





Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity

During the post-'89 period outlined in the previous chapter, which saw a surge of artistic and curatorial interest in undertaking projects with socially marginalised constituencies, with a concomitant reinvention of the exhibition as a site of production rather than display, a further manifestation of the social turn in contemporary art was emerging through a new genre of performance. [1]s hallmark is the hiring of non-professional performers, rather than these events being undertaken by the artists themselves (as was the case in the majority of body art works of the 1960s to 1980s: think of Marina Abramovic, Chris Burden, Gina Pane or Vito Acconci). If this tradition valorised live presence and immediacy via the artist's own body, in the last decade this presence is no longer attached to the single performer but instead to the [2]ollective body of a social group.¹ Although this trend takes a number of forms, some of which I will describe below, all of this work – in contrast to the projects explored in the previous chapter – maintains a comfortable relationship to the gallery, taking it either as the frame for a performance or as a space of exhibition for the photographic and video artefact that results from this. [3]will refer to this tendency as 'delegated performance': the act of hiring non-professionals or specialists in other fields to undertake the job of being present and performing at a particular time and a particular place on behalf of the artist, and following his/her instructions. This strategy differs from a theatrical and cinematic tradition of employing people to act on the director's behalf in the following crucial respect: [4]he artists I discuss below tend to hire people to perform their own socio-economic category, be this on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity, age, disability, or (more rarely) a profession.

This chapter marks a break with previous chapters in that I have seen or experienced most of the works discussed; the tone is less historical since the material is newer and a critical point is at stake. Much of this work has not been addressed or analysed in depth by art historians or critics, so my position forms a response not so much to existent writing but to the reactions that this work repeatedly elicits – both from the general public and

Summary of Comments on Artificial Hells

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Predesecor to entities such as Crowds on Demand (post 1989)				
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	Number: 3	Author: phm	Subject: Underline	Date: 5/24/2020 7:10:17 PM
	Number: 4	Author: phm	Subject: Highlight	Date: 5/24/2020 6:26:26 PM
Relationship to identity politics and the entrenchment or canalization of identity. See concept of "fastening" in Koopman 2019. Fastening is a means of being tides down and being sped up (12).				

specialist art world – at conferences, panel discussions and symposia. One of the aims of this chapter is to argue against these dominant responses for a more nuanced way to address delegated performance as an artistic practice engaging with the ethics and aesthetics of contemporary labour, and not simply as a micro-model of reification. I will begin by outlining three different manifestations of this tendency, and the different performance traditions they draw upon: body art, Judson Dance and Fluxus, and docu-drama.²


I. A Provisional Typology


My first type of delegated performance comprises actions outsourced to non-professionals who are asked to perform an aspect of their identities, often in the gallery or exhibition. This tendency, which we might call ‘live installation’, can be seen in the early work of Pawel Althamer (working with homeless men in *Observer*, 1992, and with lady invigilators for the Zachęta exhibition ‘Germinations’, 1994), or Elmgreen & Dragset hiring, variously, gay men to lounge around in the gallery listening to headphones (*Try*, 1997) or unemployed men and women to be gallery invigilators (*Reg/u/larding the Guards*, 2005). It is telling that this work developed primarily in Europe: its light and playful tone marks a decisive break with the more earnest forms of identitarian politics that were so crucial to US art of the 1980s.

Consider, for example, one of the earliest examples of this tendency by Maurizio Cattelan. In 1991 the Italian artist assembled a football club of



Maurizio Cattelan, *Southern Suppliers FC*, 1991




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Regulation...

North African immigrants, who were deployed to play local football matches in Italy (all of which they lost). Their shirts were emblazoned with the name of a fictional sponsor RAUSS: the German word for 'get out', as in the phrase *Ausländer raus*, or 'foreigners out'. The title of the project, *Southern Suppliers FC*, alludes to immigrant labour ('suppliers' from the south), but also to the trend, then hotly debated in the Italian press, of hiring foreign footballers to play in Italian teams. Cattelan's gesture draws a contrast between two types of foreign labour at different ends of the economic spectrum – ¹star footballers are rarely perceived in the same terms as working-class immigrants – but without any discernable Marxist rhetoric. Indeed, through this work, Cattelan fulfils the male dream of owning a football club, and apparently insults the players by dressing them in shirts emblazoned RAUSS. At the same time, he nevertheless produces a confusing image: the word RAUSS, when combined with the startling photograph of an all-black Italian football team, has an ambiguous, provocative potency, especially when it circulates in the media, since it seems to blurt out the unspoken EU fear of being deluged by immigrants from outside 'fortress Europe'. *Southern Suppliers FC* is a ²social sculpture as cynical performance, inserted into the real-time social system of a football league.³ Francesco Bonami therefore seems to ascribe a misplaced worthiness to the project when he claims that Cattelan aimed 'for a ³democratic new way to play the artist, whilst remaining central to the work as the coach and manager of the teams'.⁴ At a push, the collaborative process of *Southern Suppliers FC* could be said to share out the performance limelight, but it is highly directorial and far from straightforward in its political message.

Cattelan turned to sport as a popular point of reference, but music is a more frequent focus of collaboration. Swedish artist Annika Eriksson's *Copenhagen Postmen's Orchestra* (1996) and British artist Jeremy Deller's *Acid Brass* (1997) both invited workers' bands to perform recent pop music in their own idiom. The Copenhagen Postmen's Orchestra played a song by the British trip-hop group Portishead, while the Williams Fairey Brass Band (historically connected to an aircraft factory in Manchester) interpreted a selection of acid house tracks. Eriksson's event resulted in a five-minute video, while Deller's has become numerous live performances, a CD, and a diagram elaborately connecting these two forms of regional working-class music. Beyond the aesthetic frisson of mixing together two types of popular music, part of the appeal of both projects lies in the fact that the artists employ real bands. These are not actors hired to play electronic music on brass instruments, but 'genuine' working-class collaborators who have agreed to participate in an artistic experiment – a rather formal one in the case of Eriksson (the camera remains static throughout the video), more research-led in the case of Deller.⁵ The musicians perform their public personae (determined by their employment and strongly linked to class) and come to exemplify a collectively shared passion (in this case,


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Outcry of gen-z in the displacement of 'influencer' labor. See Brud contracting fictional influencer to talent agency. See also podcast Interdependence #3 on alternative perspectives on the Brud practice and potential for more equitable arts organization and delegation.
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Qualitative representation
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"Democratization" is often a lazy means for describing some other formsystem of control
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performing music) – a recurrent theme in both artists' work. These follow the trend for light and humorous ways in which delegated performance in Europe in the '90s is used to signify class, race, age, or gender. These bodies are a metonymic shorthand for politicised identity, but the fact that it is not the artist's own body being staged means that this politics can be pursued with a cool irony, wit and distance.


A rupture with this mood arrived in 1999, with the performances of Spanish artist Santiago Sierra. Prior to 1999, Sierra's work comprised a forceful combination of minimalism and urban intervention; over the course of that year his work shifted from installations produced by low-paid workers to displays of the workers themselves, foregrounding the economic transactions on which the installations depend. There is a clear path of development from *24 Blocks of Concrete Constantly Moved During a Day's Work by Paid Workers* (Los Angeles, July), in which the workers are not seen but their presence and payment is made known to us, to *People Paid to Remain inside Cardboard Boxes* (G&T Building, Guatemala City, August), in which the low-paid workers are concealed within cardboard boxes, a metaphor for their social invisibility. The first piece in which the participants were rendered visible is *450 Paid People* (Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, October), which led to a work that continues to be inflammatory: *250cm Line Tattooed on 6 Paid People* (Espacio Aglutinador, Havana, December). Many of these early performances involve finding people who were willing to undertake banal or humiliating tasks for the minimum wage. Sierra's works are stripped of the light humour that



Santiago Sierra, *250cm Line Tattooed on 6 Paid People*, 1999

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Critical in the ability to otherize the spectsical's representation

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A mark of payment, related to the outcry of inauthenticity of participant motivation in political astroturfing? How are paid political actors (in the general sense of that term) 'marked'?

accompanies many of the projects mentioned above, since they frequently take place in countries already at the disadvantaged end of globalisation, most notably in Central and South America. Consequently, he has been heavily criticised for merely repeating the inequities of capitalism, and more specifically of globalisation, in which rich countries **1**utsource' or 'offshore' labour to low-paid workers in developing countries. Yet Sierra always draws attention to the *economic* systems through which his works are realised, and the way these impact upon the work's reception. In his work, performance is outsourced via recruitment agencies and a financial transaction takes place that leaves the artist at arm's length from the performer; this distance is evident in the viewer's phenomenological encounter with the work, which is disturbingly cold and alienated. Unlike many artists, Sierra is at pains to make the details of each payment part of the work's description, turning the economic context into one of his primary materials.⁶

In its emphasis on the phenomenological immediacy of the live body and on specific socio-economic identities, we could argue that this type of delegated performance owes most to the body art tradition of the late 1960s and early 1970s. At the same time, it differs from this precursor in important ways. **2**rtists in the 1970s used their *own* bodies as the medium and material of the work, often with a corresponding emphasis on physical and psychological transgression. Today's delegated performance still places a high value upon immediacy, but if it has any transgressive character, this tends to derive from the perception that artists are exhibiting and exploiting other subjects.⁷ As a result, this type of performance, in which the artist uses other people as the material of his or her work, tends to occasion heated debate about the ethics of representation. **3**uration, meanwhile, is reconfigured from a spiritual question of individual stamina and endurance to the economic matter of having sufficient resources to pay for someone else's ongoing presence.

A second strand of delegated performance, which began to be introduced in the later 1990s, concerns the use of professionals from other spheres of expertise: think of Allora and Calzadilla hiring opera singers (*Sediments, Sentiments [Figures of Speech]*, 2007) or pianists (*Stop, Repair, Prepare*, 2008), of **4**ania Bruguera hiring mounted policemen to demonstrate crowd-control techniques (in *Tatlin's Whisper 5*, 2008), or of Tino Sehgal hiring university professors and students for his numerous speech-based situations (*This Objective of That Object*, 2004; *This Progress*, 2006).⁸ These performers tend to be specialists in fields other than that of art or performance, and since they tend to be recruited on the basis of their professional (elective) identity, rather than for being representatives of a particular class or race, there is far less controversy and ambivalence around this type of work. Critical attention tends to focus on the conceptual frame (which more often than not is **5**struction-based) and on the






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See Johannes Kreidler's 'Outsource' (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/tempo/article/outsourcing-progress-on-conceptual-music/FADFEFA96AFB7AC6AFE01C6D9D1A3C0>) wherein the composer 'allegedly' outsources the work of composing a piece of music in the style of music that he has already composed to that point for the purposes of a paid commission. Research into this project shows that the outsourcing itself never occurred, being fabricated for conceptual purposes.
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Shifting locus of transgression
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What relationship does astroturfing bear to duration? The parallel of shifting sites of political import from the individual motivation/intention to the economic imperative is the same at that described here with regards to duration. How is sustainability of movement organization and protest changed in a shift from individual imperative to economic imperative. Financialization of political agency.
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- T** Number: 5 Author: phm Subject: Underline Date: 5/24/2020 6:45:37 PM
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JR: The financialization of political agency is key. Long durational performance is kind of "brute force" hacking: using sheer will, stamina to break through to meaning/importance. political protest relies on the same dynamic, brute force duration to break-through to political agency. by converting this stamina to a simple one time payment, each protest becomes converted to a time-spent = money equation.

specific abilities of the performer or interpreter in question, whose skills are incorporated into the performance as a ready-made. The work has an instruction-based character which – along with the fact that many of the performers in these works are Caucasian and middle-class – has facilitated the repeatability of this type of work, and enhanced its collectability by museums.

The best-known example of this tendency is unarguably Tino Sehgal, who is adamant that his ¹practice not be referred to as ‘performance art’ but as ‘situations’, and that his performers be referred to as ‘interpreters’.⁹ While his insistence is somewhat pedantic, it nevertheless draws our attention to the scored nature of Sehgal’s work, and to its relationship with dance: as every critic of his output has observed, the artist was ²trained in ³choreography and economics before turning to visual art. *This Objective of That Object*, for example, places the viewer within a highly controlled experience: as you enter the gallery, five performers with their backs turned to you urge you to join in a discussion on subjectivity and objectivity. The performers tend to be philosophy students, but their semi-scripted dialogue comes over as somewhat depersonalised and rote, and any contribution you make to the debate feels self-conscious and hollow, since it is impossible to alter the work’s structure, only to assume your role within it. (If you remain silent, the performers wilt onto the floor until a new visitor enters the gallery.) ⁴Although Sehgal makes a point of renouncing photographic reproduction, his works seem actively to tear apart any equation between liveness and authenticity; indeed, the very fact that his work runs continually in the space for the duration of an exhibition, performed by any number of interpreters, erodes any residual attachment to the idea of an original or ideal performance.

A less well-known – and less gallery-based – approach that deploys similar methods can be found in the conceptual performances of Spanish artist Dora García. Several of her early performances explicitly allude to avatars and surveillance (such as *Proxy/Coma*, 2001) but her most compelling projects blur into the outside world and can potentially last for years, as in *The Messenger* (2002). In this work, a performer (the ‘messenger’) must deliver a message in a foreign language that he/she does not understand – but to do so must search for someone who can identify and understand that language.¹⁰ The performer is entrusted with the task, and it is important to note that García – like Sehgal – is a meticulous recruiter: *The Beggar’s Opera* (2007) required one performer to play a charming beggar in the streets of Münster, while *The Romeos* (2005), involved hiring handsome young men to establish seemingly spontaneous conversation with visitors to the Frieze Art Fair.¹¹ This form of ‘invisible theatre’ operates less to raise consciousness (as in the ⁵Augusto Boal model) than to insinuate a moment of doubt and suspicion in the viewer’s habitual experiences of city life.¹² García often strikes a careful balance between an

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	Fanciful thought: Tino Sehgal as an inverse character of Surkov...			
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	Erosion of equation between liveness and authenticity. Erosion of residual attachment to the idea of an original or ideal performance. The 'interpreters' in Sehgal's situation perform disinterestedness (depersonalization). What might a self-ironic, purposefully depersonalized form of political protest look like, and be capable of achieving, if anything? Could it be a potential counter to the spectacular nature of paid, astroturfed protest. Thinking of silent protests, in relation to the 'wilting' performance in Sehgal's situation. A type of inexplicably rule-based or instruction-based (formal) group reactivity that purposefully confounds, or resists easy classification and categorization.			
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	Theatre of the Oppressed			


JR: Love Number 3 haha, inverse character indeed


Number 4: maybe something along the lines of the "meta-scam" where you use an oppressive structure to its own disadvantage by forcing use of materials (Uber drivers submitting massive amounts of legal challenges to overload system): <https://rhizome.org/editorial/2020/apr/01/the-art-of-the-meta-scam/> In an IRL setting, perhaps it would be something like joining a paid-protest org like crowds on demand, and then going to a protest and revealing your payment source? definite relation to the wilting performance with the silent protest, back to corrupted leader as they walk in. this makes me think of punk rock performers who turn their back to the crowd in a statement of rejecting celebrity/social norms.


Dora García, *The Romeos*, 2008

open-ended score and the performer's interpretation of her instructions. If Sehgal's works are self-reflexive, cerebral, and encourage the subjective contribution of the audience, then García's are less visibly participatory and seem to reinforce doubt and unease.

Sehgal and García exemplify a type of performance that emphasises simple instructions, which are carried out in a manner that allows for individual variation and a quotidian aesthetic. As such, they evoke several precursors from the 1960s and '70s. Goal's 'invisible theatre' seems an immediate point of reference, but neither artists would subscribe to his political agenda; another would be the task-based participatory instructions of Fluxus.¹³ Judson Dance, with its emphasis on everyday gestures, clothes and movements as the basis for choreographic invention, is perhaps the closest precedent, especially Steve Paxton's walking pieces from the mid 1960s. One of them, *Satisfyin' Lover* (1967), was first performed with forty-two dancers, and comprises three movements only: walking, standing and sitting.¹⁴ Paxton's score is structured into six parts, in each of which the performers walk a certain number of steps and stand for a certain number of counts before exiting, at roughly thirty-second intervals. He describes the pace of walking as 'an easy walk, but not slow. Performance manner is serene and collected'; the costumes are 'casual'.¹⁵ As Yvonne Rainer observes, 'it was as though you had never seen ordinary people walk across a space. It was highly revelatory.'¹⁶ Judson Dance finds its direct lineage in contemporary choreography such as Jérôme Bel's *The Show Must Go On* (2001), which makes use of everyday movements to literalise the lyrics of pop songs. Several of these strands come together in

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JR: Interesting, i wonder if these performance inspired Surkov's "reveal" factor...

Martin Creed's *Work no.850* (2008), in which professional sprinters ran the eighty-six metres of the Duveen Gallery at Tate Britain, at fifteen-second intervals; the artist compared the pauses between these sprints to the rests in a piece of music, reinforcing the connection between choreography and daily life.¹⁷

A third strand of delegated performance comprises situations constructed for video and film; key examples might include Gillian Wearing, Artur Żmijewski and Phil Collins. Recorded images are crucial here since this type frequently captures situations that are too difficult or sensitive to be repeated. (Here it should be reiterated that my interest is not in artists working in a documentary tradition, but on works where the artist *devises* the entire situation being filmed, and where the participants are asked to perform themselves.) Depending on the mode of filming, these situations can trouble the border between live and mediated to the point where audiences are unsure of the degree to which an event has been staged or scripted. Because the artist assumes a strong editorial role, and because the work's success often relies on the watchability of the performers, this kind of work also tends to attract ethical criticism both from over-solicitous leftists and from the liberal and right-wing media.

They Shoot Horses (2004) by the British artist Phil Collins is a striking example of this tendency. Collins auditioned and paid nine teenagers in Ramallah to undertake an eight-hour disco-dancing marathon in front of a garish pink wall to an unrelentingly cheesy compilation of pop hits from the past four decades. The resulting videos are shown as a two-channel installation, in which the performers are projected to more or less the same size as the viewers, creating an equivalence between them. Although we don't hear the teenagers talk, their dancing speaks volumes: as the grueling day continues, their performances shift from individual posturing to collective effort (increasingly daft moves by way of generating mutual entertainment). At several panel discussions about this work, I have heard members of the audience raise concerns about the artist's 'exploitation' of his performers – for example, by not listing their names in the credits.¹⁸ Yet the point of Collins' project is not to be an exemplary instance of artistic collaboration, but to universalise his participants by addressing multiple genres of artistic and popular experience: the portrait, endurance-based body art, reality television (and its precursor in depression-era dance marathons, to which his title alludes).¹⁹ It is also a deliberately perverse approach to site-specificity: the Occupied Territories are never shown explicitly but are ever-present as a frame or *hors cadre*. This knowledge colours our reception of the banal pop lyrics, which seem to comment on the kids' double endurance of the dance marathon and the political crisis in which they are mired. In subjecting the teenagers to an onslaught of Western pop, Collins plays an ambiguous role: both ally and taskmaster, he depicts them as generic globalised teenagers; the more usual media representation of

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Abstraction and reduction is a means of universalizability

JR: yes, exactly. astroturfing is essentially doing the same thing, no? a universalizability through finacialization of political agency. anyone can abstract/reduce a political issue for the right price.


also, interesting tangent here with the use of pop music as a form for global violence. this is mirrored in the use of pop music, heavy metal as method of sleep deprivation torture by US in war in the middle east.

Palestinians is that of victim or fundamentalist (hence Collins' use of the 'usual suspects' backdrop, akin to a police line-up).

Artur Żmijewski's *Them* (2007) offers a more troubling narrative, less concerned with portraiture than with the role of images in reinforcing ideological antagonism. The artist set up a series of painting workshops for four different groups in Warsaw: ladies from the Catholic Church, Young Socialists, Young Jews and Polish Nationalists. Each group produced a symbolic depiction of its values, which were printed onto T-shirts worn by each member of the group in subsequent workshops. Żmijewski then encouraged each group to respond to each others' paintings, altering and amending the images as they saw fit. The first gestures were gentle – such as cutting open the door of a church, to make the building more open – but became more violent, culminating in an explosive *impasse*: painting over an image entirely, setting fire to it, and even assaulting the other participants by cutting their T-shirts or taping over their mouths. As in many of Żmijewski's videos, the artist adopts an ambiguous role and it is never clear to what degree his participants are acting of their own volition, or being gently manipulated to fulfil the requirements of his pre-planned narrative. The action unfolds with apparently minimal direction from the artist, who nevertheless establishes the structure of the participants' encounters, records the escalating conflict between them and edits this into a narrative. Following the first screening of this work in Warsaw, many of the participants were angry at this pessimistic representation of the workshops as ending in an irresolvable antagonism.²⁰ However, artists like Żmijewski are less interested in making a faithful documentary of this situation than in constructing a narrative, grounded in reality, that conveys a larger set of points about social conflict. *Them* offers a poignant meditation on



Phil Collins, video still of *They Shoot Horses*, 2004

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Cross-pollination and friction and refractive lenses onto group perception and ideology.

JR: plus, the directors manipulation of events to suit predetermined narrative.

ARTIFICIAL HELLS



Artur Żmijewski, *Them*, 2007, video still

Collective identification, the role of images in forging these identifications, as well as a harsh parable about social antagonisms and the facility with which ideological differences become hardened into irresolvably blocked patterns of communication.

The genealogy for this type of performance work is complex. On the one hand it bears a strong relationship to the contemporaneous emergence of reality television, a genre that evolved from the demise of documentary TV and the success of US tabloid TV in the 1990s.²¹ Like reality television, it also has roots in a longer tradition of observational documentary, mock-documentary and performative documentary that emerged in the 1960s and




Artur Żmijewski, *Them*, 2007, video still





JR: demonstrates how political theater serves to increase partisanship, performance of political ideals makes both sides further entrenched.

'70s.²² Although Italian Neorealist cinema, particularly the later films of Roberto Rossellini, incorporated non-professional actors in secondary roles in order to stretch the prevailing boundaries of what was then considered realism, the singularity of contemporary artists' approaches is more comparable to idiosyncratic film auteurs such as Peter Watkins (b.1935). Watkins's early work used non-professional actors, handheld cameras and tight framing as a way to address contentious social and political issues, such as the consequences of nuclear attack in his 1966 film *The War Game*.²³ He is an apt point of reference for contemporary artists, and not just for his subject matter and use of amateur performers: firstly, his films exceed the conventional length of mainstream cinema and can be extremely long (eight hours in the case of *La Commune*, 2001), and secondly, he frequently configures the camera as an agent or performer within the narrative, even when the story is set in a period prior to the invention of film; the conceit of *La Commune*, for example, is that the protagonists are being interviewed for a television report on the events of 1871 as they are taking place.

We can see from this rapid overview that what I am calling delegated performance in all its contemporary iterations (from live installation to constructed situations) brings clear pressures to bear on the conventions of body art as they have been handed down to us from the 1960s. Contemporary performance art does not necessarily privilege the live moment or the artist's own body, but instead engages in numerous strategies of mediation that include delegation and repetition; at the same time, it continues to have an investment in immediacy via the presentation of authentic non-professional performers who represent specific social groups. If body art in the '60s and '70s was produced quickly and inexpensively (since the artist's own body was the cheapest form of material), delegated performance today, by contrast, tends to be a luxury game.²⁴ It is telling that it takes place primarily in the West, and that art fairs and biennials were among the earliest sites for its popular consumption. Jack Bankowsky has coined the term 'art fair art' to designate a mode of performance in which the spectacular and economic context of the art fair is integral to the work's meaning, and against which the artist's gestures provide a mildly amusing point of friction.²⁵ Many of his examples are delegated performances, with the Frieze Art Fair as a significant incubator for this type of work: consider Elmgreen & Dragset's doubling of the booth of their Berlin gallery Klosterfelde, complete with identical works of art and a lookalike dealer (2005); Gianni Motti's *Pre-emptive Act* (2007), a policeman meditating in a yoga position; or numerous performances staged by Cattelan's Wrong Gallery, such as Paola Pivi's *100 Chinese* (1998–2005), 100 identically dressed Chinese people standing in the gallery's booth. Whereas once performance art sought to break with the art market by dematerialising the work of art into ephemeral events, day dematerialisation and rumour have become one of the most effective forms of hype.²⁶ Performance excites media

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JR: Delagated performance as a Luxury game is an interesting connection, a lot of the astroturfing instances (Trump speech, Tea party, Devos) tend towards a kind of decadences or middle-class suburban aesthetic, wedge issues, political hobbie, NIMBY, greenwashing.




Marina Abramovic, untitled performance for Los Angeles MoCA, annual gala, 2011

attention, which in turn heightens the symbolic capital of the event – as seen in numerous covers of *The Guardian*'s annual supplement to accompany the Frieze Art Fair, but also the recent controversy around Marina Abramovic's 'human table decorations' for the LA MoCA gala (November 2011): eighty-five performers were paid \$150 to kneel on a rotating 'lazy susan' beneath the tables, with their heads protruding above, staring into the eyes of diners who had paid upwards of \$2,500 for a ticket.²⁷ Yvonne Rainer wrote to LA MoCA, denouncing this 'exploitative' and 'grotesque spectacle' as reminiscent of Pasolini's *Salo* (1975). Yet the problem with Abramovic's table decorations is that they don't become more than table decorations. What is shocking is the performance's banality and paucity of ideas, and the miserable fact that a museum such as LA MoCA requires this kind of media stunt dressed up as performance art to raise money. My point is that not all examples of delegated performance should be tarnished with the label of 'art fair art' or 'gala art': the better examples offer more pointed, layered and troubling experiences, both for the performers and viewers, which problematise any straightforward Marxist criticism of these performances as reification.

II. Performance as Labour and Pleasure

As I have indicated, the repeatability of delegated performance – both as a live event or as a video loop – is central to the economics of performance since 1990, enabling it to be bought and sold by institutions

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Also worth contemplating the function of repeatability in the context of protest.

JR: Indeed, astroturfing is more repeatable, as it happens on demand, to script. where as actual grassroots activism is spontaneous, hard to catalyze, ephemeral, and perhaps more potent because of this?

JR: also interesting to see the Marina Abramovic's piece in this context as it has now become a big piece of QAnon/Pizzagate lore.

and individuals, performed and reperformed in many venues.²⁸ It is not coincidental that this tendency has developed hand in hand with 1) managerial changes in the economy at large, providing an 2) economic genealogy for this work that parallels the art historical one outlined above. ‘Outsourcing’ labour became a business buzzword in the early 1990s: the wholesale divesting of important but non-core activities to other companies, from customer service call-centres to financial analysis and research. With the growth of globalisation, ‘offshore outsourcing’ became a term that refers – with not altogether positive connotations – to the use of hired labour and ‘virtual companies’ in developing countries, taking advantage of the huge differences in wages internationally. For those sceptical of globalisation, outsourcing is little more than a legal loophole that allows national and multi-national companies to absolve themselves of the legal responsibility for unregulated and exploitative labour conditions. It is strange and striking that most UK guides to outsourcing emphasise the importance of *trust*: companies give responsibility for some aspect of their production to another company, with all the risks and benefits that this shared responsibility entails. In the light of the present discussion, it is telling that all of these textbooks agree that the primary aim of outsourcing is to ‘improve performance’ (understood here as profit). But there are also important differences: 3) the aim of outsourcing in business is to decrease risk, artists frequently deploy it as a means to 4) increase unpredictability – even if this means that a work might risk 5) failing altogether.²⁹

Noting the simultaneous rise of outsourcing in both economics and in art in the 1990s is not to suggest that the latter exists in complicity with the former, even though it seems telling that a boom in delegated performance coincided with the art market bubble of the 2000s, and with the consolidation of a service industry that increasingly relies upon the marketing of certain qualities in human beings.³⁰ Both performance and business now place a premium on recruitment, and in many cases, the work of finding suitable performers is delegated to 6) the curator, who now finds him- or herself becoming a human resources manager (negotiating qualifications, shifts and contracts). Although unique qualities are sought in each performer, these are – paradoxically – also 7) infinitely replaceable: since contemporary performance increasingly tends to be on display for the duration of an exhibition, 8) shift-work becomes necessary. There is less emphasis on the frisson of a single performance, even while the impact of the live remains: performance enters 9) ‘gallery time’ as a constant presence, eight hours a day for the duration of an exhibition, rather than being assigned to a few intense hours (as is customary with 10) ‘theatre time’). Presence today is arguably less a matter of anti-spectacular immediacy (as was the case during the 1960s) than 11) evidence of precarious labour, but artists are more likely to sustain this economy than to challenge it.

If I seem to be overstressing these economic changes, it’s because they

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	Surkov, obfuscation, wedge issues			
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	are there examples of astroturfing 'failing'? Is outrage, doxing, and revelation a mark of failure? What forms of failure would disincentivize astroturfing?			
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	Number: 7	Author: phm	Subject: Underline	Date: 5/24/2020 6:48:50 PM
	Number: 8	Author: phm	Subject: Underline	Date: 5/24/2020 6:48:56 PM
	Number: 9	Author: phm	Subject: Underline	Date: 5/24/2020 6:49:02 PM
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Hard to say what the failure metric would be, if an astroturf is revealed to be fake this only heightens the effect. perhaps making astroturf work frowned upon in the acting world would disincentivize the practice? Also, with the anti-lockdown protests, the protesters are genuinely supportive of the political goal, but their information flow injected with astroturfed messages, so that's another layer.

The outsourcing parallels are interesting, as this business practice started happening around the same time as Surkov's astroturfing campaigns, and various astroturfed movements in the US. Like a global slide towards facade, denial of our role in politics/capitalism?

The theater time vs gallery time makes me think of David Levine's comparison of protester time investment vs paid-protestor immediate payout. By shifting the time a performance/protest takes place you shift the amount of investment? emotional content?

provide not just the contextual backdrop for contemporary art but also affect our reception of it. Financial transactions have become increasingly essential to the realisation of delegated performance, as anyone who has organised an exhibition of this work can corroborate: contractual waged labour for performers is the largest outgoing expense in such shows, which operate with an inverse economy to that of installing more conventional art. [1]As Tino Sehgal points out, the longer a steel sculpture by Richard Serra is on display, the cheaper the cost of its installation becomes, whereas Sehgal's own works accrue more costs for the institution the longer they are exhibited.³¹) But despite the centrality of economics to delegated performance, and the impact it has upon our understanding of duration, it is rare for artists to make an explicit point about financial transactions; more usually, such arrangements tend to be tacit. Unlike theatre, dance and film, where there are long-established codes for experiencing a performer's relationship to labour, contemporary art has until recently been comparatively artisanal, based on the romantic persona of the singular (and largely unpaid) artist-performer. It is only in the last twenty years that performance art has become 'industrialised', and this shift – from festival to museum space, mobilising large numbers of performers, unionised modes of remuneration, and ever larger audiences – means that contemporary art increasingly exists in a sphere of collaboration akin to theatre and dance, even while it retains [2]r's valorisation of individual authorship. (There is no serious market, for example, for signed photographs of theatrical productions.)

One of the most successful exhibition projects of recent years has addressed this intersection of performance and the economy head on: the itinerant three-day exhibition 'La Monnaie Vivante' (The Living Currency) by the French curator Pierre Bal-Blanc. The first iteration of this continually changing performance experiment began in Paris in 2006; subsequent versions have been held in Leuven (2007), London (2008), Warsaw and Berlin (2010).³² Most of the works exhibited are delegated performances, drawn from a diverse range of generations (from the 1960s to today) and geographical locations (from Eastern and Western Europe to North and South America) that match the purview of this book. 'La Monnaie Vivante' places visual art performance into direct conversation with contemporary choreographers interested in the 'degree zero' of dance, such as Compagnie les Gens d'Uterpan (Annie Vigier and Franck Apertet) and Prinz Gholam. Curatorially, 'La Monnaie Vivante' is distinctive in presenting performances as overlapping in a single space and time (a combination of exhibition and festival); this format forges an intense and continually shifting proximity between the different performances, as well as between performers and viewers, who occupy the same space as the works and move among them. At Tate Modern in 2008, for example, performances of varying duration took place on the Turbine Hall bridge, ranging from a

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Relationship to duration and asserted impact of finance. Being able to measure or quantify ongoing expenditure as a means of demonstrating political activity, and thus the accrual of more funds from a more diverse range of sources. A market of circulation within the field of protesting emerges, fueled by the precarity and replaceability of actor-agents within that field.
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-  Number: 2 Author: phm Subject: Highlight Date: 5/24/2020 6:29:00 PM
Import of individual authorship attempted to be obfuscated in US context. When revealed, that figure falls into the conceptual trappings of authorship by functioning as a scapegoat, or singular point of criticism, rather than acknowledging each individual's, admittedly unequal, but also undeniable, complicity in political involvement.
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JR: Re: Number 1: this finalization of protesting could lead to rivals insurance companies paying protesters to riot/burn down their rival's clients store. someone already hypothesized that competing app-based companies like rideshare will try to encourage their rival's employees to unionize, thus weakening their profit margin.. the more protesting/activism/advocacy resembles a market, the more it devolves into a zero-sum game, lower return on investment?

Re: Number 2: this tension of individual scapegoat vs obfuscation of context is operating in astroturfism as a kind of intentional context collapse / context creation, encouraging people to focus on the individual paid actors, and then create a new systemic politic from their action: "look at these people protesting the shutdowns, must be a lot of support for reopening" - or the inverse, when opponents try to characterize actual protesters as paid actors: "look at all these paid protesters, they are only doing this to make things good/bad for X politician"


DELEGATED PERFORMANCE




'La Monnaie Vivante', Tate Modern, 2008. Tania Bruguera, *Tatlin's Whisper #5*, 2008 (foreground); Compagnie les Gens d'Uterpan, *X-Event 2*, 2007 (background).

six-hour live installation by Sanja Iveković (*Delivering Facts, Producing Tears*, 1998–2007) to fleeting instruction pieces by Lawrence Weiner (shooting a rifle at a wall, emptying a cup of sea water onto the floor). This led to some sublime juxtapositions, such as Santiago Sierra's *Eight People Facing A Wall* (2002) as the backdrop to Tania Bruguera's *Tatlin's Whisper #5* (2008, two mounted policemen demonstrating crowd-control techniques on the audience), which in turn circled around six dancers holding poses, and salivating onto the floor, choreographed by Annie Vigier and Franck Apertet.

The title of Bal-Blanc's exhibition is taken from Pierre Klossowski's enigmatic and near impenetrable book of the same name, published in 1970, in which he argues for a troubling mutual imbrication of the economy and pleasure (*jouissance*), rather than perceiving them to be separate domains. The 'living currency' of his title is the human body. Building on his analyses of Fourier and Sade (most notably in 'Le Philosophe scélérat', 1967), Klossowski's text is organised around the premise that industrial mechanisation introduces new forms of perversion and pleasure.³³ Klossowski defines perversion as the separation that occurs as soon as the human is aware of a distinction between reproductive instincts and pleasure ('voluptuous emotion'): this first perversion distinguishes the human from the mechanical, the functional from the non-functional, but it is subsequently appropriated and contained by institutions as a way to organise the processes of production towards specific and highly policed

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JR: a mutual imbrication of economy and protest: *resissance*?


ends.³⁴ As such, industry engages in a perverse act (reducing human actions to a functional tool, fixated on doing only one thing) while at the same time expelling as perverse everything that overruns and exceeds this functional gesture. Klossowski argues that art (which comes under his category of ‘*simulacre*’) is thought to die in this domain of excess because it is not functional, but in fact it should also be seen as a tool, since it is compensatory and creates new experiences (*l’usage, c’est-à-dire, la jouissance*).³⁵ Klossowski pressures the dialectic of use and non-use, the functional and the non-functional, to argue that industrial processes and art are *both* libidinal *and* rational, since the drives ignore such externally imposed distinctions. Humans are ‘living currency’, and money is the mediator between libidinal pleasure and the industrial/institutional world of normative imposition.

Using this to interpret performance art, Bal-Blanc argues that the whole impulse to produce ‘open form’ in the 1970s is an inversion or reversal of the industrial system, which is itself a form of perversion.³⁶ Artists today are therefore redefining transgression by making a dual appeal to the reification of the body on the one hand, and to the embodiment of the object on the other, two poles that he sums up in the evocative oxymorons ‘living/object’ and ‘inanimate/body’. It is no coincidence that delegated performance makes up the majority of works exhibited in ‘La Monnaie Vivante’, but Bal-Blanc places these paid bodies alongside the performance of conceptual art instructions (such as those of Lawrence Weiner) and more obviously participatory works (such as Lygia Clark’s *Caminhando*, 1963, or



‘La Monnaie Vivante’, 6th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2010. Franz Erhard Walther, *Standing Piece in Three Sections*, 1975 (foreground); Santiago Sierra, *111 Constructions Made with 10 Modules and 10 Workers*, 2004 (background).

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Franz Erhard Walther's steel *Standing Pieces* of the 1970s). These works blur the difference between many types of participatory art, as is reinforced in the photographic documentation of 'La Monnaie Vivante', in which more recent types of so-called 'exploitative' art are placed next to earlier work, reminding us that the dancers of, say, Simone Forti's *Huddle* (1961) are also being paid for their bodily labour. ¹This juxtaposition of generations and types of work (participatory, conceptual, theatrical, choreographic) is also staked as an engagement with *interpassivity* (rather than interactivity), because this is the dominant mode installed by mass media and an information society. Bal-Blanc argues that all the works he exhibits show the way in which ²individual drives are subordinated to economic and social relations, and how these rules are parsed in the entertainment industry's laws of transmission and reception ('interpassivity reveals what interactivity conceals, an admission of dependence on the user; interactivity, by contrast, gives the impression that the subject masters his language').³⁷ ³In other words, interpassivity is the secret language of the market, which degrades bodies into objects, and it is also the language that artists use to reflect on this degradation.

It is not unimportant that Bal-Blanc's development of this project was rooted in his own experience performing for two and a half months in Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform)*, 1991. In this work, a scantily clad male wears headphones and dances upon a light-bulb-studded minimalist podium for at least five minutes a day for the duration of the exhibition in which it appears.³⁸ Bal-Blanc's feeling of depressed subjection after a month of performing this work raised a number of questions for him that were only answered when he later encountered the performances of Santiago Sierra.³⁹ Like many of the artists in 'La Monnaie Vivante', Sierra seems to use perversity as a meditation on the degree to which social and



Pierre Bal-Blanc, video still of *Working Contract*, 1992

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	Again, thinking of silent protests			

economic institutions assure the triumph of perversion. For Bal-Blanc, the difference between works of art and capitalism is that artists appropriate perverted power *for themselves*, in order to produce reoriented and multiple roles (as opposed to the singular roles of industrialisation). As such, they propose new forms of transgression, and prompt a '*secousse*' (jolt) in the viewer. As Bal-Blanc suggests, in delegated performance two types of perversion confront each other face to face: the perversity exercised by institutions and presented as a norm, and that employed by artists which by contrast appears as an anomaly.

III. Perversion and Authenticity

Klossowski arguably provides a bridge in French theory between Bataille and Lacan and a subsequent generation of thinkers including Lyotard, Baudrillard and Foucault, who take from him respectively the ideas of libidinal economy, the simulacrum, and institutional discourse. For Klossowski, Sade's sexual perversions work against all normative values and structures, both rational and moral, but it is hard to ascertain Klossowski's relationship to the system he describes.⁴⁰ His interest in the human body as 'living currency' seems to be a meditation on how subjects may come to pervert and thereby enjoy their own alienation at work, but his invocation of industrialised labour also seems rather dated. *La monnaie vivante* was published in 1970, at the moment of transition between what Boltanski and Chiapello identify as the second and third spirits of capitalism: from an industrialised model of labour, organised by management, in which the worker feels exploited and unrealised, to a connexionist, project-based model, structured by networks, in which the worker is arguably even more exploited but feels greater fulfilment and autonomy. To the extent that the third spirit of capitalism is marked by elaborate forms of self-exploitation (rather than a monodirectional, hierarchical flow), Klossowski's understanding of the way we find perverse pleasure in labour is arguably even more relevant.


Following Klossowski's logic, it is as if the delegated performance artist puts him/herself in a Sadean position, exploiting because he/she knows from experience that this exploitation and self-display can itself be a form of pleasure.⁴¹ From this perspective, it is only doing half the job to point out that delegated performance 'reifies' its participants. From a Sadean point of view, this reading doesn't establish the occult pleasure of the participant in exploiting his subordination in these works of art, nor does it account for the evident pleasure of viewers in watching him/her. This interlacing of *voyeur* and *voyant* is core to Pierre Zucca's quaintly perturbing photographic vignettes accompanying the first edition of Klossowski's publication (in which two men and a woman engage in sado-masochistic acts), and is essential for rethinking the stakes of delegated performance for both the


audience's visual pleasure and that of the participant. (The most brutal image of this reciprocal pleasure recently is Sierra's two-channel video *Los Penetrados* [2010], showing a multiple and near-industrialised array of anal penetration between couples of different races and genders.)


Klossowski's writings therefore invite us to move beyond the impasse of certain intellectual positions inherited from the 1960s: on the one hand, arguments that society is all-determining as a set of institutional and disciplinary constraints (Frankfurt School, structuralism), and on the other hand, arguments for the perpetual vitality and agency of the subject which continually subverts and undermines these restrictions (post-structuralism, Deleuze and Guattari). Rather than collapsing these positions, Klossowski requires us to take on board a more complex network of libidinal drives that require perpetual restaging and renegotiation. 1his tension between structure and agency, particular and universal, spontaneous and scripted, *voyeur* and *voyant*, is key to the aesthetic effect and social import of the best examples of delegated performance.

Although the artist delegates power to the performer (entrusting them with agency while also affirming hierarchy), delegation is not just a one-way, downward gesture. In turn, the performers also delegate something to the artist: a guarantee of authenticity, through their proximity to everyday social reality, conventionally denied to the artist who deals merely in representations. By relocating sovereign and self-constituting authenticity *away* from the singular artist (who is naked, masturbates, is shot in the arm, etc.) and *onto* the collective presence of the performers who metonymically signify an irrefutable socio-political issue (homelessness, race, immigration, disability, etc.), the artist outsources authenticity and relies on his performers to supply this more vividly, 2ithout the disruptive filter of celebrity. At the same time, the realism invoked by this work is clearly not a return to modernist authenticity of the kind dismantled by Adorno and post-structuralism. By setting up a situation that unfolds with a greater or lesser degree of unpredictability, artists give rise to a highly directed form of authenticity: singular authorship is put into question by delegating control of the work to the performers; they confer upon the project a guarantee of realism, but do this through a highly authored situation whose precise outcome cannot be foreseen. In wresting a work of art from this event, the artist both relinquishes and reclaims power: he or she agrees to temporarily lose control over the situation before returning to select, define and circulate its representation.⁴² Authenticity is invoked, but then questioned and reformulated, by the indexical presence of a particular social group, who are both 3idivuated and metonymic, live and mediated, determined and autonomous.

At the same time, the phenomenological experience of confronting these performers always testifies to the extent to which people relentlessly exceed the categories under which they have been recruited. Using amateurs is

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essential in this regard, for it ensures that delegated performance will never assume the seamless character of professional acting, and keeps open a space of risk and ambiguity. ¹hat this amateurism nevertheless provokes a sense of moral outrage betrays the extent to which institutional perversion has been internalised as fully normal, while that of the artists comes across as unacceptable. The logic is one of ²rtistic disavowal: I know that society is all-exploiting, but all the same, I want artists to be an exception to this rule. When artists make the patterns of institutional subordination that we undergo every day both visible and available for experiential pleasure, the result is a moral queasiness; and yet the possibility of this also being a source of *jouissance* and a 'tool' is precisely the point of Klossowski's disturbing analysis. What becomes thinkable if the pleasure of reification in these works of art is precisely analogous to the pleasure we all take in our own self-exploitation?

IV. Performance in Context

It should be clear by now that I am trying to argue for a more complicated understanding of delegated performance than that offered by a Marxist framework of reification or a contemporary critical discourse rooted in positivist pragmatics and injunctions to social amelioration (as discussed in Chapter 1), all of which reduce these works to standard-issue questions of political correctness. The perverse pleasures underlying these artistic gestures offer an alternative form of knowledge about capitalism's commodification of the individual, especially when both participants and viewers appear to enjoy the transgression of subordination to a work of art. If one is not to fall into the trap of merely condemning these works as reiterations of capitalist exploitation, it becomes essential to view art not as part of a seamless continuum with contemporary labour, but as offering a specific space of experience where those norms are suspended and put to pleasure in perverse ways (to return to Sade, a space not unlike that of BDSM sex). Rather than judging art as a model of social organisation that can be evaluated according to pre-established moral criteria, it is more productive to view the conceptualisation of these performances as properly *artistic decisions*. This is not to say that artists are uninterested in ethics, only to point out that ethics is the ground zero of any collaborative art. To judge a work on the basis of its preparatory phase is to neglect the singular approach of each artist, how this produces specific aesthetic consequences, and the larger questions that he/she might be struggling to articulate.⁴³


And what might these larger questions be? Artists choose to use people as a material for many reasons: to challenge traditional artistic criteria by reconfiguring everyday actions as performance; to give visibility to certain social constituencies and ³nder them more complex, immediate and physically present; to introduce aesthetic effects of chance and risk; to


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Another inversion of the outrage directed towards fake crowds. In the context of political protest the professional protester that is demonized and the amateur valorized.
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-  Number: 3 Author: phm Subject: Highlight Date: 5/24/2020 6:33:15 PM
Related to the qualitative again? Is it possible to render a crowd more complex rather than simply reduce them to a they/them category? Related to the explicitness transparency in which the situation occurs.

JR: Re: 1,2 - running counter, opposition attempts to de-legitimize protest by casting amateurs as professionals/paid. "fetishistic disavowel"

Re: I think we are seeing this qualitative approach to the crowd happening in real time where people are trying to make judgments about "good protesters" and "bad rioters" (a low-res analysis of motives, validation metrics for activism (people have a right to be very angry)) or "real organizers" and "fake alt-right organizers leading people astray" (which is probably development as long it doesn't lead to badjacketing / counter-solidarity)

problematise the binaries of live and mediated, spontaneous and staged, authentic and contrived; to examine the construction of collective identity and the extent to which people always exceed these categories. In the most compelling examples of this work, a series of paradoxical operations is put into play that impedes any simplistic accusation that the subjects of delegated performance are reified (decontextualised, and laden with other attributes). To judge these performances on a scale with supposed 'exploitation' at the bottom and full 'agency' at the top is to miss the point entirely. The difference, rather, is between 'art fair art' and the better examples of this work that reify *precisely in order to discuss reification*, or which exploit *precisely to thematise exploitation itself*. In this light, the risk of superficiality that occasionally accompanies the reductive branding or packaging of social identities in a work of art ('the unemployed', 'the blind', 'children', 'brass band players', etc.) should always be set against the dominant modes of mediatic representation against which these works so frequently intend to do battle.⁴⁴ This, for me, is the dividing line between the facile gestures of so much gala and art fair art and those more troubling works that do not simply take advantage of contemporary labour conditions but bring our relationship to them through the presentation of conventionally under-exposed constituencies. It is true that at its worst, delegated performance produces quirkily staged reality designed for the media, rather than paradoxically mediated presence. But at its best, delegated performance produces disruptive events that testify to a shared reality between viewers and performers, and which defy not only agreed ways of thinking about pleasure, labour and ethics, but also the intellectual frameworks we have inherited to understand these ideas today.

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JR: Final thoughts, the invention of delegated performance seems to have had similar effects as crowds-on-demand, astroturfing: heighten the contradictions and shortcomings of hierarchal system in a space that purports to be egalitarian (gallery, democratic commons). In fine-art the practice is used intentionally to draw attention to these contradictions, although sometimes the strategy backfires and the performance becomes simply exploitative rather than a critique of exploitation. In politics, the strategy has a similar effect in Russian protest theater: to undermine itself and create disillusionment. In the west, it is used more covertly, so seeks to become invisible, like the artist in some of these works, the true motives melt away and the spectacle is center-stage.

Other connections:

The BDSM angle is something, turning market relations of exploitation into a fetish. i feel it relates to astroturfing, just don't know how. maybe these political protest theaters are like an inversion, where the opposite of neoliberal dispossession of political agency is turned into a fetish of exploitation, it's like the market logic subsuming it's opposite. with human's as avatars.

I think a take away from this could be: as with delegated performance, it doesn't matter *who* is paying people to act a certain way, just what the content of the act is. So, who cares that all of Donald Trump's crowd is paid, the doesn't change the fact that the political content is horrible. idk? have to think on that one some more