the other, and without knowing the other, one is really alone in the other's presence because the other is only dimly present to one.

By traveling to other people's "worlds," we discover that there are "worlds" in which those who are the victims of arrogant perception are really subjects, lively beings, resisters, constructors of visions even though in the mainstream construction they are animated only by the arrogant perceiver and are pliable, foldable, file-awayable, classifiable. I always imagine the Aristotelian slave as pliable and foldable at night or after he or she cannot work anymore (when he or she dies as a tool).8 Aristotle tells us nothing about the slave apart from the master. We know the slave only through the master. The slave is a tool of the master. After working hours, he or she is folded and placed in a drawer until the next morning.

My mother was apparent to me mostly as a victim of arrogant perception. I was loyal to the arrogant perceiver's construction of her and thus disloyal to her in assuming that she was exhausted by that construction. I was unwilling to be like her and thought that identifying with her, seeing myself in her, necessitated that I become like her. I was wrong both in assuming that she was exhausted by the arrogant perceiver's construction of her and in my understanding of identification. I do not think I was wrong in thinking that identification was part of loving and that it involved in part my seeing myself in her. I came to realize through traveling to her "world" that she is not foldable and pliable, that she is not exhausted by the mainstream Argentinian patriarchal construction of her. I came to realize that there are "worlds" in which she shines as a creative being. Seeing myself in her through traveling to her "world" has meant seeing how different from her I am in her "world."9

So, in recommending "world"-traveling and identification through "world"-traveling as part of loving other women, I am suggesting disloyalty to arrogant perceivers, including the arrogant perceiver in ourselves, and to their constructions of women and to their constructions of powerful barriers between women. As Women of Color, we cannot stand on any ground that is not also a crossing. To enter playfully into each other's "worlds" of subjective affirmation also risks those aspects of resistance that have kept us riveted on constructions of ourselves that have kept us from seeing multiply, from understanding the interconnections in our historico-spatialities. Playful "world" -travel is thus not assimilable to the middle- class leisurely journey nor the colonial or imperialist journeys. None of these involve risking one's ground. These forms of displacement may well be compatible with agonistic playfulness, but they are incompatible with the attitude of play that is an openness to surprise and that inclines us to "world"-travel in the direction of deep coalition.

Notes

It is an important aim of this book to come to understand these barriers to the possibility of coalitions of understanding. Most chapters in the book are relevant to this question, but I call your attention in particular to the treatment of these difficulties in chapter 7 ("Boomerang Perception and the Colonizing Gaze"). I consider the failure of nationalisms and separatisms to escape these difficulties. The distinction between split-separation and curdling-separation that I introduce in chapter 6 ("Purity, Impurity, and Separation") is also relevant. The distinction between intermeshing oppressions and the interlocking of oppressions that I develop in the Introduction and in "Tactical Strategies of the Streetwalker" (chapter 10) address the complexities of these barriers.

See Audre Lorde's treatment of horizontal anger in "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger" (Lorde 1996). Lorde, understands black women seeing the servile construction of themselves in each other with anger, hatred.

It is important that I have been thought a person without humor by whites/Anglos inside the U.S. academy, a space where struggles against race/gender and sexual oppression require an articulation of the issues. I have been found playful by my companions in struggles against white/ Anglo control of land and water in the U.S. Southwest. Those struggles have occurred in the space-time of Chicano communities. Being playful or not playful becomes in those two contexts deep traits, symptomatic of larger incongruities.

This "we" embraces the very many strands of Latinos in the United States. But this "we" is unusually spoken with ease. The tension in the "we" includes those who do not reject "Hispanic" as a term of identification.

Indeed people inhabit constructions of themselves in "worlds" they refuse to enter. This is true particularly of those who oppress those whose resistant "worlds" they refuse to enter. But they are indeed inhabitants of those "worlds." And indeed those who are oppressed animate oppressive constructions of themselves in the "worlds" of their oppressors.

Consider the congruities between the middle-class leisurely journey that Wolff describes and the agonistic sense of play (Wolff 1992). Consider also the discussion of travel in the Introduction. One can understand why this sense of playfulness is one that one may exercise in resistance to oppression when resistance is not reducible to reaction. Nonreactive resistance is creative; it exceeds that which is being resisted. The creation of new meaning lies outside of rules, particularly the rules of the "world" being resisted.

But I can also imagine the Aristotelian slave after hours as an animal without the capacity to reason. In that case, roaming in the fields, eating, and copulating would be distinctly passionate activities where passion and reason are dichotomized. Imagining people who are taken into servility in this manner is what leads oppressors to think of those they attempt to dominate both as dangerous and as nonpersons. The traveling also permitted me to see her resistances in plain view in my daily life. She did not hide resistance.

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Ravedrift 2: an interview with McKenzie Wark Sara Sassanelli

I have been eager to delve deeper into the elements of 'the rave' and how a collective, enthusiastic, and hedonistic culture congregates around its practice. I think of raves as cultural productions that speak to how things feel in the moment. The vibe of a rave, especially its music and aesthetics, can tell you a lot about a city. Thinking of my home city of London, I recall places I have danced in: an underpass, under a bridge, a club, a large building with a damaged roof with daylight filtering through. A common feeling in all those contexts is experiencing collectivity while being able to opt into being completely alone. This split feeling is what draws me to the rave.

After reading McKenzie Wark's publication 'Raving', I wanted to ask her some questions that would attempt to untangle the structure of the feeling of the rave. So often, the rave is spoken about as utopic, but I am more interested in how the smoke, the sweat, and the sound make things strange. In her writing, Wark, with her firsthand experiences in her New York rave scene, is so precise in her 'rave vocabulary'. She maps a trajectory for her reader on how raving is a practice made for those who need it in order to endure life. Her book offered me many insights into rave's sonic and temporal possibilities in light of diminishing futures and reminded me that I think of both dancing and raving as philosophical projects. The questions are an attempt to identify why raving feels like such a conducive place for living and how it gives us the coordinates to defy time through sweat and heat.

You open the book by saying that the first thing you look for at raves is 'who needs it, and among those who need it, who can handle their habit?' It makes me think of a practice of life that is beyond theory, rooted in experiencing something, but also, most interestingly, in the case of raving as practice, it's an experience that can sit outside the constraints of dominant time. What do you think those who need it are looking for?

There are different needs that people bring, and they're not always compatible. I'm interested in who needs it to be an experience that we share, even if we don't know each other. When I find a good rave or a good pocket on the dancefloor, that's usually what people there are also looking for. The kind of ravers I like to be around are able to let themselves go into the collective experience, which on a good night, or morning, I think of as a kind of sideways time. As if time dilates outwards rather than accelerates or retards.

I am much more interested in how the rave makes things strange, rather than utopian. It could be through drugs, pushing through sleep deprivation, or the unusual experience of being alone together. That murky non-space of the rave, where you know you are together but the focus is on dancing on your own. I'm curious about your understanding of 'making strange' and how this might manifest in the rave?

Some of the iconography of rave culture hints at that: aliens, smiley faces, cyberpunk graphics and all that. You could think of it as drawing on modernist aesthetics, on defamiliarization, on various avant-garde techniques. It's an avant-garde that people actually like. Maybe what we're trying to do is sandpaper off the self of private property, the self as human capital, so we can work really hard at this collaborative labor that makes nothing at all except sweat and heat. Part of which requires a bit of the "derangement of the senses," as Rimbaud said. That need not be drugs at all. Sober raving is a thing. It's more about disorganizing the hierarchy of senses.

You describe the world of the rave as a 'fractal' one. The fractal experience of the rave, in my experience, can generate a rhizomatic experience of attention. Often triggered for me by the specific experience of being alone together. What are some recurring fractal experiences that emerge for you in the practice of raving?

"Alone together" is a part of it. You are up close with a lot of people but you don't have to pay much attention to each other, at least if you're on a good dancefloor. I don't dance very well, but I do it enough that my body just knows how to fit in with other bodies in motion. The kinesthetic sense takes care of that. The kind of raves I like best center on minimal techno or other genres that are highly repetitive. They don't structure time around narrative, just repetition and variation. Sideways time. Each moment one raves when it's going well is part of what I call the rave continuum. All part of the same sideways time.

Rave is such an expansive term, and when you talk about the 'rave continuum', I immediately think about 'the vibe'. You quote one of my favorite passages from madison moore's writing, where they describe the floor in queer nightlife spaces as a 'wet, hot, sweaty netherworld, where the bathroom floor might be caked in sweat and soggy toilet paper, and where as you move through the venue you might be wading through an elixir of haze, spilled booze, glitter, crushed drink cups and cans, straws, cum, poppers, metro cards, debit cards, bills, coins, tiny drug bags, lighters, dirt, cigarettes, loose tobacco, and rolling paper." I can almost see it, feel it and hear it. A lot of raves can technically be raves, but what makes one reside in the continuum?

Some people love to police the boundaries of categories, but in practice, my friends who think of themselves as "ravers" are fluid about it. In New York, legal venues stop serving alcohol at 4 a.m. Most clubs, of course, close at that time. Raves in this town are illegal parties at unlicensed venues that run all night until morning or sometimes even longer. Mostly the music is techno, although sometimes there'll be a second room for house music and of course interesting DJs aren't too bound by genre. Nearly all the raves in the book were illegal. I don't usually show up until 4 a.m. or so anyway, so the clubs aren't much use to me. There's one scene that was in a legal venue that threw an all-nighter. They just stop serving alcohol at 4 a.m. Many of my raver friends were there so it felt a bit like a rave. But as my friend Janus Rose says: "illegal parties are better because they are illegal." Even better sometimes are what we call renegades, which are in open spaces, sell no tickets, and are much more likely to get shut down by the cops. Very hard to throw renegades in New York. There are a few of those in the book too.

The vibe I am referring to is also made up of chemicals, atoms, and sound waves, and these three terms come to mind when you mention 'fluctuating bundles of feelings and thoughts'. I think of flesh, when it feels not your own, dysphoric even. The dissociative feeling that is then grounded by moving, negotiating space, and dancing. What is the relationship between xeno-flesh and dancing?

Raving is also a book of aesthetic theory where the question might be: what is the aesthetics of dissociation? The book centers on trans people's experience as ravers in part because most transsexuals that I know are virtuosos of dissociation, usually in a bad way. Dysphoria kicks us out of our own bodies a lot. But what if it was also an ability one could cultivate? There's more than one dissociative aesthetic practice. In the book, I found four that I think are distinct, such as ravespace, enlustment, and xeno-euphoria. (The fourth one you need to know about the others to get to). Dissociation seems to me to be a very contemporary thing. I think a lot of people dissociate in the bad sense because the entire world is becoming a traumatic zone. What is an aesthetic and affective practice when a world is ending? Raves.

I think about technique a lot, especially because I work with choreographers who harness technique to push form, and whose practice started in the club. Technique in the context of the rave links me to DeForrest Brown Jr's description of Detroit techno as sonic world-building but also Bobby Beethoven (fka Total Freedom) and GHE20G0TH1K, where a new sound and style of DJing was created through experimenting with CDJs and crunchy MP3s. Its genre-bending blends made it possible for house, techno, punk, footwork, a cappella, and metal to all exist in the same set. It brings me back to the word practice but as it meets with technique. A practice that derives meaning and pleasure from the dissident and unruly. How do you understand technique as related to raving?

I didn't write much about the music as I was more interested in centering ravers themselves. DeForrest wrote the essential book on techno as Black music. A white person like me is an uninvited guest in a sonic practice invented by Black people and continually reinvented by Black people as well. GHE20G0TH1K was an important New York party in that it centered Black and Latinx queer sonic practices, including ballroom, and the expanded art of what was possible if one treated the CDJ as an instrument. It was also a moment in the story of throwing parties. When madison moore and I edited the "Black Rave" special issue of eflux journal, it came up quite a bit. I'm interested in how all the techniques come together: the constructed situation including sound, light, layout, critical roles such as who staffs the door, how it's promoted, conventions about no photos and other things, whether ravers choose to come and what they bring, whether it's turning looks, or a willingness to work it on the floor.

I have to admit, I have thought of the rave as a refuge many times. Whether it was from the heaviness and weariness of a day, or as a mirror; longing for a sense of belonging, or just as a simple break from the domination of time. Often feeling a sense of agency in the act of not sleeping, of breaking through the 24-hour mark of being awake and disrupting the idea of 'a day'. Still wanting to resist the idea of the utopic and focusing more on this idea of the 'need' - what can be harnessed from needing the rave?

I'd rather it be useless, in a way. Most of the labor we're obliged to do is within an information economy that if left unchecked is going to end this world. So there's something to be said for working really hard making nothing but sweat and heat. Most raves in New York are in light industrial spaces and it amuses me that we make nothing there—and in very long shifts. Having said that, the kind of weak ties that one forms with other ravers have other uses. It connects to mutual aid or political mobilization when that's needed. The rave is not "utopia," nor is it "resistance," but there's something to be said for just knowing a little about the people around Brooklyn. And of course sometimes intense relationships form out of raves as well. I wouldn't say "community," as that's another over-used word. I think of my raver friends as a clade.

I want to continue with your idea of 'those that need it'. The raves that I am thinking of can often be overwhelming, in a kind of goth way as Hannah Baer describes in her Artforum article 'Dance Until the World Ends'. Loud music, strange places, depending on when and where, it can be airless and overcrowded, and as she describes, this goth way of raving is framed by 'everyone dancing in a place no one particularly wants to be'. I think the gothness of it is the fluctuation between the discomfort and the euphoria, like a practice of feeling all the feelings of being alive in a compressed and altered experience of time. I want to know what you think about practicing being alive through the rave.

I know Hannah although curiously we don't run into each other at raves all that much. The New York scene is big enough that you can be passing through different parties. I did run into her at one that was so hot it felt like a sauna. When I got to the front, which is where I like to be, I met friends who had brought liter-size bottles of water. Of course every surface was covered in a layer of—I can't think of another word for it—schmutz. I took my top off and had a hard time finding it later as it was in a pile with everyone else's and we'd all worn black. Maybe one of the needs in that kind of rave is to feel alive. We all get down to the animal in the human, together. I wouldn't say "goth," as that's a subculture I missed altogether, but there's certainly an effort involved in working one's way into these constructed situations that can seem repellent at first. I like my raves on the sleazy side and that's not for everyone.

Still influenced by Hannah, I'm thinking about illicit space. From my perspective, the rave is seductive - not due to the thrill of the risk of the illegal - because if things go west and the cops come, it's actually just grim. I am thinking more of those raves that feel like the dancefloor and the darkness are the equalizer. Where it's not about one crew presiding over another, where you can see each other but stay anonymous - again this feels more about a vibe rather than a structure. What do you think is generated by sharing an illicit space?

There are parties for all sorts of needs. I don't go to the ones for club kids. It's a valid use of nightlife. Some people just feel like nothing in the rest of the world, but in nightlife, they can be special. They're on the list, they're in the greenroom, on the dance floor they command space. It'll end up on Instagram. I like raves that are more about ravers who dance. If your look involves heels you might not make it past the door. You could break an ankle on the uneven floor, and you're clearly not coming to dance. Ravers in this town are usually in basic black and sturdy sneakers. Everything is so grimy it's practical rather than being a fashion statement. Ravers show up to rave. There's also some socializing in the chill-out, and maybe some hook-ups, but mostly it's dancing, for hours and hours.

I'm interested to know more about the DJs and artists that have recently been important for you, and how that might relate to genre? For myself, I am thinking of queer and trans artists that work with genres in really expansive ways. One example would be UK artist Iceboy Violet, whose productions and lyrics have a firm grip on the messiness of desire and emotion, through a blend of noise-infused ambient alongside grime and drill productions. Their music has darkness and sadness, but it is also resilient and hopeful.

One thing I kept from my late 70s punk rock moment is to value what's local. I follow a bunch of DJs and producers who either live here or play here regularly: Juliana Huxtable, Jasmine Infiniti, Goth Jafar, Tygapaw. In more of a house music vein, Dee Diggs, Octo Octa, Eris Drew. I love the ambient sets by Pure Immanence. I try to go to as much of the Dweller festival as I can every year. It's dedicated to Black techno and electronic music. That's where I find artists I would not otherwise know about, like Introspekt. Then there's showing up for friends, some of whom are building a reputation and touring: Lychee, Janus Rose. Or the resident DJs at parties I happen to like: Clarissa Kimski, Ne/re/a, Volvox, Juana, DJ Voices, Akambi—I could go on. I have a Soundcloud called rave_theory that has most of these and more. Although, honestly, I'm a rave bimbo at heart. Sometimes I don't even know who's playing.

I'm interested in this melancholic resilience that happens at the tipping point of chemicals wearing off and feeling the body for its vulnerability. Because the rave does not last forever, you mention rest in the book, and I want to know more about the role of rest as it relates to a distorted feeling of time.

I don't do MDMA often anymore as it's too physically taxing at my age. I find mushrooms and ket more sustainable although of course, one should know one's limitations and agency around any substance. There's something special about the feeling after the rave. I don't go to afters very often although sometimes it's nice to share that wind-down time with others. Sometimes it's energizing but usually it's a pleasant exhaustion. Our mammal bodies really want to be run to the point of exhaustion sometimes, but exercise bores me so I go to raves. It's a DJ's first and last job to head off boredom.

Rave friendships, as you cite in the book, can be intense and fleeting. It reminds me of the feeling of an intensified present, and that these undurable friendships are not less valuable. Our fragmented times, and our estranged relationships with ourselves point more towards an appreciation of an intensified present rather than looking to a more utopian future. Rave friendships can also hold a pleasurable melancholic note for me, when the intensity wears off, maybe this is also another goth dimension of the rave. I'm curious to know more about your experience of friendship through your raving practice.

There's friendship and there's enmity. The slice of time in the book was one where the clade to which I belonged split in two. It's split and reformed along different lines since. I feel like I have to be diplomatic and try to remain on good terms with everyone that happens. I'm a kind of insider-outsider, being quite a bit older than almost everyone else. I love my rave friends and I do my bit to contribute to our pocket world. I co-curate the Writing on Raving series at Nowadays, for instance. The Raving book was my way of returning the gift of friendship and acceptance.

My last question is about rhythm, time, and dancing. Do you ever dance in the gaps between the beats?

My upper body does, but my ass moves to the beat.

A Mix on Radio Vilnius Flora Yin Wong

After reading the texts, I wanted to explore typical tropes of acid house / rave in the UK and US in an abstracted sense, overlapping with the more recent resurgence in reinterpretations of the genres through 'ambient' and deconstructed trance...

LISTEN - https://radiovilnius.live/category/shows/yellow-pre-launch-w-flora-yin-wong-tautvydas-urbeli/

Manifesting a Black Swan DAO (excerpt)

Laura Lotti & Calum Bowden

RADICAL FRIENDS

Today there is a mounting awareness among art workers of the ways in which contemporary art is instrumental in extending the logic of finance. The rampant neoliberalisation of the cultural sphere concentrates risk on the individual art workers who go head-to-head for increasingly limited opportunities and resources. Faced with the collapse of legacy institutions, some artists and creative practitioners have turned to block chain technologies to find answers to the problem of organisation in the cultural field, including its psycho-social pathologies and its economic sustainability. While the financial nature of the technology runs the risk of engendering familiar power structures and dynamics, the possibility it affords to transfer funds across borders, experiment with programmable co-ownership models and software-based organisations for transparent decision-making and record-keeping, known as DAOs, has opened up the imaginations of many to alternative forms of organising. Established in 2018, Black Swan is a Berlin-based collective that deploys the conceptual and operational affordances of blockchains to pursue alternative approaches to the traditional artworld templates for art making. Black Swan was conceived in the context of the Berlin art scene, deploying blockchains and DAOs to address the precarious reality of local artists and cultural practitioners, who often fall between the cracks of existing arts infrastructures due to the interdisciplinary or "non-canonical" nature of their practises. Since blockchain technology is still nascent and limited in terms of its technical and financial accessi bility, Black Swan has so far used it primarily as a means of rethinking the economics and organisational structures of the art world: Blockchain thinking, without relying on the technology itself.1 Through peer support, artist-led funding and community decision-making, Black Swan places resources into the hands of the users rather than the gatekeepers of the arts. In Black Swan's cosmos, galleries, museums, and funding bodies have no influence over how their resources are used. Cultural practition ers are the active members of the system; they decide collectively on the use of resources, participate in the curation of initiatives and art projects to be realised (something that will be addressed in more detail

Black Swan's research methodology has put play and games at the centre of technical development as a means to challenge the mystique surrounding blockchain and understand emergent behaviours around its uses, foregrounding the affective dimension of technically-mediated interactions. In role-playing games, working groups, and hackathons, Black Swan invites existing communities of creative practitioners to experiment with forms of interaction, modes of organisation, and sus tainable economic models to test hypotheses around how we organise, in a safe, playful environment. This is used as a way out of narrow tech

below), and benefit from the value produced by their practices.

nological solutionism, to collectively arrive at modes of framing problems and experiment with alternative ecologies of artmaking. Our first working group with nine creative practitioners met in Berlin in January 2021 and surfaced the desire for tools for horizontal resource management for art making. This working group is explained in more detail in the chapter "Cygnet Prototype" in this volume. Our research emphasised that one of the biggest challenges to collaborative initiatives is neither the lack of ideas or enthusiasm, nor material resources per se, but is rather the absence of context-specific tools through which artists can reach consensus over how to best use and allocate resources to their collective benefit. Since then Black Swan has been developing a kaleidoscope of methods and tools to power multidisciplinary research and practice that are situated in and adapted to our context in Berlin. This is not about replacing legacy institutions with equally molar and centralised structures, but rather creating new pathways and ecologies within and between them so that new formations may emerge from their interstices. For Black Swan, institutions are edges – connecting relations – and not centralised nodes within a network. As part of this effort, Black Swan is plotting the creation of Black Swan DAO: a translocal and mutable source for distributing resources and value differently across interdependent art worlds.

AFFIRMATIONS FOR ARTWORLDS BASED ON SOLIDARITY AND MUTUALISM

Over the last three years, Black Swan has acted as a research and development working group exploring the possibilities of art-run organ isations. Below are some of the evaluations we have come to at the end of 2021, in the guise of affirmations for artworlds based on solidarity and mutualism. True to Black Swan's nature, these observations may be forked, forgotten or mutated from here on in and are only committed to paper as glimpses of close horizons.

ART-MAKING IS A MODE OF COLLECTIVE STAKING

An agreement is always a commitment, even before a formal contract. DAOs and blockchain mechanisms provide ways to make these commit ments more explicit. One of these mechanisms is staking, the practice of "locking" tokens into protocols to earn some kind of reward while forfeiting the possibility of trading them. A stake is a lock on liquidity that enables the circulation of other "values" in a system. But as those involved in collective practices know, staking extends beyond technical mechanisms; it is a mode of relation that binds people together, socially and often economically. In fact, staking can take many different forms: one can stake in an idea, or project, or practice; it can be a way to assign responsibility, or to signal appreciation. Staking creates connections and networks, it is a game that creates its own rules as more people play it. This is true for the contemporary artworld too. The idea of the individual artist genius celebrated by the global art market is a hangover from a bygone era whose historical groundings are shrouded in myth. Art making has always been an endeavour of collective staking, and even today an artist CV (a highly disputed tool in the arts) tells a story of

collaborations with many different kinds of "stakeholders", from studio assistants and curators, to galleries, collectors, university classes, residen cy programs, and much in between. While art collectives have long been part of art history books, within the neoliberal circuits of Contemporary Art, "the contemporary collective finds itself pressured to echo the strate gies of the individual, finding success in the fullness of one... it does little to invert the capitalist model it often is bred to resist against, collapsing in on itself and alienating its audiences as an overt vehicle of capitalism."2 With the recuperation and individualisation of the collective by the art market, there is an urgent need for alternative organisational structures and mechanisms that support the heterogeneity of contributions in pro cesses of art making. Peer-to-peer infrastructures can facilitate a process of "instituting otherwise,"3 providing the foundations for proto-institutions that renew the functions and commitments of legacy organisations

to tend to the ecologies within which collectives are situated. Black Swan uses blockchain mechanisms to support the commit ments and trust networks that already exist among practitioners, without eliminating or replacing them with code, and build new bridges to extend said trust to institutional actors as silent stakeholders. The challenge is how to not stifle these nascent collective formations with too much formalisation, as emotional engagement is as key as protocol mechanics in running an organisation. In this regard, perhaps DAOs are a signpost or gateway to something else, rather than an end in and of themselves.

THE ORGANISATION IS MUTABLE, LIABLE TO CHANGE

When artistic practices are overly constrained into rigid and static organisational forms copied from vehicles of capitalism, they result in extractive economic relations where a minority in creative leadership positions benefits at the expense of the art workers who produce art for wages.4 Far from the tyranny of structurelessness,5 Black Swan's re search demonstrates the ways artists use varied organisational structures and hierarchies in practice, deploying organisational strategies to suit tasks at hand. To rethink the organisational structures of the artworld, Black Swan starts by searching for new metaphors for organising that are mutable and liable to change.6 Looking at the origins of the words organisation and corporate, we discover narrow assumptions about biology extended to the social sphere.7 Organisations and institutions can be thought of as shells and containers for groups of people. Organisations are formally constructed to achieve goals that individuals are unable or unwilling to achieve on their own.8 But as they grow in scale and complexity, organisations tend to ossify around "rational" mechanisms that render them abstracted from the reality they are embedded in, and unable to adapt to the changing context. Modern capitalism is an organised society, where corporate actors are endowed with the capacity to act independently from the intentions and interests of their creators.9 People are either held by or excluded from institutions of the family, the corporation, and the state.

A person's context-specific position within this matrix becomes at least somewhat deterministic of their ability to access resources, economic security, and a quality of life. But the rigid organisational forms upon which today's society is constructed and the expulsion, exclusion, and isolation associated with them are recent phenomena. Until the 15th century such a notion of formal organisation was inconceivable, as the legal separation between public and private sphere had not yet been developed. 10 The biological metaphors upon which modern notions of organisa tion depend further naturalise the form and structure organisations take. The rationality, rigidity and immutability associated with organisations might stem in part from 15th century European assumptions about nature, based on a mechanistic view of the universe as a large-scale eter nal machine. 11 Taken with more recent thinking about biology and the philosophy of science, we see alternative possibilities for organisations emerge that map more closely to the dynamic, multi-linear processes through which artists create together. In the recent works of the phi losophers Paul B. Preciado and Laboria Cuboniks, nature becomes a site of contestation and technological transformation. Preciado reveals how bodies are produced and reproduced through the pharmaceutical industry, pornography, and late capitalism. 12 And Laboria Cuboniks calls for the potential of contemporary technologies to be mobilised upon gender, sexuality and disparities of power. 13 As these authors show, the arrangement of organs that make up bodies are rendered as in flux, made and remade through media, technoscience, and economics. If we rethink the biological metaphors underpinning organisation in terms of this more recent thinking about nature, we can see organisational bodies as something that are fluid, mutable and adaptable, and that shift the ecology within which art is created. As Laboria Cuboniks says, "if nature is unjust, change nature!" DAOs are the most recent instantiation of the ways in which organisation can become unpinned from an immutable and ideal body form, though in practice most DAOs have a tendency to fall back on previous assumptions about what an organisation can be. Black Swan aims to change that.

THE ORGANISATION IS UNITED THROUGH SHARED VIBES

Beyond the formal mechanisms that define the scope and domain of operation of an organisation, what an organisation actually holds in common is something that is practiced, performed and renegotiated at each encounter. It cannot be "engineered" a priori. Shared vibes may lead to shared values, but not the other way around. The theorist Peli Grietzer describes a vibe as an aesthetic unity in a world or in a work of art, that is a "surface-accessible, world-making structure". 14 In other words, a vibe is an aesthetic form that operates beyond and below what neoliberal policy reductively calls social cohesion, producing collective formations through resonances that traverse pre-established social con texts. 15 Vibes are recursively related to intersubjectivity: vibes are both preconditions for, and effected by, the sharing of subjective experience by multiple people. A vibe might encompass an array of commonly-recog nised phenomena and structures including difference, noise, ambiguity, the sacred, the profane, the unknown, and the ineffable. Shared vibes are produced through intimacy and common references and already emerge within local and translocal art scenes. The musician Ezra Koenig (via Grietzer and in turn via Elif Batuman) describes a vibe as a local colour with a historical dimension: "What gives a vibe 'authenticity' is its ability to evoke – using a small number of disparate elements – a certain time, place and milieu; a certain nexus of historic, geographic and cul tural forces." 16 A vibe erupts beyond the singular and the static towards a multiplicity of heterogeneous elements and cannot be fixed or pinned down (attempts to name or describe a vibe always reduce its complexity). As Koenig suggests, a vibe demarcates a temporality unfolding across spaces and cultural contexts. It marks the creation of a locality that is not bound by geographical constraints. Black Swan's experiments with moon cycles in Cygnet further reveal ways that coalescing around the rhythms of alternative, more-than-human, temporalities might be used to create more equitable common substrates for art making. Formal organisations like firms and corporations are only possible if there is a separation between public and private spheres. Emerging in the modern era, corporations are imagined as bodies for groups of individu als to act and exchange within. The creation of these abstract corporate bodies has come to depend on the reduction of complex identities to absolute values, which serve more as regulatory ideals than as means of caring for or nourishing collective bodies in flux. While organisations and corporations might publicly declare they are held together by goals and values, economists such as Ronald Coase reveal the ways in which firms arise because of profit incentives, and grow disproportionately large when transaction costs within an organisation are lower than between organisations. 17 If our collective bodies are no longer to be based on profit maximisation or binary and absolute ideals, what else might act as substrates for people to act in concert? 18 As information technologies and blockchains make the cost of transacting between organisations effectively the same as transacting within an organisation in terms of time, coordination effort and economic expenditure, the contours of individual and collective bodies become more entangled in mutualistic metabolisms.

Searching for a "north star" or a mission without having a common-ly-held vibe only leads to an articulation of values that is vague, cliché or overly moralising. Providing a lens for reexamining the declared values of the contemporary artworld, political theorist Rodrigo Nunes shows how delineating political differences through ideological positions reduces politics to a set of choices between absolute values. He demonstrates the bifurcation of leftist politics through an analysis of two left-wing melancholias centred around the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the protests of 1968 respectively – the former emphasising state action as the driver of social transformation, and the values of unity, leadership, hegemony; and the latter stressing the initiative of social actors, putting emphasis on the values of plurality, autonomy and bottom-up organisation.19 Nunes argues that in constantly demarcating their mutual difference through the reiteration of abstract principles and values that function as negations of each other, these two sides ensure that common ground cannot be found.

We see analogous dynamics at play in the contemporary artworld: on the one hand, large institutions aim to renew themselves in a top down manner, attempting to fold any innovation or existential threat into their own brand; on the other, small initiatives operating entirely outside of established circuits in a "horizontal" and "autonomous" way miss out on network effects and the benefits that come from leadership and institutional support. Nunes finds a way out by thinking of organisation in terms of specific problems and not merely conceptual relations: "com- mon ground is a condition for responding to actual situations instead of just reiterating abstract principles or reproaching reality for being unlike our model."20 Here we see how abstract values and principles end in questions of measurement and assessment against unattainable ideal states. Vibes, and the needs and desires that vibes articulate in practice, might provide better, more transversal, organising principles and enable the adoption of mutable structures to address common problems which demand varied approaches.

THE ORGANISATION IS MAINTAINED

Whether supported by technology or not, an organisation can work sustainably over a long period of time only if it is constantly maintained. Maintenance is about repair and renewal of the social and technical mechanisms that allow the organisation to operate in the first place, enabling it to adapt to and individuate through the milieu with which it is enmeshed. As Yuk Hui and Harry Halpin put it in the context of alternative ways of conceiving social networking: "individuation is also always a temporal and existential process, rather than merely social and psychological. By projecting a common will to a project, it is the project itself that produces a co-individuation of groups and individuals."21 Like other organisational frameworks, a DAO works as a funnel to attract and catalyse "common will" and turn a "projection" or vision into a project – that is, a plan or coordinated activity.22 While the will is not lacking, most of the initiatives emerging out of the blockchain industry today feel like business as usual and are not daring enough in the visions they project for the futures they want to realise. Part of the blame lies in the deceitful optics of decentralisation with the misguided emphasis on eliminating structural hierarchies in order to eliminate power imbalances;23 the other part is in the lack of curation in the original sense of the word, which is to say the lack of actual care for the relations that DAOs can facilitate.

Black Swan aims to address this by clarifying common misconcep- tions around both terms, beginning with curating. Curare – to take care, to cure, from curating as taking care of bathhouses in Roman times, to the priest who cared for souls in mediaeval times, to looking after collections of art and artefacts in the 18th century... What new inflections and metamorphoses are to be found in the meaning and practice of curation within distributed digital environments? Black Swan's research demonstrates the ways in which community facilitation is a key capac- ity needed by cultural institutions of the future.24 As artistic practices and experiences are moving online and increasingly unfolding beyond geographically-bound localities, facilitation needs to be embedded in the core mechanisms of an organisation. It needs to be cultivated from within, in order to manifest its caring, and carrying, function. The shared vibes at the core of translocal art scenes require care and curation to be sustained, reproduced and be liable to change. Black Swan's research also demystifies and seeks to break down the ideas of the "Decentralised" "Autonomous" "Organisation" within DAOs. Decentralisation, as a technical principle, can be invaluable to fostering infrastructural resilience and reach, but it is not about eliminating or au-tomating hierarchies. Instead it should be about creating and supporting useful and mutable roles in order to meet the needs of a given initiative. Autonomy is always a mix of automation and labour, the labour of care for the infrastructure of humans and machines working together to generate \$urplus. And Organising is always a mix of horizontal, vertical and transversal strategies.

MANIFESTING A BLACK SWAN

Black Swan is a project researching the organisational forms at play in the artworld today. It responds to the ways in which legacy institutions have failed the artists they supposedly serve by imagining, role-playing, and building new organisational frameworks and arts infrastructures. Following Marina Vishmidt, Black Swan moves from institutional critique to infrastructural critique, to engage and intervene within the interlinking material, historical, economic, affective, and subjective conditions necessary for the art institution and its critique to exist and reproduce.25 From past research, play, and critique, Black Swan has distilled these four affirmations, that we have presented above, as guiding mantras to accompany us in the realisation of alternative ecologies of art making:

Art-making is a mode of collective staking, or in other words, mutually beneficial contributions and commitments should be explicit in art making.

The organisation is mutable, liable to change, or collective bodies and the metaphors they are based on should allow for adaptable, task and context specific organisational structures.

The organisation is united through shared vibes, or collectives craft and hold their own mini worlds in common the organisation is maintained, or new art ecologies need to be cared for, curated, and tended to.

At the core of Black Swan's effort is the awareness that what is "wrong" with art-and-technology projects – their inability to square radical modes of inquiry and collaborative labour with the demands and expectations of corporate and military funding, institutional support, and instrumentalised science – is precisely what is most important about them. That current collective practises cannot fit the rigid, KPI oriented structures of current institutions, and instead require organisational structures that reflect their dynamic, distributed, interoperable nature. Black Swan is developing build- ing blocks for such organisations, for the institutions of proximate horizons. These may take many forms, all at once: a solidarity-based translocal art circuit (as opposed to a "market"), a proto-institution for multi-disciplinary research and practice, a community-led micro-residency program, a self-curated knowledge repository, a mycelium network connecting differ- ent, heterogeneous hubs, and many more that cannot yet be imagined.

Black Swan does not want to replace the current artworld with an equally rigid monolithic and universalising structure. Let a hundred artworlds bloom!26 Neither does it promise utopian visions. Utopias are closed systems and only exist within clearly defined boundaries and specific contexts. Utopias are futures of the past and are not equipped to confront the challenges of the present.27 As Donna Haraway says: "The Anthropocene marks severe discontinuities; what comes after will not be like what came before."28 Building future artworlds requires being rooted in the present and looking beyond myopic frameworks inherited from modernity, building friendships and tools that may be capable of seeding many possible, if unimaginable, artworlds from the ruins of art, critique, and age-old institutions.

- 1. One of the blockchain's key characteristics is the immutability of the ledger. While this is often a desired feature, since it enables censorship resistant record-keeping, it also means that any changes to a protocol require a new deployment of the protocol itself, which can be expensive and hinder usability. To avoid this, Black Swan used role-playing as a method to gain insights into collaborative dynamics to inform the development of its DAO, which will, it is envisaged, be blockchain-based in the future.
- 2. See Legacy Russel, "Beauty & The Beast: Collectivity and the Corporation" in this volume.
- 3. On the relation between institutions and infrastructures, see "INSTITUTING OTHERWISE," BAK Online, https://www.bakonline.org/program-item/instituting-otherwise.
- 4. The use of fabricators to produce art has been commonplace since at least Michelangelo and Rembrandt, but the industrialised approach used by contemporary artists such as Damien Hirst, who employed more than 120 people in 2007, attains new scales of coordination and organisational complexity. One of Hirst's assistants comments in the UK's Evening Standard that she resented being paid £600 to do a painting that would sell for £600,000. David Cohen, "Inside Damien Hirst's factory," Evening Standard, August 30, 2007, https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/exhibitions/inside-damien-hirst-s-factory-6609579.html.
- 5. Jo Freeman, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," 1972, https://www.jofreeman.com/ joreen/tyranny.htm.

- 6. Raising the importance of metaphors in the investigation of how people bring meaning to technologies, and how technologies bring meaning to people, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson write: "Metaphors... highlight and make coherent certain aspects of our experience. A given metaphor may be the only way to highlight and coherently organize exactly those aspects of our experience. Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action... fulfilling the metaphor and reinforcing it." George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (University of Chicago Press, 2003), 132.
- 7. The shifting notions of organisation and corporate are evidenced by the etymologies of the words. In the early 15c., organisacioun is taken to mean the structure of the body or its parts. By the 18c. organisation means "that which is organized", with the senses of "an organized body of persons" only emerging in 1829, and "system, establishment, constitution" in 1873. Douglas Harper, "Etymology of organization," Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed December 22, 2021, https://www.etymonline.com/word/organization. Like organisation, the term "corporate" also shifts from the biological to the social. Corporate comes via the Latin corporatus "to make or fashion into a body, furnish with a body," and the Latin corpus or "body" more generally. In the 15c., corporate comes to mean "united in one body, constituted as a legal corporation." Douglas Harper, "Etymology of corporation," Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed December 22 2021, https://www.etymonline.com/word/corporation. A biological metaphor runs through our social structures.
- 8. Doyle Paul Johnson, "Meso-Level Structures: Communities and Organizations", in Contemporary Sociological Theory (Springer, 2008), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-76522-8_10.
- 9. Helena Flam, "Corporate Actors: Definition, Genesis and Interaction", MPIFG Discussion Paper 90/11, https://www.mpifg.de/pu/mpifg dp/dp90-11.pdf.
- 10. Alfred Kieser, "Organizational, Institutional, and Societal Evolution: Medieval Craft Guilds and the Genesis of Formal Organizations," Administrative Science Quarterly 34, no. 4 (1989): 540–64. https://doi.org/10.2307/2393566.
- 11. "For what is the Heart, but a Spring; and the Nerves, but so many Strings; and the Joints, but so many Wheeles, giving motion to the whole Body, such as was intended by the Artificer?". Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, 1651 (Oxford University Press, 1965), https://files.libertyfund.org/files/869/0161_Bk.pdf.
- 12. Paul B. Preciado, Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era (The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2013).
- 13. "Our lot is cast with technoscience, where nothing is so sacred that it cannot be reengineered and transformed so as to widen our aperture of freedom, extending to gender and the human. To say that nothing is sacred, that nothing is transcendent or protected from the will to know, to tinker and to hack, is to say that nothing is supernatural. 'Nature' understood here, as the unbounded arena of science is all there is." Laboria Cuboniks, "Xenofeminism. A Politics for Alienation," 2015, http://laboriacuboniks.net.
- 14. Peli Grietzer, "A Theory of Vibe", Glass Bead, 2017, https://www.glass-bead.org/article/ a-theory-of-vibe.
- 15. JoAnn Jaffe and Amy A. Quark, "Social Cohesion, Neoliberalism, and the Entrepreneurial Community in Rural Saskatchewan," American Behavioral Scientist 50, no. 2 (October 2006): 206–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764206290634.
- 16. Grietzer, "A Theory of Vibe."
- 17. Ronald H. Coase (1937), "The Nature of the Firm," Economica, 4: 386–405. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0335.1937.tb00002.x
- 18. The philosopher Hannah Arendt defines power as the human ability to "act in concert" towards common public and political purposes. Hannah Arendt, On Violence. (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1970).
- 19. Rodrigo Nunes, "One or Two Melancholias? 1917, 1968 and the Question of Organisation," Crisis & Critique 5, no. 2 (2018).
- 20. Nunes, "One or Two Melancholias?", 255.
- 21. Yuk Hui and Harry Halpin, "Collective Individuation: The Future of the Social Web," in Unlike Us Reader: Social Media Monopolies and Their Alternatives, ed. Geert Lovink and Miriam Rasch (Institute of Network Cultures, 2013), 115.
- 22. Etymology tells us that from the 15c., a projecte was "a plan, draft, scheme, design," from the Medieval Latin projectum "something thrown forth". Douglas Harper, "Etymology of project," Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed February 17, 2022, https://www.etymonline.com/word/organization.

- 23. A corrective to this position is offered in: Richard D. Bartlett, "Blockchain Doesn't Decentralise Power," Enspiral Tales, September 8, 2017, https://medium.com/enspiral-tales/blockchain-doesnt-decentralise-power-5918c168e6f6.
- 24. For more information, see: Black Swan, "CTM 2022: Prototyping Sonic Institutions," January 30, 2022. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKb9za47twU; Black Swan, "Simulating Equitable Art Worlds: DAOs through a role-played lens" (KW Institute for Contemporary Art, forthcoming).
- 25. Marina Vishmidt, "Between Not Everything and Not Nothing: Cuts Towards Infrastructural Critique," in Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh, eds. Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989 (MIT Press, 2017), 267.
- 26. Adaption of Rhea Myers' essay "A Thousand DAOs" in this volume.
- 27. Fredric Jameson, Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions (Verso, 2005).
- 28. Donna Haraway, Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Duke University Press, 2016), 100.

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