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**In your book *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms – Essays in Reverse Imagineering*, you begin by talking about the problems with the Mercator map and you also talk about Swedish artist, Oyvind Fahlström’s World Map painted in 1972. Fahlström, you say was interested in resistance and excess by which you mean “politics plus overflowing subjectivity, statistics plus figurative invention” Can you say how/whether resistance and excess opens up the kind of imaginary space conducive to desiring what you call an “alternative radically democratic experience.” And how is this/might this be constituted as art? Or whether resistance and excess always falls outside the world of art? And if so how is this falling outside recognized?**

Ok, well the passage you just quoted dates from an essay that I wrote probably around the year 2000 so this is already another time. At that time what really seemed to be happening was that the world map was changing radically because of the globalisation process and because of the introduction of the Internet which at once accelerated that process and also gave you some kind of view of it, some kind of vision of the process, which I thought was a kind of immensely closed world, a kind of pre-scripted or pre-coded world and it seemed to me then and in fact it still does now that that world was not going to be viable, that the attempt to globalise capitalism as really an accelerating set of procedures, relatively homogeneous procedures for forcing the circulation of money to go faster was going to lead to all kinds of breakdowns and I thought at the time that the emerging counter-globalisation movement could really try to create a different world map, that is to say, provoke a different perception and a different imagination of what the world really is. First of all that the world in itself always overflows, all the worlds that each social group, each discourse constitutes and I think that part of the role of art is to open this perception of that which is in excess of what we are conditioned to perceive, what we’re conditioned to believe. I think that the world in which one is confined by a given set of codes, a given imaginary, a given set of discourses is also the world within which one acts and that therefore an excess over that perception, that imagination can simultaneously become a different kind of action which could be resistant to the protocols, if you will or to the constraints of contemporary capitalism. So these were the thoughts at that time...I mean people in art always want to ask ‘how is it art?’ I think what’s interesting is when human expressions overflow these limited spheres - those culturally, historically, disciplinarily specific boundaries

**I’m maybe not so interested in how is it art but more, who are the artist-cartographers of today? And why insist on this particular constitution artist-cartographer? Why not for example, imagineer-cartographer? Are you referring specifically to Bureau d’Etudes here?**

Well yes, that essay is about Bureau d’Etudes and it has very much to do with this long project of cognitive mapping that Jameson formulated many years before and I would say that the attempt to go about naming what Bureau d’Etudes calls world government is something fundamental for us at this time - for all of us in the counter-globalisation movements – because we were entering a condition of world society where transnational institutions, be they state institutions or corporate institutions had themselves set up a world map which was inaccessible to us. But in addition to that kind of cognitive mapping I wanted to point to this sort of excess. I tried to point to those aspects of Bureau d’Etudes

work which couldn't be reduced to some kind of codified knowledge and I also explored many, many other practices. After all that essay is devoted to what I call the collected phantoms, that is to say all the different groups which constitute themselves by taking a name which wasn't their own - a group name - a name which tends to de-individualise the person and to open up a space of identification which again is an overflowing space, one that overflows that very tightly controlled individuality that I think is characteristic of contemporary capitalism so I think that sort of cartography is double, its at once cognitive and in that sense rationalist. It seeks to examine the codes that constitute the rules of power and at the same time it's, I think, expressive and artistic to the extent that it really seeks to overflow the individual and therefore to seek out forms of solidarity of which I felt in the 1990s, the Left was deprived, deprived with respect to what had been the extraordinary moment of the 1970s, in fact the long moment of decolonisation, when people, successfully or not sought many, many different kinds of active solidarity which involved collaborations, both political, artistic and cultural aiming always to overcome a frozen set of relations between the dominated and the dominators or between states which had conceived themselves as enemies. I think there was a lot of that going on in the late 60s and the 70s and throughout the period of decolonisation from the post-war period on and I think that it really very much conditioned that moment when Western societies began to interrogate their own cultural conventions and their own political systems in the late 60s and then I think there was a kind of renewal of that in the late 90s based on threads, previously existing threads but which were knitted together in new ways due to the new conditions at the time

**I wonder if you're equally speaking here of a particular kind art world that is obsessed with naming**

Certainly not, I'm an activist, I'm interested in politics and activism, I work with artists who like me are drawn to those domains. I'm not particularly concerned with the ways that art practices were built up in the 80s and 90s. At that time I wasn't involved in art. I started paying attention to the art that I saw around me when I did get involved in art so I just can't speak about it, I just don't have an opinion...

**I think what I was I was trying to speak about is an interest you seem to have in an art world that holds out the possibility to re-imagine...**

No I don't like the art world very much, I feel that the art world is super-coded. No! It's not the art world... I think human beings have the possibility to re-imagine. I think that when they push that to a farther degree of elaboration they're recognised sometimes by other people as artists but what interests me is not that recognition and the way it gets coded, what interests me is when imagination is associated with resistance because otherwise I have a grandiose and lengthy critique of the way that imagination is instrumentalised in our societies. I think that since the 60s the imagination has been in power. I think that the awareness on the part of both government and corporations that peoples diversity and their expressive capacities, their sensibilities and so on were now a much more important factor in a more highly individualised society gave rise to societies really saturated in aesthetics so I see these operations of coding going on in many, many different realms and for that reason I very much

do resist this question of the art world. Most of the artworld I find devastatingly dry as a matter of fact...

**Fahlström you say “would have loved the crowd at the Days of Global Action: autonomous and wild, intelligent and quick on their feet. *Bureau d’Etudes* is in that crowd. By collaborating with squats, jobless people and *sans papiers*, by operating a self-organising space in Strasbourg, the *Syndicat Potentiel* and combining it with *Universite Tangente* a project for autonomous knowledge production, they have quietly begun transmitting a pragmatic intransigence to others on the French art scene [...] Activities like those simply can’t appear on the walls of the artworld...” Why can’t they ‘appear on the walls of the artworld’ and in any case why would you want them to ‘appear on the walls of the artworld’ and can you say something about the difference between the French art scene and artworld**

The scene that I try to describe and I’m sure Fahlström would have loved that is to say the activist scene at the turn of the century was tremendously liberating. It was tremendously liberating for the individuals, groups and collectives involved - I think there one learns to experience life in much wider ways than monolised society teaches you to and that’s why I like it and I think that the revolutionary artists of the 60s and 70s, I think that their practice was soaked by these kinds of experiences which opened up doors leading to unknown lands, lands of power - the experience of power, of sexuality, of tragedy, of possibility, of discovery, and crucially of solidarity - the kind of love that you experience when you’re not driven by the goals that capitalism is always setting up for people and the sort of performances that its always demanding of people and for all those reasons I see great potential in these situations of resistance, I continue to do so and I think they’re still being produced by people who experience them as a vital need - a vital need which is a need inseparably for themselves and for principles, for a consciousness of what’s going on in the world. And maybe in the larger more open sense art is very, very important to the creation of those environments of resistance and of alternative ‘becomings’ if you will, alternative paths through life, and so I think there’s a struggle over what is art, what’s it good for and where it exists. At the time I was very, very interested in the possibilities for art to exist outside the walls. I worked with people like *Bureau d’Etudes* who would make multiples, thousands of copies of work which could be given away. We did the same thing earlier with *Ne Pas Plier*, so that’s why it was natural for me to go from *Ne Pas Plier* to *Bureau d’Etudes* – the same principle as it were, we’d make some kind of artistic expression, one based very much on images and on the warmth of simple, yet surprising messages - in the case of *Ne Pas Plier*, the graphic arts group - which could be given away in crowds, which could be the sort of graphic support for meetings, conversations, the taking of sides, the act of protesting together - that forming of a collectivity, and in the case of *Bureau d’Etudes* something a little different - a conceptual practice, very analytic, and yet also imbued with the generosity of giving something away and the placement of that act within situations of resistance to power which in those cases were an experimental form of demonstration, the new kinds of networked demonstrations that we were really inventing at the time, I think for very good reasons.

If I make my relation to the worlds of art more precise I don't have very much of a struggle over what art could be good for and in that sense, I think museums are very interesting places if we can manage to liberate them from their self-referentiality, what are really barriers to entry but also barriers to exit, barriers to the degree to which these creations, these expressive acts can radiate and resonate in society, so I find that most museums are - like a lot of artists find them as well – more or less like prisons. Robert Smithson said the definitive word on that, that the museum is an asylum and the curator is the warden and if the work is judged to be somehow sick, its in there. I think that was said very, very well. That said, since the time around the turn of the century when so much protest activity was going on, I've worked more with museums whenever its possible but I find there still are serious limits and so I continually create other contexts for my work, and for my writing, for the kind of interactions I have with people, for the meetings and collaborations I have with artists. So this struggle over what art is, where it can exist and how it is based in society is very much a live one for me...

### **How do you normally work with museums?**

Well you know, as time has gone on and my cultural critique has grown more complex, trying to dig into the technical, scientific basis of the contemporary world, I need to interface with museums and also universities to find both the people who can appreciate these kinds of endeavours and also the metaphors around which they can be developed and in the best of cases I find metaphors in a few works of more highly elaborated art. So for me there's a hunt for metaphors, a hunt for the kind of imaginary stimulation or opening that you get from the art that attracts you. I mean this is particular to each individual person and in my case its definitely tied to... I think cultural critique is made from an encounter with art that doesn't stop with the art, its not self-referential. Adorno wrote a book called *Prisms* - I do things in that vein...

**You say "...half of the work of *Bureau d'Etudes* remains underground: the refusals and denunciations are clear, the cooperation and subjective play remains almost invisible. And maybe its better that way: how could you successfully represent an alternative radically democratic experience"? This is perhaps answered you say by a group of urbanists on "the fringes of the art world who have created one of the most impressive systems of representation to appear in recent years" USE or *Uncertain States of Europe* – a project by Stefano Boeri and *Multiplicity*. Can you say how this answers the question?**

What I was interested in was suggesting two possibilities. One, that the experiences of a transformed sensibility, sensorium, if you will, and imaginary, were at a certain level ineffable, that this was an experience which really ought to be pursued outside of any form of representation - I think that, and I think the world is full of a lot of diverging truths and I think that's true. I also think its very interesting when people try to represent the transformation of the sensorium of an imaginary and so I looked for what I thought was one of the most interesting set-ups, devices of representation that I've ever seen and I still think it is, the work by *Multiplicity* - its a very electronic thing, it consisted of 16 sort of large double or two-sided screens so that you had a kind of matrix of different forms of audio visual representation combined with music that attempted to give you a territory within which you could

move physically, there was architectural representation in there but there was also video interviews, and that kind of subjective snapshot photography that aims at giving you a feeling for the way that one moves through an urban area and also that aims to capture some of the expressions of the people who inhabit those areas and I thought there you had a highly sophisticated electronic set-up involving audio visual editing in a new and experimental way that I thought was a very, very interesting and based very much on the theories of Multiplicity and therefore of the multitudes that would come to interest me more and more in the succeeding years as that project was very much informed by the Italian economists even though the people running the project did not have the kind of political engagement of either *Bureau d'Etudes* or the real Autonomists... so this is where it was. I often do these sort of double presentations where one part of the essay deals with something more... that seems to me to be within the constituted worlds of art and dealing with more recognisable forms of representation but in a very innovative and perhaps useful way... more resistant, more recalcitrant if you will, filled with a sense of urgency toward the huge degree of injustice, oppression, repression, and domination that fills the world today for anyone who cares to look at it as most people don't

**Is this an ongoing project by Multiplicity**

I'm not really sure... I mean my interest ran out after a while. Multiplicity did some very good work but it has that character, that very opportunistic character of critics circulating between the worlds of architecture and art, existing on a kind of conference circuit of research practices - which, interest me where you'll find people like Eyal Wiseman, people that interest me quite a lot - and if Multiplicity has done some great work that I haven't seen yet then I'm willing to get very enthusiastic about it. There were limits to it I thought in terms of the attractiveness of it for a certain circuit of influential consumption, or a kind of *prosumer*, professional consumer thing which is rampant in our societies and is part of the immense *vita contemplativa* that rules the academy by which you know all and do nothing

**I was wondering whether it was too simplistic to think that art 'per se' can open up the kind of imaginary space conducive to desiring what you call an alternative radically democratic experience?**

I think nothing 'per se' can open up that space because the space opened up is between people first of all. So anytime you get to something 'per se' you've already walled yourself off totally and there's really very little chance that anything is going to open up there except in some narcissistic splitting of the self which of course exists in the psychology of the neurotic individual. I mean we know it well. No! I think the imaginary opens up between people in trans-subjective experiences. I think it opens up often at the limits of people's psychic equilibrium and it's not only about the sublime, it's about the moments when you can't stand to be normal anymore. I admire people who can't stand this society, I really can't either, especially today, the way things are going, it gets worse and worse you know... In other words, you get the picture the 'per se' is not my thing

**I get it... you talk about the possibility of "building a networked resistance to corporate capitalism" and you say the signs of this possibility are primarily cultural and artistic. Can you**

**say a little more about – and maybe you’re already saying it - how important artists are to this project? Sometimes when you’re speaking about art you seem to be speaking about a very formal, institutional, homogeneous world of art whereas maybe we need to think about ‘worlds’ of art and worlds of art that are even pushing at this so called centre as perhaps groups like *Ne Pas Plier* and *Bureau d’Etudes* are doing, that are not necessarily outside the frame of art but are pushing at this frame.**

Well yes, the text that you’ve quoted actually has the title *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms*, and it does contain the four ideas of the book. At the turn of the century, the attempt to challenge the norms, the procedures and the ongoing expropriation of globalisation had to pass through networked communication and yet we knew that these networks which we were learning to use and indeed to create through the open-source software movement, through projects like *Indymedia* and so on, we knew that these came out of a corporate military complex and that the tools themselves and their social uses had to be somehow de-codified, transformed, so that you’re kind of playing with fire, which is what you do with any practice. You always have to engage with social material that is not the kind you would like, it’s the kind that you have so to avoid what could easily become the reduction of people to packets, to bits, to abstract units of information flickering on the screen, we needed to experiment at the same time with forms of social relations, of collective performances, experiments, in which one of the key things is to lose yourself, to discover collectivities that can at once slip away from the various modes of control and yet cohere so as to offer some kind of resistance, some force of proposition in the face of a society that is a society of control. Now these themes have never left me, this is still what I write now. I’ve just published a book called *Escape the Overcode* in which I’m still talking about the same thing, maybe at a higher degree of, you know, schizophrenia or, I don’t know, but that was the issue and in the essay *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms* you have on the one hand a development of the critical framework that I built up under the heading of *The Flexible Personality* and on the other a development of the poetics of the collective name which was built up by many people including, I think crucially, the *Luther Blissett group*. I think behind the *Luther Blissett group* you have a long history of a very recalcitrant, very experimental form of art called *Mail Art* which is very, very strong in Italy and which also perceives the author of an art work to be multiple, to be in many senses unassignable, and conceives the art process to be unfinished, to be part of a circulation, conceives the uses of art to be extraordinary and multiple, that are always embodied by the user, therefore taking on that whole Duchampian possibility for the receiver to actually make the art work which the more formal and more exclusive worlds of art foreclose even while paying lip service to it. So I think that, lets say the abstraction, the brutal abstraction of telematic networks gave rise to a form of resistance that is itself - while using those telematic networks - always embodied in a very Dionysian way, in a way that has to do with the extremes of pleasure and a kind of excess which also has aspects of violence. In a riot you tend to smash things, you tend to like to see things on fire, you tend to try and marshall an energy of refusal that has to signify what it means in ways whose unfolding is of great concern for activists. People think that this is some kind of rampaging passion run wild and that may be true for some of the people involved and for some of the people who have been so brutalised by society that they’re no longer capable of doing anything but lashing out but I can assure you that for artists-

activists this is not the case, there's a great attention paid to the forms that this sort of excess are going to take and I think that on the more subtle levels there's attention paid to the psychic and trans-subjective forms that are going to be developed in those moments when the normal protocols of control are not just transgressed but really forgotten, they're somehow overcome in that fleeting way of the autonomous zone which was the space that collectively, as a differentiated multitude many people tried to create at that time and undoubtedly still do.

**Flexibility you say “was an extremely positive idea, in California in the 1970s when the culture of microelectronics was invented – the polar opposite of the rigid 1950s: openness to others, embodied experience, self-expression, improvisation, refusal of hierarchies and discipline. These were the utopian days of Bucky Fuller, Gregory Bateson and the Whole Earth Catalogue: no-one would have dreamed that An Ecology of Mind could become a management tool. But the aesthetic strategy of the “counter-culture” – difference and otherness, the rhizome, the proliferation of subjectivities – could be exalted and set to work in a semiotic economy, where what you sell are images and signs”.... Is this the art world of today?**

I don't think it's just the art world of today I think it's the world of cognitive capitalism of which the art world is one simple feeder stream into that vast world of 'semiotic capitalism', as Guattari called it. We're surrounded by it now. It's the world of immaterial production and consumption. Capitalism just couldn't produce as many things as it needed in order to grow so it had to create new products and those new products were signs.... the relationship between a sign and a behaviour and this is where you get this society of control. So now people exist in relation, basically to, streams of signals which come at them through the urban environment, through the multiplication of screens, devices, sounds, letters and even smells and vibrations in the urban environment and then through their many mobile devices particularly the phone which has become the ultimate vector of the control society and so that's a very targeted, tailored individualised universe which comes to each person in a form that's meant for them and that's how this process of individualisation becomes really hyper-individualisation. I describe that later in the text when I talk about targeting devices because what's always important to do as a cultural critic is to be a genealogist, to see where these things come from and often you find some military roots, often you find some roots in processes of massive state control, it's the general formula of neo-liberalism which is some kind of sublation of the former state capitalism that was much more centrally controlled, then you get a multiplication of the sort of foci of control which is permitted by the proliferation of digital devices, of chips, of information processors. So all of that is I think a necessary critique. I've developed it far, far beyond the levels that are contained in this book and with a much greater degree of precision and sophistication but what I've also done and was already doing in this book and what I think most of the critics of today's cognitive capitalism don't do is to try to open up experiences which are affective, which range all the way from the intimate and the affective to the cosmic because I think that only by developing those experiences right there in the thick of semiotic capitalism can you find some margins of affective difference if you will

**When feedback devices are built directly into the distribution circuits, you say “the sources of desire are directly available to corporate monitoring”. In the context of art are these exhibitions, galleries and art institutions and arts insistence on ‘naming’, so when in Chapter 7, *Liars Poker – Representation of Politics / Politics of Representation* you talk about ‘picture politics’ when it is associated with a proper name and presented within the contemplative frame of the art institution? Invariably it produces statements like these: “I represent the people,” or “I represent a social movement,” or “I represent the excluded” – which are the classic lies of representative democracy, when it serves to conceal private interests”**

Yeah, lets say that’s an older sort of feedback device in society not the ones I was talking about a moment ago which are characteristic of what I call informationalism, what everyone calls informationalism. However society is composed of many different layers and among those layers we find the classical institutions of the democracies and the social democracies such as museums but in those institutions you have a form of normalisation which makes certain people into the agents of representation. As people trying to open up a different space, a non-normative space of exchange and of action, activists can only be suspicious of such procedures of representation and indeed they are. Anarchists are famously suspicious of any kind of representation. If it exists they want it be revokeable. It makes good sense if you want to have some chance of charting out a different destiny, of mapping out a space that isn’t already inscribed on the existing maps that you judge to be the maps of some kind of oppressive society. So... yeah I think that the paradigm that I find mostly in museums is the paradigm I describe in *Liars Poker*. It’s anterior to the electronic world of real feedback - of information flows. It’s situated at another cultural level, an older one, but one that still has plenty of power in society and I just experienced this exact thing in Bristol at the Arnolfini where I was trying to work with the Platform group who are trying to do a classic intervention, where they want to take some of the power of the museum - because it does have a use, right - they want to actually realise the use value of the museum, to have a spot, an open spot in an open society where many different kinds of people could come not only as passive publics but as participants in a process that asks questions about the common good and tries to imagine interventions into what that common good can be in the really existing world and there encounters all kinds of problems due to the frame that’s set by the institution and in the best of cases works with those problems. So I went there to speak and I began by quoting the first lines of my text *Liars Poker* - which is kind of a touchstone for many people working on the borders between art and activism - and then tried to tease out what are the possibilities for transformation of those limits at a time when the sense of urgency is rising in society and I do think this is a time of rising urgency. I think it’s a time where even the keepers of the flame of art, of the more traditional modernist values of art sense that their world is not enough to really... not only to maintain the values of a democracy but to keep them safe from the dangers, from the risks, of a brutal transformation of our world which is actually going on at a terrifying rate as we are made aware of, not only by the upcoming conference on climate change, but by the effects of climate change, by the melting of the arctic ice sheet, by the frequency of unusually violent storms and all the phenomena that prove to us that we are on a course of self-destruction. So, in that moment I think that its worth interrogating the older art worlds to see if they aren’t about to change... its important.

I've always thought that one should try to maintain a sort of dialectical relationship with public institutions to the degree that they're closed off to actual use by the citizens. I think that they should be either criticized and in a way attacked or simply left but when its possible to open them up or when the people within them make efforts to open them up I think they should be used in the most faithful and principled way possible and I think that this is a development of that game of *Liars Poker* which is a game of maintaining a certain tension and a certain demand, a certain exigency. You can frame it in a very violent way as I did then because I think it was necessary at that point to frame it in a very violent way and indeed that went on and on because unfortunately rather than continuing to open up as the institutions started to do a little bit with the agitation at the turn of the century we then had a return to normal and a five-year bout of collective blindness pressed on by the real estate bubble and the funny money that acted to really distract people from the radical facts of an increasingly urgent situation. This is the kind of thing that simply makes you nuts, makes you crazy. I mean, when you see that such an important social movement as the many, many counter-globalisation movements was just covered over by a great snowball of idiocy which was celebrated by most of society until the point when the wool was pulled from their eyes and they asked what have we been doing for the last five years. Its time to start again I guess...

**What were the terms of reference of the invitation extended by the Arnolfini?**

Well, the terms of reference as far as I'm concerned were those that were created by Platform and their collaborators which was a fifty-day occupation of the museum by a number of artist-activist groups including a direct action group the Bike Bloc that were trying to mount some direct action at the Copenhagen summit and then other very, very interesting and wide range of groups including people who were looking to develop modes of transforming ones family life. I think that's extraordinary and this whole proposal of slow travel like travelling by foot rather than taking a high-speed train for visiting some urban destination. Very, very interesting set of practices that they're trying to offer as forms of aesthetic experience that are quite, quite different from the kind of climate controlled, literally climate controlled, supposedly value neutral White Cube of a place like the Arnolfini gallery so where you see a tension and that tension doesn't just revolve into a perfect institution utterly transformed, no, its played out as co-operation and antagonism that's necessary in society and I think that society needs to learn to support more of that. I mean when I realised that in the conference in which I was speaking that the door was being locked lest any non-paying person from the public entered by chance, I was a bit shocked which I often am, especially in Britain, which I think is an extraordinary control society and one where people have become completely obsessive about every kind of measure which always leads back to the ultimate measure of money and is always justified by the measure of money. So, you know I don't think that the issue has been resolved but I do think Platform and their collaborators made a tremendous attempt, are still making a tremendous attempt to do something and to not accept the destiny that the control society pushes dissidents towards which is the destiny of mere extremism which they're very good at repressing

**When people talk about politics in an artistic frame, are they're always lying?**

When I say artistic frame I give a number of elements that make you understand that this is a specific frame and therefore a specific kind of art world. It's the one which neutralises and that insists on the self-referentiality of art and so on, things we've already talked about. So I think that what's at stake is changing that frame... to the degree to which the workings of the imagination and the capacities of expression can be relocated in society, re-qualified and assigned above all, different finalities, or at least different directions, I think that you transform the normalised artistic frame - the one that always refers back to canonical values which are the values of great painting and sculpture of the past, the values of modernism, both completely indexed to market values and also crucially indexed to norms of the state, of the capitalist state which constructs a certain kind of individual, a certain kind of relationship and so on - and I think when its not transformed, you can only lie, you can only be hypocritical so I think this relationship of tension has to be maintained otherwise one becomes hypocritical immediately and that's still true...

**You ask “ Does anyone doubt there exists a politics of representation? [...] They have not witnessed the endless capacity of people who do not occupy positions of elite power, and who do not enjoy direct access to major media, to project their message nonetheless, by mean of signs, images and gestures. Nor have they realised how effectively artists can work in such “outside” contexts: one need only think of *Gran Fury*, amidst the New York Aids activism of the 1980s; of *Ne Pas Plier*, with the jobless people's movements in Paris in the 1990s; or of the many artists who have participated in recent counter-globalisation demonstrations and campaigns.” This seems to be for you where the fight is for art and artists? As you say “Artists can play a vital role in this kind of “picture politics.” However, you say “It is easy for artists to heed the injunction of the museum, the magazine and the market, which say. “Picture politics for me.” Do a picture or a sculpture of politics, carry out the representation of political conflict... you give as an example of Thomas Hirschhorn's, *Wirtschaftslandschaft Davos* (Economic landscape Davos), shown in Zurich when Hirschhorn won the prize for “Young Swiss Art” in 2001. What would leaving the artistic frame behind mean for someone like Hirschhorn?**

I think it would mean engaging in some political struggles where you have a chance to collaborate with someone unlike yourself and not for the greater glory of your own name. I think that that's what I find beautiful. I'm not particularly impressed by someone who tries to build a monument to themselves, I don't find that admirable...

**If the taxi hadn't been running out to the Friedrich-Wöhler Siedlung from the main site of the 2002 *Documenta* would it have made a significant difference to the framing of Hirschhorn's *Bataille Monument*?**

Oh, I don't know, I mean, you know, one tries to pick an example that seems significant, the example is never quite as perfect as you would like thankfully because human beings including artists are never reducible to the concepts that nonetheless attempt to describe something real. It just so happened that I was struck by this very early sort of appropriation of the imagery of the counter-globalisation movements and its something that stings you when you're involved in those movements and you see

them being diverted into presentation but there could also have been many, many other examples and I'm not sure the details are so important...

**The most interesting question within the artistic field, you say, is “How to play the exhibition game in such a way that something real can actually be won ...” there’s something that strikes me when you talk about ‘something real’ here in terms of ‘use value’ – can you say something more about this ‘something real’ and what’s at stake for you in this notion of this ‘something real’?**

Well, I mean the opposite of use value, for Marx, is exchange value. Exchange value is that which circulates in the form of a monetary sign and attracts people’s attention to a monetary sign as the primary object. You can never precisely distinguish between use value and exchange value in a capitalist society but you can try so if there were a political use value it would lie in whatever sort of socially organized action would tend to diminish the role of exchange value in the governance of our lives and therefore in the creation of our very selves. We live in a society where the mathematics of exchange value have been developed to a degree hitherto unprecedented because of computers and so there’s a real need to do what to some degree was done after the Second World War, that is to establish domains of existence that are not subject to those laws of circulation and exchange, when people are guaranteed healthcare it means that the care for their health isn’t dependent on the fluctuation of a monetary sign, that is to say their bank account. The same can be said for everything that can be guaranteed as a vital need for the collectivity, be it education, unemployment insurance, retirement, and even free time, all those things. So, these are not just empty words or ideals that have never been realised. What we need now is to realise those new forms that includes intervening where people are being excluded from access to the very vital needs of food and shelter which is the case all over our hyper-rich societies so when I say a ‘real’ change can be made, of course I mean a real change that effect peoples lives, their ability to enjoy their lives, to enjoy that expansion of oneself into other people and other worlds that I think is the real fruit of existence in whatever cultural way and under whatever latitude and language its developed and I think that politics and Left politics has always been about that. Its always been about trying to extend the realm of those who have the right and entitlement to participate in a life that’s as good as the life others know – I think these are real things and very concrete things and they’re deeply bound up with what kind of art you’re going to make, what kind of art you’re going to be able to perceive, what kind of art you’re going to be able to enjoy, they’re intimately bound up with that and there’s no way to change art without changing life and without changing the political divides that structure life and that structure social interaction

**You say that “art today is one of the few fields open to experimentation with the technologies, habits and hierarchies of symbolic exchange, fundamental to a media-driven society. But these experiments can only take on a transformative power in the open, evolving context of a social movement, outside the cliques and clienteles of the artistic game. Which is why even the work of someone as outwardly radical as Thomas Hirschhorn appears so dubious. How can anyone be**

**sure of its success, when the reception is dominated by his proper name?” Are there cliques and clienteles in the activist game and what do these look like and how are they dealt with?**

Oh undoubtedly - yes of course. Perhaps there's a bit of rhetoric in the word 'only' in the sentence you quoted. What I'm trying to get at is that experimentation with the senses is known relatively well to people involved with the arts, you hear sounds, you touch textures, you see colours. Experimentation with the ways that our senses are channelled and constructed, that is to say, experimentation within the more restrictive realms of technology, of media, of architecture as its actually used in society is something that I think has been dealt with in a very interesting way particularly by performance artists and by many others like *Invisible Theatre* and so on which tended to flourish in a very radical way during the '60s and which continue to flourish in a radical way but without any more connection to the constrictive worlds of formal art. What you had since the '60s was a kind of divide in society where those experiences with the sort of everyday sensorium flourished but became the concern of a counterculture that was increasingly considered retrograde or whatever - it no longer had social prestige. Now what interests me is to take and reignite that kind of experimentation but in today's societies and there are powers produced in today's society not just the power to drive a bulldozer through an open field or through someone's house as its done in the *Gaza Strip* every day but also the power to drive a desire through someone's heart and to drive a whole set of blinking lights into someone's eyeballs and I think that there too you can experiment with what its possible to sense, to imagine, to say, to express and to be, and I'm interested in that because that's where the sort of leading edge of social change is taking place and I think its important to intervene there. I think that in a democratic society we need that kind of experimentation, everywhere where society is changing and setting up new fields of coded interaction. Who decides on those codes, to what end, for what use, for what exchange value. This is where we need an open experimentation that's also dialogical, that involves the exchange of views, of words and I think in the best of cases even in the formal art institutions there is some experimentation with that but I don't think its recognised well enough for what it is. I think it tends to get pulled back to comparison with an earlier work that was judged prestigious again in comparison to another work and the benchmark for this kind of experimentation is always a few years in the 1960s that were canonised where the work of people like Bruce Nauman or Robert Smithson, everything is interpreted as a variation on those works or the canonised works that followed which is losing really the impulse that was at work and that still is at work for so many artists in trying to open up the possibilities of perception, expression and speech in daily life in our highly complex societies today....

**You say “the privileged status of art within the creative city and creative economy discourse obviously has to be left behind; and even more, it has to be actively resisted, deliberately subverted, so that something new can arise in its place” - We've just been talking about this - the enigma, you say for us, and this is what I'm interested in “is why this second option has only been taken, so far at least, by a relatively small minority. What creates a contemporary leftist culture? How is a subversive subjectivity forged? And what blocks its formation?” Can you say something about what you think creates a contemporary leftist culture, how is a subversive subjectivity**

**forged and what blocks its formation and how can art/artists help in what you call “an anthropology of self-fashioning”?**

If you are interested in expression, if you are interested in creativity, it comes as a shock to see that which interests you most, transformed into devices for the structuring and instrumentalisation of your own desire. This is what we could see massively in the phase of gentrification or what I call mega-gentrification that unfolded in the late 1990s but then with renewed intensity in the middle years of this decade and so... I think that the force of that, the really overflowing... because so much of the productivity of contemporary industrial post-industrial capitalism was put into the creation of aestheticized environments that the question of how to build a Leftist activity - lets say activity - that has this attraction to others and that tries to build solidarities across the lines that divide us and across the many, many barriers that divide people, how does that emerge? Really I think it emerges first of all in situations where you resist somehow where you take not so much a risk which could be capitalized on but where you make yourself vulnerable to the dangers that anyone who steps outside the clearly indicated normative behaviors that society proposes