Anonymous:
The Occupy Movement and
the Failure of Representational Democracy

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Abstract

In this essay I try to make the case that the Occupy Movement can be thought through as a Post-Situationist art event which requires that it be thought of in terms of its pragmatic effects and what it can ‘do’ in relation to its viral spreading around major urban centers of the globe. I further try to make my case by utilizing the conceptual tool kit of Deleuze and Guattari; hence such ideas as sense-event, territory, virtual, and actual are part of this repertoire. I then try to further the complexity of Post-Situationism by including hacktivism and exploring the importance of being Anonymous in a society of control. The overall intent is to worry representation and to make the case for direct or participatory democracy.
It is an error to divide people into the living and the dead: there are people who are dead-alive, and people who are alive-alive. The dead-alive also write, walk, speak, act. But they make no mistakes; only machines make no mistakes, and they produce only dead things. The alive-alive are constantly in error, in search, in questions, in torment.


1. It may be somewhat of a sacrilege for many art educators to think of the Occupy Movement as political and ethical art whose affect was to create a ‘smooth space’ of media attention within the striated territory of capitalist interests, which by law sets up the corporation as having the rights and responsibilities of persons with Wall Street as its pulse center. Yet, that is the aim of this essay: to treat the Occupy Movement as a ‘sense-event,’ a bloc of sensations in relation to the creative philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980), where art is theorized as a constant traversal flight into and across disciplines, thereby placing the social always into question. It is an attempt to treat the Occupy Movement, whose manifestations went viral globally via social networked media, as an exemplar of Post-Situationist art that works with virtuality, becoming, temporality, and territory. This is an exercise in what could be called *practical aisthetics*, as opposed to the usual aesthetic paradigm (defined as non-use-ful) that is usually foisted on art. The Occupy Movement exemplified a form of performance that no longer asks: “is this art?” but rather “what does it do?” And, moreover, ‘is it useful?’ To treat the artistic ‘sense-event’ in this way is to dispense with the usual framing that art in its various forms of capitalist discourse receives, such as ‘what does it mean?’ and, perhaps worse, ‘how do we judge whether it is a good|bad piece of art?’ And, of course, ‘what’s its worth, pricewise, that is?’

2. Can the Occupy Movement be taken as a ‘tool’ in its performative theatrical sense? Such a pragmatic question that weds art to life is only obliquely tangent to Jacques Rancière’s (2004) now well-known stance on the “distribution of the sensible.” For the magnitude of such a reorientation to happen, Rancière (1998) places political change as a “rare event,” (p. 17, 139) which then redistributes the senses for greater participation by “the part that has no part” (Rancière, 2004, p. 12). The claim being proposed here is more modest; the emergence of an artistic sense-event enables an ontological reorientation on the micro-level

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1 This essay was inspired by Ian Buchanan’s “September 17, 2011: Occupy without Counting.” See his remarkable exploration of May 68 in Buchanan (2008). Smooth and striated spaces will be explicated later in this essay. The terms come from the philosophical oeuvre of Deleuze and Guattari (1980).

2 The difference between aiskesis (aisthetics) and aesthetics is a long running theme throughout my writing (see for example, jagodzinski, 2010a). Aisthetics is played at the neurological level; aesthetics is at the level of conscious cognition. Not that this has made much difference in the business as usual of art and its education.

3 See Wendy Brown’s (2002) analysis of the paradoxes of the rights movement and Ellen Feiss’ (2012) attempt to evaluate Tania Bruguera’s art project, Immigrant Movement International (IMI), in light of Brown’s Critical Legal Studies argumentation. This would be an example of the complexities of judgment based on what art can do.
or molecular level to take place, offering a micropolitics that becomes serialized as variant actualizations of Occupy Wall Street as the epicenter. Unlike Rancière’s model of transformative change, the Occupy Movement immanently emerges from the system that is already in place. It’s closer to the Duchampian urinal that conceptually flipped the ‘inside’ of the gallery and museum institutionalized space to the ‘outside.’ Zuccotti Park, as the site of public artistic action, occupied the ‘conceptualization’ of Wall Street as a symbol of Capitalist neoliberalist progress. The park is, after all, a slab of concrete. While the urinal created resentment and shock to bourgeois sentimentality, the Occupy Movement created resentment and shock to neo-cons, so much so that the conservative non-profit group Citizens United along with the late Andrew Breitbart, a high profile conservative, produced a conspiracy theory video called Occupied Unmasked to claim that this was pre-organized by leftist interests. As is well known, it was not the weather that did the Occupiers in. The ‘performance’ was stopped when the State had had enough from pressures placed on it by property owners, propertied classes, and capitalist interests; when all the deterrents had failed, force became the only way to ‘stop’ the movement.

3. One of the concerns I have with the social justice developments in our field of art and its education that understands artistic practice as a progressive cause is the way it has been caught by representational thinking and identity politics. Many of the essays in JSTAE continue to employ categorical signifiers of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disability when making their arguments for equal rights. The worry is that subjectivity is decided on a priori grounds, as if it were some sort of pre-established combination of signifiers. From this a master signifier emerges within a particular context that defines who ‘I am’: queer, visible minority, white male, disabled, and so on. A dead-end has been reached. While I recognize that this position amongst my colleagues is contentious, it needs to be said. While I recognize that the struggle of identity must continue along molar lines, the worry is that the theorization of ‘difference’ remains caught up in representational thought that will never escape claims of hierarchy, bifurcation, and the slippages into transcendentalism and monolithic accounts shaped by the classical signifiers of representational thought: color, class, gender, sexuality, ability. Pluralist democracy, based on representation, is continually sabotaged by those very ‘representatives,’ who claim the rights of leadership, based on being a ‘purer’ form of a particular ideal that is seeking equality and justice. Such leaders are said to be closer to such discrimination than others included within the same categorical identity: poor Black people, ‘real’ women, transgendered as opposed to gay and lesbian. Inadvertently identity politics supports a ‘genderism,’ ‘postracism,’ ‘sexualism,’ and so on by virtue of the way ‘difference’ is cleverly pitted against a hegemonic ‘sameness.’ Since the constitutional ‘Law’ operates in this way, this ‘molar’ battle will continue. In Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980) terms, identity is a question of intensity and movement as well as a problematic by way of an ‘Idea,’ which articulates an unfolding desire. This is what holds a heterogeneous assemblage together. The categorical a priori signifiers fall away. The Occupy Movement formed such a heterogeneous assemblage that surpassed identity politics.

Contemporary critical art takes the political and the critical as shibboleths that apply equally to the neoliberal agenda as to the leftist agenda. A recent example is Imran Qureshi, who has been awarded “Artist of the Year” 2013 by the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle. The Deutsche Bank Global Art Advisory Council has a ‘gaggle’ of internationally renowned

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4 So, for instance, for them a workhorse is closer to an ox than a racehorse. Identity is no longer based on a genus.

curators including Okwui Enwezor (of Documenta 11 fame). The bank honors auspicious artists who address social issues in an individual way. Qureshi is a Pakistani artist who works from the motifs, symbolism, and ornaments of the Moghul tradition that flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries. The work is a reflection of the West and the Islamic world. Here tradition is referenced for the constricting models it represents, for its violent political and religious sentimentality, stereotypes, and conventions so as to work the tensions between violence and hope, destruction and creation, to call for peaceful resistance and optimism in these difficult times. Here we have a social criticism, supported by a world bank, via identity politics (Pakistani, Islamic, with the right tone) so as to further the much needed stability to keep currency flowing and tradable. In contrast, the Occupy Movement as a heterogeneous assemblage upsets such poststructuralist critical thinking since its defining identity appears to be ‘missing.’ Gender, sex, race, religious affiliation, age, and so on were not the defining signifiers of belonging. How often did the pundits of critical thought and the right raise the issue that there was no ‘leadership,’ that there were no clear demands made by occupiers, and so on? Why is that?

4. The Occupy Movement merged life and art, and it is in keeping with post-Situationism characterized by non-representational activism: the artist is not privileged, requiring interactors to make the artwork ‘happen’; such art is situated in the ‘real world’ of the public theater, and it operates in a political sphere that is theatrical in the way social ‘padules’ are intervened and disrupted; the types of gatherings for post-Situationist art are differentiated by the force of the event itself—from micro to macro gatherings; the social media is employed in creative ways to reach the global network; it’s a DIY ethic that disseminates information that is contra to the syndicated news channels. The Occupiers movement’s fundamental demand follows the thinkers and rioters of May ‘68 to ‘change life’ (changer la vie). All desire is social—economic and structural. As a well-known quote has Foucault (1984) querying,

> What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life? (p. 343)

Such is the thrust of the Occupy Movement: life as art. It is much like Joseph Beuys’ prervous idea of ‘social sculpture’ where ‘everyone is an artist.’ Following Beuys, the Occupy Movement seems to have strong affinities for building a ‘moving’

> “SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART” . . . EVERY HUMAN BEING IS AN ARTIST who—from his state of freedom—the position of freedom that he experiences at first-hand—learns to determine other positions of the TOTAL ART WORK OF THE FUTURE SOCIAL ORDER. (As quoted in Tisdall, 1974, capitals in original, statement dated 1973, p. 48)

One might think this is an exaggerated claim. However, we can think of each Occupy site within the realm of interventionist installation art in two ways: first there is the literal site, which simply refers to the location as a singular place (i.e., Zuccotti Park) that has its own

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5 Patterns and schedules.
6 For an exploration of art into life and life into art, see jagodzinski (2010).
physical constraints, and second, there is the functional or pragmatic site that does its ‘force work.’ Here Wall Street is the target that is being virtually ‘occupied,’ and the economic and political problematic that the Occupation Movement presented is oxymoronically presented by this ‘pragmatic site,’ for it is only ‘temporary,’ although the attempt is made to hold on to the territory for as long as possible. After all it’s the Occupy Movement, not the Occupied Movement. As the ‘outside’ forces that biodegrade artwork endure, so too do the State forces eventually try to ‘wear down’ the demonstrators via court injunctions and various safety prohibitions, until violent State forces are employed (pepper spray, billy clubbing, tear gas, physical constraint and removal, smashing computers, and so on) to finish the job. But not before the economic problematic has been exposed globally via social and public media. The artwork as an ‘abstract machine’ has done its job; its effects have been disseminated. Whenever this happens the questions concerning the Law are always raised. In this regard the ethical and political questions that surround the performative videos of hostage beheadings by Al-Qaeda and of the Occupy Movement are one of degree rather than kind. Both extremes answer to a ‘future social order.’

5. The Occupy Movement that spread globally into major cities has many qualities attributed to art engaged with genuine interpersonal human relationships, ‘participatory art,’ which requires some form of engagement on behalf of the viewer to complete the work. Passersby, workers going to Wall Street, and the media had to ‘engage’ with the demonstrators in Zuccotti Park (formerly called Liberty Plaza Park!). Such art enters the public sphere to disrupt daily movement, comprising a spatial element, a territorialization that escapes the institutionalized space of the museum and gallery. Yet, such ‘participation’ needs to be evaluated—is it merely a subordination to the artist’s will as the organizer of the ‘spectacle’ for ethico-political ends? Are the participants yet more fodder for the ‘event’ like reality television? Are these bodies serving in the capacity of the service economy—as unpaid labor through their voluntarism? Such art that enters life focuses the economic injustices that are so obviously in play within the designer capitalist system. It is a shift away from the lens of aesthetics to the force of the social impact that emerges from the formation of bodies affecting each other. Thus the creation of a meme whose genesis reproduces itself as more and more people are acceptant of the cultural idea no matter their identity as defined within representational logic. Post-Situationist in its thrust, the Occupy Movement did a turn with media that spread its efforts serially, that is, horizontally and rhizomatically. The virtual idea, the Occupy Movement’s virtuality as a sense-event in relation to the problematic that they were demonstrating, is what became actualized globally, spreading from one city to the next by clearing a smooth space within each urban area, parking next to some iconic monument (city hall, state building) or marker of progressive achievement (a bank).

6. With communication networks becoming interior-focused, private space and identity

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7 To what extent are bodies ‘used’ by artists as participants like Sebastiao Salgado for his dramatic pictures of Sahelian famine? Are these victims or willingly ‘posed’ bodies? What of Santiago Sierra? He hires disadvantaged and marginalized individuals as part of his performance pieces. Sierra hired a tattoo artist to tattoo a continuous line across the backs of four drug-addicted prostitutes in return for the price of one hit of heroin. What of the infamous ‘container’ installation by the late Austrian artist Christoph Schlingensief to raise awareness of the increased xenophobia over immigration by the use of the nationalist Freiheitliche Partei of Jörg Haider back in 2000? Are these shock tactics to raise the ‘problematic’ of injustices ethically and politically justified? Whenever art in life is staged, such judgment can never be avoided as human rights and the Law come into play when it comes to transformative change, no matter the scale.
seem all there is; the public arena within cities has been striated, privatized and marked spatially and temporally only to continue the flows of commerce. Yet, Occupy took the tactic of holding a space as a constant reminder that civil disobedience marks a stance of defiance against ‘business as usual.’ Such a ‘smooth’ space begins to act as a space of condensation for the repressed worries on everyone’s mind. As Zygmunt Bauman (2001) put it, “Public Space is not much more than a giant screen on which private worries are projected without, in the course of magnification, ceasing to be private” (p. 107). At the molecular level the creation of such ‘microutopic’ communities follows a ‘swarm mentality’ that is experimental in nature. Occupy was not a protest as much as a “demo-stration” of what a participatory assemblage might function like, complete with a General Assembly that arrived at decisions by 90% consensus and the production of The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City on September 29, 2011. It is a statement that marks out the problematic of ‘corporation’ in the way that a ‘person’ has corrupted what was perceived to be a democratic system ‘by the people, for the people.’

7. It is perhaps ironic that the Occupy Movement as an art that works with a ‘swarm’ mentality with acephalous leadership overturns Giorgio Agamben’s (1998) well-known claim that the camp exemplifies the ‘state of exemption.’ Here the camp, rather than being under sovereign control, is taken back. It is not pervaded by ‘bare life,’ but by life that thrives, exemplary of direct democracy’s potential for communism where people help people in a cooperative effort. As many have pointed out, the campers used extraordinary ingenuity as the State tried to impose its ‘soft’ force to make them give up and disappear. A late October snowstorm prompted the city of New York to confiscate gasoline generators as a fire hazard. Occupy Wall Street’s response was to acquire bicycle generators to create ‘clean’ and safe energy as well as to contribute to the good-will of participants in their solidarity. With the banning of bullhorns, the human microphone, or ‘open mic’ as the entrainment of the voice—repeating words and passing the message on down the line so that everyone ‘got it’—solidified the affect and the resolve of the encampment. As Protevi (2011) puts it

The human microphone thus offers an entry into examining political affect in the enacting of the phrase ‘We the People’ at OWS. It shows us how direct democracy is enacted by producing an intermodal resonance among the semantic, pragmatic, and affective dimensions of collective action. (n.p.)

The ‘joy’ that this human microphone created worried right-wing pundits like Ann Coulter (whose personality exemplifies the sickness and dysfunctionality of U.S. politics). To her these encampments (or anything that she perceives as ‘liberal’) were mobs or potential mobs. Once so perceived, her spin was to generate threat and anxiety as to their explosive violence, vilifying them as devils. To drive this home Andrew Breibart of Citizens United Productions produced a documentary called Occupy Unmasked claiming that Occupy was a plot manufactured by the Democratic ‘hard’ left. Rape, drug overdoses, and deaths were played up to further vilify the encampment.

8. Through Facebook, 400 unique pages on the Occupy Movement were developed that spread the word across the U.S. There was at least one in each of the 50 States. The Facebook pages enabled organizers to facilitate local encampments and organize protests and marches. People could be recruited, resources allocated to local occupations, information could be exchanged, and stories told and shared. Twitter announced the event and polled the views at large on a specific decision in real time. Gender, sex, age, disability
made no difference here. This was a non-representational movement. Not labor unions or teachers marching in the streets, or a gay liberation parade, but an ‘occupation,’ both virtual and actual, pointing to the utter stalemate with the political and economic system of representation and the corporations that they support. If the U.S. elections showed that the country was evenly divided left and right, then this was no centralist compromise. There is no disputing the disparity of wealth over the last 30 years; the top one percent has received three-fifths of all the income gains in the country. Most of this went to the richest tenth of that one percent (see Trudell, 2012). The movement was the lumpenproletariat along with students and working men and women and those that joined displaying its ‘last stand.’ It was but a glance as to how participatory democracy might work—no representatives claiming leadership for the cameras. By resisting making specific demands or adopting some sort of platform (liberal, democrat, green), the movement avoided political partisanship, and it was one of constant ‘becoming,’ continually open to more and more actualization of the Idea that another future was possible than the one framed by capital.

9. And what precisely have neoliberal economic policies wrought that Occupiers find so distressing, besides the Democratic betrayal and the waning of the Obama Dream? As Wendy Brown (2011) summarizes it:

staggering unemployment (25% among recent college graduates), deteriorating wages, vanishing pensions, home foreclosures, scandalous rates of poverty and homelessness (1 in 5 children in the US is born into poverty) and accelerated destruction of public goods and services already slimmed by two decades of neoliberal defunding and privatization. Together these effects pooled the predicaments of the poor and the middle class, the young and the old, the working and the under- and unemployed: all are sacrificed as capital is propped, bailed, and continues to feast. Put another way, what makes this era unique is the unprecedented mutual identification among working middle class families carrying under-water mortgages, unemployed youth carrying under-water college loan debt, laid-off factory workers facing contracting unemployment benefits, public workers forced to shoulder ever growing contributions to their own ‘benefits’ or losing long-promised pensions, and skilled and unskilled workers—from pre-school teachers to airline pilots—whose salaries for full-time work cannot lift their families above poverty level. (n.p)

Can anyone not be affected when reading this succinct list?

10. So why post-Situationist? How can I claim that the Occupy Movement be seen as an exemplar of this force of artistic theater? Situationist International addressed the society of the spectacle. So, have we left such a society? Many would say it’s stronger now than when Guy Debord (1970) first formulated such a thesis with a rigor that has stood up. However, what the society of the spectacle is and how it is taken up in artistic discourses vary from critic to critic: some attribute it to corporate display (architecture was postmodernism’s first love affair) or to ‘screen’ culture in general, with the glut of images that continues to be produced exponentially it seems. Certainly Jean Baudrillard (1983) dismissed this idea in the early 80s, suggesting that “the merging of medium and message” should be considered “the first great formula of the age” (p. 54). I personally maintain that the dispositive in place is the synopticon (jagodzinski, 2010b), an inverted panopticon. Here the many watch the few, while the self-exhibitionism of the few (through the social media of television,
YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, personal webpages, blogs) clamors for recognition by appealing to an amorphous conglomeration of spectators ‘out there’ for their aggrandizement, which is abetted by the silliness of having the ‘audience’ vote as to who is the best dancer, or class act, and so on, enriching the global franchise of these ‘talent’ shows. The apotheosis in the art world in this vein/vain may well be the ‘Twitter Art’ of Anthony Gormley. *One and Other* (2009) was a 100-day (2,400 hours) project of a ‘human sculpture.’ A single person was to occupy the ‘fourth plinth’ of Trafalgar Square in London for an hour. He or she could do whatever he/she liked. These activities were recorded and continually streamed online. The project was touted as ‘democratic,’ ‘representing’ the ‘people’ of Great Britain. Here spectacle is reinforced as a stream of banal egos is forwarded in the name of ‘participatory’ democracy.

11. Such *faux* participation is furthered by the communicative technologies, as if they have opened up more ‘participatory democracy’ rather than simply refining representational politics into the ability to find precise target groups as evidenced in the recent presidential election: the Latino vote, the women’s vote, the Black African-American vote, the gay vote, and on it goes. Participation in designer capitalism is characterized by ‘interpassivity,’ as the Austrian philosopher Robert Pfaffler (2003) put it. The fetishism of technology seems to further communication, yet the platforms that make it possible are pre-designed, and in the last instance control the responses that are possible. Post-Situationist art looks to a ‘participating’ spectator, what I have called elsewhere an ‘interactor’ (jagodzinski, 2010b). The ‘interactor’ here is an ‘affected’ individual, as if drunk with the possibility of change that outstrips the ‘post-political’ climate where everything is calculated and marketed for economic gain. Such an interactor need not merely be a ‘participant’ but a collaborator as well. But many artists who maintain that they oppose individualism and the commodity object often play into neoliberalism’s most seductive forms such as networking, the freedom of mobility (as long as one is productive), affective labor, and art projects that draw the crowds into the city’s gallery system. We have today, like designer capitalism itself, the generation of a new oxymoron that satisfies both the left and the right: mass customization. The Occupy Movement was proliferating such ‘interactors’ before the State shut down the experiment in participatory democracy. Such post-Situationist art speaks not only to consumerist societies where ‘activism’ is the right to vote for some celebrity on television, but to totalitarian and military regimes as well, where it is far more dangerous to engage in such theater. Yet there is an attempt to revive ‘communism’ as an Idea, rather than look to the Communism that collapsed in 1989, and it has been hijacked by regimes such as China which has in its place an even more ruthless form of capitalism: communist capitalism or capitalist communism, take your pick.

12. The Occupy Movement has direct ties to Hacktivism (hack and activism) in the way the tension between artistic and social critique is maintained, yet overcoming the usual claims of art activism, especially in the case of Nicolas Bourriaud’s (2002) ‘relational aesthetics’ that has received too much attention in art and its education for its transformative impact since it is confined to the gallery network, a fact that seems to escape its advocates. In terms of the ‘relational’ thesis, one is hard pressed not to see the difference between Rirkrit Tiravanija cooking Pad Tai (1990) for gallery visitors and talking to critics and the Occupiers of these camps sharing and cooking food together. The difference of course is the site itself and the problematic that is being engaged. Hacktivism and the Occupy Movement overcome the usual binaries when it comes to public art: individual/collective, artist/participant, active/passive, art and life. They do so because such binaries are worked through as a productive tension via anonymity. Hacktivists are the ones who wear the Guy
Fawkes masks that come from the cult film *V is for Vendetta*, responsible for aiding the demonstrations in Tripoli and Cairo; arrested for their Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) raids against corporations and trolling techniques by attacking Scientology (which resulted in jail time). One such hacktivist development was by twenty-year old Isaac Wilder and his friend Charles Wyble during the Occupy Wall Street Movement. Their invention was the ‘The Freedom Tower,’ another DIY project. The Freedom Tower is essentially an alternative Internet, or mesh network, like a pirate radio Internet, that works with peer-to-peer network interaction to share files and information, completely shielded from corporate and State Internet controls, which could easily be enforced. As a meme, it spread to Occupy Austin, Occupy San Antonio, and Occupy Los Angeles before it was all shut down.8

Anonymous

In the remaining part of this essay, I would like to dwell on the question of anonymity that pervades the hacktivism of Anonymous and the ‘leaderless’ General Assemblies that characterized The Occupy Movement. It is a reflexion9 that folds back on the first part of this essay, attempting to make the outside inside once more.

13. Anonymity is generally understood as some sort of cover or mask over a subjective self. It presents the paradox of being a somebody—yet a ‘nobody’ with agency. The null position of its erasure or disappearance (anonymity’s double or duplication) occurs when it is considered a form of identity itself. The common sense notion of being anonymous is somehow to escape identification, or to support something up front, like a charitable donation, and not be identified with it. Why? Perhaps to become known and associated with a cause brings unwanted consequences—corporate donations are generally anonymous so that they can target charities they feel serve their value system, not to mention the generous tax break that is given for being a good corporate citizen. With the US presidential elections much was made of the so-called anonymous Super PAC [political action committees] donors that were shaping the Republican presidential race. Their anonymity has finally been exposed as the players behind the spate of caustic advertisements. That it was the wealthiest 1% should be no surprise.

14. Western art’s overriding trope has been subjectivity, the authority of the artists and self-expression as tied to libertarian rights. Ai Weiwei has become the new iconic symbol of such free expression. Promoting such an artist who is so vocal and mistreated so badly by the Chinese government garners not only sympathy, but presents the United States as a country where artistic dissent is prized as long as it stays within the limits of the State and national laws. The question of who is promoted for what political reason should always be asked.10 Yet, Ai Weiwei used his international fame to push against his country’s immigration

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8 In art and its education David Darts has developed his DIY PirateBox that enables wireless file sharing networks where users can anonymously chat and share images, video, audio, documents, and other digital content (see http://wiki.daviddarts.com/PirateBox_DIY).

9 I use this grapheme (self-reflexion) in my writing to distinguish it from representational self-reflection and post-structuralist self-reflexion that is often used with identity politics. Self-reflexion works with the notion of the Deleuzian ‘fold’ (pli) wherein the symbiosis of the inside|outside becomes a complex topological landscape.

10 An obvious example in an art historical context comes from the support of the CIA and the genesis and support of the National Endowment for the Arts as a direct result of Cold War cultural politics where Abstract Expressionism was touted as ‘free expression’ in contrast to Social Soviet Realism (Guilbault, 1983).
policies, raising their problematic by performing *Fairytale* for 2007 Documenta XII.\(^{11}\) It shows self-reflexivity in action. If my argument that the Occupy Movement is an example of a new artistic public expression, articulating the frustration of representative democracy publically, then that ‘freedom’ of expression has been further breached. Recent U.S. legislation over copyright laws (that were eventually thwarted) caused some websites to voluntarily shut down like Btjunkie. Others like Pirate Bay stood their ground. In a designer capitalist system there isn’t much wiggle room as intellectual property means profit dollars. Copy Left does what it can within a system where everything is counted for personal gain. The hacktivism of Anonymous pushes hard to make all their software free source. Instructions are easy for participating in a DDoS raid, or for being a ‘troll’ to help shut down a racist site. But then the law is always in the corridors.

15. To be anonymous could not exist without the null set of a system of being ‘nobody’ as the binary of being a ‘somebody’ (see Figure 1). Anonymity exists as the overlap between the I and non-I, between marks of non-agency (literally no body) to literally possessing some body, which grants full agency. Anonymity exists between non-signification and signification. In this overlap it is Janus-faced operating on the border of the in-between. There are a number of ways to take this in-between existence. I will develop two of these: one representational and the other non-representational, which is where I think the force of art as played out in the Occupy Movement and hacktivism occurred.

16. First it is necessary to recognize that anonymity operates within a global society of media surveillance and electronic identification as one’s digitalized persona in the so-called control society where faciality is not only profiled and categorized but in many countries arrests are made for civil disobedience, as we have witnessed in Syria, but not only Syria. The riots in London and Vancouver when the Philadelphia Flyers beat the Vancouver Canucks in ice hockey for the Stanley Cup led to many arrests simply by having police

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\(^{11}\) One thousand and one Chinese immigrants were invited to come to Kassel, Germany along with 1001 chairs from the Ming and Quing dynasties that stood empty as the surrogates for the 1001 visitors who milled around the city with its citizens.
looking at surveillance tapes and checking their data banks. The difference between Syria, Britain, and Canada in this regard is simply one of degree rather than kind. When one thinks of the clever way protestors have been removed from their “occupy sites” via fire rules and loitering regulations, the comparisons seem all the more worrisome. Even more tragic when it comes to forms of protest as performance art, Canada has passed a law that makes it illegal to wear masks during riots and protests during unlawful assembly, in itself a tenuous definition. The Draconian Bill C-309 has yet to be ratified by the Canadian House or Senate. If it does pass, the jail sentences are up to ten years! The Anonymous hackers who troubled Scientology were given sentences longer those given to pedophiles, up to ten years. This speaks to the power of the mask and the power of anonymity that the State fears. One positive aspect is that such masks are still allowed in peaceful demonstrations and protests. Peace and violence are like two sides of the same coin, easily ‘flipped.’

Figure 2. TIME’s “Man of the Year” – The protestor.

17. There is no such thing as anonymity, or rather anonymity is defined by ways of avoiding State capture. Civil disobedience remains at the global forefront in so many countries. The youth of the world are attempting to open a future. They form a huge culture of disillusionment and disappointment. To look at the recent U.S. elections is to see the stalemate of the State as the disconnect between power and politics. Politics, it seems, serves power rather than has power. The power of the State has been beleaguered. Power lies in the spaces of finance, trade, information, off-set by drug trafficking, illegal immigration, the illegal sex trade, and corruption. Much has been made of Time’s Person of the Year issue being “The Protestor,” which appears on the top left corner in this image of a sea of images for what was once called “Man of the Year” (see Figure 2). This image was claimed to be anonymous—supposedly neither male nor female, nor any race, nationality,
or religious orientation. But the irony of this image of “The Protestor” who was to represent the 99% of nobodies of the Occupy Wall Street Movement was soon revealed, if the image itself was not a hoax (see Figure 3). It turned out to be that the image taken by photographer Ted Soqui was that of Sarah Mason, a 25-year-old resident of Highlands, part of a later Photoshopped scene of an Occupy LA protest at Bank of America in Downtown LA in November of 2011. The Protestor of the Year has been fingered and exposed. Again, “There is no such thing as anonymity, or rather anonymity is defined by ways of avoiding State capture.”

Figure 3. TIME’s “Person of the Year” – The protestor.

18. Artists working to avoid capture by the State operate within a post-Situationist diagram. Much of it is like protest itself—attack and then withdraw to disrupt chronological time, since the operations need to be clandestine leaving no trace behind. Unfortunately, these are more anarchic, like the Hacktivists known as ‘Anonymous,’ who dons the mask of V (in V for Vendetta) (see Figure 4). To go outside the social institution, to become a ‘nobody’ can operate only in the form of nomadology, which means perpetual movement, and the political question then becomes where the line is drawn between criminality and justice since hackers are able to play both sides of the border. Internet issues blatantly show where power lies. When Wikileaks became controversial Pay Pal, MasterCard, and Amazon pulled out from the site so that donations couldn’t be received.

Figure 4. Anonymous.
19. Activist media has had three incarnations so far. Net.art was the 1.0 version. People like Heath Bunting maintained that Internet communications, which were being promoted as the triumph of the democratic subject, were in actuality being co-opted by capitalist forces as a tool to expand consumer culture. As the free Web loses more and more ground, it seems that the 1.0 net.artists have been proved right. The next incarnation was Tactical Media or the Web 2.0 version by advocates like Geert Lovink, who continued social activism, but here the Achilles’ heel was the design. Tactical media weaponry could attack and destroy but rarely build anything new. The third wave has become locative media or ‘situated software’ that foregrounds networked bodies. Locative media are flexible, versatile, embodied, and portable. An obvious example of this third incarnation is Electronic Disturbance Theater’s Transborder Immigrant Tool. A cheap cell phone (Motorola’s i455) that has GPS functionality is then redesigned to assist people crossing the Mexican-US border across the desert—this is a real favorite of Republicans! The ‘war machine’ here fights surveillance with surveillance through the GPS mobile device. Unlike Tactical media, these mobile technologies offer activists a way to reconnect to the world in DIY kinds of ways to achieve ‘real effects.’ There are many more examples like the Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA) that finds ways to skirt surveillance cameras.

20. Anonymity in first and second incarnation is through representation, that is, trying to avoid surveillance and detection where all the spaces of movement and time are being shut down via designer capitalism that counts everything in terms of warrants and tolerances. The other way might be via non-representational means—anonymity that faces in the direction of nobody rather than somebody, a rethinking of subjectivity altogether. This is where the Occupy Movement and hacktivism by Anonymous find themselves involved with the more flexible means of ‘fighting fire with fire,’ so to speak. They turn the possibility of media in on itself: Copy Right becomes Copy Left. The Freedom Tower, mentioned above, is a good example of its versatility in the way an alternative Internet is possible on a micro-scale. I call this (again) self-reflexivity within the forming assemblage of desire.

21. Recall that behind the mask of Anonymous—V for Vendetta—is the burnt unrecognizable face that is so horrible one cannot look at it (see Figure 5). Anonymity can be rethought as the inhuman—or the unconscious inhuman that has its own agency—like the swarm effect of the Occupy Movements. While Deleuze and Guattari (1980) develop the ‘war machine’ as tactical representational media 2.0 demonstrate, they also develop the notion of probeheads as a way to disturb faciality.

Figure 5. The faceless face of V for Vendetta.
It is the face, they maintain, that positions and characterizes subjectivity—what they take as the facial machine of black space and white wall. In other words a face does not exist until it signifies, and its signification can materialize only against a discourse, which is the identity politics of representation. While poststructuralism has seen a proliferation of differences, each difference is still set against an ideal type, so there is a proliferation of ideal types that identity politics has set into motion. The most obvious examples are advertisement companies like the Colors of Benetton in the way they manage racial identities, and in the entertainment industry it has been Madonna that has profited on the multiple makeovers with Lady Gaga being a step-up, rather than being a ‘probehead’ that deterritorializes subjectivity. We might think of Anonymous hacktivism as a form of ‘probehead’ that places ‘identity’ into stasis (see Figure 6).

![Anonymous as probehead](image)

**Figure 6.** Anonymous as probehead.

22. Probeheads destroy categorizations and look towards, as Deleuze|Guattari (1980) say, “a people yet to come” (p. 345) The youth are generating this “people yet to come” via a participatory democracy that has ‘yet to come.’ The faciality of anonymity as a form of probehead cannot be categorized, unlike hybridity, which still enables categorizations to...
emerge in finer details—like getting your genes analyzed and saying you are 1% aboriginal or 4% black and so on. Probeheads simply disturb and are not so easily identifiable as they are an abstraction, an ‘abstract machine.’ The hacktivism of Anonymous and the Occupy Movement are the *non-representational emergent developments*, searching for an ‘audience’ that has not formed, via participants that are not yet there; they hold the virtual potential of another ontology, another ‘world’ view that must emerge if the 99% are to have life that is not held hostage to the debt that the corporate world uses to define its future for the 1%. We see that even the State can be held hostage—all across Europe by the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) insistence on payment: Greece, Spain, Ireland, Portugal, and most recently Cyprus. Italy is endangered as well.

One of course may call my characterization of the Occupy Movement as ‘bad performance art,’ much as early Christian art was ‘crude’ in relation to the splendor of Roman art that was refined and polished. Yet Christianity introduced a new ethic of citizenship: a *creed* that enabled any citizen to join them, breaking with Roman *civitas*, which applied only to Roman citizens. The Occupy Movement also introduced a new ethic: open participation for a Cause of economic equality and community. Judgment cannot be based on aesthetic grounds (good/bad) because we are not dealing with refined and polished theater, an aesthetic that is already in place. Rather it is an emergent diagram or platform that is just beginning to be crystallized. Here we have the start of something crude—an experiment of potentiality that does not ‘premediate’ the future, but rather opens it up.

The Occupy Movement is ‘an abstract machine’ in the way it reproduces desire for a participatory democratic process that emerges from the stranglehold of global institutions like the World Bank. We saw its replication around the planet, a social meme gone viral. While it was brutally shut down, the virtuality of its force has hardly been extinguished. It is the projection of the emergence of new global citizenry, the affective feeling that there is an economic cancer that has to be cured, and the health of the planet fought for.
References


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