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Venice Biennale: Staging Nations

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VENICE BIENNALE: STAGING NATIONS

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Submitted to the faculty of
The Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
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Every day, for hundreds of years, Venice had woken up and put on this guise of being a real place even though everyone knew it existed only for tourists. The difference, the novelty, of Venice was that the gondoliers and fruit-sellers and bakers were all tourists too, enjoying an infinitely extended city-break. The gondoliers enjoyed the fruit-sellers, the fruit-sellers enjoyed the gondoliers and bakers, and all of them together enjoyed the real residents: the hordes of camera-toting Japanese, the honeymooning Americans, the euro-pinching backpackers and hungover Biennale-goers.

Geoff Dyer, *Jeff in Venice, Death in Varanasi*

Whenever art happens—that is, whenever there is a beginning—a thrust enters history; history either begins or starts over again.

Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art”

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ABSTRACT

Emily Lauren Putnam

VENICE BIENNALE: STAGING NATIONS

During the Biennale, Venice, with its unique urban topography and waterscape, functions as a staging ground for nations and other political and cultural groups. Unlike the crop of biennials that have recently exploded on the art scene, the Venice Biennale is the world's longest running festival of its kind. Its origins coincide with both the crystallization of capitalism in the nineteenth century, the creation of a unified Italian nation, and major challenges to European colonialism. A distinctive characteristic of the Venice Biennale is its reliance on an exhibition setup modeled on the cultural display of modern, sovereign nations, which has persisted over time. In recent decades, neoliberalism has impacted the geopolitical layout and the inclusion of nations at the Venice Biennale as a site where gestures—artistic, curatorial, institutional, political, tourist, and urban—are involved in the production and exhibition of contemporary art. These gestures are some of the means by which nations are presented, enacted, modeled, behaved, revealed, contained, erased, and experienced. In this dissertation, I read such gestures within the context of select national pavilion exhibitions and what the Biennale calls “collateral events” from 1993 to the present through the lens of critical theory, visual studies, and performance studies in order to examine how such gestures enable and reveal material relations and the structuring of power in neoliberalism, where freedom is placed under erasure.

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Introduction

“The power of art to change life is indirect. But so is (or ought to be) the power of political sovereignty.”
—Susan Buck-Morss¹

As Susan Buck-Morss describes in the above quote, both art and politics influence the destiny of a nation and its inhabitants, though this relationship is complex, ambiguous, and at times contradictory. While there tends to be an emphasis on the role of political sovereignty in international relations, the role of art cannot be underestimated. In the past several decades, the rise of neoliberalism has changed art, politics, and economics, which are mediated at the international art event, the Venice Biennale. Unlike the recent crop of biennials that have exploded on the art scene, the Venice Biennale is the world’s longest running festival of its kind, dating back to the late days of European colonialism and the rise of the modern nation-state in the nineteenth century. Since 1907, the Venice Biennale has relied on a national pavilion system as its exhibition model. As time progressed, the geopolitics of the Biennale has shifted in conjunction with the changing tides of transnational politics and economics, but the national pavilion system remains the backbone of the event. Subsequently, the increasing influence of neoliberalism has impacted the geographic placement and inclusion of pavilions and what the Biennale refers to as “collateral events.”

David Harvey defines neoliberalism as:

A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional

framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.²

The emphasis on market freedom means that some national governments are expected to have limited roles in the neoliberal model, with the defined purpose of creating and preserving the infrastructure that will allow these market conditions to flourish. Moreover, according to this model, the nation is not rendered useless, but rather preserves an authoritative role in certain key actions.³ As shown over time, the actual implementation of neoliberalism deviates from its ideals, resulting in uneven geographical distribution. In addition to these changes in political and economic thinking, a transnational art network has emerged that is helping to re-define the notion of nationhood in the twenty-first century.

In this dissertation, I read select national pavilion exhibitions and collateral events from 1993 to the present through the lens of critical theory, visual studies, and performance studies, treating the Biennale as an event where gestures enable and reveal material relations and the structuring of power in neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has impacted the geopolitical layout and the inclusion of nations at the Venice Biennale as a site where gestures—artistic, curatorial, institutional, political, tourist, and urban—are involved in the production and exhibition of contemporary art. These gestures are some of the means by which nations and other groups are presented, enacted, modeled, perceived, revealed, contained, erased, and experienced. During the Venice Biennale, the city of Venice, with its long history of cosmopolitan trade and travel, becomes a staging ground for nations and other groups. After tracing a

taxonomy of gestures in the work of Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, I explore how Venice and the geopolitics of the Biennale produce heterotopias and comprise a stage for gestures to unfold. Then, I explore the presentation of nation both in terms of performative, institutional gestures and as a theatrical event while considering the roles of the Biennale tourist/spectators. Finally, I study the implications of digital technology on the more recent Biennales, treating it as a virtual overlay where gestures occur both to reinforce and potentially challenge the geopolitics of the Biennale.

When Gestures of Protest Become Aesthetic Gestures

On January 25, 2011, protests began in the Arab Republic of Egypt that would soon transform the political future of that nation. On January 28, 2011, referred to as the “Friday of Rage,” Egyptian artist and activist Ahmed Basiony was killed during protests at Tahrir Square as the result of police sniper-fire. At that time, the artist was preparing an exhibition for the Egyptian pavilion at the 2011 Venice Biennale. After his death, the in-progress work was presented in the Egyptian pavilion as the installation, *30 Days of Running in the Place*. The work consists of multichannel projected videos that fill the walls of the pavilion, which is located in the *Giardini*—the main exhibition area of the Venice Biennale. The video channels alternate between footage from the Tahrir square uprisings and documentation of a performance featuring the artist, which took place one year before the uprising. The quality of the protest video is consumer-grade and the camera is shaky at times. The low-tech aesthetic lends an air of authenticity to the footage—as if it were shot with whatever camera was available, emphasizing the

significance of the events being captured. For the performance featured in the work, also titled *30 Days of Running in the Place*, Basiony wore a sensor-fused plastic suit that could calculate the levels of sweat produced and the number of steps taken while jogging in place for one hour every day over a period of thirty days. This performance originally took place in a cubic structure of enclosed plastic sheets, which allowed viewers to witness his actions outside of the cube, in conjunction with digital projections of the collected data converted into a grid of colors. The video seems to be a collection of shots from a science fiction film featuring a biohazard decontamination chamber. The pairing of this footage with the protest videos is jagged, confusing, and seemingly incomplete as it is wrought with gaps in presentation and almost impossible to follow without the assistance of supplementary text.



Figure 1. Left: Ahmed Basiony, 28th of January (Friday of Rage) 6:50 p.m., Tahrir Square. Photo taken by Magdi Mostafa

Figure 2. Right: Ahmed Basiony, *30 Days of Running in the Place* documentation footage, February–March 2010, Palace of the Arts Gallery, Opera House Grounds, Cairo, Egypt.

The version of *30 Days of Running in the Place* displayed at the Venice Biennale was made posthumously by others, including a friend and colleague of the artist, Shady El Noshokaty, who conceived of this presentation of the installation. Picking up where Basiony left off, El Noshokaty frames the exhibition of the two seemingly disconnected videos by relating the span of the artist's life to that of the government of former Egyptian president Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak. Mubarak served as president from 1981 to 2011 and Basiony died at the age of 32—making him just as old as Mubarak's regime, which the protests of 2011 helped bring to an end. El Noshokaty describes how the videos juxtapose the energy wasted by a person through the act of jogging in place with the energy wasted by a nation.⁴ Basiony initiated the work with his artistic gestures present in the original performance. He then died as the result of his gestures of protest. El Noshokaty then brings together these aesthetic gestures and the gestures of protest through the final presentation of the Biennale installation.

The work that El Noshokaty completed for the Venice Biennale is in part a tribute to the artist, as well as attempts to fulfill the gestures that Basiony initiated, but was unable to complete. According to the curators:

We collectively desired, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, to recognize and honor the life and death of an artist who was fully dedicated to the notions of an Egypt, that to only recently, demanded the type of change he was seeking his entire life. A *gesture* of 30 years young, up against 30 years of a multitude of disquieted unrest [emphasis added].⁵

The artist died as part of the revolutions that would rock the Egyptian government. For Egypt to present art that is intimately entwined with and ultimately determined by current events supports the significance of the Biennale as being more than just an opportunity for exhibiting contemporary art—it also involves the staging of a nation’s identity, providing a venue for international reception.

Staging Nations

The idea of staging, as used in the title of this dissertation, *Venice Biennale: Staging Nations*, has a double function. First of all, staging evokes the constitutive gestures involved in the presentation of national structures through the Biennale’s pavilion system. Secondly, it accounts for Venice as the site or stage where these performances unfold. The city is built on thousands of petrified posts submerged into the marshland to form architectural foundations, thus making Venice literally and physically a stage. In theatre, the term “staging” refers to the gestalt of a performance. Encompassing more than just the placement of actors, set design, and lighting, staging refers to the ambiance of the event space and how the performance unfolds in this space. Patricia Pavis points out how the term “staging” is a relatively recent development, only introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century. She defines staging as “the transformation or, better, the 'concretization' of the [dramatic] text, using actors and stage space, into a duration that is experienced by the spectators.”⁶ From this general definition, the execution of staging varies, at times lending coherence to a dramatic text, and at other times intentionally introducing ambiguity. There are a

range of techniques and strategies associated with staging, depending on the nature and demands of the performance. Despite differences in techniques and outcomes, staging functions as a means of making the text concrete. Similarly, Venice can be seen as a site for the concretization of national identity—often around current political issues—for international reception.

In den *Spielraum* eintreten⁷

I apply the metaphor of staging to the presentation of nation-as-concept at the Venice Biennale. The pavilions function as performance spaces where nations are invited to present the most contemporary of their artists. Each pavilion is a site where national identity (the text) is presented, reaffirmed, or challenged, that is—made concrete. These pavilions are interconnected in the transnational network that the Biennale comprises for international uptake. At the same time, the city of Venice functions as a stage where the Biennale as a whole unfolds—where the geopolitics of international and material relations can be experienced through works of contemporary art and the institutional negotiation of the Venice Biennale. Pavis describes how the stage, derived from the Greek *skênê*, contained the “*theologeion* or playing area of gods and heroes.”⁸ The stage is a *Spielraum*, which translates from German into “playroom.” In everyday German usage, the *Spielraum* functions as conceptual “elbow room,” a space of discursive negotiation. Martin Heidegger uses the term in his essay “The Origin of the Work of Art” in reference to the revealing of truth. He states:

Truth happens only by establishing itself in the strife and the free space [*Streit- und Spielraum*] opened up by truth itself. Because

truth is the opposition of clearing and concealing, there belongs to it what is here to be called *establishing* [emphasis in original].⁹

According to Heidegger, the work of art makes space for this process to occur.

Samuel Weber reads Heidegger's definition of the work of art as breaking from classical aesthetics, where the work of art is considered to be self-contained:

“rather, it is a work repeatedly designated as a *Spielraum*, a play-room, but also [...] a stage of conflict and dispute.”¹⁰

Weber describes how the *Spielraum* exists as a place of play, or free space, but this play is not harmonious. He emphasizes

Heidegger's relationship between the revealing of truth, *alēthia*, and strife:

Whereas the notion of truth as adequation presupposes an underlying identity as *tertium comparationis*, *alēthia* insists upon an irreducible and generative *strife* as that which transforms the relationship from an essentially static one, presupposing a self-identical referent as its ground, to an unstable dynamic that participates in the relation it both engenders and undercuts. In place of the self-contained ground, the referent, there emerges a conflictual process in which something can “reveal” itself, step into the open only by at the same time withdrawing or obscuring that upon which it depends [emphasis in original].¹¹

Moreover, the *Spielraum* is a place of negotiation, of conflict, of dissensus, of experimentation—of strife and play.

Walter Benjamin also explores the concept of *Spiel*, or play, and *Spielraum*. Miriam Bratu Hansen describes how the term appears in various instances of Benjamin's writing, most explicitly his book reviews and exhibition reports on children's toys from 1928. According to Hansen, “In these articles he argues for a shift in focus from the toy as object [*Spielzeug*] to playing [*Spielen*] as an activity, a process in which, one might say, the toy functions as a medium.”¹² As such, this opens a space of play for the child to engage in actions

not intended by or necessarily understood by adults. Hansen points out how the concept of play returns in Benjamin's work in other ways, including the association of *Spiel* to mimetic play, as when children mimic adult actions, and gambling.¹³

Hansen emphasizes how Benjamin's use of "play" is part of a larger philosophical genealogy that can be traced to Karl Groos, Willy Haas, and most importantly, Sigmund Freud's 1920 essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.¹⁴ In this essay, Freud considers the role of infantile play, particularly, the "fort/da game," in relation to traumatic neurosis. He states: "As the child passes over from the passivity of the experience to the activity of the game, he hands on the disagreeable experience to one of his playmates and in this way revenges himself on a substitute."¹⁵ Thus, according to Freud, play can potentially transform painful experiences into pleasurable ones, establishing a relationship between strife and play. Benjamin later translates this concept into his discussion of cinema where he uses the term *Spielraum*, which Hansen argues must be read in "both its literal and figurative, material and abstract meanings."¹⁶ In the 1936 edition of his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin states: "What is lost in the withering of semblance [*Schein*], or decay of the aura, in works of art is matched by huge gain in room-for-play [*Spiel-Raum*]. This space for play is widest in film."¹⁷ In correlation with Freud's treatment of play as a means to make painful experiences pleasurable, Hansen points out how for Benjamin, the room-for-play that film opens up could help ease the "traumatic effects of the bungled reception of technology" in the early twentieth century.¹⁸

Hansen's reading of Benjamin's use of *Spielraum* can be applied to this analysis of the Venice Biennale. At the Venice Biennale, the pavilion functions as the *Spielraum* for the staging of nations, where national identity is both presented and negotiated—concretized—through constitutive gestures. Additionally, as a whole, the Biennale is a *Spielraum* of international relations that both participate in and expose the material relations and the support systems that give rise to these acts. The pavilion functions as the space for play where national and transnational strife can be replicated, minimized, or challenged.

In the case of *30 Days of Running in the Place*, El Noshokaty's completion of Basiony's work brings together the latter's aesthetic gestures and gestures of protest, cut short by his untimely death, with the aesthetic gestures of a video installation. Both sets of gestures, political and aesthetic, are free to mingle in the playroom of the pavilion exhibition. The trauma of the artist's death is transformed into the more palatable experience of the video installation and the strife of Egypt's protest is aestheticized. At the same time, the national designation of the pavilion identifies these gestures as nationally sponsored and supported. The authority of the nation draws these gestures into the fabric of a transnational community—a structure endorsed and protected by the institutional framework of the Venice Biennale.

This presentation of contemporary political events can be considered an effective move for Egypt, as it takes advantage of the opportunity that the Venice Biennale offers in terms of international reception. This exhibition marks the end of Mubarak's regime, providing an alternative understanding of Egyptian

nationhood. Nationhood can be understood in both conceptual and geopolitical terms. Benedict Anderson describes the challenges of pinpointing the definition of nation and subsequently analyzing the terms nationality and nationalism. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson defines the nation as an “imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”¹⁹ What distinguishes a nation as a community, according to Anderson, is the fact that “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”²⁰ Subsequently, national identity forges a group bond that is supposed to transcend social, economic, and cultural differences.

In addition, nations function as geopolitical entities. The success of a national declaration in legal-political terms depends on recognition by the international community, which currently involves the authority of the United Nations. At the moment, the United Nations includes 193 member states, all of which have representation in the General Assembly. It is from this pool that the Venice Biennale selects the official national pavilions.

The phrase “staging nations” is meant to refer both to the nations that are acknowledged through inclusion at the Venice Biennale, like Egypt, but also to groups of artists that do not represent officially recognized nations. These artists participate in collateral events, or fine art exhibitions sponsored by the Biennale. Such groups include, for example, Native American and Palestinian artists. Representing groups that are not considered sovereign nations recognized by the institutional framework of the Biennale, these artists highlight the limitations of

the qualifier “nation,” making evident the gaps of the system and its erasures. Moreover, the title *Venice Biennale: Staging Nations* refers to the staging of recognized nations while also acknowledging the authoritative hierarchy that informs who gets to present on this stage and under what terms.

Venice Biennale—Overview and History

The Venice Biennale has taken place almost every two years since its debut in 1895. Paolo Baratta, current president of *Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia*, describes how the Biennale is like a wind machine: “Every two years it shakes the forest, discovers hidden truths and gives strength and light to new offshoots, while giving a different perspective to known branches and ancient trunks.”²¹ The Biennale enters into the city of Venice bringing a mix of “global” and “contemporary” art, while at the same time temporarily transforming the architectural, historical, and cultural foundations of the city. Baratta goes on to describe the Biennale as a “grand pilgrimage” of art and culture.²² “Pilgrimage” is not new to the city of Venice; for centuries the city has been a popular site for travelers, including visitors on their way to the Holy Land. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a different sort of pilgrimage occurs daily with the millions of tourists who flock to the city of Venice to catch a glimpse of its wonders. Every two years, Biennale attendees become part of this massive group of temporary inhabitants, using maps, guidebooks, and the same facilities as the average tourist. At the same time, the Biennale disrupts the flow of tourist traffic, bringing interest—even if only temporarily—to other parts of the city that exist outside the major tourist thoroughfares.

The introduction of the Venice Biennale is tied to the cultivation of modern Venetian tourism in the late nineteenth century. During this time, Venice was no longer the great center of trade, commerce, and shipbuilding that brought it such prestigious wealth during the Middle Ages.²³ The city was far from its pinnacle of financial prosperity and political influence cultivated during the era of the *Serenissima* republic, which officially ended with the invasion of Napoleon in 1797. The French occupation, while brief, curtailed Venice's existence as an independent republic and paved the way for it eventually to join the unified Kingdom of Italy in 1866.²⁴ Throughout the 1800s, Venice attempted to attract travelers to its unique urban center. Without the natural resources and industries that support other cities, Venetians have always relied on travel-associated businesses as the main means of bringing in income. In addition, with the opening up of alternative shipping routes, Venice no longer claimed dominance as the gate between Europe and the Middle East. At this time, Venice had also developed a reputation as a "pleasure center," with plenty of courtesans and gambling halls to entice travelers and empty their wallets.²⁵ Thus, during the late nineteenth century, the former Venetian republic was attempting to reinvigorate its economy as part of a newly unified Italy.

The first Biennale took place in 1895, less than three decades after Italy became a unified nation. Shearer West describes how Venice used its reputation as a fantastical destination for travelers along with its associated commercial reality in order to attract tourists and spectators to the Biennale. West points out how, while Venice managed to maintain its physical beauty, the city "lost its

political influence and economic prowess, and it became instead a literary symbol.”²⁶ As such, Venetian socioeconomic reality became increasingly dependent on the city’s imaginary existence. In part, the draw of Venice, according to West, is based on how it contradicts “the sordid reality of the modern world,” an impression that is further complicated “by a discourse which sexualized the city as a site of unrequited but perpetual desire.”²⁷ The development and promotion of Venice as a destination for travelers of leisure would transform the city into one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, with the Biennale developed as part of this effort.

The Biennale initially resided in the *Palazzo Pro Arte* (also known as the *Padiglione Centrale*, or the Central Pavilion)²⁸ located in the Giardini, an area of parkland created by Napoleon during the French occupation. The Giardini was part of Napoleon’s greater plan for a new, modernized layout of the city. Vittoria Martini describes Napoleon’s aspirations as reflecting Enlightenment principles where the “city was meant to become a functioning organism, but also one which would bear witness to contemporary science and culture of the time.”²⁹ According to Martini, as part of this plan, “parks and gardens were necessary features that would represent healthy, green spaces and free lifestyles in touch with nature even if ‘always under the vigilant eye of reason.’”³⁰ Despite the ambitions of the project, the Giardini were not put towards the intended purposes, but instead occupied precious space in the overcrowded Venetian urban topography. Eventually, the Giardini would come to be the site of the Venice National Exhibit in 1887, providing a welcome alternative to the overcrowded *Piazza San Marco*.³¹

With the building of the Exhibition Palace in 1895, the Giardini became the permanent home of the Venice Biennale. The early versions of the Venice Biennale emphasized a cultural elitism through the promotion of Academic painting, functioning as a way to bring “high art” to the Venetian upper class.³² Beginning with Hungary in 1907, select nations built permanent structures in the Giardini as exhibition sites, thus instigating the national pavilion system.

The Giardini play a prominent role in the international art exhibition that would reinvigorate the cosmopolitanism of the new Italian Venice.³³ As in prior centuries when Venice was a capital of mercantile trade, the city once again became a destination where people could experience other cultures. Robert C. Davis and Gerry R. Marvin point out how Venice has historically been treated as a meeting place of East and West, allowing for Grand Tourists to experience the exotic curiosities of foreign cultures without actually traveling to these places.³⁴ A similar model of experience persists in the present day Biennale, where the spectator can hop from national pavilion to pavilion, experiencing a transnational landscape of cultures in the Giardini in a mere few hours.

The geopolitics of the Biennale have a material history that involved the collusion of regional, national, and (neo)imperial interests from its beginnings to this day. In the beginning, the Biennale was primarily a Venetian affair and an opportunity for the city to practice its traditional regionalism with an expressed ambivalence towards the newly unified Italian nation.³⁵ Initially, the mayor of Venice was president of the Biennale, though this changed in 1920 when these roles split as fascist influence emphasized Italian nationalism over regional

interests. According to Maria Stone, between 1928 and 1932, “Fascist-appointed officials replaced Venetian elites at the Helm of the Biennale.”³⁶ During the fascist era, the Biennale shifted from ambivalence towards Italian unification to the active promotion of nationalism. Increasingly, nations were building permanent pavilions in the Giardini, and collateral events were added in 1934.

In addition, the social landscape of the Biennale shifted as the fascist government sought to attract a larger middle class audience through the incorporation of mass and popular culture, including film, popular drama, music, decorative art, and public art.³⁷ These changes were overseen by Antonio Maraini, who served as secretary general of the Biennale as well as director of the Fascist Syndicate of the Fine Arts, and Count Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata, president of the Biennale. Under this leadership, the Biennale became a major cultural institution, expanding beyond the parameters of “high art.” According to Stone, “the Venice Biennale’s reconstitution was hybrid and complex [...]. The mass and popular culture introduced at the Biennale in the 1930s retained an aristocratic patina and a flavor of cultural elitism.”³⁸ These changes to the social and cultural landscape of the Biennale were consistent with domestic political and economic interests, as well as shifting transnational cultural and economic trends. In addition to expanding cultural offerings, the government also implemented specific economic initiatives, including offering subsidized train tickets and entrance fees, helping to expand audience demographics.³⁹ Stone emphasizes how the fascist organizers of the Biennale worked to attract large-scale and socially diverse tourism:

After 1932, visitors could make extended trips, partake in a range of activities, select, choose, and consume plays, music, film, and the fine arts. Each of these attractions mobilized the consumptive possibilities of culture and of Venice itself by being situated in various parts of the city and requiring that the spectator move through the city to attend them. [...] The Biennale now had an itinerary similar to shopping: the art exhibition's pavilions themselves resembled shops and the act of moving among a variety of attractions located throughout the city intensified Venice's transformation into an extended arcade or theme park.⁴⁰

The changes to the social and cultural landscape of the Biennale made during the fascist era would persist, even after the dictatorship ended.

The advent of World War II would eventually disrupt the Biennale. By the time war began in Europe in 1939, plans for the twenty-second Venice Biennale in 1940 were already well underway, and so it opened as planned. However, not all nations with permanent pavilions participated. Austria, Britain, Denmark, France, Poland, and the USSR were all absent.⁴¹ The 1942 Biennale would be the first fully wartime Biennale, which Lawrence Alloway notes is a point stressed in the exhibition catalogue and in the Italian Press at the time. This rendition was a highly nationalized and politicized version, with the British pavilion transformed into the Army pavilion, the United States into the Navy pavilion, and the French into the Air Force pavilion.⁴² The transformation of the international fine arts festival into a platform for fascist military culture was significant. Even though attendance was low, Alloway states:

The ideological value of holding such an exhibition, after two years of war, was considerable. It affirmed the Rome-Berlin axis, emphasized Italy's European role as "keeper of the flame," and implied an illusory high level of stability and leisure in the middle of war.⁴³

As Italy, along with the rest of Europe, became increasingly consumed by war, the Biennale took a six-year hiatus.

After World War II, the Biennale attempted to detach from the disgraced leader Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini and the lingering memories of fascism. These efforts were manifest in the 1948 Venice Biennale. The official Biennale website refers to this event as “a major exhibition of a recapitulatory nature.”⁴⁴ Considering the fascist ideological heavy-handedness of the 1942 Biennale, it is no surprise that the organizers would take this opportunity to reinvigorate the event. It is important to note how the official website of the Venice Biennale treats the fascist and immediate post-fascist period of its history, as the site currently functions as a promotional tool for the Biennale. The use of the term “recapitulatory” is particularly interesting, as the Biennale site does not divulge what this “recapitulation” is meant to address—the ideological infiltration of fascism and Italian nationalism into the Biennale institutional structure. Led by art historian Rodolfo Pallucchini, the 1948 exhibitions involved a celebratory retrospective of modern art from around Europe, starting with the Impressionists.⁴⁵ Increased interest in the art of other nations was an opportunity to distance the Biennale from the Italian self-interested nationalism of fascism.

However, changes to the Biennale were not just limited to reformulating Italian national interests. The early Biennale pavilion system was informed by shifts in political and economic attitudes as questions of cultural inclusion and exclusion function as indicators of hegemonic ideas. Therefore, it is not surprising that the increasing influence of the United States in the international political

scene could also be experienced at the Venice Biennale after World War II. This began when Peggy Guggenheim exhibited her famous New York collection in the Greek pavilion in 1948.⁴⁶ From 1954 to 1962, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) took sole responsibility for organizing exhibitions at the pavilion of United States of America at the Biennale. MoMA also had ties with the CIA during the Cold War and was involved with the active promotion of US values of freedom and democracy abroad through art and culture.⁴⁷ The rise of US influence was made explicit in 1964, when the award for best painting was given to Robert Rauschenberg. According to Martini, this gesture “helped mark the final shift of contemporary art and its market from Europe to the United States, ushering in the beginning of American cultural and economic imperialism.”⁴⁸ To the present day, the geopolitical tides of the Venice Biennale continue to correlate with transnational political and economic events and relations.

Currently, in terms of the Venice Biennale’s institutional structure, the *Fondazione la Biennale di Venezia* is autonomous but relies on the authority of the Italian culture minister. According to Francesco Bonami, curatorial director of the 2003 Venice Biennale:

The culture minister, although he or she is considered a kind of demigod in the country’s cultural hierarchy, is usually someone with a vague and flexible idea of what constitutes contemporary culture (and even on the luckiest of occasions, contemporary art is never at the top of the list).⁴⁹

Despite the supposed lack of expertise when it comes to contemporary art, the culture minister appoints the president of the Biennale, who according

to Bonami, “has typically been a former, fallen CEO seeking institutional redemption, rather than an expert in any of the fields of contemporary culture.”⁵⁰ The current president Paolo Baratta has been director of Telecom Italia since May 2004 and has served in various Italian government positions, including Minister of Privatizations, Minister of Foreign Trade, and Minister for Public Works.⁵¹ One of the duties of the president is to chair the Biennale board. The board is made up of four other members in addition to the president, and are all political appointees, including the mayor of Venice, a representative of the province, a representative of the region, and a representative of Italy’s central government. Bonami notes how each representative tends to encapsulate the views and interests of the political party currently in power.⁵² The Venice Biennale institutional structure is rife with national political and corporate influences that inform how the event is organized in addition to informing the selection of curatorial directors and deciding what nations can participate.

During the 1990s and into the beginning of the twenty-first century, the world economy and political climate have undergone another major shift. These changes can be detected in the geopolitical layout of the Biennale, as more and more national pavilions are being included in subsequent iterations. In 1995, the institutional board selected a non-Italian to be curatorial director for the first time. Also in that year, the Biennale began offering countries that lacked permanent pavilions the possibility of exhibiting at sites made available by the city, private

owners, cultural institutions, or the Catholic Church.⁵³ These sites are guaranteed the status of official national pavilions during that year's Biennale. As a result, these pavilions extend the physical and conceptual limits of the Biennale to include whatever building could be appropriated for the purposes of a gallery exhibition site while also extending the list of national participants. Martini points out how "the possibility offered to foreign countries of presenting their best contemporary artists and art in such an internationally visible place as the Venice Biennale, has given sought-after prestige and legitimacy to so many people and countries."⁵⁴ This statement also reveals how the institutional authority of the Biennale has grown over time. As it gained a reputation of importance in the contemporary art scene, it has come to encompass so much more than an event designed to attract tourists. The prestige associated with this longest running event of its kind and its continued reliance on a nation-based model means that invitations to present at the Venice Biennale become an opportunity for artists and nations to be recognized and legitimized as participating members of what Noël Carroll refers to as the transnational art world⁵⁵ on a renowned, geopolitical stage.

The Rise of Neoliberalism

With the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, capitalism and democracy apparently emerged as some the world's dominant ideological models of economics and governance. At this point, both systems were injected with the neoliberal influence through policies implemented by Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom of Great Britain. As a result, there was a significant structural change in governmental organization in

order to accommodate the growing market economy. National economies were encouraged to open up, leading to the formation of the European Union and the introduction of free trade policies, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). These policies were combined with technological advancements and the decreased cost for capital, commodities, and bodies to cross borders at faster rates. While some boundaries, including the economic borders of Western Europe, were becoming more permeable, others were reinforced as immigration policies became more stringent in “prosperous” nations, including the United States. Additionally, the rise of the Internet, the proliferation of mobile cellular phones, and advancements in computer technology revolutionized communication and the spread of information.

These changes, which are commonly referred to as part of the phenomenon of globalization—though, as I will show, this identification is misleading—comprise the rise of neoliberalism in politics and economics. Neoliberalism encompasses the idea that all relations, including human relations, can be brought under the domain of a free market. With its roots extending back to Alexander Hamilton and early American capitalism,⁵⁶ neoliberalism has come to dominate present day international economic and political discourse. The creation and expansion of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have played major roles in the spread of neoliberal ideologies and the implementation of practices in national governments around the globe, further entrenching this mode of thought as hegemonic discourse. With a firm belief in maintaining market freedom at all

costs, neoliberalism has redefined the role of nations as governments are expected to ease the way for free trade. At the same time, advances in communications and travel technology have eased the dissemination of neoliberal ideas and practices, making it seem as if it is the only option available for countries wishing to participate in the “globalized” market economy. As David Harvey states: “[neoliberalism] has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world.”⁵⁷ Encompassing more than just a theory of the market, neoliberalism has come to infiltrate people's understanding of how the world works, functioning as the standardized norm.⁵⁸ Once it gained its foothold, the spread of neoliberalism exploded, resulting in what Joseph Stiglitz, former chair of President Clinton's Council of Economic Advisors, refers to as the “Roaring Nineties—the decade of mega-deals and mega-growth.”⁵⁹ Marked by severely uneven geographic economic development, what occurred during the 1990s changed how economics, politics, and even art are produced and practiced.

One of the paradoxical qualities of neoliberalism concerns individual and social freedoms. David Harvey describes how in neoliberal thought, there is the belief that market freedom can guarantee individual freedoms.⁶⁰ Subsequently, the calls for freedom as a means of justifying economic and political intervention, such as the US invasion of Iraq, have been used to further implement neoliberalism. However, the freedom experienced under neoliberalism may be a false freedom. Maurizio Lazzarato describes how neoliberalism constitutes a system of credit and debt, or a debt economy, creating subjects that are

permanently indebted, resulting in imbalanced power relations that reassert neoliberal authority.⁶¹ He states:

The debtor is “free,” but his actions, his behavior, are confined to the limits defined by the debt he has entered into [...]. You are free insofar as you assume the *way of life* (consumption, work, public spending, taxes, etc.) compatible with reimbursement [...]. The creditor’s power of the debtor very much resembles Foucault’s last definition of power: an action carried out on another action, an action that keeps the person over which power is exercised “free.”⁶²

As Harvey points out, individual freedom and human dignity, including rights associated with gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, are appealing in their own right,⁶³ but when promoted as a means of facilitating the implementation of neoliberal policies, they became more nefarious as this freedom is potentially a false freedom where people are indebted to their literal and figurative creditors.

Despite the rigorousness of neoliberalism and the many proponents who enthusiastically promote its tenets, reality has, more often than not, fallen short of idealistic expectations. According to neoliberal theorists, including Milton Friedman of the Chicago School of Economics, privatization and deregulation of the market are necessary in order to increase efficiency and productivity.⁶⁴ While neoliberalism tends to serve larger economies that can compete in the open market, it does so at the expense of smaller and weaker economies that cannot keep up. Moreover, attempts to implement these policies in particular national contexts, such as Chile in 1973 and Russia in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, resulted in severely uneven development and an increasing wealth

gap. As Harvey describes it, this process “has evidently been a very complex process entailing multiple determinations and not a little chaos and confusion.”⁶⁵ For example, during the 1990s, Egypt faced a looming economic crisis as the result of high levels of external debt. Consequently, the Mubarak government signed an economic reform agreement with the World Bank. In turn, the Egyptian government implemented extensive neoliberal economic reforms, including cutting spending for social programs; liberalizing trade, commodity prices, and interest rates; and privatizing a large number of public-sector companies. These changes resulted in economic hardships, particularly for factory workers, landless peasants, and government employees. At the same time, a new minority, business elite emerged, taking advantage of market liberalization. According to Dina Shehata, “there soon emerged a two-tiered society: the majority of the Egyptian population was increasingly marginalized, while a small minority prospered like never before.”⁶⁶ During the five years leading up to the “Arab Spring,” workers—including blue-collar laborers and educated professionals—took to organizing strikes and protests in order to express frustrations with economic and social circumstances. Increasingly, educated youths joined these ranks. Shehata describes how Egyptian youths, like those in other Middle Eastern nations, face the paradox of having the highest levels of schooling with the highest level of youth unemployment in the world:

Youth unemployment is highest among those with more education: in Egypt in 2006, young people with a secondary education or more represented 95 percent of the unemployed in their age group. Those who do find jobs often work for low pay and in poor conditions.⁶⁷

Those leading the 2011 popular revolution, including Asmaa Mahfouz, Ahmed Maher, and Wael Ghoneim, were children during the 1990s when neoliberal economic policies were being implemented in Egypt. In addition to the economic challenges and austerity measures demanded by the IMF and World Bank, Selim Shahine describes how young people witnessed the “formation of a new coalition of government officials, businessmen, and politicians that emerged on the back of deregulation and privatization.”⁶⁸ As this group’s power and influence increased, more and more young people in Egypt faced no prospects for the future.

Thus, contradicting claims of increased prosperity for all—including Reagan’s “trickle down” economics or the assumption that “a rising tide lifts all boats”—the implementation of these policies has resulted in the uneven distribution of resources, resulting in a widening gap between the wealthiest and most impoverished groups. Neoliberalism relies on strife and conflict, such as that fostered in Egypt, for its survival. Lazzarato describes how the implementation of neoliberalism has involved social disruption by means of “theft, violence, and usurpation” as opposed to “contract or agreement.”⁶⁹ Subsequently, recent economic and political turmoil has only furthered the extent of neoliberalism. According to Lazzarato, “the power bloc of the debt economy has seized on the latest financial crisis as the perfect occasion to extend and deepen the logic of neoliberal politics.”⁷⁰ Economic disenfranchisement, social grievances, and lack of civil opportunities helped trigger the protests that would lead to Basiony’s death, as well as ushering in a new phase of Egyptian government with the removal of Mubarak. Moreover, *30 Days of Running in the Place* not only

captures the zeitgeist of recent Egyptian political history, but also reveals the strife that neoliberalism thrives upon, here resulting in the death of a young artist.

These financial twists and turns associated with neoliberalism became possible with technological developments, resulting in increased telecommunications connectivity. Harvey emphasizes how such international links are not novel, but have historically been significant:

The international links were always important, particularly through colonial and neocolonial activities, but also through transnational connections that go back to the nineteenth century if not before. But there has undoubtedly been a deepening as well as a widening of these transnational connections during the phase of neoliberal globalization, and it is vital that these connectivities be acknowledged.⁷¹

Venice, in particular, has functioned as a cosmopolitan site of trade for centuries. However, as Harvey notes, there is something distinctive about the speed and extent of these relations that is worth acknowledging. Increased reliance on communication networks have resulted in interconnected societies and markets where information can be shared across the globe in real time. Stiglitz comments on how this has made an already interdependent world even more connected: “It used to be said that when the United States sneezes, Mexico catches a cold. Now, when the United States sneezes, much of the rest of the world comes down with the flu.”⁷² Even though Stiglitz has a US-centric understanding as conveyed in this comment, his metaphor concerning national economies and illness is accurate. Now when a major economic player struggles, whether in Asia, Europe,

or elsewhere, reverberations extend beyond regional parameters and its impact can be felt in other parts of the world.

Changes in telecommunications networks have other significant impacts. In particular, social media networks, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, have been noted for the role they played in helping to organize and facilitate the Egyptian uprisings in 2011. Shahine emphasizes how those who helped to spearhead popular revolts also grew up in the age of the Internet:

Almost from childhood, they had been plugged in to myriad information and communication sources. Online, they took part in a world that was very different from the one they were living in. They experienced the freedom to express their views, and to associate with whoever [sic] they chose. In web chats, blogs, and tweets, engaged young people discussed police brutality, nepotism, the corrupt marriage of business and politics. They quoted Žižek, Gandhi, John Lennon, and JFK. And, with other global activists, they spoke of social justice and equality, learning the language of human rights, freedom, and democracy.⁷³

The Internet functions as a sphere where users can express and exchange thoughts and ideas, while also providing an effective tool for organizing the logistical details of a popular protest movement. In addition, as part of the “world wide web” this information can be accessed around the world, extending the parameters of popular support. Once the Egyptian government became aware of the powerful influence of these networks after the protests began, all Internet and mobile phone connections were cut on January 28, 2011. This did not quell the popular uprisings, however, as the “Friday of Rage” had already been planned.⁷⁴ This would also happen to be the day that artist Ahmed Basiony was killed. A few days

before his death, Basiony posted the following statement to his personal Facebook page:

I have a lot of hope if we stay like this. Riot police beat me a lot. Nevertheless I will go down again tomorrow. If they want war, we want peace. I am just trying to regain some of my nation's dignity. [January 26 at 10:00 p.m.].⁷⁵

This statement, while presented in the informal context of a Facebook page, encapsulates the political attitudes of young Egyptians that social media networks helped foster: a progressive attitude concerning direct civil engagement.

Encompassing both the negative and positive effects that neoliberalism has on the politics, economics, and communication networks of Egypt, these qualities inform the gestures of protest that became the aesthetic gestures of *30 Days of Running in the Place*.

The influence of neoliberalism on art is not unique to Basiony's work, as it has generally changed art-making practices, institutional exhibitionism, and the experience of spectatorship over the past few decades—in *30 Days of Running in the Place*, these connections are made explicit. During the 1990s, critics, scholars, and artists began speaking about a “social turn” in the arts. Particularly, in 1998, Nicolas Bourriaud published *Relational Aesthetics* as an attempt to quantify what he describes as a new trend where social bonds and dialogue function as the form of art.⁷⁶ In this book, Bourriaud focuses his discussion on artists whose work was presented in the 1996 exhibition *Traffic* at the Bordeaux Museum of Art. Artists discussed by Bourriaud include: Liam Gillick, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Vanessa Beecroft. Distinguishing the work of these artists, he argues:

“the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist.”⁷⁷ Here, Bourriaud is proposing a break with previous types of artistic practice, articulating a rift that posits what these artists are doing as uniquely different.

Soon after the publication of *Relational Aesthetics*, artists and scholars quickly celebrated and condemned Bourriaud's assertions, opening up a spectrum of confusing and at times contradictory discourse concerning art and social practice. Critics of Bourriaud, including Shannon Jackson, Claire Bishop, and Martha Rosler, argue that his eclipsed study of relational art practice is disconnected from a much larger genealogy of social and participatory art making.⁷⁸ At the same time, Bishop and Rosler describe how Bourriaud's presentation of relational aesthetics with its emphasis on utopian aspirations leaves little room for critical engagement, or what Bishop refers to as antagonism.⁷⁹ In addition, Jackson's “inter-art” study of this supposed “social turn,” bringing together theatre studies and the visual arts, reveals how the sort of live and participatory practice that Bourriaud promotes as revolutionary in the 1990s has been the norm for performing artists, including those in music, dance, and theatre, for a much longer period of history.⁸⁰

Bourriaud's text and subsequent critiques have caused a (re)consideration of art practice in social and relational terms, particularly in institutional contexts. What was previously been considered the practices of “fringe” or “marginal” artists, including Dadaism, Fluxus, Happenings, and performance artists,

increasingly have become reified, commodified, and financially viable in the institutional context. These changes impact how artists work in addition to how the arts are financially supported. In turn, museums put greater emphasis on including live art events, as opposed to functioning merely as a repository for objects, changing how spectators interact with art. This shift can be experienced at the Venice Biennale, where in recent iterations there have been fewer “traditional” media, such as painting and sculpture, and a greater proliferation of performance-based works, installations, and video. Pavilion exhibitions with explicit attention to contemporary political and social matters, including the 2011 Egyptian pavilion exhibition, are also increasingly prevalent.

As noted in the critiques of Bourriaud, the changes in artistic practice that took place in the 1990s did not necessarily come from artists’ increased reliance on participatory and relational works. Rather, the shift occurred in how these works are contextualized by institutional frames, including the formation and discussion of a contemporary art canon, the commodification and dispersal of these works through private sales and auction houses, and how museums present and sponsor these works. With the increased privatization of funding for artists, especially in the United States, there has been an uneven distribution of monetary support that has resulted in increased struggles for the “starving artist,” especially since the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) ceased providing individual grants to artists in 1994, while others are capable of executing multi-million dollar endeavors. In their introduction to a collection of essays concerning fair compensation for art-making in the twenty-first century, Julieta Aranda, Brian

Kuan Wood, and Anton Vidokle describe how an artist's labor increasingly goes unpaid and many artists are forced to rely on personal investments in order to produce art. They state: "you are your own sugar daddy and trophy wife in a single package."⁸¹ This attitude of personal support is consistent with neoliberalism, where accountability and responsibility are increasingly placed on the individual.

At the same time, increased private funding for the arts has also extended the possibilities of what artists are capable of accomplishing. For example, Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, the US representatives at the 2011 Venice Biennale whose work is the focus of chapter one of this dissertation, have developed a practice that is dependent on the networking capabilities of telecommunications technology and facilitated by the open market. Relying on Google searches and hyperlinks, the artists perform their research using the serendipity of the Internet in a manner that pavilion curator Lisa Freiman refers to as twenty-first century surrealist.⁸² They create projects from this research that involve collaborations with numerous diverse individuals and groups, including object fabricators, non-art experts for consultations and performances, curators, coordinators, and project managers. Their exhibition *Gloria* was a complex collaborative effort that involved hundreds of people from several countries. The channels of the neoliberal market economy opened up the possibilities for artists through financial and communication networks. According to Freiman, the execution of the six commissioned works for *Gloria* took place over ten months.⁸³ Specialists included computer experts, fabricators, the athlete performers, a tank

collector, and an international banking company. Even though the artists are required to turn to others to help realize their projects, the artists are thoroughly enmeshed in the process and always have the ultimate word when it comes to the final presentation of the work.⁸⁴

While Allora and Calzadilla instigate the projects, their collaboration sets off a chain of collaborations, which bring together experts at the top of their fields who may otherwise not interact. For example, the execution of *Algorithm* involved contacting a specific German organ maker, Orgelbau Klais of Bonn, Germany, who was then paired with Diebold, an international banking company, in order to develop an organ powered by an ATM machine. This ATM was maintained by the Rome-based bank, Banca Nazionale del Lavoro.⁸⁵ In addition, a computer expert was paired with a composer, Jonathan Bailey, to develop a score that could respond to the ATM interactions, which also involves collaboration with Diebold in order to ensure that the ATM is functioning.⁸⁶ This transnational network of workers involved in the production of *Gloria* is facilitated by the free trade policies that have opened up systems of production and consumption to extend beyond national borders.

Changes in artistic practice are also being accommodated and encouraged by changes in institutional structure and support systems. More and more institutions, including the Tate in London and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, are building the networks and facilities to present art as events. At the same time, curators and institutions are increasingly involved in the production and execution of works by living artists. For example, *Gloria* was organized and

supported primarily by the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Martha Buskirk calls the changing role of the museum in relation to contemporary art production “museum manufacture.” While she points out that the museum in some sense creates the work for just about any object through the gesture of institutional inclusion, contemporary art brings this to another level. She states:

Museum manufacture is [...] quite literally true for many forms of contemporary art where institutions actively collaborate with artists in the process of organizing, staging, and documenting their site-dependent or event-based projects, with the works therefore linked to the museum from their inception.⁸⁷

Instead of functioning as just a mausoleum for finished works, the museum is involved in every step of the process from birth to artist abandonment, ensuring a degree of control over the life of a work and a guarantee of ownership. In turn, Shannon Jackson posits that institutions provoke ambivalence “as a network of systems that both support and constrain human activity; institutions are honored and feared, thanked and criticized for their role in the constitution of selves and societies.”⁸⁸ While artists have been engaging in “institutional critique,” or using art as a means of exposing and critiquing institutional support systems,⁸⁹ for some time prior to the “social turn” of the 1990s, there have been ramped-up efforts by institutions not merely to welcome works that previously functioned as interventions, but to become thoroughly integrated in the process of producing art. Such infiltration of artistic institutions into the production of art raises the question—does this leave space for critical engagement? Even artists, including Martha Rosler, who have pursued tactics of institutional subversion and have been previously rejected from the museum setting are now invited to present these

polemical works. As Buskirk notes, there is now a fine line between institutional critique and entrepreneurial endeavor.⁹⁰

Changes in institutional presentation and framing have also informed how spectators respond to art. Major institutions increase exposure of art that was previously limited to specialized galleries or underground shows. At the same time, great efforts are made to make the works accessible, both physically and conceptually, to a broader audience. Telecommunications networks mean that localized events can now be shared on the Internet, extending the potential audience for a work, even after an event or exhibit is complete. Documentation is no longer restricted to archives and academic critiques. Social media networks, blogs, and photo-sharing sites have expanded both access to art works and the means by which people can discuss and receive them in both formal and informal settings. The dissemination of digital networked technology changes how memories are shared; the process of actually experiencing an event can be almost simultaneous with distributing documentation. Jane Blocker considers how these technological developments have influenced memory, subjectivity, and witnessing. Emphasizing the ambivalence of these effects, Blocker treats these technologies “neither as purely utopian solutions nor as some monolithic threat.”⁹¹ Through digital technology, experiences are transmitted faster than ever before, also offering opportunities for on-the-spot feedback, opening a forum for the sharing of opinions. People who may never have the opportunity to experience a work of art in its physical presence can have access to documentation, including video, photos, and written testimonies, while also sharing ideas about the work in

the same space. No longer relegated to the realm of the informed or the wealthy, the exhibition of contemporary art has taken on characteristics of mass culture.

In addition, the rise of telecommunications networks has challenged the definition of witnessing and opened online dialogic forums but also redefined what it means to remember. It is now possible to witness what occurs at the Venice Biennale through digitally mediated channels, though some, including Elizabeth Albrycht, argue that this experience differs from actually traveling to the event: “a photo of a piece of art viewed on the computer monitor simply cannot compare to seeing it in person. Yet, it is possible to deeply experience the event of the Biennale digitally, via the cloud of responses to the Biennale that can be found online.”⁹² On the Internet, there exists a virtual counterpart to the Venice Biennale, comprised of various images, testimonies, and accounts. It has a range of functions from recording and sharing experiences, to filling in the gaps in the memory of the spectator who may have been physically present at the Biennale. Through the experience of producing, sharing, and receiving this data, the spectator is destabilized, as the act of witnessing is no longer limited to specific moments in space and time. In a high-tech, post-structuralist move, the subject is scattered and reconfigured as a cyborg, where memories and experiences become patchworks of the “real” and the digital. Blocker describes how we maintain our “fragile mortal bodies even as we are enhanced, our lives extended, our thinking improved, our memories expanded by new technologies.”⁹³ While the parameters of our individual and collective memories continue to expand, digital technology has yet to completely displace the human body, resulting in a tension between

mortality and possibility. The long-term implications of these technological developments are not clear-cut. As Blocker notes: “we live in a world that has grown smaller and yet infinitely expanded, where technology simultaneously connects and isolates us.”⁹⁴ The influence on the spectator is noteworthy, particularly as digital technology has come to influence the unfolding of experience in real place.

Defining the Contemporary and the Global

The rise of the transnational art world in conjunction with neoliberalism has been met with various degrees of criticism and celebration. At the same time, it has also given rise to a rhetorical structure for considering art to be “contemporary” and “global,” utilizing words that tend to be thrown around without being fully qualified. At the Venice Biennale, the common language is the language of contemporary art. Its effectiveness depends on the understanding that art is not reflective of society, but mediates experiences.⁹⁵ What exactly does the phrase “contemporary art” refer to and how does it function in a world or “global” context? Jonathan Harris, editor of *Contemporary Art and Globalization*, describes how “contemporary” has “no finally secure single sense.”⁹⁶ “Contemporary” is an abstract concept that can materialize contingently. The word can be used to describe the “recent,” “postmodern,” and at times, “modern.” Boris Groys argues that while contemporary art seems radically pluralistic, “this appearance of infinite plurality is, of course, only an illusion.”⁹⁷ Moreover, despite the apparent variability of the phrase “contemporary art,” it has come to mean something particular in this moment in the discourse of the art scene in

which the Venice Biennale participates as a manifestation and validating experience. At times, “contemporary” is defined by a work’s relationship to history, its medium or materials, its relationship to theory or the discourse of art, the context of presentation, the artist’s intention, or the spectator’s uptake.

Charlotte Bydler states:

The *contemporary* is no straightforward temporal quality, but one that designates artworks, discourses, and communities considered to be (positioned at) the global horizon of events. It is art with its time, of its time. But also art of a certain community [emphasis in original].⁹⁸

Generally, defining an artwork as “contemporary” comes both from the work itself and the context and discourse surrounding the work. According to Giorgio Agamben, being contemporary is dependent on an artist’s relationship to “one’s own time, which adheres to it but at the same time keeps distance from it.”⁹⁹ That is, being contemporary means to be able to engage with one’s particular time in history, but also to evoke a critical distance that creates room for strife and play.

Defining and experiencing the contemporary has always influenced the presentation of art at the Venice Biennale. As time has progressed, what has constituted the contemporary has changed, but overall there has always been a tendency to include art that is considered culturally relevant to the current time period. It is important to note that the concept of contemporary art is not transhistorical or transcultural, but is rooted in a European or Western definition of culture and relies on a Western discourse of history and understanding of time.¹⁰⁰ As Harris notes: “‘art’ is a concept developed in European culture and

internationalized in many fundamentally problematic ways as part of the western colonial knowledge ‘episteme,’ or system of knowledge.”¹⁰¹ In twenty-first century understandings of contemporary art, there is an expectation of diversity, which is experienced at the Venice Biennale through the subversion or reiteration of traditional and national cultures into “non-traditional” presentations of art, including installation, performance, post-conceptual or post-medium, new media, and multi-media works, among others. At the Venice Biennale, it is a matter of adapting the abstract idea of contemporary art in works that are contingent upon the national culture of the pavilion. This presentation provides an impression of diversity, though actual cultural diversities tend to be demoted to make way for works that communicate globally—that is, using the language of contemporary art that is rooted in Western art history. Martha Buskirk states:

Perhaps the only point of accord in discussions of contemporary art is that there is not consensus. There is no shared or universal standard of judgment and no comprehensive narrative, except for perhaps the grandest claim of all—that contemporary art has to be understood as a global enterprise.¹⁰²

Instead of facilitating the discussion of defining “contemporary,” Buskirk’s point raises another question—just how are we to define “global” and how is it manifested at the Venice Biennale?

The word “global,” especially when used in conjunction with the phrase “contemporary art” elicits a sense of both concern and excitement. Noël Carroll notes how tempting it is to consider the art world as a global scene “because the mass communications media are so integral to the experience of the transnational

urban world—because they appear to be everywhere—the impression that the arts have gone utterly global is hard to resist.”¹⁰³ However, to refer to something as “global” utilizes an all-encompassing term that leans towards homogenization. In actuality, what is typically posited as “global” has localized or regional characteristics that get lost, mistranslated, bastardized, or appropriated. While, again, like economic globalization, this is not a new cultural phenomenon, nevertheless the speed at which the process of exchange takes place is unprecedented. Referring to something as “global” glosses over the nuanced regional differences that comprise the rich tapestry of art on a worldwide scale.

At the same time, there is the risk that what is posited as “global” is actually a Western-influenced model of art being presented as universal in a neocolonial move. Since the Biennale selects which countries can be included as official national participants, acceptance is dependent on institutional consensus within Italian politics and international relations. Over the past decade, there has been a great increase in the number of nations with official pavilions, a fact which the Biennale emphasizes throughout its website and catalogues. However, the exact criteria that determine which nations can be included, while others are excluded, are not clear. In recent years, there has been an increase in Middle Eastern, African, and Asian nations, but there are many more who do not participate. Thus, this Biennale is not truly “global.” In the context of this dissertation, the term “global” is used to designate the amorphous ideal of worldwide connectivity.

In his essay “Art and Globalization: Then and Now,” Noël Carroll emphasizes how globalization is not a new phenomenon, but is “arguably a process with a probably immemorial lineage.”¹⁰⁴ He points out the histories of trade between Europe and Asia, within which Venice was a significant stopping point, as well as the colonial ambitions and innovations in transport technology that have unfolded over centuries. Carroll argues: “Perhaps the driving engine behind the globalizing tendencies of the present, has always had worldwide ambitions with respect to markets and resources.”¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, he goes on to point out that any discussion of globalization, even in the twenty-first century, is incomplete, since while the world is arguably “getting smaller,” there remain numerous regions that fall outside of the parameters of the so-called “global village.” In contrast, Carroll proposes that what is evolving is an “integrated, interconnected, transnational art world.”¹⁰⁶ What is distinctive about this approach, as opposed to treating globalization as a novel phenomenon, is that it takes into account the local and regional particularities found in art and culture, even when part of a larger, transnational network. At the same time, Carroll acknowledges the longer history of hybridization many associate with globalization, which is significant for appreciating Venice as a city that has historically been part of this type of network, and whose culture is primarily built upon cross-cultural exchange. What is different in this era, according to Carroll, are the transnational practices and institutions that are coming into being,¹⁰⁷ which are the major subject of consideration throughout this dissertation.

The Biennialization of Art (and the Venetianness of a Biennale)

A trend that has accompanied the rise of neoliberalism is the increase of massive art fairs, including biennials, triennials, and *documentas*. While the Venice Biennale is the longest running event of its kind, the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries are punctuated by the increase of these types of events on various continents. According to some estimates, there are somewhere between eighty and 140 art biennials scattered throughout the globe.¹⁰⁸ Thierry de Duve acknowledges that responses to this proliferation of biennials seems to be divided:

Interpretation of the phenomenon [...] oscillates between the optimistic embracing of a democratic redistribution of cultural power among established and “emergent” regions of the world, and the pessimistic recognition of a new form of cultural hegemony and re-colonization of the part of the West.¹⁰⁹

Acknowledging these two extremes, which tend to accompany discussions of neoliberalism in general, opens up the field of various pros and cons associated with transnational networking of the art world. This dissertation attempts to examine the tensions that arise from this dichotomy, particularly the influence of the recent iteration of globalization on the presentation of national culture and how this impacts what constitutes contemporary art in the twenty-first century.

The rise of neoliberalism and the transnational art circuit has influenced the Venice Biennale in a number of ways. First of all, it has led to the questioning of the national pavilion system, which constitutes the primary Biennale exhibition structure. Currently, the Venice Biennale is one of the few that rely on the model

of national pavilions, which Simon Sheikh refers to as “national (self)presentation.”¹¹⁰ The persistence of this model is important to note, even though adjustments have been made, such as including curated thematic exhibitions and hosting “collateral events” and “para-pavilions.” The increase in non-national pavilions function as a testament to the neoliberalism desire to minimize borders and boundaries in order to promote free trade and open markets. Secondly, it is no longer the sole event of its kind, but a becoming a potential stop along a multi-national circuit.¹¹¹ As a body of scholarship has been developing around the theme of biennials, the Venice Biennale starts to get muddled with other exhibition events like it, losing the particularities of what makes this version so important—specifically, Venice’s history as a cosmopolitan city functioning as a stage for promoting cultural identities in a cross-cultural context long before the Biennale first came about.

While neoliberalism has caused a reconsideration of the nation as a political unit, the Venice Biennale has maintained its core geopolitical pavilion model, making this one of the qualities that distinguishes this biennial from almost all the others. According to Swiss art historian Beat Wyss, the questioning of national representation reached a peak during the 1990s.¹¹² I argue that the persistence of the national model at the Biennale attests to the continued relevance of the nation as a political entity in the twenty-first century. At the same time, Yahya Madra argues that the Biennale has been in an incomplete transition from a “nation-state/imperial” mode to a new “transnational” mode, with the more recent Biennales involving an “exchange” or “political negotiation” between these two

modes.¹¹³ For Madra, “the transition within the Venice Biennale is itself over-determined by the geopolitical changes that constitute its context.”¹¹⁴ Perhaps the struggles of nations in the free trade context highlight the utopian impossibilities of the “global” in the first place. As Noël Carroll explains:

We seem to be between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, we want to say that we have entered a new era of globalization both in general and in respect to art. But on the other hand, with just a little pressure, the notion of globalization in both respects appears to come apart. For, not every nation in the world is an equal partner in this global dance and even those parts that are involved in transnational enterprises are often more regionally engaged than globally. The world is not as pervasively connected as is often imagined.¹¹⁵

The tension between the national and globalized ideals that Carroll describes is evident in the ambivalence concerning the geopolitical pavilion map of the Venice Biennale.

Josette Féral’s essay, “Every Transaction Conjures a New Boundary,” offers some insight into the contradictory actions of opening and enclosure that the national pavilion system entails. The tendency towards opening, which neoliberalism represents, is also associated with a simultaneous action of enclosure, or the production of new boundaries, such as national boundaries. As a result, she states:

A new cartography has been instated whereby subjects are more and more “deterritorialized,” that is, severed from the country or culture to which they are originally linked and “reterritorialized” according to new parameters more akin to the localities they live in, localities defined through “human sociality” rather than geographic borders.¹¹⁶

Her analysis suggests that together with the global movement towards openness there is also the creation of zones of exclusion and isolation. The tension between the national and the global at the Venice Biennale may be correlated to this redrawing of boundaries. The increase in the number of artists working abroad but representing their native countries, as well as the selection of non-national artists as national representatives offers evidence of this effect at the Biennale. The erasure and erection of boundaries are going to be discussed in greater depth in chapters two and three of this dissertation, which reads the Venice Biennale as heterotopic *Spielraum* and examines the institutional support systems of nations.

In addition to its exhibition model, what also makes the Venice Biennale distinctive from other events is the setting. As noted, Venice has a long history as a cosmopolitan city, centuries before neoliberal globalization. Venice has both formed and been informed by the networks of trade and travel among Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. It developed as a unique, independent republic that was lacking in natural resources, except for the sea itself, and thrived on these relations with others. As Frederic Lane notes, “being on the edge of two worlds—the Byzantine and Moslem East and the Latin-Germanic West—Venetians looked sometimes eastward, at other times westward for profits and power and for artistic inspiration.”¹¹⁷ Through trade, negotiations, and warfare, Venice fostered alliances and fought its enemies as this maritime republic grew both in size and influence. In turn, it became what Lane refers to as a “chief port of the Adriatic and the chief link in northern Italy between East and West.”¹¹⁸ During the height

of shipbuilding at the *Arsenale* in the fifteenth century, Venice earned renown as a travel destination for foreigners, and according to John Julius Norwich:

It was no wonder that strangers came flocking—merchants, pilgrims bound for the Holy Land, and increasing numbers of simple travelers spurred less by commerce or piety than by curiosity and a thirst for adventure—to the point where, as a contemporary wrote, the rough accents of the Venetians were lost in the babel of strange tongues that was to be heard daily on the Piazza. Here, unlike any sea-port on the Mediterranean, they knew that they would not be swindled—the Republic maintained a specially-trained corps of officials whose sole duty it was to look after strangers, to find them accommodation, and to see that they were never overcharged.¹¹⁹

Even centuries prior to the advent of modern tourism, Venice welcomed its foreign travelers and provided comfort during their stay. Thus, Venice's reputation as a travel destination began, whether as a port of call during a longer journey, or as an urban wonder in and of itself. The present-day Biennale builds upon this historical precedent where the city functions as a site for cultural display and exchange in a transnational network of art, politics, and economics.

A Brief Overview of Gestures

The gesture is a type of action, but with a variety of uses and applications. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to propose another definition of gesture. Rather, the gesture functions as the focus of these readings and analyses. Gestures can be kinesthetic or disembodied; gestures can be performed by individuals or institutions; gestures can be subtle or monumental. The term appears in a range of disciplines and scholarly discourses, including rhetoric, theatre, and the visual arts.

Some studies of gesture in Classical Antiquity emphasize its use as coded signs during speeches and presentations, or “manual rhetoric.” Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, arguably the first public professor of rhetoric, discusses *gestus*, including posture and gesticulation, in his extensive writings on the topic. According to Fritz Graf, who writes about Quintilian's contributions, “in rhetoric, gestures [...] underline and amplify the message of language by stressing the emotional, non-rational elements.”¹²⁰ Gestures attempt to capture the hearts of an audience. These early studies of gesture and rhetoric emphasize the ability of such movements and actions to communicate, which can either enhance or detract from the spoken message. The rhetorical gesture can be physical, but also textual. As such, the gesture fills in the gaps of communication that words cannot necessarily convey, providing supplementary information that can range from subtle to grandiose.

Immanuel Kant also addresses the role of gesture in conjunction with verbal communication. For Kant, gesture is one of the sensations used by people in order to communicate, and that complete communication consists of word, physical gesture, and tone, which should be simultaneous and united.¹²¹ In rhetoric, as one of the beautiful arts of speech, the gesture functions as a means to convey emotion and enhance a performance. Kant defines rhetoric as “the art of conducting a business of the understanding as a free play of the imagination.”¹²² According to Kant, the orator “thus announces a matter of business and carries it out as if it were merely a play with ideas in order to entertain the audience.”¹²³ Presenting a “matter of business” as if it were a “play with ideas” in order to

persuade the audience eventually leads Kant to vilify rhetoric, particularly when it is used as an art of persuasion. Rhetoric may have some characteristics of poetry, the other art of speech, but only to the extent “as is necessary to win minds over to the advantage of the speaker before they can judge and rob them of their freedom.”¹²⁴ Thus, rhetoric becomes problematic, as it can be used to gloss over or conceal vice and error, while precluding the audience of the freedom that is especially important in civil matters. Kant's condemnation of rhetoric as a kind of trickery also lends suspicion to the gestures associated with this type of performance, especially when gestures are cultivated in order to persuade and subsequently “rob” the receiver of the freedom to judge.

The cultivation of gestures in rhetoric in order to persuade and promote emotional responses can also be found in theatre performances. As with rhetoric, the study of gestures has been a pertinent component of theatre since ancient Greece, but its role has not been consistent. Patricia Pavis describes two trajectories that gestures have taken in theatre. The first treats gesture as a means of expression, which can be traced back to a classical conception of gesture. According to Pavis, this use of gestures is meant to externalize “a pre-existing psychic content (emotion, reaction, meaning) that the body is intended to communicate to others.”¹²⁵ When emphasis is placed on presenting the dramatic text, gestures function as a means of enhancing these expressive qualities and tend to be practiced and carefully articulated through rehearsal. The other major tradition considers gesture as a means of production as opposed to communicating

pre-existing meaning, as seen in the work of Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski.¹²⁶

In the nineteenth century, Richard Wagner emphasized the role of the gesture in his conception of the total work of art, or *Gesamtkunstwerk*. When staging operas, Wagner aimed to create a theatrical experience that completely immersed the spectator. He drew from various artistic media and elements, including music, literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, and stage design. Martin Pucher describes how Wagner considered gestures as the corporeal motions of his performers, and these formed the foundation of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*: “The actor’s gestures are more than the physical center of the work of art: Wagner also derives from them the material for the theatrical aesthetics of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.”¹²⁷ In his 1839 essay, “The Art-Form of the Future,” Wagner emphasizes the corporeality of the human body as the primary means of experiencing life, and subsequently art. Gestures become an expressive mold for thought as the primary actions of the body.¹²⁸ From this point, Wagner developed a theory of the gesture, which he applied to other areas of his composition and staging process. For Wagner, the gesture came to signify a language of the unsayable.

The immersive qualities of Wagner’s theatricality have caused his theories to come under critical fire, especially from Friedrich Nietzsche and Theodor Adorno.¹²⁹ In addition, German playwright, director, and theoretician Bertolt Brecht also challenges Wagner’s immersive approach to theatre. In “A Short Organum for Theatre,” Brecht describes how this type of theatre places the

spectators “under the cover of darkness” as witnesses to human relationships that are put on display in order to arouse feelings, but without the potential for critique and social action.¹³⁰ Brecht fears that Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in its all-consuming format, becomes a vortex that both mystifies and drains spectators.¹³¹

In response, Brecht proposes an alternative theatrical approach, referred to as epic theatre, as an opportunity to defamiliarize the immersive, hypnotic spectacle that came to haunt modern theatre from Wagner onward. As with Wagner, the gesture plays a significant role in Brecht’s conceptualization of epic theatre. However, Brecht’s treatment of the gesture differs from Wagner’s. Brecht feels that gestures are informed by a person’s social comportment and how she relates to others. He refers to the realm of material relations that structures a person’s capacity for gesture as *gest* or *gestus*. The socially encoded expression, or social gest, is “the gest relevant to society, the gest that allows conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances.”¹³² Social gests function as “the mimetic and gestural expression of the social relationships prevailing between people of a given time period.”¹³³ Through rehearsals and training, Brecht asked performers to carefully examine their use of gesture and pay attention to how these actions function as expressions of meaning, while also challenging traditional usage. The actors use gestures to relate to each other as well as to the audience. Moreover, the gesture of the Brechtian actor is the performance of *gestus*.¹³⁴ For Brecht, *gestus* is informed by material and social relations, which he believes are class-based. Frederic Jameson emphasizes how Brecht understood *gestus* to be historicized, as opposed to universal or transhistorical.¹³⁵ As a result, *gestus* can

be modified over time in relation to social circumstances or can be drastically altered when attention is brought to these actions. Brecht's attention to detail and the modifications of his actors' actions is noted by Hans Curjel while observing a rehearsal of *Antigone* in 1948: "The directorial method was based on investigation and varied experimentation that could extend to the smallest gestures—eyes, fingers [...]. Brecht worked like a sculptor on and with the actor."¹³⁶ For Brecht, the ability to change comprises a significant component of his aesthetic methodology and ideology. He uses the theatre as a place to examine material relations as well as to inspire his actors and audience to change their material circumstances. Instead of letting the spectators become passive observers, caught up in a dreamlike space as they watch the production unfold on stage, Brecht uses the theatre as a place to entertain, but also educate his audience, inspiring them to make changes in their social conditions.

Walter Benjamin draws upon Brecht's use of gesture. In his essay, "What is Epic Theatre?" he posits that epic theatre makes gestures "quotable": "an actor must be able to space his gestures the way a typesetter produces spaced type."¹³⁷ When gestures are quotable, according to Benjamin, they become interruptions of action. Moreover, "epic theatre is by definition a gestic theatre. For the more frequently we interrupt someone in the act of acting, the more gestures result."¹³⁸ The effectiveness of epic theatre arises because it does not produce empathy or identification, but astonishment and defamiliarization in the audience.

Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben builds his definition of gestures on the work of Benjamin and Brecht. His writings provide insight into how gestures

communicate meaning, while also drawing attention to the gesture's quality of deferral. In his 1990 essay, “Kommerell, or, On Gesture,” Agamben emphasizes how gesture is closely tied to language, functioning as the “stratum of language that is not exhausted in communication and that captures language, so to speak, in its solitary moments.”¹³⁹ Subsequently, gestures are not a source of prelinguistic content, but offer another side to language that is speechless. Agamben states:

Gesture is always the gesture of being at a loss in language; it is always a “gag” in the literal sense of the word, which indicates first of all something put in someone’s mouth to keep him from speaking and, then, the actor’s improvisation to make up for the impossibility of speaking.¹⁴⁰

As with Benjamin, gesture functions as an interruption. Agamben takes his analysis a step further when he states:

Criticism is the reduction of works to the sphere of pure gesture. This sphere lies beyond psychology and, in a certain sense, beyond all interpretation. [...] Consigned to their supreme gesture, works live on, like creatures bathed in the light of the Last Day, surviving the ruin of their formal garment and their conceptual meaning.¹⁴¹

The sphere of gesture is a *Spielraum*—a space of speechlessness where meanings are loosened, and, according to Agamben, “confusion turns to dance, and ‘gag’ to mystery.”¹⁴²

In a later essay, “Notes on Gesture,” Agamben examines the work of Gilles Deleuze and the role of gesture in cinematic expression, emphasizing how gesture is the means by which film becomes political.¹⁴³ Referring to the Roman philosopher Varro, Agamben states: “What characterizes gesture is that in it nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and

supported. The gesture, in other words, opens the sphere of *ethos* as the more proper sphere of that which is human.”¹⁴⁴ Moreover, gestures function as a means of bringing ethos from the realm of ideas by putting theory into practice. Subsequently, Agamben places emphasis on the quality of actions, as opposed to what gestures may denote. The gesture does not address a goal, but “*the gesture is the exhibition of a mediality: it is the process of making a means visible as such* [emphasis in original].”¹⁴⁵ As means without ends, gestures can be the actions of artists that carry or convey meaning, but do not constitute the meaning of a work. This emphasis on developing a practice as opposed to demonstrating an outcome is a key quality of the gesture, which Agamben argues should also constitute the realm of politics.

The definition of gesture in the visual arts is somewhat distinctive, though not completely disconnected, from the understanding of the term in rhetoric and theatre. Roland Barthes examines the artist’s gesture in an essay about American artist Cy Twombly, where he describes how the gesture proceeds from the artist’s body and the contact with his tool and the surface that he marks:

What is a gesture? Something like the surplus of an action. The action is transitive, it seeks only to provoke an object, a result; the gesture is the indeterminate and inexhaustible total of reason, pulsions, indolences which surround the action with an atmosphere.¹⁴⁶

Barthes distinguishes between the message, which seeks to produce information, and the sign, which seeks to produce an intellection, from the gesture, which “produces all the rest [...] without necessarily seeking to produce anything.”¹⁴⁷

Gestures can both add and erase in a process where traces are layered and negated while finality is deferred. Moreover, the artist is the operator of gestures, which can exceed the physical action of putting a pencil to paper and into the realm of conceptual action of post-medium artists. The gesture advances meaning, but the direction or course this may take is not always evident. The uncertainty involved of navigating the terrain between messages and signs through gestures is a process that will be considered in this dissertation.

Another influential writing concerning gesture in the visual arts is Allan Kaprow's 1958 essay, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock." Written two years after the tragic death of the renowned painter, Kaprow emphasizes Pollock's contributions to art making as something that exceeds the limits of modernist criticism. Instead of focusing on his paintings,¹⁴⁸ Kaprow puts forth Pollock's process as one of his notable innovations that would come to inform art of future generations: "With Pollock, the so-called dance of dripping, slashing, squeezing, daubing, and whatever else went into a work placed an almost absolute value upon a diaristic gesture."¹⁴⁹ Working on large canvases laid out on the floor, Pollock literally immersed himself in the painting, where he left traces of his gestures as he moved in the canvas. Kaprow describes how Pollock's process can be differentiated from the "old craft of painting [...] perhaps bordering on ritual itself, which happens to use paint as one of the materials."¹⁵⁰ As with Barthes's analysis of Twombly, the gesture involves much more than the materials, with emphasis placed on the action of artist.

However, Kaprow does not end his discussion concerning the gesture here. He goes on to describe the impact that Pollock's work has on the spectator:

I am convinced that to grasp a Pollock's impact properly, we must be acrobats, constantly shuttling between an identification with the hands and body that flung the paint and stood "in" the canvas and submission to the objective markings, allowing them to entangle and assault us. This instability is indeed far from the idea of a "complete" painting. The artist, the spectator, and the outer world are much too interchangeably involved here.¹⁵¹

Moving away from emphasis on the autonomy of the artwork that dominated much of modernist criticism, Kaprow makes note of how the site of meaning-making production cannot be contained by the work itself, but extends to incorporate the gestures of its spectators as they identify with the experience of the artist. Kaprow was not the only thinker at the time to articulate this transition, but his observations in relation to Pollock and gesture are significant since he went on to develop his own method of art making, particularly his Happenings, which put these ideas into practice.

The emphasis on practice as opposed to fixed outcome when it comes to the production of meaning relates to Jacques Derrida's conceptualization of Martin Heidegger's notion of *sous rature*. *Sous rature* roughly translates as "under erasure," and is typically displayed by presenting a word, but then crossing it out to denote how the word is inadequate, but without a suitable replacement, it remains necessary. Derrida appropriates this concept from Heidegger's letter to Ernst Jünger, "Zur Seinsfrage." In this essay, Heidegger is attempting to establish a speculative definition of nihilism but also confronts the problem of defining

anything. Constituting what some consider his great poetic gesture, Heidegger crosses out the word “Being,” and lets both deletion and the word remain. According to Gayatri Spivak, “Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible.”¹⁵² To write a word, cross it out, and then print both the word and its deletion carries and visually articulates the traces of the gestures involved in writing. Spivak differentiates between Heidegger’s and Derrida’s use of *sous rature*:

Heidegger’s ~~Being~~ might point at an inarticulate presence. Derrida’s ~~trace~~ is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience [...] both Heidegger and Derrida teach us to use language in terms of a trace-structure, effacing it even as it presents its legibility.¹⁵³

Sous rature contains both the traces of gestures of writing as well as gestures towards the multiplicity of meanings that a word or sign may contain.

Writing under erasure, using terms that are inadequate yet necessary, explicates what Derrida refers to famously as *différance*. As a deliberate misspelling of *différence*, *différance* is Derrida’s term for the condition of possibility for meaning. In the essay “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” Derrida describes *différance* as a “non-origin which is originary,” or an “originary” that has been crossed out (*sous rature*).¹⁵⁴ In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida states:

The (pure) trace is différance. It does not depend on any sensible plentitude, audible or visible, phonetic or graphic. It is, on the contrary, the condition of such a plentitude. Although it *does not exist*, although it is never a *being-present* outside of a plentitude, its possibility is by rights anterior to all that one calls sign (signified/signifier, content/expression, etc.), concept or operation, motor or sensory. [...] Différance is therefore the formation of

form. But is *on the other hand* the being-imprinted of the imprint [emphasis in original].¹⁵⁵

With *différance*, Derrida breaks from the logocentric, teleological approach to philosophy that emphasizes the seeking of a single, originary truth. For Derrida, “knowledge is not a systematic tracking down of a truth that is hidden but may be found. It is rather the field ‘of *freeplay*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions in the closure of a finite ensemble [emphasis in original].”¹⁵⁶ This field is comprised of traces, with the trace being “the *différance* which opens appearance [*l'apparître*] and signification.”¹⁵⁷ Gestures participate in the process of producing and deciphering the systems and chains of imprints and traces that Derrida considers constitutive of our differences and lived experiences. Gestures can erase and obscure as well as divulge and highlight, placing meaning under erasure. Gestures both reveal and participate in material relations and support systems of power, and in the case of the Venice Biennale this takes place on the scale of the local, regional, national, and transnational. These relations are not fixed, but have changed over time since the inception of the Biennale in 1895, in concordance with shifts in politics and economics.

Making Art Politically

At the Venice Biennale, some artists may make political art, but they all make art politically as part of the geopolitical pavilion system. Heidegger’s investigation concerning art and truth is useful in clarifying the relationship between art and politics. For Heidegger, the work of art is not an autonomous object dissociated from history and experience. In contrast to Kant’s aesthetics

that are based on a disinterested subject, Heidegger emphasizes the thingly quality of the work of art as an object created out of the artist's experience. The artwork is also more than its thingly elements and, according to Heidegger:

This something else in the work constitutes its artistic nature. The artwork is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but it says something other than what the mere thing itself is [...]. The work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory.¹⁵⁸

This "other" that the artwork reveals is the opening up of the Being of beings, or the revealing of truth.¹⁵⁹ Unconcealment, or *alethia*, means that truth can never be understood fully, as once it is unconcealed, it is then concealed. The thingly qualities of the work of art evoke experiences, which are perceived bodily using the various senses, and as Heidegger writes: "In the nearness of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be."¹⁶⁰ For Heidegger, in contrast to Kant, art and aesthetics does not have to do with the experience of the beautiful in the mind of the subject, but rather it is the art work's disclosure of truth.¹⁶¹

In addition to emphasizing the thing itself when it comes to aesthetic experience, Heidegger also points out the significance of historical context in relation to giving rise to the work and the work's subsequent existence. As a thingly object, the artwork is subject to natural physical processes of entropy, reaffirming Heidegger's insistence that the art object is not autonomous. At the same time, these thingly qualities, which cannot be overlooked, mean that the subject who experiences this work cannot be disinterested. The work is created

through a process by the artist, which differs from other work processes.¹⁶² Instead of being reduced to craft, art is created through *technē*, which Heidegger describes as “a bringing forth of beings in that it *brings forth* what is being presented as such *out of* concealment and specifically *into* the *unconcealment* of its appearance; *technē* never signifies the action of making [emphasis in original].”¹⁶³ For an artist to create, she is bringing something forth. Heidegger writes how truth is not gathered from the things at hand, “never from the ordinary. Rather, the opening up of the open region, and the clearing of beings, happens only when the openness that makes its advent in thrownness is projected.”¹⁶⁴ This process of clearing takes place with the work of art.

Thus, Heidegger emphasizes how the production of art participates in the unfolding of truth. Art is not about making a product, but is a practice. Jacques Rancière continues this legacy of treating art as a practice. He differentiates between three regimes of art: the ethical regime, the representative regime, and the aesthetic regime. For the ethical regime, Rancière turns to Plato's *Republic* as his standard reference. Images lack autonomy and are understood by being questioned for their truth and their effect on the ethos of individuals and the community.¹⁶⁵ In the representative regime, works are no longer considered in conjunction with the laws of truth as they belong to the sphere of imitation or *mimesis*. As Steven Corcoran, editor and translator of the Continuum edition of Rancière's *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, notes: “[images] are not so much copies of reality as ways of imposing a form on matter.”¹⁶⁶ Rancière argues that in this regime, art becomes hierarchical through critical discourse as it also is

categorized according to medium of expression, thereby preventing any kind of innovative action against dominant political structures. Greenbergian modernism functions as the height of the representative regime in the twentieth century as it sought to purify painting, leading to Michael Fried's condemnation of the theatrical in art.¹⁶⁷ In the third regime, the aesthetic regime, the distinctions between media are blurred as emphasis is placed on expressiveness. The normative relationships between form and matter established under the representative regime are overthrown, freeing the artist from these restraints. For Rancière, it is not a matter of exclusion for aesthetics and politics, but aesthetics is always bound up with politics. The Venice Biennale is a site where this is made explicit through the intertwined, institutional nature of the event with national governments and international relations, but this aesthetic dimension of politics is not limited to this sphere. Rather, what occurs at the Venice Biennale makes evident the material relations and support systems that constitute interactions of the politics, economics, and the art world in a transnational network informed by neoliberalism.

Without equating the aesthetic value of art with its political ends, the Venice Biennale continues to function as a site of cultural production in the twenty-first century, adapting since its inception to the changing states of world systems. The Biennale has carried Venice's legacy as a cosmopolitan city of cultural exchange from the late nineteenth century into the new millennium. This dissertation explores what the Biennale has to offer in terms of staging nations, cultural diplomacy, and artistic production in the twenty-first century. Whether

functioning as a mausoleum of ideas, a scavenging ground for the inflated art market, or a site of cultural diplomacy, the Venice Biennale emerges from the city's historical legacy as what Mary Louise Pratt refers to as a "contact zone" for cultural exchange.¹⁶⁸ As the city that emerged from marshes in the Adriatic Sea, built atop petrified poles plunged into the muck, Venice's renowned Biennale continues to function as a realm where nationalism and contemporary art merge through gestures that continue to add and erase, a place for strife and play in this geopolitical *Spielraum* where freedom is placed under erasure.

Chapter 1

The Ugly Americans

Gestures and Social Practice in the Work of Allora and Calzadilla

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword,
His truth is marching on.

CHORUS:

Glory, glory, hallelujah! Glory, glory, hallelujah!
Glory, glory, hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watchfires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps,
His day is marching on.

CHORUS

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His Judgment Seat.
Oh! Be swift, my soul, to answer Him, be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

CHORUS

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me;
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.

CHORUS

“The Battle Hymn of the Republic”
—Lyrics by Julia Ward Howe, 1861



Figure 3. US pavilion, exterior shot, 2011. Photograph by EL Putnam.

Potential and Kinetic Energy: *Body in Flight (American)* and (*Delta*)

Originally erected in 1930, the official pavilion of the United States of America is located in the Giardini, the main exhibition area of the Venice Biennale. As with other pavilions in this area of the city, its architecture functions as a testament to national culture. The neoclassical building is reminiscent of a miniaturized version of Thomas Jefferson's plantation Monticello, complete with dome and rotunda.¹

Approaching the pavilion in 2011, I am confronted by a runner dressed in a US jersey on a treadmill attached to the top of an overturned tank. This work, *Track and Field*, dominates the space in front of the pavilion and fills the surrounding areas of the Giardini with the loud, grinding noises of the tank treads.

Upon entering the building, I approach *Armed Freedom Lying on a Sunbed*, which consists of a reduced bronze replica of the *Statue of Freedom* lying horizontally inside a Solaris 422 tanning bed. In the galleries to the right and left of the pavilion's central rotunda, there are life-size replicas of elite business class airline seats. Attention has been paid to minor details, such as the inclusion of a grey blanket under the seat and dog-eared copies of airline magazines slipped into the pockets. As I walk around the sculptures, carefully examining these details, I am reminded of my own travel experience, coming to Venice the day before, which included a stressful and uncomfortable transatlantic flight. The seats also evoke memories of 9/11, when instruments of consumer flight were transformed into weapons of aggression and violence.

My understanding of the work is quickly complicated once I discover that these sculptures actually function as apparatuses for gymnasts. At specified times throughout the day, a gymnast dressed in glittery red, white, and blue spandex with the letters "U.S.A." across the chest presents a routine to a small audience that fills the gallery space. For *Body in Flight (Delta)*, a female gymnast uses the model of the Delta airline seat as a balance beam. Her body bends and folds along the curves of the seat, displaying trained athletic grace that defies gravity as she balances on this atypical piece of equipment. The routine, which lasts for approximately seventeen minutes, includes movements from gymnastics combined with modern dance, emphasizing her flexibility. In the opposite gallery, for *Body in Flight (American)*, a male gymnast transforms the American Airlines

seat into a pommel horse, upon which he performs a twelve-minute routine that demonstrates his physical strength.



Figure 4. Allora and Calzadilla, *Body in Flight (Delta)*, 2011. Photograph by EL Putnam.



Figure 5. Allora and Calzadilla, *Body in Flight (American)*, 2011. Photograph by EL Putnam.

Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla are the artists who produced *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta)*, along with the five other newly commissioned works presented in *Gloria*, the US Pavilion exhibit at the 2011 Venice Biennale. Living and working in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the artist duo is known for works that incorporate a range of artistic media, including sculpture, video, sound, and “delegated performance,” which Claire Bishop defines as “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.”² In addition to those mentioned, other works included in *Gloria* are the two-channel video projection *Half Mast\Full Mast* and the interactive installation *Algorithm*, which is an organ that is run by a functioning ATM machine. These works exemplify the bizarre juxtapositions and humorous inversions that have earned the artists their reputation as political jokers. Through these strange combinations, such as placing gymnasts on business-class airline seats, Allora and Calzadilla's work contains themes of political protest and cultural critique, using humor and juxtaposition in order to defamiliarize the spectator. This quality can be understood as the Brechtian effect of *Verfremdungseffekt* (V-effekt).³ With this method, Brecht wants to defamiliarize his actors and spectators in relation to what they consider to be natural in society.⁴ According to a press release sent out by the Indianapolis Museum of Art, these works “re-present familiar symbols, forms, and actions to destabilize existing narratives around national identity, global commerce, international competition, democracy, and militarism.”⁵



Figure 6. Allora and Calzadilla, *Body in Flight (Delta)*, 2011. Performance by gymnast Chellsie Memmel. Photograph by Nick D'Emilio. Reproduced with permission from the Indianapolis Museum of Art.



Figure 7. Allora and Calzadilla, *Body in Flight (American)*, 2011. Performance by gymnast David Durante. Photograph by Andrew Borwin. Reproduced with permission from the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

What the Critics Have to Say...

Critical reception of the US Pavilion has varied. A number of critics are immediately taken aback by *Track and Field*. Negative reviews tend to be dismissive in their language and carry a tone of frustration. Some of the words used to describe the work include: ugly, obnoxious, stupid, vacant, absurd, desperate, pointless, and sophomoric.⁶ Following *New York Magazine* arts and culture blogger Jerry Saltz's first visit to the Pavilion, he described how aptly *Track and Field* depicts how the rest of the world perceives the United States:

We Americans are making this incredible noise, flexing our might, playing police force to the world, entertaining ourselves and anyone who'll watch, being grandiose and goony and needy, all while trying to stay fit. [...] Allora and Calzadilla have found a way to encapsulate, possibly exorcise, summon, and certainly give visual form to the freaked out way the world sees the United States. [...] As I walked away from this infernal piece I said to [a friend], "Now, that's America."⁷

In a blog post eight days later, Saltz changes his opinion and lists the US Pavilion exhibition as one of the Biennale's worst, saying that everything inside is "obvious, redundant, or silly."⁸ He goes so far as to claim that *Armed Freedom Lying on a Sunbed* may not be art.

Writing in the *Guardian*, Adrian Searle seems ambivalent in his position concerning the art:

Was this all about American power and choreographed, muscle-bound might? Allora and Calzadilla pirouette on the line between politics and entertainment. The runners go nowhere, and the

upside-down tank looks impotent and vulnerable, though it makes a lot of noise—a roaring excess.⁹

Roberta Smith of the *New York Times* describes the exhibition as having a “clenched, unforgiving energy.” She makes sure to state that she does not care much for it, pointing out how the work is lacking substance: “They offer an angry, sophomoric Conceptualism that borders on the tyrannical and that in many ways mimics the kinds of forces they criticize.”¹⁰ She is quick to point out that the pieces fall short in comparison to *Stop, Repair, Prepare: Variations on “Ode to Joy” for a Prepared Piano* (2008), the Allora and Calzadilla work that was presented at the Museum of Modern Art in late 2010. This piece involves a Bechstein piano with a hole punctured through it, which renders two octaves of the piano inoperative. The pianist stands in this hole and plays the fourth movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, commonly referred to as “Ode to Joy.” Smith appreciates the “substance” of *Stop, Repair, Prepare*, which she finds lacking in *Gloria*. Even though she acknowledges the legacy of surrealism found in the art, Smith points out that the works “yield little in the way of enigma. Either you can instantly parse them or they are impenetrable.”¹¹ Like most reviews of the work found in the popular media, Smith’s analysis does little to scratch below the surface of *Gloria*. Instead, she relies on first impressions and immediate emotional responses to comprehend this Biennale exhibition. Her refusal to engage with the offered social and political critiques functions as a disavowal of *Gloria*—a dismissive gesture as she writes off these works as insignificant and below her standards of art worthy of critical engagement.

Another reviewer, Carla Acevedo-Yates of *ARTPULSE Magazine*, chastises the artists for not taking the opportunity to offer a more critical stance concerning US neocolonialism in Puerto Rico. Most of her article consists of a breakdown of the artists' "activist front," attempting to tarnish their activities as politically engaged artists. She dismisses the choice of Allora and Calzadilla as a "politically correct" decision for the United States.¹² Like other critics, Acevedo-Yates is baffled by some of the juxtapositions in the exhibition, such as the use of airline seats as gymnasts' apparatuses. She wants the artists to be more explicit in their critical position, claiming the role of political advocates and champions for the Puerto Rican cause. For Acevedo-Yates, "An unrestricted and responsive dialogue must be maintained at all costs and at every level."¹³ She reprimands the artists for relying too much on spectacle, which in her opinion negates the possibility of effective sociopolitical critique. Instead of attempting to unravel what the artists present, she criticizes them for not directly addressing Puerto Rico's political situation "when given this golden opportunity."¹⁴ While other US critics argue the work was too explicit and does not leave enough to the viewer's imagination beyond the spectacle, Acevedo-Yates feels the artists need to be more explicit in their critique to effectively engage with Puerto Rican activist politics.

Except for the articles present in the exhibition catalogue, including thoughtful analyses by Carrie Lambert-Beatty and Yates McKee,¹⁵ little effort has been made to thoroughly deconstruct the works and explore their aesthetic, political, and social significance. In addition, there is an absence of reviews and

analysis of the US Pavilion in the *Artforum International* Biennale issue (September 2011). This omission is notable, especially since other politically charged works, including Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn's *Crystal of Resistance*, are discussed with bravado.¹⁶ Hirschhorn's exhibition in the Swiss pavilion involved an overwhelming takeover of the space that included the production of crystal-like forms using packing tape, cell phones, magazines, and other consumer goods. Transforming the pavilion into a neoliberal spectacle of consumerism, Hirschhorn also incorporates unavoidable grotesque images from war zones and political protests, including shots of smashed-in skulls and autopsy photos. Located only a short distance away from the US Pavilion, Hirschhorn's confrontational installation received great praise, while Allora and Calzadilla's *Gloria* did not even garner a mention.¹⁷

A Different Look: Gesture, Material Relations, and Social Practice

These responses are lacking critical engagement when it comes to discussing the art of *Gloria*. In this chapter, I will offer an alternative analysis of the work—a different look that will draw together readings of gestures, material relations, and social practice. Shannon Jackson's model of art performance and definition of social practice in conjunction with Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, or V-effekt, allow me to argue that works like *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta)* expose the material relations and support systems involved in their production while pointing to the ways the art functions as a critique of these relations. I suggest that the works that comprise *Gloria* expose and deconstruct such relations, allowing for a challenge to US nationalism,

neocolonialism, and neoliberalism in relation to Puerto Rico and transnational networks in the twenty-first century. At the same time, this examination of the work of Allora and Calzadilla presents a taxonomy of the gesture at the Venice Biennale, tracing the various layers of value and levels of reception that are informed by the contributions of the artists, the institutional framework—including the curator, national governments, the Biennale, and the art market—and the spectators. At the Venice Biennale, this interplay of gestures is what contributes to the production of meaning of the works, creating a *Spielraum*, or "play-room," as the pavilion also functions as an opportunity for the staging of US national identity.

As critics have noted, at first look, the use of business-class airline seats in *Body in Flight* as apparatuses for gymnasts seems opaque or even absurd. However, as with all of Allora and Calzadilla's juxtapositions, this playful decision comes as the result of the artists' collaborative research and development.¹⁸ Allora and Calzadilla have become known for their appropriation and re-contextualization of objects in unusual juxtapositions, or what Carrie Lambert-Beatty refers to as "an aesthetics of inversion."¹⁹ Executing *Body in Flight* involved a number of actions directed by the artists, including the construction of life-size models of the airline seats. The elite business-class seats from US airline companies are not mundane objects, but are specifically chosen for the works. The seats are presented in the reclining position, an attribute that is only available to those with the financial means to afford these comforts. The material qualities of the objects are directly tied into the social status of the

travelers represented—they encapsulate the social stratification of airline travel, which reflects economic and class difference. The ability to travel voluntarily is a privilege in and of itself, with elite business-class air travel being an opportunity that very few can afford. Allora and Calzadilla describe the airline seats “as symbols of commodity myths that are bound up with ideas of nationalism, competition, global commerce, travel, etc.”²⁰ The airline seats structure both the space of the gallery, by occupying a specific place in the room, as well as the routines of the gymnasts, who use these seats as apparatuses. The seats are presented in static positions, with the reclining position emphasizing the implied performance of an occupant at rest and not in motion. The selection of this position is intentional on the part of the artists, who note this design “create[s] and confirm[s] narratives of progress, travel, comfort, business, leisure, class relations, and nationality.”²¹

In the neoliberal economy, certain travelers, including business travelers and tourists, are afforded a belief in the freedom of travel. As noted in the previous chapter, Maurizio Lazzarato describes how the freedom of the debtor in the neoliberal, debt economy resembles Michel Foucault’s last definition of power. That is, the creditor performs an action over the debtor, who is then allowed to behave freely within the confines of this debt.²² This description resonates with travel in the twenty-first century. People are allowed to travel freely within the confines of national securities and protocols, within the limits that visas and passports afford, all of which are tracked and documented. The tourist who travels from the United States to Venice may appear to be free, but is

limited by national and international legislation. This traveller exists within a networked grid where she and her information are processed, scrutinized, and tracked. She is free—as long as she remains within these parameters.

What then is the “body in flight” that the title mentions? The seats, though static, come from commercial US airlines whose logos are present on the upholstery. However, these seats are presented outside the context of an airplane—the implied “body in flight” of the airplane is absent from the work. The “body in flight” must then be the body of the gymnasts—the hyper-trained, elite athletes whose machinelike bodies bend and cut through the air using finely tuned, choreographed movements.

Just as the airline seats represent an exclusive class of travel, the gymnasts are not considered your average athlete. Through years of training that typically begins at a young age, gymnasts’ bodies are carefully inscribed and perfected to perform specialized tasks and routines that are meant to display the supposedly supreme form of the human figure. Like living classical sculptures, gymnasts’ bodies and the actions they perform are not natural. In the Olympics and other major international sporting events, gymnastics function as a means of displaying national power and pride. Gymnastics is a popular event at the Olympics and can become an opportunity to practice politics by other means in a charged political and social climate. For example, the competition between US and Soviet gymnasts during the Cold War allowed the nations to compete without engaging in the mutually assured destruction of atomic technology. According to Susan Cahn:

Like everything from Third World governments to kitchen appliances, sport became part of a Cold War international contest in which the United States and USSR vied not only for athletic laurels but to prove the superiority of capitalism or communism.²³

This trend continues in the twenty-first century, though it has shifted from Cold War politics to the neoliberal economy. At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, controversies concerning the ages of the Chinese gymnasts mirror tensions over child labor practices in China.²⁴

The gymnast as an Olympic athlete embodies national social and political relations in an international context. The performances of *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta)* function to reiterate these relations, but with a difference. The difference comes through the retraining of athletes to perform an extended routine that combines gymnastics with modern dance, the contextualization of the performance in a gallery context, and the aesthetics of inversion through the juxtaposition of the gymnasts to airline seats. In order to develop unique routines for this particular equipment, the artists collaborated with US all-around men's gymnastics champion Dave Durante and New York-based modern dance choreographer Rebecca Davis. The artists intentionally brought together a gymnast with a dance choreographer in order to create a “*gestural* gymnastics vocabulary that did not yet exist [emphasis added].”²⁵ Introducing a “contamination of specialties,” Allora and Calzadilla carry their aesthetics of inversion into the process of choreographing the routines as these experts are asked to challenge their limits in order to accommodate the artists' directions.

It seems as if when it comes to the presentation of their work, Allora and Calzadilla function as artistic directors working behind the scenes in order to execute projects that fulfill their vision. However, these directions function as the gestures that express the artists' intentions. Every aspect of the work described in the above breakdown of *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta)* are the result of Allora and Calzadilla's collaborative research and development of these projects, executed under the close watch of the artists who work with others possessing the particular skills necessary for their realization. The artists' gestures can be found throughout the works: at times made explicit, such as the conceptual juxtaposition of two seemingly incompatible objects, and at other times sensed more subtly, such as the influence over the collaboration of Durante and Davis in order to create unique routines of bodily movement. Allora and Calzadilla's practice is not restricted to specific materials, but exists in the terrain of action and gestures. Lisa Freiman, organizer and curator of *Gloria*, emphasizes how they are "conceptualists," as opposed to makers.²⁶ Like Jeff Koons, Allora and Calzadilla require the support of others to realize and execute their ideas. The artists' gestures, which consist of directing the modifications of objects and individuals through juxtaposition and retraining, are what constitute their process. The artists enlist the help of other collaborators, such as Durante, Davis, and the gymnast performers in *Body in Flight*, to assist in the execution of these gestures.

Allora and Calzadilla's artistic process is based in collaboration, beginning with the fact that the artists do not work as individuals, but as a pair. Notably, Allora and Calzadilla were the first duo chosen as US representatives at the

Venice Biennale. The dynamic of collaboration is a key quality of the development and expression of the artists' gestures. In 2007, Allora and Calzadilla were the subject of the PBS contemporary art documentary series, *Art 21*.²⁷ During their interview, the artists describe their creative processes, stating that many of their projects come out of an impetus to research a particular topic or idea in order to learn more about something in the world and to articulate a response. Through this research and development, the artists create archives of various concepts, historical moments, and cultural images, amassing a collection of source material that allows them to create a montage that brings together different things that may seem unusual or even nonsensical at first glance. When discussing their process of collaboration in the video interview, Allora and Calzadilla emphasize the significant role that arguing plays in the development of ideas. Allora describes how arguing makes them "most close to each other," which extends beyond artistic collaboration and into their personal relationship.²⁸ Instead of retreating from dissensus, strife, and its associated tension, Allora articulates how they make fighting an art form, seeing each of them as going to battle, and after each has given his or her best, what is left over "is what we truly agree with and truly find in common." At this moment in the video, Calzadilla proceeds to interrupt Allora, which in turn leads to an argument, illustrating the process that Allora just described. The editorial decision to include this exchange in the episode of *Art 21* effectively presents the collaborative process that the artists claim to utilize. The artists go on to describe how what results from these arguments tend to be the starting points from which they move forward in the

development of projects. It is through the tension of argument that the humor associated with their works typically arises, since according to the artists, many times what they end up agreeing on is what makes both of them laugh. According to Allora, if the artists laugh at the same thing, they both identify with this thing and it becomes a way to find things in common and identify with each other. What the interactions of the *Art 21* interview reveal is that the personal dynamics of the artists, both inside and outside of the studio, inform how they go about developing projects.

In addition to collaborating with others in order to produce the objects on display, Allora and Calzadilla hired non-artist experts as live performers in *Body in Flight* and *Track and Field*. The hiring of non-artist experts as performers in works of art, or “delegated performance” is not unique to Allora and Calzadilla. Claire Bishop describes how this strategy differs from the theatrical or cinematic traditions of hiring actors, as artists “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.”²⁹ In contrast to the performance art of the 1960s and 1970s, live performance works in the twenty-first century may not necessarily privilege the artist’s body or the live moment, but instead:

Contemporary performance art [...] 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.³⁰

These non-artist experts participate in the production of meaning by performing actions specified by the artists. Claire Bishop emphasizes how delegated performance functions “as an artistic practice engaging with the ethics and aesthetics of contemporary labor, and not simply as a micro-model of reification.”³¹ The material relations involved in the gestures of delegated performance expose the social support system that encourage the creation of such complex and expensive works. As Bishop notes:

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. 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.³²

She goes on to draw parallels between the rise in delegated performance and the increase of “outsourcing” in business, pointing out that this correlation is not coincidental, as the costs and expenses accumulate when hiring multiple performers for extended periods of time.

In the case of Allora and Calzadilla, their recruitment of specialized experts means that they cannot hire just anyone to perform. For *Body in Flight*, the gymnasts trained for months in order to perform the extended routines on the unusual apparatuses. In *Stop, Repair, Prepare*—which is an earlier work by the artists and not included in *Gloria*—pianists had to learn how to play upside down and backwards on a modified piano.³³ At Documenta 13, they presented *Raptor's Rapture*, a video performance where Bernadette Käfer, a flautist specializing in prehistoric instruments, plays a flute carved by *Homo sapiens* 35,000 years ago

from the wing bone of a griffon vulture. Their works require a flow of financial support to be realized, and it should not be surprising that the rise of delegated performance coincided with the art market bubble of the 2000s. In other words, works of art that involve delegated performance exists as part of and are supported by the material relations of the art market, even when the work may critique these relations. The changes in economics brought on by neoliberalism that have supported the rise of delegated performance, according to Bishop, “provide not just the contextual backdrop for contemporary art but also affect our reception of it.”³⁴ For example, delegated performance allows for the duration of a performance to be much longer and take place more often than works that only utilize the artist’s body. Also, delegated performance allows for the artists to draw upon skills that exceed their own expertise, opening up the possibilities of what the artists are capable of producing through the “outsourcing” of labor. Despite the significance of financial support for the realization of these works, this information tends not to be emphasized in the exhibition. Instead, it becomes the assumed cost of producing the work, along with other material costs.³⁵ Moreover, delegated performance promotes neoliberalism, including the idea that all relations can be brought under the domain of the market and into the artistic process.



Figure 8. Gymnast Rachel Salzman rehearses on a practice model of *Body in Flight (Delta)* at Circus Warehouse. Photograph by Andrew Bordwin. Reproduced with permission from the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Gestures, Gestus, and *Verfremdungseffekt*

Allora and Calzadilla’s artistic practice is transformative—it modifies objects and bodies—and it exists in the realm of concepts and gestures. The works of Allora and Calzadilla involve gestures that change the state of materials while also welcoming other participatory gestures. Freiman describes *Gloria* as “quasi-Surrealist interventions that are meant to propel us into questioning official narratives. These absurd and paradoxical *gestures* beg us to consider the relationships among art, war, nationalism, and athletic competition [emphasis added].”³⁶ The re-training of the gymnasts in *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta)* bring attention to what Bertolt Brecht refers to as social gestus—or the expression of material relations that reveals social conditions and ideologies—that allows for the observation and analysis of qualities that may have otherwise be

treated as natural.³⁷ In *Body in Flight*, the gestures of travel help reveal gestus. Almost everyone who has traveled to the Biennale has had to conform their body to the rigors of flight—bodies are processed, screened, imaged, queued, and then perhaps have a chance to recline. These travelers know how to conform our bodies and gestures to that environment. When the gymnasts, however, perform their routines on the airline seats, the original usage of the objects becomes estranged as the nationally identified icon of travel is conflated with the nationally identified icon of the Olympian. Brecht states: “The object of the [V-effekt] is to alienate the social gest underlying every incident.”³⁸ Since gest is the expression of material relations, it can be used to reveal that these relations are not fixed. Brecht describes how defamiliarization is meant to “free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today.”³⁹ Defamiliarization reveals normalized material relations as constructed, and therefore capable of change. Jameson describes how the V-effekt is an “instant intrusion of the everyday: it is what constantly demands to be explained and re-explained—in other words, it is an estrangement which asks to be further estranged.”⁴⁰ This explanation of the V-effekt may clarify the frustration expressed in some of the reviews of *Gloria*. Instead of delving deeper into the confusion provoked by the works, many of the reviewers rejected the uneasiness associated with defamiliarization, dismissing the art in negative terms. Allora and Calzadilla’s aesthetic juxtapositions cause an intrusion into the everyday that is meant to cause discomfort. Breaking the “numbness and familiarity” of everyday life, the works intentionally estrange the viewers by revealing the social gestus,

which in terms of *Body in Flight* involve exposing the false freedom of commercial airline travel. These feelings are meant to be threatening to those in positions of authority. The work discloses US social behaviors and defamiliarizes these actions for the audience. While US critics, such as Jerry Saltz, are aware that the work reveals how the rest of the world perceives the US, this exposure and critique can be upsetting. Instead of explaining and examining the estrangement of the art more closely, Saltz relegated the pavilion to his list of the worst, arguing that there is nothing to the art beyond that first impression.

If *gestus* is the structure of social and material relations, then some gestures are the means of expressing *gestus*. Giorgio Agamben describes how the gesture is the “communication of a communicability.”⁴¹ He emphasizes the mediality of gesture—how it places human beings in the means of communication. The gesture conveys what otherwise cannot be communicated in sentences: “The gesture is essentially always a gesture of not being able to figure something out in language.”⁴² For Agamben, gestures communicate when words do not suffice, but it also places the human being as “being-in-language.” He is interested in gestures that do not work towards an end, but exist as the means of expression. Subsequently, Agamben goes on to argue that politics should be a sphere of pure means: “of the absolute and complete gesturality of human beings.”⁴³ Like Brecht, Agamben appreciates the social significance of communication. Bringing together Agamben’s definition of gesture with Brecht’s definition of *gestus* makes it possible to see how the actions of Allora and Calzadilla’s art are performed as a means without end. The gestures of the various

participants and collaborators reveal the gestus of the political and social systems that support the work. Instead of exploring the perceived ends of these gestures, I am interested in examining the means by which they are presented. While critical responses to *Gloria* tend to emphasize the perceived ends of the works, such as to express dissent with US military policy, I am interested in exploring what gestures reveal about gestus and the critiques conveyed by these revelations. The gestures of the artists make the means of action visible. As collaborative actions, these gestures include relations with others that both support and inform the production of the works. In addition to immediate collaborators, other participants, including the institutions involved in the execution of the exhibition such as the US State Department, attempt to direct the reception of the audience. An analysis of *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta)* in relation to the exhibit as a whole, along with the actions and activities of other participants and institutions, reveals a taxonomy of the gesture. In turn, this taxonomy provides insight into how the work exposes the material relations of social practice and the institutional attempts to contain these efforts.

The Proprioceptive Entitlement of the United States in Puerto Rico

In *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta)*, the nationally identified athletes performing on nationally identified airline seats in a nationally identified pavilion at an international art festival introduce a discourse concerning the national and commercial occupation of space. In *Social Works*, Shannon Jackson examines the role of performance in art that utilizes “social practice,” which she defines as:

A term that combines aesthetics and politics, as a term for art events that are inter-relational, embodied, and durational [...] social practice celebrates a degree of cross-disciplinarity in art-making, paralleling the kind of cross-media collaboration across image, sound, movement, space, and text that we find in performance. It also gestures to the realm of the socio-political, recalling the activist and community-building ethic of socially engaged performance research.⁴⁴

Jackson considers social practice in her exploration of art that simultaneously reveals, constructs, and critiques material and social relations. In order to do so, Jackson reconsiders Brecht and Marx for the twenty-first century, analyzing works that are inter-medial and transcend disciplinary categories. As a result, Jackson's inquiry taps into debates concerning the autonomy of art and the relationship between art and society, both of which are pertinent to the work of Allora and Calzadilla. Jackson emphasizes how in an increasingly transnational social landscape, exposure and critique cannot necessarily be equated with subversion. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, neoliberal economic institutions have posited a challenge to the nation. At the same time, the former have increasingly taken on the role of the latter through increased privatization. As a result, the tactics of 1960s revolutionary art making are not, cannot be, the same tactics used by artists today. Since critique is not necessarily equated with hegemonic subversion, Jackson questions "models of political engagement that measure artistic radicality by its degree of anti-institutionality."⁴⁵

She states:

If progressive artists and critics unthinkingly echo a routinized language of anti-institutionalism and anti-statism, we can find

ourselves unexpectedly colluding with neoliberal impulses that want to dismantle public institutions of human welfare.⁴⁶

Instead of falling into these traps, Jackson is interested in how art can explore alternative constructions of social relations. She argues: “Performance both activates and depends upon a relational system, a contingency that makes it a prime venue for reflecting on the social and for exposing the dependencies of convivial and expressive spheres.”⁴⁷ Art that utilizes Jackson’s notion of social practice can function as sites for critique of broader social and institutional practices.

Jackson’s theorizing of social practice is particularly useful for reading *Body in Flight*, as well as the other works in *Gloria*. In *Body in Flight*, the gymnasts potentially make people uncomfortable because they expose the relational system of power between the artists, the athlete participants, the curator, institutions (including the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the US Department of State, and the Biennale), and spectators. Some of the social constructions and practices revealed by the work in *Gloria* include: US nationalism and neocolonial occupation of Puerto Rico, military policy, diplomacy by other means including athletic competitions and the Venice Biennale, and the tension between neoliberalism and the nation in the twenty-first century.

Part of this critique involves the proprioceptive entitlement of the United States. Proprioceptive entitlement is a phrase used by Shannon Jackson to describe a subject’s perceived entitlement to occupy space.⁴⁸ While Jackson uses it to refer to the perception of space in relation to the body, it provides an

appropriate metaphor for US expansion, manifest destiny, and neocolonialism. Since the end of the War of 1898, Puerto Rico has been an unincorporated territory of the United States. The debate concerning independence or statehood has a long history on the island. In the 2012 election, a majority of Puerto Rican citizens voted for the island to apply for statehood. However, until the issue is settled, Puerto Rico exists in a diplomatic state of limbo with residents being considered US citizens, but without the full spectrum of rights that this status entails. César Ayaia and Rafael Bernabe describe Puerto Rico as follows:

After being one of the few colonies of a fundamentally noncolonial imperialism, it remains, most observers would argue, a colony, long after most colonies in the world have moved on to either political independence or formal political integration with their metropolis.⁴⁹

Thus, the neo-colony of Puerto Rico challenges US claims to being a democratic union.

Lisa Freiman's decision to propose Puerto Rican artists as US representatives in the context of the most prestigious of international biennials can be interpreted as simultaneously confirming and questioning US nationalism in the twenty-first century. While the nation is a conceptual and geopolitical entity, nationalism is an ideological construction that is comprised of both discursive and material elements. In *Encountering Nationalism*, Jyoti Puri argues: "National identities do not have any inherent essence, but are defined in relation to each other."⁵⁰ At the same time, these identities are not fixed, but as Puri points out, "need to be continually imagined, reproduced, and reiterated in order for them to

appear normal and natural.”⁵¹ The Venice Biennale as a transnational showcase for the presentation of contemporary art is a prime opportunity for this process. Nations display artists in relation to each other in pavilions that invite cultural comparison and competition. At the same time, the reaffirmation of national identity through the Biennale allows for these constructions to appear normalized and natural.⁵² Moreover, it is an appropriate framework for the United States to exhibit work from artists living and working in Puerto Rico as a means of re-defining national identity. On the one hand, it reaffirms Puerto Rico's status as a US territory, granting the artists the significant role of cultural ambassadors on the international stage. On the other hand, Allora and Calzadilla disrupt impressions of US nationalism by highlighting the island's ambivalent, colonized status. The cultural implications of this act also have social and political ramifications. Puerto Rico is reaffirmed as a US territory in the national imagination while also altering what constitutes US nationalism. In addition, recognition is brought to Puerto Rico and its peripheral status. Even though it is currently not a state, the island is included in the US cultural landscape.⁵³

At the Venice Biennale, a lot is at stake concerning national identities as well as international relations. Like the Olympics, the Venice Biennale is about state power and national pride—an opportunity to reaffirm and potentially challenge power relations without succumbing to armed conflict. The title of the 2011 Venice Biennale Art Exhibition, *ILLUMInations*, references the national pavilion structure. Curatorial director Bice Curiger attempts to situate the sentiments of nationalism when she states in the Biennale catalogue:

The Venice Biennale continues to be buoyed by a spirit that transcends all national boundaries, especially in an age when artists too have become multifaceted, keenly perceptive migrants and cultural tourists. [...] Far removed from culturally conservative constructs of “nations,” art offers the potential to explore new forms of “community” and negotiate differences and affinities that might serve as models for the future.⁵⁴

By presenting the word “nations” in lower case letters, Curiger simultaneously highlights and de-emphasizes it.

However, the Biennale’s traditions developed during an era when the nation rose to the forefront as a model of governance. Curiger may express hope for a future model of community, but national boundaries are reaffirmed through the presence of the pavilion exhibition model. *Gloria*’s themes of nationalism, Olympic sport, and military policy not only critique and reveal US actions and policies, but extend to the Venice Biennale as a whole. Within the city of Venice, spectators can travel from nation to nation at a rapid rate, exploring culture in the nationally identified manner that Allora and Calzadilla make explicit. Themes of travel, consumerism, and competition also extend beyond *Gloria* to include the general experience of attending the Venice Biennale as tourists spend cash throughout the city while also exploring off-site pavilions vying for their attention. With *Gloria*, Allora and Calzadilla describe how they attempt to hyperbolize and expose the “nationalistic and competitive nature of the Biennial Pavilion structure (whose counterparts could easily be international sports competitions like the Olympics).”⁵⁵ This competitiveness acknowledges how the Biennale awards prizes, including the *Leone d’Oro* for best national pavilion. At the same time, Biennale pavilions are competing for the attention and

acknowledgement of the press, the transnational art world, and the spectators. In what has become such a complex living event enmeshed in a unique urban topography, there are numerous ways to succeed and fail in making an impression and garnering support for pavilions, which in turn translates as support for the artists and the nations that they represent.

(Mis)reading *Gloria*

The title of the exhibit, *Gloria*, also participates in this political critique. The word translates from Italian and Spanish to “Glory.” It has a variety of connotations including religious and spiritual, military, Olympic, economic, cultural grandiosity, and, according to the IMA press release, “points to the pomp and splendor of the national pavilions.”⁵⁶ Allora and Calzadilla note how they “liked the idea of gendering the US pavilion with a female Spanish name: *Gloria*.”⁵⁷ Like other qualities of the exhibit, the title is loaded with multiple meanings and a variety of potential (mis)interpretations. *Gloria*—the plural of glory—brings to mind the US patriotic anthem “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”⁵⁸ This song, penned by Boston poet Julia Ward Howe during the Civil War (1861), relates this tumultuous conflict with holy judgment at the end of time as conveyed in the New Testament. Howe’s daughter, Florence Howe Hall, describes how her mother wrote the lyrics, sung to the melody of the popular war song at the time, “John Brown’s Body,” in a single night after visiting Union army camps.⁵⁹ According to Hall, Howe was both troubled and inspired by the struggles of the Union soldiers during this era and worked actively as part of the abolitionist movement. Hence, the correlation drawn between the battlefield and God’s

judgment stems from the larger fight against the “evil” that the institution of slavery represents.⁶⁰ Since the Civil War, the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” has become one of the United States’ classic call to arms, regularly performed by marching bands and choirs, including the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and military-affiliated musical groups. After September 11, 2001, the equation of war with holy judgment effectively participates in the morally charged rhetoric of good and evil perpetuated by the Bush Administration: either you are with us or against us.

The theme of the US institution of slavery can be detected in the work, *Armed Freedom Lying on a Sunbed*, located in the central rotunda of the US Pavilion.⁶¹ In her essay in the exhibition catalogue, Freiman describes the controversy surrounding the construction of the original statue, which traces back to the contested issue of slavery in the nineteenth century. As Freiman points out, “not only was the statue cast by slaves, but it was meant to sport a different headdress, a Liberty Cap, worn by freed slaves upon manumission.”⁶² Jefferson Davis, who was US Secretary of War during the commission of the sculpture and would go on to become the president of the Confederacy during the Civil War, rejected this design, since he “viewed the headdress as a ‘Yankee protest against slavery.’”⁶³ Reading this work in conjunction with the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” forces recognition of a challenging chapter of US history in relation to current affairs, such as the occupation of Puerto Rico and the continued pervasiveness of racism in US society.

The organ of *Algorithm* evokes another reading of the exhibition title. As noted earlier, *Algorithm* is an interactive sculpture and sound piece that consists

of a functioning Italian ATM machine encased in a working, twenty-foot pipe organ. When a bankcard is inserted into the slot, the pipe organ is activated and begins to play a score that is heard throughout the space. The sounds projected by the organ are determined by the commands selected by the ATM user based on an algorithm developed by the composer Jonathan Bailey. The score produces randomized notes and chords, ranging from atonal to harmonic, at varying degrees and volumes. The commands selected by the user activate the algorithm of the score that pushes pressurized air through the organ pipes.⁶⁴ According to the artists, the title, *Algorithm*, links “together algorithmic composition and algorithmic banking.”⁶⁵ The Diebold ATM is managed by an Italian bank and is the only functioning ATM in the Giardini. When attempting to perform the quotidian act of withdrawing money from an ATM, the spectator activates the work through this gesture of participating in the global economy. In addition, the organ is evocative of religious mass. In Roman Catholicism, “*Gloria in excelsis Deo*” translates from Latin to “Glory to God in the highest,” and is the title and beginning of the Greater Doxology, an ancient hymn of Christian praise that is sung as part of mass.⁶⁶ The organ of *Algorithm* and the high ceiling of the gallery evoke sights and sounds of the Catholic mass, creating a cathedral-like setting in the space of the Pavilion. The higher power praised in *Algorithm* is the God of commerce and the global economy—when you use the ATM, the angels sing, filling the room with sounds in reverence of neoliberalism in this high mass of capitalism.

Titles—in addition to the signature, wall texts, guides, audio tours, critiques and interviews, and the actions of the curator in presenting the work in the gallery space—all contribute to the meaning of a work. Jacques Derrida collectively calls these things the parergon. According to Derrida, the parergon is

Neither work (*ergon*) nor outside the work [*hors d'oeuvre*], neither inside nor outside, neither above nor below, it disconcerts any opposition but does not remain indeterminate and it *gives rise* to the work. It is no longer merely around the work [emphasis in original].⁶⁷

Responding to Immanuel Kant's treatment of the art object as autonomous,⁶⁸ Derrida points out that art is comprised of both the work itself and the structure around the work that contributes to its meaning. The work of art always exists in relation to some body of knowledge, and how we think about the "interior" of the work is informed by what we bring to its "exterior." As with the artists' other gestures, the open interpretative potential of the title is a means without end—it puts a process in motion that defers the meaning of the work as it provokes the gestures of others to create a dialogue of potential understanding. The potentiality of gestures is what makes Allora and Calzadilla's art so evocative and prevents it from being reduced to "tweetable" (140 characters or less) responses. This complexity may pose challenges for spectators and critics who are unable or unwilling to play along with the artists, thereby resulting in the shortsighted critical responses.



Figure 9. Allora and Calzadilla, *Algorithm*, 2011. Installation view. Photograph by Andrew Bordwin. Reproduced with permission from the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Another reading of *Algorithm* functions as a commentary of twenty-first century neoliberalism by evoking the eighteenth century debate of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton concerning early US capitalism.⁶⁹ As noted previously, the US pavilion is reminiscent of Monticello, Jefferson's plantation located near Charlottesville, Virginia. Jefferson, who was the nation's first secretary of state and third president, held some distinctive economic viewpoints, which happened to clash with the nation's first secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. Jefferson firmly believed in an agrarian economy, in contrast to Hamilton whose economic plan was based on commerce and

manufacture. Additionally, Hamilton favored the development of a national bank and wished to use national debt as a means of establishing credit, both of which Jefferson opposed.⁷⁰ Even though Hamilton died during a duel with Aaron Burr in 1804, his policies planted the seeds of what has become known as neoliberalism in the early US economy. His economics were based largely on credit, in contrast to Jefferson who wanted a dollar-for-dollar economic system that meant paying off debts as opposed to incurring them. As noted previously, Lazzarato discusses how debt has become the social basis of life as the result of neoliberal economics. Also, Hamilton favored an elitist system that placed the rich and wellborn in positions of power, which has been replicated through neoliberalism. The education required for this system involves limited training—preparing workers for participation in manufacture and the market system. These are not the free individuals promoted by Jefferson, but subservient to the economic system they are trained to support. Hamilton’s freedom, like the freedom of neoliberalism, is freedom under erasure. *Algorithm* replicates this debate with its presentation of a functioning ATM machine—connected to the global economy and the manifestation of Hamilton’s economic reforms—is placed in a Jeffersonian building.

Revelations, Not Solutions

Body in Flight (American) and *(Delta)*, along with the other works that constitute *Gloria*, produce social critique, revealing material relations as opposed to presenting solutions to social issues. Shannon Jackson discusses this approach in her analysis of Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset’s installation-based

critiques of the Scandinavian welfare state.⁷¹ Specifically, Jackson is interested in “how performance—in its temporal, spatial, and, here, spectacular senses—have propelled [Elmgreen and Dragset]’s critique of institutions that are dependent upon both capitalist and socialist principles of organization and (de)regulation.”⁷² Like Allora and Calzadilla, Elmgreen and Dragset utilize objects and hire non-artists to participate in their works. For example, Elmgreen and Dragset hired unemployed citizens to wear guard uniforms and sit in chairs spaced evenly around a room for the work *Reg(u)arding the Guards* (2005). The work is part of the traveling exhibit and installation *The Welfare Show*. In each city where the show was presented, the curatorial staff would need to find these participants. The number and racial composition of the group varied depending on where the show was located, revealing something particular to each social environment.⁷³ According to Jackson, these constitute “a reduced, anti-relational relational exhibit” that offers ambivalent critique of social welfare and public services in the twenty-first century.⁷⁴ The work is a product of its paradoxical social structures, where the role of the nation-state has been challenged by neoliberal demands of privatization. Instead of offering alternative solutions, Elmgreen and Dragset’s art offers “an ongoing meditation—sometimes playful, sometimes horrific—on the perils and possibilities of systemic imagining.”⁷⁵ *Gloria* can also be considered a playful and horrific meditation on social practice, with the social systems that Allora and Calzadilla reveal include US nationalism, neocolonial practice, and neoliberalism in relation to Puerto Rico and the world economy.

From Exposure and Critique to Containment

What *Gloria* reveals about material relations is potentially subversive and defamiliarizes social interaction. This quality poses a threat to hegemonic power structures and institutions, including those involved in the production of the work who have a stake in its outcome. While the artists attempt to defamiliarize social *gestus* through gestures and techniques of replication, modification, and inversion, the institutional participants utilize containment strategies to frame the potential reception of the works in order maintain social norms and reinscribe power relations.

What exactly is a containment strategy? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, containment is defined as “the action or fact of containing; holding; restraint; deportment, behavior.”⁷⁶ The term is used in a variety of contexts including military and state usage—“the action or policy of ‘containing’ a hostile nation, etc.”⁷⁷—as well as in medical situations. To contain means to form a barrier or limit in order to quarantine a threat. Containment strategies are intended to weaken a perceived threat, which can include inoculation to build up a populace’s defenses by providing some controlled exposure to the threat. Containment strategies can also be used to undermine conceptual or ideological threats, such as those posed by art. Fredric Jameson argues that all ideologies can function as strategies of containment through which society can suppress the contradictions of history. He defines a strategy of containment as that “which

allows what can be thought to seem internally coherent in its own terms, while repressing the unthinkable [...] which lies beyond its boundaries.”⁷⁸ In response to *Gloria*, the gestures of the curator and institutional participants that frame the presentation of the work so that it seems coherent and unified can be interpreted as containment strategies to delimit the sociopolitical critique of the art by suppressing the dialogic space of interpretation. Allora and Calzadilla’s version of protest may be weakened by gestures of institutional containment. For example, the exhibition curator and US pavilion commissioner, Lisa Freiman, mollifies the potentially subversive qualities of the works by presenting carefully contextualized analyses for the spectators. In response, I argue that the tension between the artists’ efforts and the containment strategies of institutional participants are an example of the ongoing, endlessly deferred gesture of strife and alienation.

Containment strategies, or gestures of containment, attempt to delimit the perceived threat of the work. Gestures of containment work by taking the means of the artists’ gestures and put them towards a specified end. According to Agamben, this occurs because: “nothing [...] is as fragile and precarious as the sphere of pure means.”⁷⁹ As pure means, the gestures and play of the artists are also vulnerable to the capitalist forces being critiqued. Agamben argues capitalist apparatuses, including neoliberal apparatuses, are so effective “because they act on pure means, that is, on behaviors that have been separated from themselves and thus detached from any relationship to an end.”⁸⁰ Today’s rebellion can become tomorrow’s bestseller. Whatever critiques that Allora and Calzadilla

present are subject to the institutional forces that have a stake in the outcome of the work, including the US State Department, corporate sponsors, and the Venice Biennale. Like the artists' gestures, gestures of containment reveal social systems and material relations. The curator, in particular, acts as the bridge between the artists, institutions, and spectators. Freiman's gestures are pivotal in these containment strategies as she functions as a mediator for exhibition.

Freiman plays a significant role in framing the presentation of the work to the spectators who attend the Venice Biennale or may access the work in other contexts, including the Internet, popular media, and exhibition catalogue. Not only does she frame the presentation of the art, she is also involved in laying the conceptual groundwork for the pieces. Being curator of a Biennale exhibit involves a more complex set of tasks than those faced by the typical museum or gallery curator. Michael Brenson describes how Biennale curators must be "at once aestheticians, diplomats, economists, critics, historians, politicians, audience developers, and promoters. They must be able to communicate not only with the artists but also community leaders, business executives, and heads of state."⁸¹ These multiple roles are associated with a multitude of responsibilities. The curator is not only representing her own interests and those of the artists, but also the institutional and cultural interests of the nation, corporate sponsors, and the Biennale as a whole.

On the transnational institutional scale of the Biennale, the curator is responsible for a large and varied audience whose interests and concerns about art and culture are wide-ranging. In addition, the temporary nature of the Biennale,

the close proximity of the works to other art, and the scale and reputation of the event as a whole, contribute to the challenges of the curator. Over time, the curator has become increasingly more important in these exhibitions as the mediator of the various players involved in the Biennale. This quality can be detected in Freiman's gestures and the centrality of her role in the execution of *Gloria*. Freiman worked with Allora and Calzadilla while proposing the exhibit to the US State Department, but also contextualized the works in a manner that subverted its potentially insubordinate qualities. In her statement about the exhibit, which is provided in the press pack and can be found in the Fifty-fourth Venice Biennale catalogue, Freiman states:

The official nomination of these artists to represent the US demonstrates one of the central principles of American democracy in action: freedom of speech and the importance of intelligent dialogue and debate in the development of a free and just society.⁸²

While this statement emphasizes the importance of open dialogue, it also potentially limits that discussion by removing the critical sting of the works. It may also explain why certain critics, spearheaded by Carla Acevado-Yates, treat the selection of Allora and Calzadilla as a "politically correct" choice. Each of the works included in *Gloria* contains some element that may be interpreted as critical of US national and transnational policies. For example, *Track and Field* provides a vivid visual spectacle in front of the pavilion while also emitting sound that can be heard throughout the Giardini. The visual and aural presence of the work combined with the loaded symbol of a military tank can easily be read as critical of US military action.⁸³ In her exhibition catalogue essay, Freiman

describes *Track and Field* in relation to surrealism and pop art as a way to contextualize the work within the history of art.⁸⁴ She compares it to Meret Oppenheim's *Object*, Claes Oldenburg's *Lipstick (Ascending) on Caterpillar Tracks*, and Martha Rosler's *Bringing the War Home*, all of which are recognized works in the modern and contemporary art history canon. By positioning *Track and Field* within art history discourse and emphasizing the neo-surrealist tactics of the artists, Freiman attempts to frame potential interpretations of the pieces that minimizes the socio-political critical implications of the work. I consider these actions as gestures of containment since Freiman attempts to direct the gestures of the artists to specific ends, which in this case are interpretations of the works informed by precedents in art history.

The increasing importance of the curator in art exhibitions is what Paul O'Neill refers to as "the curatorial turn." O'Neill describes how over the latter part of the twentieth century, there has been an "ascendency of the curatorial gesture" that "began to establish curatorial practice as a potential space for critique."⁸⁵ O'Neill argues that the curator has increasingly taken on the role of the critic in the construction of discourse around art, and there has been an increasing interdependence between artistic and curatorial gestures since the last decade of the twentieth century.⁸⁶ O'Neill describes a "slight shift away from an author-centered cultural hierarchy towards a post-production discourse, in which the function of curating has become another recognized part of the expanded field of art production."⁸⁷ In *Gloria*, these qualities are present in the curator's actions in supporting the works' production as well as the framing and presentation of the

art, in addition to mediating communication between the various institutional participants and being involved with gestures of containment regarding audience and critical response. O’Neill argues how exhibitions are contemporary forms of rhetoric: “complex expressions of persuasion whose strategies aim to produce a prescribed set of values and social relations for their audiences.”⁸⁸ The gestures associated with present-day exhibits may not be the bodily actions described by Quintilian and other scholars of rhetoric, but gestures continue to play a significant role in evoking—or containing—emotional responses in the receiver.

At times, the curator will attempt to hide her actions by placing the spotlight on the artists, but she creates a framework around the art that contributes to the meaning of the work. This curatorial framing is part of the parergon and hence participates in the work’s production of meaning. Criticism and present-day curation are performative in that they constitute the relations that give the artwork its identity. Both curatorial and artistic gestures are vital to the art’s production of meaning.

From Individuals to Institutions

Analyzing containment strategies can reveal a great deal about the workings of power at the Venice Biennale. This extends beyond the immediate participants of the exhibition, including the artists, performers, and the curator, to include institutional sponsors and participants. The US Department of State approved the decision to select Allora and Calzadilla as the 2011 national representatives and provided financial support for *Gloria*. In a press release dated

September 8, 2010, a spokesman for the department describes the works: “Designed to offer rich opportunities for dialogue and interaction with the public, their projects will appeal to a broad audience.”⁸⁹ Echoing the sentiments of Freiman’s statement, the State Department also makes sure to emphasize that Allora and Calzadilla are living and working in Puerto Rico: “The work of Allora and Calzadilla [...] reflects the progressiveness of creativity and culture in the United States today.”⁹⁰ By noting that the artists are living and working in the US territory of Puerto Rico and situating this fact in the greater landscape of US culture, the State Department uses nationalism as a means of containing the critique posed by the artists.⁹¹ Even though *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta)* provides a critique of US proprioceptive entitlement, including the occupation of Puerto Rico, the containment strategies of the US State Department undermine these attempts by extending the ideological frame of nationalism to include the island territory.

The presentation of US nationalism is explicit in *Gloria*. It is displayed through the Olympic theme, the uniforms of the athletes, the inclusion of *Armed Freedom*, the allusion to the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” and the use of seat models from American commercial airlines. It is so extreme that it borders on being garish, especially since it brings to mind the nationalist fervor in the United States that took place after 9/11. Instead of being solely a celebration of national identity, *Gloria* is an opportunity for restricted dissensus—a controlled critical intervention that expresses the US celebration of freedom of speech that effectively displays democratic values through criticism. After eight years of

ideological fervor and narrow-minded government policies—including the controversial Patriot Act—*Gloria* becomes an opportunity for the US government to exhibit tolerance of dissensus. At the same time, the inclusion of Puerto Rican artists contributes to an image of national diversity that has been increasingly prevalent since the election of Barack Obama—the first African American president—in 2008. In the 2011 Venice Biennale, the United States displays a national identity that contradicts its image of the first decade of the twenty-first century as a nation of warmongering xenophobes. As a result, *Gloria* becomes an opportunity for the US to salvage its cultural reputation while encompassing the democratic values that form the basis of US national identity.

Instead of being the work of “rogue” artists, *Gloria* displays the paradoxical nature of democracy. Derrida describes how democracy is a governmental system where the right to criticize is part of the paradigm: “Democracy is the only system [...] in which, in principle, one has or assumes the right to criticize everything publicly, including the idea of democracy, its concept, its history, and its name.”⁹² When Freiman argues that *Gloria* is an exercise in freedom of speech, she is emphasizing this point. Alain Badiou describes the leeway allowed for dissensus under the democratic emblem: “You can say what you like about political society, display unprecedented ‘critical’ zeal, denounce the ‘economic horror,’ you’ll always earn pardon as long as you do so in the name of democracy.”⁹³ In these circumstances, strife is simulated and conflict an illusion. The use of art, even art that appears to critique the system it represents, plays a role in perpetuating democratic values. This type of governmental critique

has a significant place in the context of the Biennale. In his discussion of *Gloria*, National Public Radio correspondent Christopher Livesay describes how the exhibit qualifies as a tool of foreign policy that the Obama administration refers to as “soft diplomacy” or “smart power.”⁹⁴ The purpose of this tactic, according to David Mees, the US cultural attaché in Rome, is to “cultivate [a] softer image” for the United States.⁹⁵ Moreover, it is not coincidental that themes of the military and athletic competition are present in *Gloria*. This tactic involves the presentation of critical engagement with US military policies, specifically those instigated during the Bush presidency, as a means of “softening” the image of the US by presenting it as more tolerable and self-aware under Pres. Barack Obama.

The institutions involved in *Gloria* incorporate more than national and governmental interests. As with most goods and services in the twenty-first century, the Venice Biennale has become a site of neoliberal activity. Art dealers located in Paris, Mexico City, New York, and London were all involved in determining the ownership and pricing of the works. Private sponsors of *Gloria* include Hugo Boss, the Puerto Rican coffee company Café Yaucono, and Christie’s auction house, which have some stake in its outcome. Acknowledging the financial backers of the art also brings attention to the fact that the works exist in a neoliberal market economy. The actions of businesses and corporations can involve more than just sponsoring pavilions. For example, Christie’s investment in the Venice Biennale goes beyond the US pavilion. In 2011, they released a guide to the Biennale as an iPhone app. The app, which can be downloaded for free, includes a map of the pavilions in Venice along with dining information and

selected highlights by affiliates of Christie's and other major players in the art world. While the app is useful for navigating the confusing terrain of Venetian streets and alleys—as will be discussed in chapter five of this dissertation—it contextualizes the Biennale in a way that eventually benefits its sponsor, who is invested in the market value of contemporary art works. Just the inclusion of artists in the Venice Biennale has increased the financial value of their art. In After their inclusion in the Biennale, the Gladstone Gallery in New York, which represents Allora and Calzadilla, sold their piece *Lifesaver Manhole* (2011) at the Basel art fair to an Australian collector for the healthy sum of \$110,000.⁹⁶ Whatever subversive qualities the art presents will in some way financially benefit those who invest in it. Ironically, the investors, who encapsulate neoliberal forces, are critical targets of the exhibit. By placing a financial stake in the work, the investors have influence in contextualizing the art and can potentially tame the critical outcome while increasing market value. The neoliberal system of global capital explicitly directs the artists' gestures to financial ends.

But It Doesn't End here...

If art's critique of social gestus is skewed by the actions of institutional participants, can a work's critical exposure still reach its audience? Can art escape containment strategies that seem to always capture gestures and put them towards prescribed ends? An analysis of gestures of artists and the institutions does not take into account a major component of the art's production of meaning—the various uptakes of the spectators. The artists and institutions may direct spectators' processes of interpretation, but the interpretations may not always

follow anticipated results. Instead of dismissing the attendees of the Venice Biennale, including those present at *Gloria*, as passive consumers of art, these spectators can be appreciated as a diverse intersection of subjects whose interests in and knowledge of art and culture ranges considerably. Attending the Venice Biennale involves degrees of motivation and desire for art as experience not commonly associated with museums. Here, the spectator is presented with a surplus of art from around the world, integrated into the Venetian cityscape. The actions of spectators at the Biennale result from a combination of previous experiences and ranges of interest in art and culture along with the unique format of the exhibits as an immersive tourist experience. These spectators are anything but uniform and may involve a wider variety of interests, knowledge, experience, and expectations than typical museum and gallery goers. Even with an apparently passive audience, the spectators bring energy through their presence. Since spectators are not static objects, but kinesthetic bodies, their actions become significant expressions of thought in their reception of a work, allowing for feedback even when words are not shared.

Extending the parameters of the work's collaboration to include the audience along with the non-artist experts, the curator, governmental institutions, the Biennale, and corporate sponsors increases the participants involved in art's production of meaning. In the *Emancipated Spectator*, Jacques Rancière supports the significance of the spectator as a living subject. Instead of assuming the spectator is a passive participant, Rancière argues that it is necessary to break down the preconceived designation of art as the transmitter of knowledge and the

viewer as the receiver. According to Rancière, the oppositions of viewing/knowing, appearance/reality, activity/passivity put into play “a distribution of the sensible, an *a priori* distribution of the positions and capacities and incapacities attached to these positions. They are embodied allegories of inequality.”⁹⁷ The spectator is not a *tabula rasa*—a blank slate upon which the artists inscribe meaning. Rancière points out that spectating involves a series of actions: “She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of places.”⁹⁸ Whether aware of it or not, the spectator contributes to the production of meaning of the work as she composes her version of the piece in response to her engagement with it. These thoughts are expressed through her actions that engage with the actions of the other participants of the work, including other spectators and designated performers along with the forms and frames presented by artists, curators, and institutions. Unlike these latter factors, the spectators are not subject to the same scrutiny and modification accomplished through rehearsals and the various stages of a work’s construction and presentation. The spectators are invited to photograph and videotape the galleries, including the gymnasts’ performances of *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta)*, while being free to enter and leave the space as they please.

However, according to Rancière, the spectator is not emancipated because of the erasure of formal parameters of the work. Instead, the spectator is emancipated once it is acknowledged that she is actively contributing to the production of meaning of the work—once we, according to Rancière “challenge

the opposition between viewing and acting.’’⁹⁹ In fact, the apparently freeing parameters of *Gloria* are a red herring when it comes to understanding the emancipation of the spectator, since it can actually function to hide more discrete modes of directing the spectator’s interpretation of the work. This point is where the actions of the curator and institutional participants can manipulate the spectator’s response by providing information that guides the actions of the viewers. Supplementary materials and guides—both paper and digital—all function as discrete parameters of the work and reinforce the assumption that the spectators are passive consumers of knowledge as opposed to active participants. These materials use knowledge as a means of maintaining the hegemonic power relations that support the institutional participants. Moreover, the spectators potentially function as sites of re-enforcing norms, or can provide an opportunity for resistance. By treating the spectators of *Gloria* as emancipated, they become active participants of the production of meaning.

In *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta)*, along with the other works presented in *Gloria*, Allora and Calzadilla utilize social practice as a means of revealing material relations and support systems. The gestures of the artists reveal and critique material relations using aesthetics of inversion that includes the modification of objects and bodies. Institutions, including the US State Department, the Venice Biennale, and corporate sponsors, work to contain these gestures by directing the meaning of the work to prescribed ends. At the same time, spectators engage with this interplay of actions, introducing a new set of gestures that can both challenge and undermine institutional containment

strategies. The site of meaning making production exists between these various participants as gestures interact in a complex network of engagement, which functions as a *Spielraum* where meaning is provided with room to play and where strife can potentially be introduced or contained. The social practice of Allora and Calzadilla exposes how material relations are not fixed, but are constantly in flux as critique leads to containment and subversive retaliation. The lessons of *Gloria* are pertinent to the twenty-first century and our understanding of the relationship of art to politics, culture, and economics as influenced by neoliberalism.

Chapter 2

Cartography Deferred: The Venice Biennale as Heterotopic *Spielraum*

It began as marshland in the Adriatic Sea. Around 400 CE people started to settle in the Venetian lagoon. Initially a refuge for people escaping Attila the Hun and the “barbarians” of northern Europe, over centuries Venice grew into a successful center of trade and commerce. This city, which would go on to form an independent republic that would last until the invasion of Napoleonic troops in 1797, is described by historian John Julius Norwich as “the principal crossroads between East and West, the richest and most prosperous commercial centre in the civilized world.”¹ Centuries of warfare and commerce would eventually give way to leisurely travel and tourism, but throughout it all, Venice has functioned as a port for goods and ideas. Greatly influenced by Byzantine culture, Venice has collected its histories while building its distinctive architectural topography. Over time this has resulted in a cultural waterscape unique in comparison to any other Italian city. For those entering the city, transitioning from *terra firma*, or solid ground, to the canals and alleys of Venice is an experience that has awed visitors throughout centuries and continues to amuse and challenge tourists today. The ocean waters that gave birth to Venice consistently threaten to reclaim the city as it maintains a dependency with its environment that could drown it at any moment. Unlike other European cities built and developed during the middle ages, Venice does not have any city walls—just the sea for fortification. This delicate balance between human architectural achievement and maritime

phenomena is the foundation of a city that continues to function and develop as a center for cultural exchange. The history of Venice resides in its spatial distribution, which has been built and rebuilt in a series of architectural layers that have come to form the physical, geographic foundation of the Venice Biennale.

The Biennale and its relationship to Venice can be visualized as a series of layers. These layers are not distinctive, but interact and intersect through innumerable foldings that comprise the cultures and histories of Venice. At the base, there is Venice's unique topography of canals and alleys. Next, there is the art and architecture of the city that blends styles from distinct cultural regions, exhibiting Venice's history as a site for cross-cultural encounters. Venice's legacy as a destination for travelers and tourists contributes to these cosmopolitan qualities. There are the layers of life activities that incorporate—though they are not limited to—locals going about their daily business, the city's urban infrastructure, and the mass of tourists who flock daily to this city reputed to be “the most romantic place on Earth.” These layers comprise the sociological qualities of the city, creating cultural experiences that, like the city's architecture and topographical qualities, are distinctively Venetian.

The unfolding of the Venice Biennale is spatially and temporally informed by how place is manifested in Venice and the way its topography has developed and is experienced. The Biennale emerged during a transitional period during the waning of European colonialism and birth of the Italian nation in the nineteenth century as Venice, a city built on mercantilism, was attempting to promote itself as culturally and economically relevant. Venice informs the spatial distribution of

the Biennale, and the Biennale modifies the Venetian topography through its temporary exhibitions and historical legacy. In turn, the Venice Biennale can be considered an integral part of the city's fabric and its material relations. As the second half of the twentieth century witnessed another transition of former colonies to independent nations, along with the rise of neoliberalism and a transnational information network, both the Biennale and Venice have adapted to these changes. Maps of Venice and its Biennale exist in a living, symbiotic relationship, creating counter-sites, or what Michel Foucault refers to as "heterotopias," for national exhibitions of contemporary art that function together as a politicized geography participating in material and power relations. The temporal characteristic of the Biennale as a contemporary art exhibition event occurring every two years since 1895 (with some exceptions) has resulted in a geography that is, as Jacques Derrida phrases it, *sous rature*, or under erasure—a cartography that is deferred. Like the tides of the Adriatic Sea, the Biennale flows in and out of the Venetian alleys and *palazzi*, but with each iteration it leaves its topographic marks on the city. The gestures that constitute the expression of material and power relations are involved in the creation of this terrain, and it is upon this terrain that the geopolitical gestures associated with the Venice Biennale unfold.

In this chapter, I read the Venice Biennale as heterotopic space and place. Beginning with the Giardini, then moving to the Arsenale, and then off site pavilions, I focus on the geopolitics of the event in relation to the physical geography of Venice. In this context, space is understood in Epicurean terms as a

Spielraum, which Edward Casey describes as “the very medium of [atomic bodies’] situatedness and movement, the scene of their multiple occupation.”² As such, space offers both room and place. Place, therefore, is defined as occupied space, or the location of something in space. As a *Spielraum*, space offers the “leeway” that allows place to emerge—a place that for Heidegger is a site of conflict and play for the clearing and concealing of truth.³ Moreover, I examine the overlay of Biennale maps on top of the Venetian urban topography in order to explore the geopolitical relations revealed through location, with the Venice Biennale and its pavilions functioning as the *Spielraum*. In addition to Michel Foucault’s definition of a heterotopia as a counter-site or kind of “effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites [...] are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted,”⁴ I draw upon Irit Rogoff’s definition of geography as orders of knowledge and systems of power and Frederic Jameson’s model of cognitive mapping, or the negotiation of urban space that connect the psychic with the social, in order to examine the spatial distribution of the Venice Biennale in relation to place histories and geopolitics. During the Biennale, Venice becomes the site where institutional and national gestures of inclusion and erasure enact national and global relations. In this heterotopia for the staging of nations, some levels of geopolitical differences are suspended, as in the Olympics. As exhibition sites, the pavilions of the Venice Biennale and their respective locations, whether in the Giardini, the Arsenale, or scattered throughout the city of Venice, inform the reception of the art. At the Venice Biennale, the utilization of place for the presentation of art extends beyond the gallery to include the

distribution of pavilions. The Biennale transforms the city of Venice but is also informed by its topography, cultures, and histories. By reading the Biennale as a heterotopic *Spielraum*, it becomes possible to unravel the complex interactions that take place between various participants in relation to the city.



Figure 10. Satellite Image of Venice. Imagery ©2012 Google.

A Geographic History of Venice

Venice originally grew from a series of villages in the marshes of the Venetian lagoon, tucked away in the northeastern corner of present-day Italy in the Adriatic Sea. The city currently consists of 117 islands. The residents created the foundations for these buildings by submerging hundreds to thousands of posts into the marshy earth, pushed down through mud and sand until firmer ground could be found. Over time, these posts have petrified, continuing to hold up the many buildings that defy their surrounding terrain.⁵ Historically and today, the buildings are subject to the uncertainty of the ocean, including the ebb and flow of daily tides, rising water levels, and the slow sinking of the city. As a city that floats on water, Venice is comparable to an anchored ship—a floating site that is on the one hand contained by the parameters of its architectural accomplishment and on the other hand subject to the infinity of the sea. Furthermore, Venice does not travel from port to port, but instead is dependent on whatever can be brought on board. The intimate relationship of Venice to the ocean is an acknowledged quality of its culture, made explicit by the traditional Ascension Day performance of tossing a ring into the waters as a symbol of Venice’s marriage to the sea.⁶ Venetian life has always been dependent on the ocean to provide protection and sustenance, including its extensive mercantile trade network and a highly capable naval fleet. During the mid-thirteenth century, Venice became *Serenissima Repubblica Veneta*—the Most Serene Republic of Venice (or simply *La Serenissima*); an independent “republic” founded on trade.⁷ According to Norwich:

And that trade [...] owed its phenomenal success not to any territorial expansion but, paradoxically, to the very smallness of the Republic [...] by virtually confining the Venetians to so restricted a space, it had created a unique spirit of cohesion and cooperation—a spirit which showed itself not only at times of national crisis but also, and still more impressively, in the day-to-day handling of their affairs.⁸

Without many natural resources except for the ocean itself, the channels of commerce would eventually transform into the canals of tourism.

Venice's geographic and architectural history changed over time, as additional places were made habitable and available for urban development. The centuries-long process of building up Venice has resulted in a blending of various architectural styles and inspirations throughout the city, including Byzantine, Medieval Gothic, baroque, neoclassical, and twentieth century modern. Deborah Howard describes how the history of Venice is preserved in the fabric of the city itself: "Like animal fossils petrified in layers of rock, so the life of the Venetian people through the ages is recorded in the architecture of the archipelago on which the city was founded."⁹ This maritime port of goods and ideas developed into a center of cultural exchange that continues to attract travelers who marvel at the uniqueness of Venice's architectural development. The nature of the city, like the swamps upon which it is built, is amphibious—evolving and adapting in order to stay afloat in spite of the literal as well as economic and political tides.

When Napoleonic troops entered Venice in 1797, it began to undergo a period of great political, social, and economic upheaval with the waning of the aristocracy and the beginnings of urban modernization inspired by Enlightenment

principles.¹⁰ Significantly, this event marked the end of Venice's existence as an independent republic. The process of "revitalization" involved the destruction of Renaissance monuments and buildings that encapsulated Venice's medieval heritage to make way for broader alleys, the Giardini, and building renovations, including a new royal palace in the Piazza San Marco.¹¹ Napoleon's reign of Venice, while short-lived, established certain attitudes concerning the modernization and industrialization of the city,¹² which came to inform the creation of the Venice Biennale. After Napoleon, Venice would come under Austrian domination until 1866, when Italy became a modern nation. At this point, the city changed considerably as the medieval way of life made way for an era of technological modernization. Many demolitions of notable historical buildings in addition to constructive changes were made during this time, including the arrival of the railway to Venice and the erection of iron bridges.¹³ These changes made the city able to accommodate a different type of traveler of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries—the leisure tourist who could easily enter and exit the city. The Venice Biennale is considered part of the initiative to attract tourists to the city as it attempted to establish itself as "an international centre of scholarship and the arts."¹⁴ Venice has continued to change since the Biennale's inception, with this art event helping shift the geographic terrain of the city through the development of the Giardini, the restoration of the Arsenale, and the introduction of official national pavilions and what the Biennale refers to as "collateral events" in buildings throughout the city. Concurrently with this push for innovation, there has been an increasing desire for preservation of previous

architectural and artistic accomplishments, providing juxtaposition between contemporary aspirations and historical legacy that characterizes the setting for the Venice Biennale.

Moreover, the development of Venice resulted from the initial inhabitation of a waterscape, which through ingenuity became the site of urban construction. Through the interaction of human action and technology with natural elements, the inhabitants of Venice were able to build in this marshy terrain in order to dwell and then thrive. Martin Heidegger considers the human interaction with place in his 1951 lecture, “Building Dwelling Thinking.” He states:

To be a human being means to be on the earth as mortal. It means to dwell [...] both modes of building—building as cultivating [...] and building as the raising up of edifices [...] are comprised with genuine building, that is dwelling. Building as dwelling, that is, as being on the earth, however, remains for man’s everyday experience that which is from the outset “habitual”—we inhabit it.¹⁵

That is, the architecture that occupies Venice is more than just shelters for human activities, but is the result of dwelling. According to Heidegger, “building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings.”¹⁶ Buildings are not just structures, but make a site habitable while leading to further building. In Venice, this process has occurred over centuries, where its buildings are sited on the constructed “bedrock” of the city that contain remnants of histories and cultures that are preserved, decay, sink, and are refurbished, resulting in an architectural blend of styles and techniques that trace Venice’s early Byzantine influence to the modernization of the industrial

era, including the beginning of the Biennale, and present-day sustainability aspirations.

Venice's longstanding history as a destination for travelers and a port of exchange contributes to it being an appropriate site for a biennial, where contemporary art from various countries around the world is presented to an audience. Arguably, Venice can be considered one of the first cosmopolitan cities. Like peddlers promoting their goods in designated stalls at a bazaar, pavilions are situated for the display of works, each attempting to grab the attention of passers-by. These spectators, who for the most part are also tourists in the city, move through the galleries, participating in an exchange of culture and ideas that has a long precedence in Venice. The terrain of Venice has been built up through layers of such cultural interactions, with the Biennale continuing to contribute to this legacy. As such, Venice is a place that has been developed through layers of experience. Edward Casey describes how places gather "things in their midst—where 'things' connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts."¹⁷ Subsequently, places are not static, but dynamic. The experience of place is not just held in the bodies of its residence. Casey describes how places "keep unbodylike entities as thoughts and memories."¹⁸ In Venice, the memories that these entities hold may stretch back centuries, and whether or not the tourist or passer-by may have knowledge or appreciation of this history, these entities participate in the creation of new memories that are added to the place. As such, Venice functions as a cartography

deferred, where the city's terrain is molded through interaction and experience.

According to Casey:

Gathering gives to place its particular perduringness, allowing us to return to it again and again as *the same place* and not just the same position or site. For a place, in its dynamism, does not age in a systematically changing way [...] [a] place is generative and regenerative on its own schedule. From it experiences are born and to it human beings [...] return for empowerment [...]. [A place's] power consists in gathering these lives and things, each with its own space and time, into one arena of common engagement [emphasis in original].¹⁹

For the Biennale, this arena of common engagement began in the *Palazzo Pro Arte* in the Giardini, expanding and altering over subsequent Biennale years when the experiences gathered resulted in the building of national pavilions, the appropriation of the Arsenale, and the temporary occupation of buildings throughout the city of Venice.

Of Other Venices: The Venice Biennale as Heterotopic *Spielraum*

Far from being the utopia of cosmopolitan coexistence, the Venice Biennale creates counter-sites both to the city of Venice as well as the nations that participate in the event. The heterotopias introduced by the Biennale overlay and incorporate the city of Venice, which is not an empty stage or blank canvas, but a unique urban landscape rich with its own blend of cultures and histories. The Biennale involves the construction of place that brings together a variety of cultural and geographic places that would otherwise not occur. The heterotopias of the Venice Biennale are characterized by its mappings of an imaginary geopolitical landscape over the city. Some of these places, such as the permanent

pavilions of the Giardini and the exhibition halls of the Arsenale, are officially designated spaces of the Biennale and primarily utilized for that purpose. However, the architectural foundations of these places were not initially designated for this use. Instead, the Biennale has appropriated these places and “refurbished” them for the specific use of exhibiting contemporary art. These prior histories are not erased through the acts of appropriation, but form the foundation upon which the heterotopia emerges. This can also be said for the multitude of off-site pavilions scattered throughout the city of Venice, as these tend to be buildings temporarily “taken over” as exhibition sites, even though their previous usage may have been for non-art-related purposes. As Edward Casey points out, Foucault describes how heterotopias are both “absolutely different” from the surrounding places they reflect, while at the same time are “locatable in geographic reality.”²⁰ Heterotopias are part of the fabric of a place, but simultaneously introduce an alternative site that may disrupt the material and power relations of that place.

The Giardini is the geographic heart of the Venice Biennale. This park, which was created by Napoleon, has hosted the Biennale since its inception. The transformation of the gardens from a reminder of the fall of *La Serenissima* into a site of cultural exposition cannot be overlooked. This act functions as a gesture of reclamation that redefines an urban space created by the outsider Napoleon, turning it into something representing Venetian and Italian patriotic ambitions. Irit Rogoff argues that geographies are not neutral categorizations of space, but are “always gendered, always raced, always economical, and always sexual. The

textures that bind them together are daily re-written through a word, a gaze, a gesture.”²¹ The re-designation of the Giardini would be one of the first geographical gestures involving the claiming of space as a part of nationalist performance of the new, modern Italian nation at the Venice Biennale, instigating a process that continues into the twenty-first century. Gestures such as this play a key role in the “re-writing” of local space that comprises Biennale geopolitics.

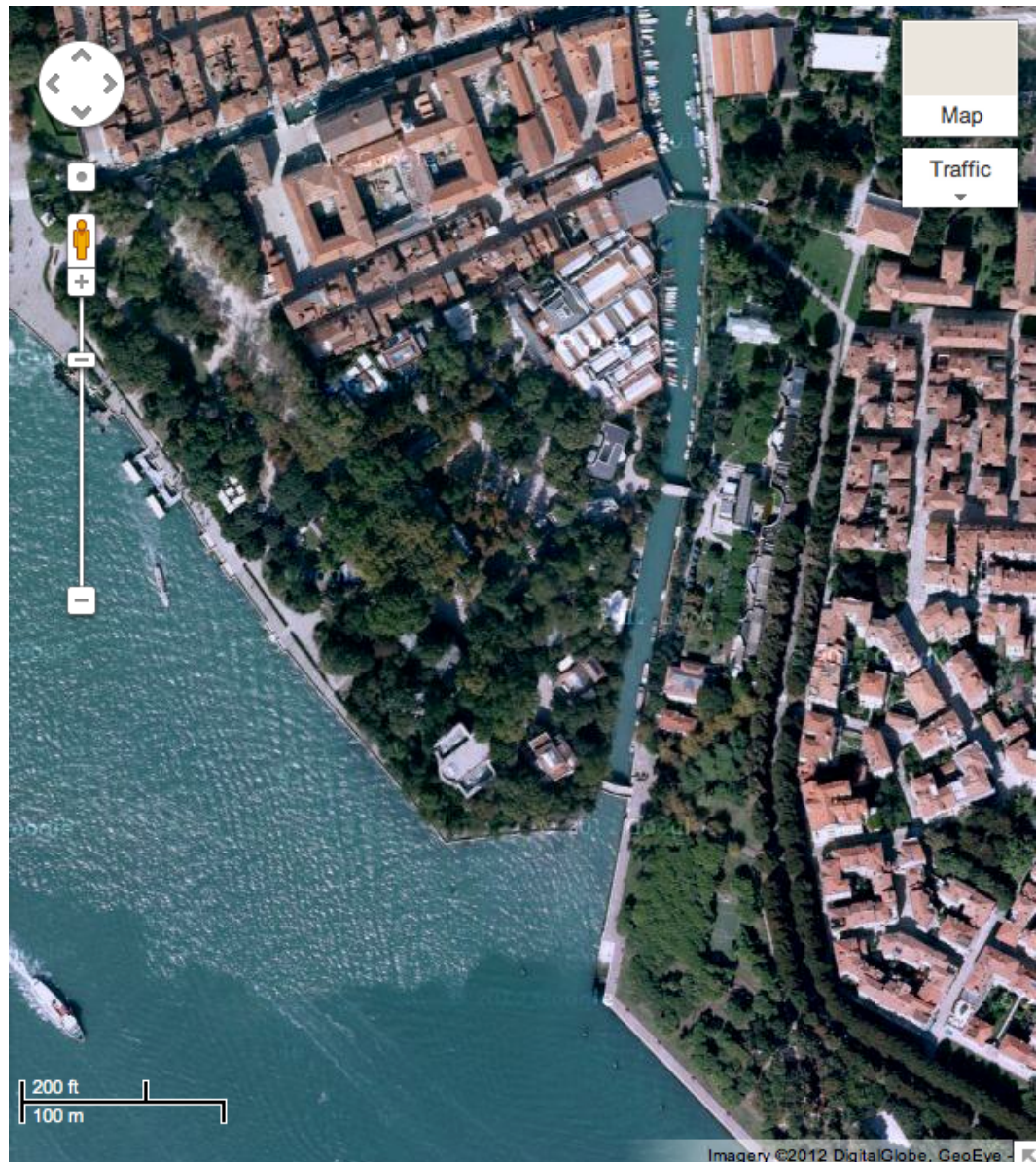


Figure 11. Satellite image of the Giardini. Imagery ©2012 Google.

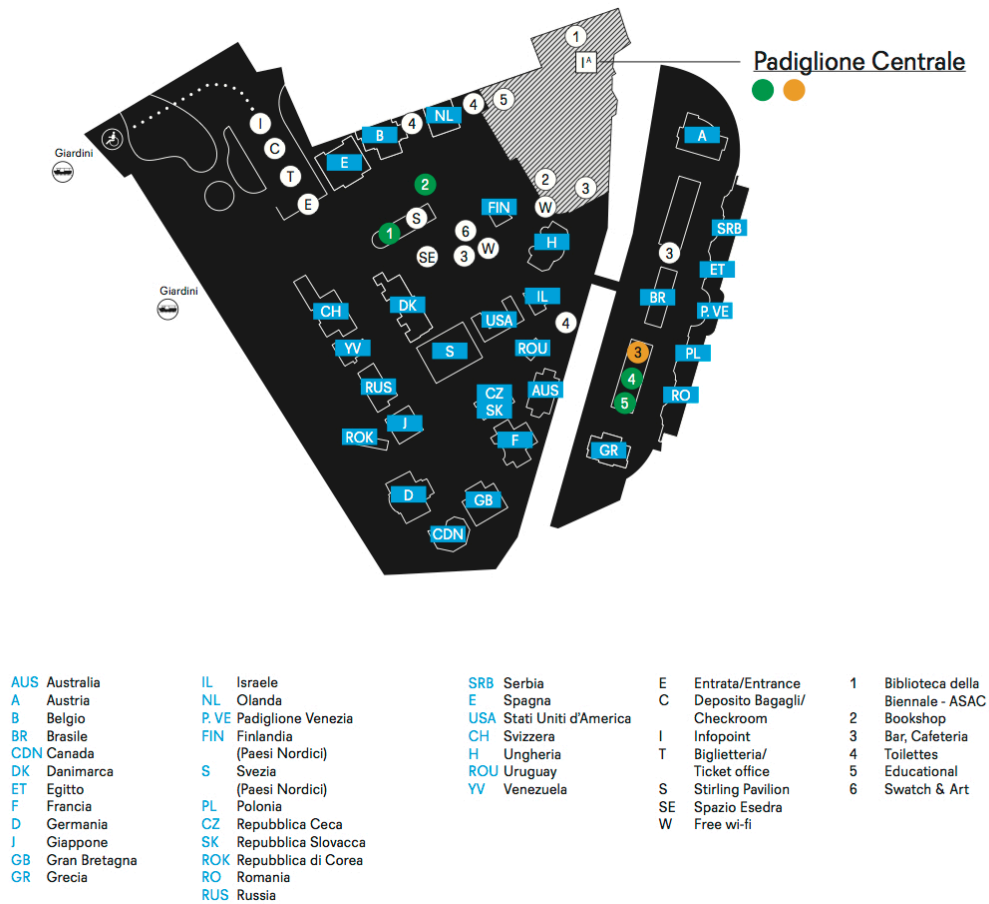


Figure 12. Map of the Giardini, 2011 Venice Biennale

The Giardini currently hosts thirty permanent pavilions that represent thirty-four countries. Starting with Belgium in 1907, nations began building permanent pavilions maintained by the guest nations. The Giardini temporarily houses Biennale exhibitions while collecting metaphoric layers of exhibition histories. Yanya Madra argues that the "very architectural forms that populate the Giardini of the Venice Biennale [...] inadvertently reveal the traces of the overdetermined history of this oldest of all biennials."²² This history is informed by the evolving nature of political and economic relations from the later days of European colonialism, to the struggles associated with the two World Wars and

their aftermaths, as well the era of post-colonialism, when nations outside of Europe were clamoring for international recognition, and into present day neoliberalism. According to Vittoria Martini, the first wave of pavilions consisted of Belgium (1907), Hungary (1909), Germany (1909), Great Britain (1909), France (1912), Holland (1912), and Russia (1914). The second wave, which took place after World War I and during Italy's fascist era, included Spain (1922), Czechoslovakia (1928), the United States (1930), Denmark (1932), Switzerland (1932), Poland (1932), Austria (1934), Greece (1934), Romania (1938), Yugoslavia (1938), and Egypt (1938). A third wave of pavilion building took place in the Giardini after World War II, though limited due to space restrictions. The third wave consists of Israel (1952), Venezuela (1954), Japan (1956), Finland (1956), Canada (1958), Uruguay (1961), Scandinavia (1962), and Brazil (1964). Finally, Australia obtained permission for a pavilion in 1988 and South Korea in 1995.²³ Martini notes that after World War II "every political change and re-establishment of borders was mirrored in the nomadic movements of the pavilions within the Giardini territory, and then of those located in the city within Venice itself."²⁴ For example, Israel requested a pavilion in 1948 just shortly after being declared a nation. Between 1947 and 1948, there had been talk of adding a Palestine pavilion, but with the creation of Israel, "Palestine" was no longer considered an acceptable contender, and Israel took its place.²⁵ The Israel pavilion is situated next to the US pavilion, a primary supporter of the state. During this third wave of national participation, according to Martini, "never before had the significance of having a 'national art container' been so important."²⁶ National

pavilions are more than just sites of exhibition; they offer the opportunity to participate in a transnational network of art, politics, and economics on the world stage. In addition, the increased prominence of “stateless” groups, like Palestine and Native North Americans, presenting collateral events materializes the “collateral damage” of geopolitics in this heterotopic *Spielraum* that functions as a counter-site for international relations.

The Giardini’s designation as a public garden is pertinent to reading it as a heterotopia. Foucault describes the garden as one of the oldest examples of heterotopias that “is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.”²⁷ Gardens are living installations that combine plants, water, and other natural elements in a single, manicured space that would not exist in any other state. The garden is a site that encourages life and growth, but also contains this growth within the parameters of the space. As an urban garden in a congested floating city, the Giardini as a heterotopia provides a stark contrast to the city terrain just beyond its borders. This contrast can be perceived through satellite photos of Venice, with the Giardini appearing like an island of green in a sea of red-tiled roofs. Unlike other gardens on firm land, the Giardini is fully constructed from the ground up, built like the rest of the city on posts above the delicate marshes, just floating above the surface of the ocean waters. In this sense, the Giardini fulfills Foucault’s criteria of heterotopia, both as a literal garden, or a human-constructed parcel of land in a floating city that would not exist naturally, and a place where art and different national discourses converge.

Hans Haacke—Exhuming History

The collected histories that may contribute to a heterotopic *Spielraum* can also become the target of institutional critique. According to Andrea Fraser, the practices associated with institutional critique, or the exposure and critique of art's institutional support systems, appeared in the 1960s.²⁸ Hans Haacke uses the histories of place and the identification of the pavilion as a national space as the inspiration for his work, *Germania*, which was presented at the 1993 Venice Biennale. His installation involves the destruction of the floor of the German Pavilion. By tearing up the floor, Haacke intends to evoke the Nazi regime's remodeling of the Pavilion in 1938. Through his destructive gesture, Haacke reveals national complacency through an institutional critique that makes the pavilion's historical fascist support systems apparent. Instead of articulating these sentiments, Haacke uses an act of negation to resurrect the tainted history of the pavilion, creating a heterotopia that brings Germany's history into the present through the exposure of the building. Like exhuming a corpse, Haacke's destruction of the floor does not allow for Germany's fascist past to rest in peace. The inclusion of the term "Germania" (Hitler's name for Nazi Berlin) in large, capital letters and a photograph of Hitler visiting Venice compound Haacke's intentions as well as alluding to Italy's and the Biennale's fascist history. That year, Germany was awarded the *Leone d'Oro* for Best National Pavilion.

Haacke's actions evoke Foucault's second principle of a heterotopia, which states: "a society, as its history unfolds, can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion."²⁹ Foucault uses the cemetery as a way to illustrate this principle. As a space to put the dead, cemeteries serve a practical purpose, but also come to represent how a culture understands life, death, and immortality. Foucault argues that at one point, cemeteries served as the "sacred and immortal heart of the city," until during the nineteenth century, when it became identified as "'the other city,' where each family possesses its dark resting place."³⁰ When the Nazi government remodeled the German pavilion, it became a monument to its nationalist ideology. After World War II, the building remained unchanged as traces of fascism were conceptually wiped from the pavilion. Haacke's institutional critique challenges this gesture, bringing this history back to the forefront of the imagination. The "dark resting place" of fascism is disturbed. Notably, after the exhibition, the pavilion was returned to its previous state.



Figure 13. Hans Haacke, *Germania*, German Pavilion at the 1993 Venice Biennale. Photograph by Roman Mensing © Hans Haacke/VG Bild-Kunst



Figure 14. Image of Adolf Hitler included as part of *Germania* by Hans Haacke. Photograph by Roman Mensing © Hans Haacke/VG Bild-Kunst.

Even though Haacke's work makes specific use of the architectural space of the German pavilion, it is not bound to the physical environment. Instead of being site-specific, which has universalizing tendencies as it defines site as the material location, the work can be treated as site-particular. For a work to be site-particular, it is not predetermined by conceptual or ideological constructs, and neither is it totalized in terms of physical form, which consists of a modernist definition of site as a neutral space experienced by a universal spectator.³¹ In contrast, according to Ilya Noé:

[A site-particular work] is constructed performatively out of the exchanges between the artist, environment, and audience. It is an ongoing series of interrelational and open-ended processes: always partial, always situated, multiply layered, often contradictory and messy, and produced by active agents negotiating between all kinds of positions and working through all kinds of relationships.³²

With the site-particular, emphasis is placed on the convergence of experience, situating the spectator in relation to the various conceptual, ideological, and material negotiations that participate in the construction of art.

Frederic Jameson describes how Haacke's institutional critique can be considered a political variant of conceptual art that "redirects the deconstruction of perceptual categories specifically onto the framing institutions themselves."³³ Haacke's installation makes exact use of the German pavilion, transforming the gallery into the work of art, which destroys the illusion of neutrality of the white cube. At the same time he treads onto Germany's legacy as a Biennale participant and reaches into the darkest corner of its twentieth-century history, baring the bones of trauma through the destruction of the pristine space. Transforming the

building into heterotopic *Spielraum*, Germany and Italy's fascist histories intermingle with the present Biennale that has actively worked to distance itself from this period. The act of awarding the Golden Lion takes Haacke's potentially subversive gesture, undermining the strife it may introduce, and co-opts it as part of the institutional paradigm of the Venice Biennale. In this *Spielraum*, the strife of history becomes the fodder for Biennale acclamations.

Instead of viewing architecture as a container of space to be filled, Jacques Derrida proposes that it can be understood as an event—more of a happening than a thing. In the essay, “Point de folie—Maintenant l’architecture,” he emphasizes the now, or *maintenant*, of architecture as opposed to a “*properly* architectural moment, the hieratic impassibility of the monument [emphasis in original].”³⁴ He challenges the axiomatic understanding of architecture as “the trial of the monumental moment [...] [that] connotes something stubbornly closed on itself in accordance with a fixed *arche* and *telos*,”³⁵ since it permits “no trace to appear on its body because it afforded no chance of transformation, permutation, or substitutions.”³⁶ Architecture does not exist in a static state of preserved monumentality, but it is constructed and changes through interactions with the environment and its inhabitants in a dynamic process where places and spaces of movement are “*destined* for events: in order for them to take place [emphasis in original].”³⁷ Moreover, Derrida's concepts of spacing and deferral, which he originally proposed in terms of writing, are applicable to understanding the function of architecture and how it relates to experience.³⁸ According to Derrida, understanding architecture as an event treats it as a “writing of space, a mode of

spacing which makes a place for the event.”³⁹ Taking this dynamic approach to architecture and place makes room for the gestures that accompany the experiences of dwelling.

Growing beyond the Giardini

Once it became apparent that the spatial distribution of the Biennale was limited by the parameters of the Giardini, other exhibition sites were appropriated. At the same time, the Biennale’s heterotopic *Spielraum* expanded its boundaries to incorporate other sites in Venice. One of these sites is the Arsenal of Venice, also referred to as the Arsenale, which for centuries had functioned as the state-owned shipbuilding yard where masses of warships and mercantile vessels were created for Venetian use. Situated in the east of the city—and west of the Giardini—construction originally started on the Arsenale around 1104 under the direction of Doge Ordelafo Falier. According to Norwich:

Over the next half-century, there grew up the mighty complex of dockyards, foundries, magazines, and workshops for carpenters, sailmakers, ropemakers, and blacksmiths that Dante described in the *Inferno* and that gave a new word to the English language and many others beside—the Arsenal.⁴⁰

The word “Arsenal” emerges from Venice’s intertwined relationship with Middle Eastern culture, as it comes from the Arabic *Dar Sina’a*, which translates to “house of construction.”⁴¹ With the founding of the Arsenale, the industry of shipbuilding would become standardized and localized in Venice, functioning as the industrial heart that regulated the city’s extensive seaborne networks. At its zenith in the fifteenth century, it was considered the eighth wonder of the world

and was the largest industrial complex of medieval Europe.⁴² As a city born of water, Venice saw shipbuilding and its related industries play a key role in its rise from a city to a republic. Norwich writes: “Over the years, the Venetians always remained better and faster shipbuilders, more accurate navigators, and more resourceful seamen than anyone else.”⁴³ Norwich also points out that when it came to the construction and use of ships, Venice never differentiated between defense and commerce:

Her war captains [...] were never averse to trading on the side—a predisposition which meant that many of her military expeditions actually paid for themselves—while her merchant vessels had always to be ready to defend themselves against pirates or, occasionally, competitors [...] the warships produced by the Arsenal were endowed with as much storage space for additional cargoes as could be devised, and the merchantmen given plenty of provision for defence.⁴⁴

Initially, the geopolitics of the Arsenale were informed by the shipbuilding industry that built up a fleet of ships that carried Venetian influence around the world. As the site of production of these vessels, the Arsenale was more than just an industrial center, it provided Venice with the means to extend beyond its geographic limits and acquire the resources necessary for a thriving urban center.

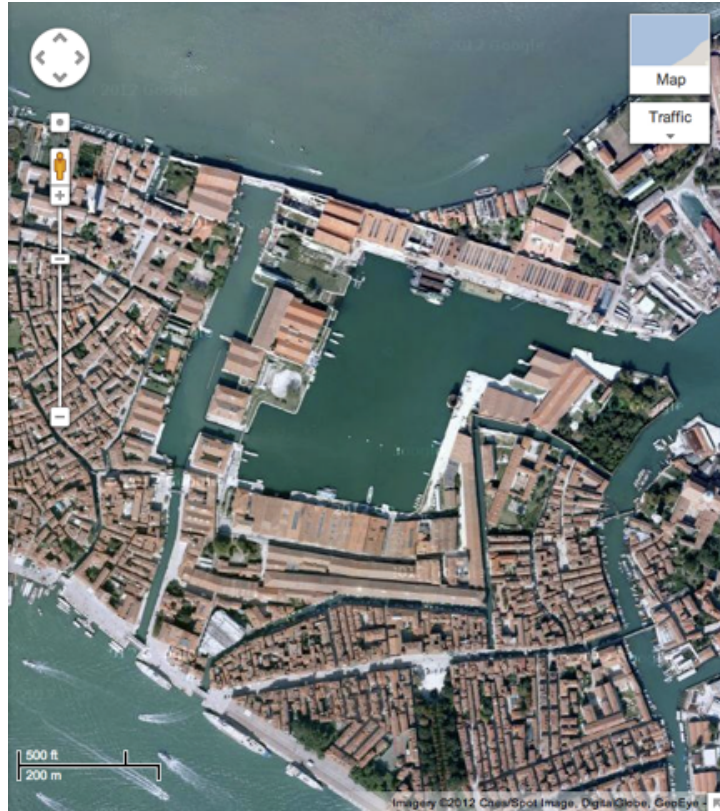


Figure 15. Satellite Image of the Arsenale. Imagery ©2012 Google.

By 1600, technological changes in shipbuilding and warfare combined with the waning of Venetian military strength diminished the significance of the Arsenale as a site of production. Even so, when Napoleon invaded Venice, he considered the Arsenale a prime objective, resulting in considerable damage to the complex.⁴⁵ The Arsenale would continue to be in use well into the twentieth century with some refurbishment and reallocation of purpose. In 1980, the Venice Biennale began using the *Coreria della Tana* ropewalk as a site for staging exhibitions.

Through gestures of reclamation, the Arsenale was transformed from a site of ship production for the fortitude of Venice into gallery spaces. In some ways,

the use of the Arsenale by the Biennale is like the reclamation of the Giardini through the alteration the material relations of power by refurbishment and the repurposing of place. However, the history associated with the Arsenale extends back much earlier than that of the Giardini. Also, unlike the Giardini, which functioned as a sign of the Republic's defeat, the Arsenale was once a major power center for the city—it brought Venice to the world. Paradoxically, as a Biennale exhibition center, it is the place where the world comes to Venice. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, restoration work on the Arsenale was underway along with the creation of more access points to the nearby Giardini in order to create stronger geographic connections between these two Biennale exhibition sites.

The original structure of the Arsenale is not abolished through the Biennale's gestures of appropriation. Both internally and externally the building architectural structure is maintained—instead of transforming the halls into white cube galleries, the internal exhibition spaces are left with pillars intact and bricks exposed. While this may not provide a neutral surface for the presentation of art, the references to the original architecture and function of the Arsenale create an illusion of continuity with the Venetian landscape. According to Jameson, with this type of referential tactic, the original building “stands as some last minimal remnant of that older space as it is worked over, canceled, surcharged, volatized, sublimated, or transformed by some newer system.”⁴⁶ Despite the preserved façade of the Arsenale complex, it has been repurposed. Reference may be paid to the original function of the site and the historical legacy that its architecture

signifies, but it has been modified just as the trade network within which it functioned has drastically altered since its peak of productivity centuries ago.



Figure 16. Satellite view of Giardini and Arsenale. Imagery ©2012 Google.

In 2011, the exhibition halls of the Arsenale contained works by over forty artists that constituted part of *ILLUMInations*, the thematic exhibition organized by curatorial director Bice Curiger. Included in this group was Swiss-American

artist Christian Marclay, who was awarded the *Leone d'Oro* for best artist of the international exhibition for his work *The Clock* (2010). Essentially a collage consisting of cinematic moments of characters interacting with timepieces, this twenty-four hour film corresponds each showing of a clock with real time. Instead of compressing the unfolding of narrative events to the standard two-to-three-hour running time of film, Marclay gathered a collection of moments from predominately US movie history to present a film that both correlates with the pace of time of the spectators as well as spanning decades of cinematic production. This intrusion of the past into the present experience of time alters the temporal experience of film. Exhibited in a darkened gallery in the Arsenale with rows of comfortable couches, spectators are encouraged to get comfortable and stay awhile. Subsequently, Marclay's *The Clock* invites certain kinds of gestures from its spectators—to sit for hours at a time and engage with one particular work, or possibly to relax and doze off in the cool and comfortable gallery—that challenges the customary viewer performance implied in exhibition contexts. The Arsenale's architecture encourages spectators to move from one gallery to the next in a unidirectional, linear manner. Also, for a number of evenings, the Arsenale stayed open to allow spectators to view the film in its entirety, since gallery hours do not accommodate its twenty-four-hour running time.

While Marclay's work challenges the implied performances of place introduced by the Biennale, these latter actions differ from the implied performances of the Arsenale as a site of industrial production. The gestures

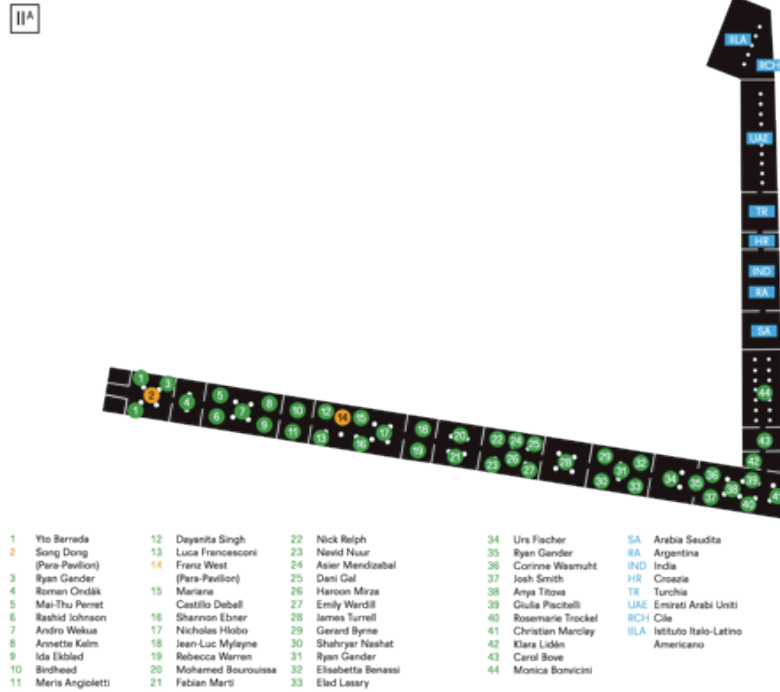
originally associated with the Arsenale constituted hard labor in a stifling work environment that Dante compared to hell in this passage from the *Inferno*:

As in the Arsenal of the Venetians
Boils in the winter the tenacious pitch
To smear their unsound vessels o'er again,
For sail they cannot; and instead thereof
One makes his vessel new, and one recaulks
The ribs of that which many a voyage has made;
One hammers at the prow, one at the stern,
This one makes oars and that one cordage twists
Another mends the mainsail and mizzen.⁴⁷

Over time, the material and power relations that gave rise to the Arsenale and turned it into a significant center of the Venetian mercantile system and its naval fortification have changed. While the rooms have been refurbished, remnants of the original architecture remain as lingering evidence of its history. As with the Giardini, the appropriation of the Arsenale has not wiped out traces of Venice's past, but merges with new experiences of place in this heterotopia.



Figure 17. Installation view of Christian Marclay's *The Clock* at the 2011 Venice Biennale. Photograph by Amy Youngs.



Venezia → Arsenale → Corderie/Artiglierie

Figure 18. Map of the Arsenale, 2011 Venice Biennale

Since 1995, the Biennale has offered countries lacking permanent exhibition spaces, such as New Zealand, the possibility to exhibit at temporary national pavilions. Martini writes how buildings are “made available by the city, private owners, cultural institutions, or the Church, guaranteeing that these sites were to become official national pavilions during the period of the Biennale.”⁴⁸ New Zealand has participated in this capacity since 2001. Judy Millar’s installation *Giraffe-Bottle-Gun*, which was one of New Zealand’s two official pavilion sites at the 2009 Venice Biennale, provides an example of how contemporary art is juxtaposed against the backdrop of Venetian history while also informing the experience of place as a heterotopia. The exhibition took place

in the Church of the Maddalena, the only circular church in Venice, and took advantage of the building's unique architecture in the realization of the work. The church was originally founded in 1222, but the present structure was built on top of the original medieval building. This Neo-Classical version was designed by Tommaso Temanza and begun in 1761. According to Howard, the small Roman Catholic church was "much loved by Venetians, especially as a setting for weddings."⁴⁹ Its design was influenced by the architectural trends popular at the time of construction, incorporating the "plainest possible architectural elements."⁵⁰ The works that make up *Giraffe-Bottle-Gun* take advantage of the church's unique cylindrical space, with the largest element of the installation being a large painting in the round that dominates the room. Millar's large-scale paintings are actually digital reproductions of smaller works enlarged to emphasize the gestural qualities of the abstract designs. There is a strong contrast between the artist's loose brush strokes juxtaposed with the representational religious paintings already located in the room. The shapes of Millar's other paintings, which loom over the viewers, are non-rectangular and irregular, jutting into the Neo-Classical symmetry of the church, disrupting any illusion of perfect form. According to the exhibition website, the work interacts with the physical dimensions of La Maddalena, instigating "a lively dispute with the venue in which it intrudes, between the great history of Venetian painting and this contemporary practice."⁵¹ Millar's installation folds into the architecture of La Maddalena, forming a temporary heterotopia that layers two eras of Venetian art and cultural history—the Neo-Classical with the contemporary—onto each other.

Giraffe-Bottle-Gun works both with and against the space. According to the curator, Leonhard Emmerling, the work is about conflict and not fitting in— juxtaposing the multiple histories of painting in Venice compared to the short history of Euro-American–influenced painting in New Zealand.⁵² The work intentionally creates a mismatch of histories, functioning as a proposal of New Zealand cultural identity as well as an attempt to claim a place in the history of painting through the literal insertion of these works into the Venetian context. The exhibition space determines the work, especially its claustrophobic qualities that result from the large cylindrical painting placed in the center of the church. In addition, the work cannot be experienced from a distance, but only through immersion, with the body of the spectator functioning as the filter of reception.



Figure 19. Installation view of *Giraffe-Bottle-Gun* by Judy Millar, located in Church of the Maddalena, one of the New Zealand pavilions at the 2009 Venice Biennale. Photograph by EL Putnam.



Figure 20. Maps of the 2007, 2009, and 2011 Venice Biennales overlaying map of Venetian tourist zones. Image by EL Putnam.

The Geopolitics of Heterotopias

I produced the above image by overlaying maps of the 2007, 2009, and 2011 Venice Biennales. The digitally produced document gives a visual sense of how the Biennales have infiltrated the city of Venice, particularly in the past few iterations when national inclusion has increased. The Biennale layer exists in conjunction with the layer of tourist activity, as pavilions may direct spectators in directions that are off the tourist's beaten path. While the offsite pavilions can be found throughout the city and on the surrounding islands, nations tend to cluster sites around more easily accessible routes, such as along the Grand Canal or in the space between San Marco, Rialto, and Accademia—an area that Isabella Scaramuzzim, vice-director of *Consorzio per lo Sviluppo Economico e Sociale della Provincia di Venezia*, refers to as the “tourist triangle.”⁵³ This triangle is

marked in red in the above map. The more curvaceous red line indicates the imagined boundary between the international zone, where many foreigners own apartments, and the more residential areas located at the outer ring of the city's distribution.

Location is important for offsite national pavilions, since if they are located in parts of the city that are too difficult for tourists to navigate or are too far off the beaten path, then the pavilion may receive less traffic than other, more centrally located pavilions. Originally, the Giardini pavilions belonged to European countries, with pavilions for some Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern nations being added over time. Other non-European pavilions occupy offsite venues, most of these nations having begun sending official national representatives only in the past few Biennales. The growing presence of Middle Eastern and Arab nations in the recent decade is particularly notable, as compared to previous years, with many nations participating for the first time. In 2011, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirate (UAE) all had national pavilions. Saudi Arabia and the UAE were located in the Arsenale for easy access, while Iraq was only a short distance away along a well-traveled alley. Iran occupied the same location as it did in the 2009 Biennale, which is near the “tourist zone” of the city. Syria was a bit more difficult to visit, as it was located, along with Cuba, on the *Isola di San Servolo*. These two pavilions were only accessible by boat travel and unlikely to be “stumbled upon” by spectators like other offsite pavilions located in the more popular parts of the city.

In addition, at the Venice Biennale, there has been a tendency to overlook the contributions of certain non-national groups, such as Native North Americans, in relation to national performance. These underrepresented histories typically are not included as national pavilions, but are presented as collateral events. For example, James Luna addressed the dearth of Native North American presence in his 2005 collateral event *Emendatio*. This exhibition, which consisted of live performances and two installations, claimed Venice as part of Native American cultures and histories while creating a heterotopia, or counter-site, to US national identity. While preparing for the exhibition, Luna came upon the story of Pablo Tac, a Luiseño Indian—which also happens to be Luna’s tribe—who left Mission San Luis Rey in California and traveled to Rome, becoming a Catholic priest in 1834. During this time abroad, truncated by an early death from disease in 1841, Tac studied, performed research, and wrote extensively, including drafting of a Luiseño dictionary. He also took this opportunity to correct the errors in the way Europeans understood his people.⁵⁴ This process included writing an account of the missionization of the Luiseños in California from the native perspective. This text provides an alternative to the dominant European narrative, challenging the authenticity of presumed historical facts. As Tac states, "I could have taught more, but who could teach others what they don't know? What I knew, I taught. What I didn't know, I've left. Better to be quiet than saying lies."⁵⁵ The Latinite term “emendatio” translates loosely into English as “emendation,” and refers to this process of demystifying misinformation, and unfortunately, many perceptions of Native Americans are fueled by inaccurate ideas and nostalgic fantasies.



Figure 21. Installation shot of *The Chapel for Pablo Tac* by James Luna in the Palazzo Querini Stampalia, 2005 Venice Biennale. Photograph by Katherine Fogden.



Figure 22. Installation shot of *Apparitions: Past and Present* by James Luna in the Palazzo Querini Stampalia, 2005 Venice Biennale. Photograph by Katherine Fogden.

Emendatio is comprised of two installations, *The Chapel for Pablo Tac* and *Apparitions: Past and Present*, as well as performances by Luna. Truman Lowe, co-curator of *Emendatio*, describes the first installation as an homage to

Pablo Tac where “Catholicism becomes the connective tissue linking the artist’s tribal community and history to Italy.”⁵⁶ The chapel that Luna creates is filled with Luiseño objects along with artifacts of the type that Tac may have owned or used during his time in Rome. Authenticity is not necessary since Luna does not strive for historical accuracy in the work. According to Lowe, he “deliberately blurs and blends fact with fantasy. His installation effectively reinscribes history and memory—much as Tac’s own account of a Catholic mission was an *emendation* to the dominant ‘text’ of history [emphasis in original].”⁵⁷ Luna commonly utilizes this process in his work. Jane Blocker describes how he “spends a great deal of his time as an artist clowning in the costume of memory and history, throwing a pie in the face of liberal guilt and white ‘native envy.’”⁵⁸ Through his transformation of place, Luna contributes to the experience of place by bringing to light the story of a Native American in Europe that has slipped through the cracks of the hegemonic narrative. This work functions as part of Luna’s larger project, as described by Block, to “show the present reality of Indians, to demonstrate native appropriation of white culture, and to document his community’s persistent survival despite its occupation by outsiders.”⁵⁹ With *Emendatio*, Luna has expanded the parameters of his discursive terrain of the relationship of Indians to whites in the Americas in order to relate to a European audience. Luna’s creation of a historical and spatial heterotopia functions as a counter-site to the utopian treatment of US national identity as a unified whole.

Apparitions: Past and Present also plays with human connections historically and in the present. For this work, Luna used projections to

superimpose images of present-day Luiseño people onto photographic portraits of Luiseño Indians of the past. The postures and gestures of the former mimic those of the latter, creating an overlay of images that compress about a century of time into the boundaries of a photographic space. On top of these images, the shadows of spectators would interfere with the projected shots, intermingling the gestures of these witnesses into a dynamic process of historical reclamation. As Paul Chaat Smith, Assistant Curator of the National Museum of the American Indian and co-Curator of *Emendatio*, notes in his essay for the exhibition catalogue, “*Emendatio* claims Venice as part of Indian history, and in doing so demonstrates a belief held by Luna and many other Native people: that every place is a native place.”⁶⁰ The works create connections over centuries of time as well as space, inscribing into place a history of Native North Americans into the Venetian topography, but also into the memories and experiences of the spectators

In addition to the installations, Luna presented a performance ceremony that alludes to Catholic rites, continuing to use these practices as a means of creating connections with Europeans. Lowe describes the performance as follows:

After blessing and laying a ritualistic circle of stones, low-income food items, sugar packets, medical vials, and syringes—references to the current health crisis of many indigenous [North American] nations—the artist begins to dance in place for four hours on each of the four days at the outset of the Biennale. The emphasis on the number four is significant because in many cultures, this number signifies the four cardinal directions and is considered sacred. When something is repeated four times, it carries with it a statement about permanence. Thus, Luna's strenuous performance serves as a quiet metaphor for the physical and spiritual endurance required for indigenous survival in the twenty-first century. At the same time, it serves as gestures of sacrifice, healing, and renewal, honoring a global community.⁶¹

With this performance, Luna introduces Native American gestures into the heterotopic *Spielraum* upon the Biennale stage. He produces a heterotopia by bringing together histories and discourses that challenge US narratives of national identity and presumptions concerning Native North Americans, both at home and in Europe. The implications of this work are significant when considering the role of Native North Americans in the cultural and national performances of the United States. Smith points out that the "creation myths of North America allow little room for Indians. We are inconvenient reminders of a tragic past."⁶² That is, they function as evidence of social and political strife that cannot easily be absorbed into the grand US hegemonic historical narratives. In 2005, the representative for the United States was Ed Ruscha, who presented ten paintings inspired by the Jeffersonian layout of the US pavilion. The title of the exhibit, *Course of Empire*, is ironically appropriate when juxtaposed with Luna's exhibition. While Ruscha's work is conveniently housed in the US Pavilion in the Giardini, Luna's exhibition is located in the *Palazzo Querini Stampalia*, which is located between St. Mark's Basilica and the Rialto Bridge, though at a distance from both the Giardini and Arsenale. The building is accessible from the *San Zaccaria Vaporetto* stop, but this does require some navigation of the Venetian alleys. The "course of empire" in this instance pushed Native Americans away from the US pavilion and into the periphery of a Biennale collateral event mixed into the maze of Venice. In this spatial and geopolitical heterotopia, these histories are brought together, introducing conflicting histories into the Biennale *Spielraum*, allowing for new readings of US national identity to be made. At the

same time, this inclusion illustrates how in the neoliberal economy, historical strife can function as an opportunity for expanding markets as Luna and Native American culture participate in the transnational art scene.



Figure 23. Satellite image showing location of the Palazzo Querini Stampalia, the site of *Emendatio* (red marker) in relation to the Arsenale entrance (blue maker) and the Giardini (yellow marker). Imagery ©2012 Google.

These Biennale heterotopias of the Giardini, Arsenale, and off-site pavilions are not equally accessible, but vary depending on location in the city. For example, the Giardini and Arsenale require the purchase of tickets to enter. They are easy to navigate due to the layout of the locations and the exclusivity of the site. Thus, the people who visit these sites specifically pay to view the exhibits. In contrast, the temporary pavilions located throughout the city are immersed in a sea of tourist activity. In the Giardini, the geography and participating nations are predictable due to the organization of space and layout of the pavilions. When attempting to experience the pavilions located throughout the city of Venice, it may be more difficult to find the exhibitions. Also, without

permanent structures, the offsite participating nations are variable, as their location tends to change from Biennale to Biennale. In addition, more work is exerted on behalf of the pavilion organizers since it takes effort to locate and secure an appropriate location. While there is typically no monetary entrance fee for offsite pavilions, the cost consists of the ability to find the location, which can be difficult for tourists due the challenging urban terrain of alleys and canals that constitutes Venice. Most offsite pavilions use markers located on the ground to direct spectators to specific destinations, which at times can be indispensable when it comes to finding pavilions. Moreover, Biennale heterotopias, particularly offsite pavilions, are informed by Venice—a city without a solid foundation on land, rather existing as a disorienting, floating water space. At the same time, the Biennale alters the urban terrain as it draws spectators off the tourist’s beaten path to explore other regions of the city. The Biennale utilizes the unique qualities of Venice as a means of informing its geopolitical layout.

Geographies are not just the identification of place or the “charting of land masses, climate zones, elevations, bodies of water, populated terrains, nation states, geological strata, and natural resource deposits.”⁶³ In *Terra Infirma*, Irit Rogoff defines geographies as “at one and the same time a concept, a sign system, and an order of knowledge established at the centers of power.”⁶⁴ The determination of geographies is an exercise of authority, as seen through the Colonial contests of Europe during Imperialism with the claiming and renaming of lands throughout the Americas, Africa, the Pacific Islands, parts of Asia, and the Middle East. Rogoff describes how geographies are both bodies of knowledge

as well as systems of power grounded in “issues of positionality, in questions of who has the power and authority to name, of who has the power and authority to subsume others into its hegemonic identity.”⁶⁵ In other words, the acts of defining, marking, claiming, and reclaiming land and space through geography are gestures that exercise authority and hegemonic influence. The claiming of pavilion space at the Venice Biennale can be considered a neo-imperial exercise that translates these actions into the exhibition of contemporary art, where the geopolitical implications are both literal and metaphoric. A pavilion represents a stake in the transnational art scene as well as a national stake in the celebrated international playing field of the Venice Biennale. The gestures associated with these pavilions—the gestures of inclusion on behalf of the Biennale, state supported curatorial gestures involved in the organization and implementation of the exhibitions, artistic gestures involved in the production of the work, and the gestures of the tourists and spectators in experiencing the art—all influence the relationship between contemporary art and Venice as a place. These heterotopic gestures challenge the utopia of national identity as a unified whole, introducing diversity while also inverting and challenging ideals. These gestures are expressions of material and power relations that rewrite the cartography of Venice with each passing Biennale.

In addition, national pavilions are not considered neutral gallery exhibition spaces. Instead, they are physically identified in regional terms as being located in Venice, Italy, as well as conceptually as sites of cultural diplomacy and participation in the transnational art network. Just as the national participants have

changed over time, the nature of the transnational art scene has transformed from being based in European traditions or consumed through colonialist exploits, to becoming a neoliberal market informed by increasingly digitized networks of communication. In other words, the transition from colonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the rise of neoliberalism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries can be mapped through the geographic inclusion of pavilions and their placement at the Venice Biennale.

Cognitive Mapping and the Geopolitics of Place

Understanding material and power relations spatially can be illustrated using Frederic Jameson's definition of cognitive mapping. For Jameson, cognitive mapping is the negotiation of urban space involving processes of the political unconscious that link the psychic with the social, "which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system."⁶⁶ He bases his theory upon American urbanist Kevin Lynch's analysis concerning the "legibility" of city space from the perspective of its inhabitants use of landmarks.⁶⁷ Jameson then adds the philosophies of Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan in order to present an ideological and material means of mapping imaginary relations spatially. According to Jameson, considering the Althusserian definition of ideology in relation Lynch's description of mapping experience in physical space allows us to re-think these issues "in terms, for example, of social class and national or international context, in terms of the ways in which we all necessarily also cognitively map our individual social relationship to local, national, and international class realities."⁶⁸ Jameson differentiates between

cartographic maps, which emphasize mimetic representations of place on a two-dimensional plane, with cognitive mapping. Specifically, cognitive mapping utilizes contemporary texts and aesthetic acts in order to connect our imaginary relations with the real conditions of our existence.⁶⁹

As geopolitical, heterotopic *Spielraum*, the Venice Biennale presents a prime opportunity to examine understandings of national identities from a variety of perspectives and how these understandings are cognitively mapped in relation to each other. As the above image of the layered Biennale maps from 2007–2011 shows, this configuration includes the social geography of Venice. It is on the stage of Venice that performances of national identity takes place—a bazaar of geopolitical play and diplomatic relations participating in a transnational competition of the arts where presence, absence, and location are connected to political and economic relations. The association of national performances with Venetian geographic, historical, and cultural topographies is an unstable, constantly metamorphosing state of affairs. It is necessary to historicize the Venice Biennale—to contextualize it terms of time and space while taking into consideration the material relations and structures of power that give rise to the event. Instead of treating space and time as empty formal containers or “structurally enabling presuppositions,” as Kant does,⁷⁰ Jameson emphasizes how material relations actively transform them. According to Jameson:

Neither space nor time is “natural” in the sense in which it might be metaphysically presupposed (as ontology or human nature alike): both are the consequence and projected afterimage of a

certain state or structure of production and appropriation, of social organization of productivity.⁷¹

At the Venice Biennale, imaginary relations of geopolitics are spatialized, inscribing these relations onto the pavilions system—an urban scaled model of world politics. These relations can be experienced in space, but the attention that cognitive mapping brings to these relations remains significant. The local, or the Venetian, is the site for national allegory to participate in transnational or “global” relations. As noted in the James Luna example above, when the underrepresented native population is juxtaposed with an official national representative, national allegories are not always consistent, emphasizing how they are also far from complete. This cognitive map is rendered geographically, where physical placement of the pavilion becomes a manifestation of imaginary, social, and material relations between Native North Americans and the United States government. The incompleteness of allegory is one reason that Jameson has proposed the method of cognitive mapping. For Jameson, this increasingly complex postmodern world is far too complicated to represent using traditional forms of *mimesis*, such as cartography. Cognitive mapping functions as a means of tracing material relations in terms of an ever-changing global totality. Instead of just reflecting on past experiences, however, according to Jameson, cognitive mapping “insists much more strongly on the way in which art itself functions as a mode of knowledge, a mode of knowledge of the totality.”⁷² Thus, it creates what Ian Buchanan refers to as a “usable representation of the present,”⁷³ making it possible to read between the lines of these spatial and geopolitical relations.

Jameson emphasizes throughout his writing that totalization is impossible, but cognitive mapping presents some semblance of totality to read the relations that bind us together.

Throughout the history of the Venice Biennale, material and political relations have informed national participation. From 1895 and up until the First World War, the world system mapped through the Biennale was that of industrial capitalism and the wane of European colonialism. After World War I, when Italy saw the rise of fascism, the Biennale followed suit by emphasizing Italian national superiority. The end of World War II marked an alternative approach to international relations with the rise of the United Nations. At the same time, many new nations were formed with the end of European colonialism. The Biennale continued to change its mapping of the world system in the late twentieth century with the rise of neoliberalism, notably marked by the opening up of the city of Venice in 1995 to offsite pavilions accommodating national displays that exceeded the spatial confines of the Giardini. Subsequently, the mapping of the Biennale continues to inform the topography of Venice as more and more national pavilions and collateral events are added to accommodate the recognized underrepresented, while also expanding the transnational art market to include a greater variety of groups under the economic umbrella of neoliberalism.

Within the system of pavilions, there is a geopolitical pecking order. As Yahya Madra points out, any “nation-state that does not have a permanent pavilion, yet wishes to participate in the Biennale [...] has to rent space in the city, most probably in one of the overpriced empty palazzos that are struggling to

stay afloat (in most cases literally) in a state of decrepitude.”⁷⁴ Madra argues that since its inception, the Biennale’s architectural structure makes evident the geopolitics and economic relations of the hegemonic world order.⁷⁵ However, these transitions are not always clear-cut or easy. According to Madra, the Venice Biennale has been going through an uneven and undoubtedly incomplete transition from a “nation-state/imperial” mode of appropriating art to a new “transnational” mode. Yet, this emerging transnational mode is not simply replacing the earlier national mode. The newer editions of the Biennale have included both types of exhibitions, and there is indeed an “exchange,” a political negotiation between the two modes.⁷⁶ The continued significance of the nation, even in a supposedly “global” art fair, becomes apparent when examining the work of artists who represent groups or regions that are not recognized as nations, such as Palestine, Wales, Hong Kong, and Native North American tribes. The designation of these groups’ exhibitions as collateral events sprinkled throughout the city of Venice presents a second tier in the geopolitical pecking order of the Biennale, partially replicating some of the strife of international relations. These exhibits may bear the official Biennale logo, but they are not acknowledged as official national participants and therefore do not qualify for the *Leone D’oro* for best national pavilion, which since 1986 (when prizes were taken up again after they were suspended after 1968) has been granted primarily to the United States or a European nation.⁷⁷

The cognitive and cartographic maps of the Biennale are not consistent. The changes and shifts that have occurred in the Venice Biennale from inception

to the present participate in these transitions. Each passing Biennale comes with the expectation that the event will return in two years in a different shape and form—every Biennale carries the foundation of future Biennales in addition to the traces of previous ones.

Placemaking

The Biennale pavilions provide an opportunity for artists to occupy Venetian sites and transform them for the duration of the exhibition through the installation of contemporary art, participating in a heterotopic *Spielraum*. Okwui Enwezor explores how the emergence of contemporary art from “postcolonial sites of production, dissemination, markets, media, and institutional reception”⁷⁸ have increased in prominence in part due to the increasing network of biennials around the globe. At the same time, in compliance with the ideology of neoliberalism and the free market, the Venice Biennale has been required to challenge its geopolitical order with the opening of the city of Venice to national pavilions in order to accommodate national requests for participation as more nations are acknowledged as “worthy” participants on the international, Biennale stage. Also, the pavilion sites can provide an opportunity for nations to reconsider their colonial past, as can be gleaned from the US presentation of Puerto Rican artists Allora and Calzadilla in 2011. Moreover, Enwezor argues:

Exhibitions of contemporary art over the last two decades must be perceived from the point of view that they have become place-making devices for articulating the empirical evidence of the imaginative practices of contemporary art across the world, not just in Western centers of power.⁷⁹

In this day and age, over 100 years since the Biennale's inception when European colonialism was running on fumes, to be granted a space at the Venice Biennale is to be provided with an opportunity to make a place that participates in transnational material and political relations through contemporary art. While these opportunities for expression may seem desirable, inclusion in the Venice Biennale also translates into the inevitable inclusion of the art market, where the perceived freedom of expression is placed under erasure. Despite the temporary nature of the exhibitions, they are also part of a legacy of cultural exchange that precedes the Biennale and can be considered part of Venice's history as a port of goods and ideas—a heterotopic *Spielraum* of art, geopolitics, and national identity.

Chapter 3

Because It Is There...

National Performatives and International Uptake at the Venice Biennale

In 1965, an article appeared in the journal *Philippine Studies* that recounts the experiences of Emmanuel Torres, the curator of the Philippines exhibit at the Thirty-second Venice Biennale in 1964. Torres shares his first-hand account of participating in the “oldest, the most celebrated, and [...] the most lavish of international art festivals.”¹ He emphasizes how despite all the struggles associated with bringing this exhibition together, the nation accomplished the great feat of being present at this prestigious event for the first time. The Philippines was one of two Asian countries at the 1964 Biennale, and Torres describes “the word ‘Philippines’—*Filippine*— [...] being heard for the first time in the Venetian press and in many cocktail parties given by the participating countries through their respective embassies.”² He carefully details the challenges involved in preparing the exhibition, as well as the frustrations he experienced while at the Biennale, most of which involved the lack of financial support from his national government, resulting in minimal publicity for the art, difficulty acquiring the appropriate amenities for a prolonged stay in Venice—including food and hotel rooms—and lacking the money necessary to ship the work back home.

Despite these setbacks, Torres is enraptured by the fantastic city where these events unfold, “a city like no other in the world, where it was easy to alleviate worries of the kind we had, where the love for art is second only to the love for life.”³ The ambience of this legendary city captivates him, as he reproduces the mystical aura of Venice in his account. Torres states:

Sights and sounds of this absurdly romantic storybook city sinking steadily millimeter by slow millimeter into the water, had us in its thrall—until over a large campo of Shylock’s Rialto we could see, large and clear, a wine-dark, crenelated banner announcing the XXXII Venice Biennale, reminding us what we were supposed to be there *for* [emphasis in original].⁴

The lavish picture Torres paints of Venice and its world-renowned Biennale emphasizes the significance of the event for the Philippines in his eyes, a notion supported by his reiteration of how important it is for the Philippines to be included as participants:

By the Grand Canal the flags of thirty-four nations streamed in the wind, and it was heartening to know that the Philippine flag was up there for all the delegates and ambassadors from other countries to see, fluttering for the first time at the Biennale.⁵

According to Torres, the Venice Biennale offers a gauge for measuring the success of art and culture in the Philippines, as well as affirming the country as a modern nation in the eyes of the international community.

When preparing for the exhibition, Torres intentionally chose artists whose work transcends regional culture and can be recognized as contemporary by a Western European audience. The representative Filipino artists, Jose T. Joya Jr. and N. Veloso Abueva, create works that emphasize geometric forms and are

reminiscent of abstract expressionist paintings and modernist sculptures that dominated the European and US art scene in the 1940s and 50s. Even though Torres received criticism from Filipino spectators who were dismayed by the lack of national character in the chosen works, he went ahead with his decision and seems pleased that he chose works that resonated with the European, as opposed to Filipino, cultural traditions. Looking back on his experience at the Biennale, he notes that “entries which tried hard to assert national identity [...] looked awfully misplaced at the Biennale [...] national identity or imagemaking carries no weight in an international art exposition.”⁶ This observation keys into a significant tension between the national and the “global” at the Venice Biennale. On the one hand, a nation wants to be recognized as having the “global” qualities of international cultural affiliation. On the other hand, emphasis on being recognized as an independent nation continues to persist. The Philippines, like many of the other non-European nations included at the Biennale, were the target of colonial and imperial aspirations for centuries. In 1898, the Philippines, along with Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Guam, transitioned from being a colony of Spain to the imperial control of the United States.⁷ The nation would gain independence in 1946, and so the 1964 Biennale not only presents an opportunity for the Philippines to associate itself with the 1964 European contemporary art scene, but also a chance to demonstrate its status as a sovereign nation on an international stage.

Torres’s desire for national recognition at the Venice Biennale is not unique, but taps into the political and social underpinnings of the event. As his account reveals, the Venice Biennale encompasses more than just the exposition

of contemporary art. Rather, it functions as a platform for national performance on an international cultural stage set against the backdrop of a unique urban destination with rich histories of cross-cultural exchanges. Here, where participating nations are expected to showcase the most contemporary accomplishments of their artists, the Venice Biennale provides an opportunity for countries to affirm, challenge, or redefine national identity for the uptake of an international audience.

Even though the Biennale is not an authoritative international political forum, like the United Nations, the political relations that comprise its institutional governance participate in a larger fabric of international relations where pavilion representatives function as cultural diplomats officially commissioned by national governments. Presently, national inclusion at the event is dependent on being invited by the Biennale administration to participate, which in turn relies on the recognition of the nation by the Italian government and the international community. As a result, this process replicates the hegemonic relations of global political and economic networks. Recently, the advancement of neoliberalism in the late twentieth century has impacted the inclusion of national pavilions in the Venice Biennale. When a group such as Palestine is not considered a nation in the international community, these artists are not forbidden from participating, but they must find alternative means of inclusion, such as what the Biennale refers to as “collateral events.” This chapter investigates nations attempting to redefine their performative structure at the Venice Biennale, including the Republic of Iraq and the Republic of Haiti, as well as hard to define

“zones” of imperial power that Joseph Fallon refers to as “murky zones,” such as occupied countries, stateless entities, and sites of extreme rendition like Guantanamo Bay.⁸ “Murky zones” include representatives from groups that do not have officially sanctioned national pavilions, such as Palestine. These examples bring attention to the presentation of the national performative, or a nation’s constitutive gestures, at the Venice Biennale and reveal the power relations involved in the reinforcement and maintenance of the international community through the support and disavowal—or erasure—of nations. In other words, this chapter attempts to unravel the institutional context of the Venice Biennale as the staging ground for nations.

Operation *Wounded Water*

At the Fifty-fourth Venice Biennale in 2011, Iraq presented the exhibition *Wounded Water* in an official national pavilion. For this exhibit, two generations of Iraqi artists were invited to participate, presenting works that resonate with the theme of the growing scarcity of clean, potable water in the world. According to the curatorial statement, it is increasingly predicated that futures wars will not be over oil, one of the accused reasons behind the war in Iraq, but over water.⁹ Despite a thematic framing that does not directly address recent military events, the exhibit contains a powerful subtext informed by the twenty-first-century US-backed invasion of Iraq. This pavilion is a *Spielraum* where gestures of strife and play aestheticize these current events.

Included in *Wounded Water* is the video *Consumption of War* (2010–11) by Iraqi-born artist Adel Abidin. The screening room for this video is situated in an installation reminiscent of an abandoned corporate office space. There is no reference to the geographic location of this office, making its site the anonymous “murky zone” that epitomizes the twenty-first century corporate environment. This installation functions like a decompression chamber for the piece. The space takes advantage of the natural decay of the Venetian building, which contributes an uncanny quality of architectural abandonment.



Figure 24. Adel Abidin, *Consumption of War*, 2010, Video Still

The video begins with the shot of a man going about his business in an office setting similar to that of the installation. Another man enters the room, and the two momentarily glare intently at each other, sizing each other up as adversaries before dramatized conflict. Then for some undisclosed reason, both men remove glowing florescent light bulbs from the ceiling, and begin using them

as light sabers—the iconic weapon of the film franchise *Star Wars*. Even though the men’s fighting has the intensity of adult physical confrontation, this impact is lessened by the sound effects they are producing with their mouths, emphasizing a child-like quality of the work. The gestures of the men playing out this battle immediately evoke the science fiction film series *Star Wars*, offering an absurd and humorous presentation of Iraq’s struggles. This apparently lighthearted piece alludes to the battle of good versus evil found throughout the *Star Wars* films, bringing to the mind the rhetoric leading up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Instead of referencing solely Iraqi culture, the work has a “global” character that reflects the consumption of US popular culture. These characteristics correlate with the transnational background of the artist. Abidin was born in Iraq in 1973, where he lived until 2001 when he moved to Finland to pursue an MFA in new media. The work is very much about Iraq, but at the same time makes no specific reference to the nation.

Presenting the work under the Iraqi flag provides the work with national identification. The battle portrayed in *Consumption of War* is initially confusing as it is unclear why the men are even fighting, but this uncertainty evokes a reading of the recent US-backed military invasion. Initially, the United States invaded Iraq because of a supposed threat of weapons of mass destruction that was later disproven.¹⁰ The US maintained military occupation of the nation, only announcing the withdrawal of troops in 2011. At this point, it remains historically unclear as to why this invasion took place, though there are many speculative reasons.¹¹ The artist describes how the work alternates “between lush and dry,

attractive and foolish; this is a landscape of false promises and restricted power,”¹² conveying a play of the dichotomy between crisis and absurdity that reflects the opaqueness surrounding the invasion. Over the past thirty years, Iraq has become a “hot spot” nation embroiled in the complex violence of Middle Eastern politics. In 1979, Saddam Hussein took power as Iraqi president, beginning a dictatorship that would last until the US invasion in 2003. Over these decades, Iraq experienced conflict with Iran, the invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Operation Desert Storm, and tough UN Sanctions. Decades of war and conflict have weakened the Iraqi infrastructure, tarnished its reputation in the eyes of the United States and Western Europe, and according to the pavilion's curatorial statement, resulted in artistic isolation.

Instead of getting caught up in the ideological fervor of political rhetoric that has dominated conversations concerning Iraq over the past few decades, *Consumption of War*, along with the other works in *Wounded Water*, attend to an issue often overlooked in international policies concerning “rogue”¹³ nations—the impact on the civilian public and extensive environmental damage. At the same time, Iraq is attempting to define a post-Saddam Hussein national identity that challenges outsider presumptions of the war-torn nation by presenting work that is distinctively Iraqi, but also can be perceived as “contemporary” and “global” by performing it on the international stage of the Biennale. These constitutive, aesthetic gestures attempt to present an alternative to Iraq’s national performative for the judgment of the transnational art world.

The use of the word “performative” in the formulation of the national performative is derived from J. L. Austin’s analysis of performative speech acts.¹⁴ Austin defines a performative utterance as when a person “is *doing* something rather than merely saying something [emphasis in original]”¹⁵ Austin argues that in the case of performative utterances, as when a couple says “I do” in a marriage ceremony, “it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it [emphasis in original].”¹⁶ His treatment of words as the means of performing actions is significant, since language can function as constitutive gesture as opposed to just being relegated to a realm of description or reflection. Therefore, when a group declares itself to be a nation, words are the means by which the action occurs. This declaration is the gesture of the national performative, which for Iraq took place in 1932.

In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin differentiates between two types of performative speech acts: illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. A locution is defined as the linguistic function of an utterance, or how the statement is phrased. An illocution is an act with an expressed aim and desire, using locution with a certain force. A declaration is a type of illocutionary act. A perlocution is the characteristic aim of a speech act, but unlike an illocution that utilizes direct expression, it involves an indirect relationship between the speech act and resulting action, as occurs through persuasion, convincing, or scaring a person into action. Perlocution places emphasis on how an act is received by the audience and the feelings, thoughts, or actions it may instigate. A perlocution is the aim of

an illocution, but it is not an illocution. When a work of art causes a person to perform an action, such as donate to a charity, it can be considered an example of a perlocution.

Even though Austin initially limits his description of performative speech acts to particular types of nonfiction verbal language such as officiating a marriage ceremony or the sentencing of a prisoner, it has become evident that the distinctions between a constitutive and a performative way of speaking are not clear-cut.¹⁷ In her book *How to Do Things with Art*, Dorothea von Hantelmann applies Austin's definition of the performative to the arts in order to explore how artists "create and shape social relevance."¹⁸ Von Hantelmann argues that all art functions as performative since "every artwork has a reality-producing dimension."¹⁹ To discuss art in terms of the performative is to approach the subject with a "specific methodological orientation" that creates a "different perspective on what produces meaning in an artwork."²⁰ Emphasizing the performative dimension of art "signifies art's possibilities and limits in generating and changing reality."²¹ The question for von Hantelmann is not a matter of qualifying art as performative, but rather how art's performative qualities influence the production of meaning and its subsequent social efficacy.

In terms of Biennale art, performative aesthetic gestures are conflated with political gestures, which can be read in *Consumption of War*. Over the past few decades, Iraq's national sovereignty has been directly influenced by particular foreign military gestures. In his 2002 State of the Union Address, Pres. George W. Bush declared that Iraq, along with Iran and North Korea, comprised the "axis

of evil,” aligning these nations as enemies against the United States and the “free world.”²² Bush was not the first person to posit Iraq as the “evil” enemy to US Freedom. His father, Pres. George H. W. Bush instigated this process back in the early 1990s, when his use of “saber-rattling rhetoric” helped posit Saddam Hussein as an evil enemy and dehumanize Iraq in order to garner support for the Gulf War.²³ The road to the 2003 US-led invasion, Operation Iraqi Freedom, was paved with the ashes of the 9/11 terrorist attack—though its intentions extend back to the end of the Gulf War in 1991. In his article "From Post-9/11 Melodrama to Quagmire in Iraq: A Rhetorical History," Herbert Simons describes how Pres. George W. Bush took advantage of the inflamed rhetoric following this world-changing and traumatic event, "providing the basic melodramatic binaries in terms of which the 'war on terror' was launched and then morphed into the war on Iraq."²⁴ In terms defined by Edward Said, Bush took an “Orientalist” attitude towards the Middle East, sharply opposing claims of US (Christian) freedom against Middle Eastern (Islamic) oppression.²⁵ It was with these rhetorical gestures that Bush was able to push the United States into war, making the conflict seem politically feasible despite the fact that the invasion of Iraq warranted a great deal of debate and popular protest.²⁶ Comparing the rhetoric leading to the Iraqi invasion to melodrama, Herbert Simons describes how "the two-dimensional characters of fictional melodrama and the use of exaggeration and polarization for dramatic effect find their way into political crisis rhetoric by way of a valorized 'us' and a dehumanized or demonized 'them.'"²⁷ *Wounded Water* can be considered a confrontation of this dichotomy, reintroducing

common elements of humanity through the theme of potable water as a means of dispelling the demonization of Iraqi civilians.

The Iraqi pavilion has been in the works since 2004, which is important to note, since this is just one year after Hussein disappeared on April 9, 2003, making it part of the cleanup of the nation's international reputation. On this day, a US military vehicle toppled the statue of Hussein in Firdos Square, Baghdad. This staged act was a performance that symbolized the overthrow of his regime along with Iraq's conception of nationhood through the intervention of foreign governance. The toppling of monuments has historical precedence when it comes to symbolizing the overthrowing of governments. It functions as a means of disrupting the course of history in the public square. As Susan Buck-Morss notes, "It is history that legitimates political revolution."²⁸ Monuments, which are meant to stand the test of time, function as transhistorical testaments to the legacies of political leaders and become perfect targets for those who wish to change the course of a nation's history. Upending these structures, then, functions as a way of emptying a history of its meaning, emphasizing the rupture from the past and providing a symbolic blank slate for the nation to move forward with.²⁹ The toppling of Hussein's statue was performed by US marines. At one point, they covered the former leader's face with the American flag—a gesture that poignantly emphasizes the shift of power.

The US toppling of the monument in Iraq was followed by another staged event on May 9, 2003, when Pres. George W. Bush presented a televised speech

on the USS *Abraham Lincoln* under a large banner that stated, “Mission Accomplished.” According to Jan Cienski, a reporter for Canada’s National Post:

The White House staged the address for maximum political effect, with Mr. Bush touching down on the carrier's 1.8-hectare flight deck in a twin-engine S-3B Viking jet, hours before his national address. A pilot in the Texas Air National Guard thirty years ago, Mr. Bush, who sat in the co-pilot's seat, emerged in a full flight suit, helmet tucked under his left arm. He walked across the deck with a fighter pilot's swagger and was swarmed by the sailors and airmen.³⁰

When Bush appears wearing the suit of an aviator pilot, he aligns himself as Commander-in-Chief with the soldiers who actively carry out his orders.³¹ During his speech, Bush declares the end of major combat operations in Iraq, which ends up being what Austin refers to as an unhappy performative, or a performative that does not produce its intended results, since fighting only increased during the subsequent years. US military operations only officially came to an end in 2011, when Pres. Barack Obama began withdrawing troops. Despite this, fighting continues as Iraq works to develop an autonomous government after the US intervention. Like the toppling of the statue, Bush’s performance functions as a staged, symbolic act that communicates military and political actions with very real consequences. While Saddam Hussein never returned to power, official US military action continued in Iraq for eight more years. This unfolding of events evokes a lot of criticism concerning Bush’s actions and declaration on May 1, 2003, with the banner coming under particular scrutiny as a grandiose gesture that ultimately lacks the substance of its claims.³²



Figure 25. US Marines taking down the statue of Saddam Hussein in Firdos Square, Baghdad, April 9, 2003. Associated Press.



Figure 26. Pres. George W. Bush on the USS *Abraham Lincoln* May 1, 2003, declaring the end of major combat operations in Iraq underneath a “Mission Accomplished” banner. Associated Press.

Even though Bush's declaration can be seen both as a boastful performance and an unhappy performative, since the war in Iraq did not end, it did acknowledge the transfer of Iraq's national future to being under the direct influence of foreign power. Promoting values of freedom for Iraqi citizens, multinational corporations and the United States government began rebuilding the nation and its infrastructure, developing what David Harvey refers to as a neoliberal state. Taking advantage of the strife introduced by military conflict and the upheaval of its national government, corporations could move in and privatize Iraq's infrastructure. According to Harvey, "the freedoms [this state] embodies reflect the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations, and financial capital."³³ Such strong ties to foreign investors potentially influenced the critical stance that the pavilion curators took when organizing the exhibition. Intentionally selecting a theme that examined the collateral damage of war, the environmental damage, and lack of potable water from the civilian perspective as opposed to overtly criticizing US and other foreign military operations and governments, the Iraqi artists are attempting to articulate a national performative in the context of the transnational art world as opposed to the international community of the United Nations. That is, Iraq is not trying to declare its nationhood as a geopolitical entity—this declaration took place in 1932 and remains unchanged. Rather, Iraq is presenting different constitutive gestures of nationhood in order to be recognized as an accepted member in the cultural field of the transnational community. In this instance, the artists, and not soldiers or politicians, are the negotiators. At the same time, Iraq's

national performative retains a sense of complacency in relation to foreign powers, possibly to avoid rejection from the international Biennale and to avoid fracturing already-fragile economic and political relations. That is not to say that the work is completely devoid of critical engagement. Rather, the artists are careful about whom they criticize and how these ideas are presented to the audience. Abidin attempts to frame *Consumption of War* under the exhibition theme concerning potable water in his accompanying artist statement:

Consumption of War explores the environmental crisis through the participatory and spectator culture of profit driven bodies. Today, global corporate entities encourage consumption on a massive scale for maximum profit, disregarding the obscene amounts of water needed to produce “necessities” such as a pair of jeans or cup of coffee. In Iraq, major corporations have signed the largest free oil exploration deals in history. Yet while every barrel of oil extracted requires 1.5 barrels of water, 1 out of every 4 citizens has no access to clean drinking water.³⁴

Without this description, it is unclear as to how the theme of potable water is articulated in Abidin’s work. These framing gestures are not self-censorship, but involve carefully choreographed negotiations of presenting Iraq as a nation. Emphasizing the theme of “water” in the title of the exhibit is one way of directing the reception of the work, but with knowledge of the recent Iraq conflict in the mind of some viewers, it is impossible to disconnect the hardships and tensions presented in the art from current events.

Uptake

When a group declares itself as a sovereign nation, this declaration is a performative utterance, specifically an illocution. However, the declaration alone

is not enough to create a sovereign state. In order for this performative utterance to be what Austin refers to as a “smooth” or “happy” act depends certain rules. According to Austin, “the first rule is [...] that the convention invoked must exist and be accepted. And the second rule [...] is that the circumstances in which we purport to invoke this procedure must be appropriate for its invocation.”³⁵ The determination of a happy or unhappy performative is dependent on what Austin refers to as “uptake.”

Uptake can be understood as an audience’s reception of a performative act, including understanding the force and the meaning of the act.³⁶ For example, during a marriage ceremony, when an official says, “I now declare you husband and wife,” his words perform an act. In addition, when the bride and groom say, “I do,” they are also performing an act. Here, uptake is dependent on the participants agreeing to fulfill the actions that the words perform—both partners must accept the vows and honor them. Uptake is also dependent on the marriage legislation in play. Let’s say that the marrying participants are a gay couple in the state of Ohio where, as of 2012, same-sex marriage is not legally recognized by the state government. This performative would not be considered a happy performative by the authorities, since the uptake of the act by the state government does not recognize the marriage as legal. If the same couple were to be married in Massachusetts, however, their marriage would be considered legal and therefore a happy performative. Unfortunately, this marriage is only recognized at the state level and not by the federal government, which has consequences concerning federal tax law and other nationwide legislation.³⁷ How

this single act can be considered both happy and unhappy depends on the scenario and the uptake of the audience at the personal, the state, and the federal level. These uptakes do not always coalesce, and these contradictions, along with the differing receptions of the act, reveal the power relations involved between the different participants. Additionally, strife is introduced into these relations. While the marriage participants state “I do” and secure uptake between each other and the witnesses present, if the state or federal government does not recognize the union as legal, whichever governing body has the utmost authority will ultimately determine if the performative is happy or unhappy, with consequences that affect the autonomy of the couple.

This example of a happy or unhappy marriage performative resonates with the concept of the national performative. When a group of people come together to present a national declaration, the happiness or unhappiness of the act depends on the uptake of the international community. If the international community does not recognize the declaration, then the group will not be considered an autonomous nation, thereby restricting the influence the group has in political and economic self-determination. This can lead to strife and conflict within groups and in transnational relations, sometimes leading to civil or international war. Shannon Jackson elaborates upon Austinian uptake, describing how it takes place in a contingent sphere. Uptake does not only involve the active acknowledgment or explicit rejection of an act, but also “even in unqualified terms such as drawback, excursion, and novelty disavows it.”³⁸ Moreover, when a recipient erases or ignores an act, this also results in an unhappy performative. Audience

reception, both verbal and nonverbal, secures the uptake of an act. Depending on the scenario, including the authority and the positionality of the audience, uptake can have a range of effects as noted in the marriage example discussed above. Different types of national and international uptake can be found at the Venice Biennale, whose authority is informed by the international community based in political and economic relations. Generally, the world order at the time of a Biennale directly impacts the reception of the audience. As a result, uptake at the Biennale's inception differed from when the Italian fascist government took control, which then differed during and after the Cold War, as it is different now with the advent of neoliberalism.

In his analysis of uptake, Timothy Gould acknowledges a “sort of gap that opens between the happiness and coherence of an illocutionary act and, on the other hand, the field of desired perlocutionary effects.”³⁹ He dubs this gap “illocutionary suspense” or “perlocutionary delay.” This nuanced description of the performative and uptake has implications for the Venice Biennale, where the national performative may be acknowledged by the international community, and therefore happy, but may not have exactly the desired outcome of understanding in terms of international relations.

Reading *Wounded Water* as juxtaposed to *Gloria* provides insight to how both the US and Iraq are struggling to cope with the prolonged conflict. Appropriately, Allora and Calzadilla's *Gloria*, the exhibit at the US pavilion in 2011, alludes to the post-9/11, emotionally charged attitude towards war. As noted in a previous chapter, the title of the exhibition can be interpreted as

referencing the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” the military anthem from the US Civil War that equates the Union cause with God’s judgment. As Iraq attempts to come to terms with its war-torn state and turn an eye towards the future, the US presents a self-conscious awareness of the absurd excess of its zealousness that lead to the Iraq invasion in 2003, particularly in the work *Track and Field*. The performance of the runner on a treadmill on top of an upside-down tank aptly summarizes military conflict for the US in the twenty-first century—as energy is exerted and resources are spent, there is little sense of what the resolution of these conflicts will be. Without an exit strategy, war is not only run aground, but it is also running in place. Even after the officially declared end of the Iraqi conflict, it is unclear what the future of the nation will hold.



Figure 27. Allora and Calzadilla, *Track and Field*, 2011. Olympic gold medalist Dan O’Brien (Decathlon, 1996). Photograph by Andrew Bordwin. Reproduced with permission from the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Using contemporary art as diplomatic performative gesture is an example of cultural “soft power.” Joseph Nye Jr., who coined the phrase in the early 1990s, defines soft power as the “second face of power,”⁴⁰ or “getting others to want the outcomes that you want [that] co-opts people rather than coerces them [...] [and] rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others.”⁴¹ Soft power may involve presenting attractive personalities, cultures, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority.⁴² There are innumerable ways that soft power can and has been used throughout history, including popular cultural production, the exchange of goods for loyalty, learning the language of other groups and cultures in order to communicate more effectively, and spreading ideas about governance and economic relations, which includes the ideologies of democracy and capitalism. According to Nye, soft power is a matter of attraction as opposed to the use of force. Hard power, on the other hand, involves covert and conventional military operations.⁴³ It is important to differentiate between the two when discussing the Venice Biennale, though art historian Caroline Jones offers a more generalized opinion. She argues: “To put it bluntly, biennials and world’s fairs conduct politics by other means [...] biennials are no different than sporting competitions and diplomatic exchanges that sublimate military desires.”⁴⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, US representatives Allora and Calzadilla’s contributions to the 2011 Venice Biennale make her reasoning apparent. In *Gloria*, the artists explicitly draw from the images of sports and the military through the incorporation of an inverted tank and the inclusion of Olympic athletes as performers.

However, to reduce the diplomatic relations present at the Venice Biennale as equivalent to military action is a reductionist move, since it overlooks the particularities of this scenario. The Venice Biennale functions as a stage for soft power—a type of cultural diplomacy with official connections to national governments. As noted, for a nation to participate in the Venice Biennale, the government must be recognized by the international community, and usually governmental representatives are involved in the process of selecting and sponsoring artists, which emphasizes the diplomatic significance of their efforts. Moreover, the national performative presented at the Venice Biennale is not equivalent to military action and neither are the consequences. To some extent, Jones's claim that biennials, along with sporting events and diplomacy, sublimate military desires is accurate. At the same time, military action continues to dominate international relations and maintains its role as a prominent determining factor in the declaration and the uptake of national performatives around the globe. The soft power of culture and diplomacy presented using aesthetic acts at the Venice Biennale is another means by which the national performative can be presented, but it continues to be used in conjunction with other means of action that utilize both soft and hard power. The Biennale does not have the authority to resolve international issues, just as it does not have the authority to declare nations. Instead, the Venice Biennale provides an opportunity for international uptake that does not require the immediate use of military action. The Biennale, like the Olympics, provides an opportunity for international relations to take place outside recognized political forums for diplomacy, such as the United Nations.

Iraq's performative gestures are not only read in the context of their presentation at the Venice Biennale, but also in conjunction with other gestures associated with their national identity. Here, critical responses to Austin's original proposal can be useful, particularly Jacques Derrida's emphasis on iteration as opposed to context in performative acts. Jacques Derrida emphasizes the importance of iteration in terms of performative utterances in his essay "Signature Event Context," a well-known critique of Austin. He defines iterability as the possibility of repeating a text. Janelle Reinelt describes the importance of Derrida's contributions concerning iterability: "iteration means that in the space between the context and utterance, there is no guarantee of a realization of prior conditions, but rather a deviance from them, which constitutes its performative force."⁴⁵ Derrida defines iterability as the possibility of being repeated. In order to be effective, communication must be iterable "in the absolute absence of any receiver or of any empirically determinable collectivity of receivers."⁴⁶ For Derrida, the iterability of language precedes spontaneous performance. Iterability is not the simple act of repeatability but indicates the potential for alterability of an event in a speech act.⁴⁷

According to Judith Butler, who responds to both Austin and Derrida in her book *Excitable Speech*, potentiality takes place through the recontextualization of iterability: "If the text acts once, it can act again, and possibly against its prior act. This raises the possibility of resignification as an alternative reading of performativity and of politics."⁴⁸ Judith Butler elaborates on Derrida's definition of iterability when she argues that there is ambivalence at the

heart of performativity as a “renewable action without clear origin or end.”⁴⁹

Lacking finality, performativity resists totality. The meaning of performativity is not total, as Austin suggests. Rather, meaning is deferred through iterability.

Wounded Water is an opportunity for Iraq to present a different iteration of its national identity—a kind of revised national performative by means of artistic production that functions as repetition with a difference. Instead of just being a performative, these actions constitute performativity. Performativity is not an act, but a reiteration or citation.⁵⁰ Judith Butler has written extensively about performativity in terms of gender. Butler states:

Performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance. Moreover, constraint is not necessarily that which sets the limit to performativity; constraint is, rather, that which impels and sustains performativity.⁵¹

It is possible to apply Butler’s framework of analysis to national performativity, which also relies on the continued maintenance of codified norms to appear as a part of culture. In the case of the Iraqi pavilion, the constraint is determined by the norms of behaving as a friendly nation as perceived by the international community that comprises its uptake.

Scholars differ on the relationship between performativity and performance, which leads to diverging conclusions about the role that awareness of performativity can play in performing identity. Elin Diamond describes performance as “the site in which performativity materializes in concentrated form.”⁵² Diamond states: “as soon as performativity comes to rest on a

performance, questions of embodiment, of social relations, of ideological interpellation, of emotional and political effects, all become discussable.”⁵³ By making performativity visible through performance, naturalized characteristics of social being become topics of evaluation and capable of change. For Diamond, “performance can materialize something that exceeds our knowledge.”⁵⁴ It takes what may typically be unacknowledged and makes it concrete. Diamond explains how Brecht’s techniques of defamiliarization when paired with feminist critique illuminate naturalized social relations and allow us to see sign systems as sign systems.⁵⁵ As a result, this visibility can allow for an engagement that may not be experienced otherwise and introduces the possibility of progressive change.

This process of awareness through defamiliarization can be detected in *Consumption of War*. By presenting a fictionalized battle scene that draws from the tropes of popular and corporate culture, Abidin defamiliarizes images of war through his transcultural approach. Instead of accentuating the national ubiquitousness of Iraq, Abidin emphasizes the performativity of national identity through the presentation of a video installation that can in fact take place in an office space anywhere. The juxtaposition of the place-less scenario of *Consumption of War*’s office to the national parameters of the pavilion and the local architecture of Venice intersects these various spatial spheres in the time frame of the video. The oddness of this presentation defamiliarizes the viewer: it is not quite a battle, it is not quite an office, it is not quite *Star Wars*, but it is presented as Iraqi. Following Diamond’s analysis, the performance of the “fighters” in the video reveals the

performativity of Iraqi national identity through defamiliarization as the nation battles for recognition and acceptance in the international community.

Illuminating performativity through performance may seem appealing as a tool of cultural identity analysis and formation, but that is based on the assumption that visibility can lead to conscious changes in a subject's performativity and social interactions. Shannon Jackson problematizes this approach, arguing that it places too much emphasis on visibility and self-conscious intention: "the presence or absence of self-conscious intention became equated with the presence or absence of political relevance."⁵⁶ Jackson points out that tactics of defamiliarization, such as those described by Diamond, make assumptions concerning the intention and self-consciousness of the subject who does the displaying, the pointing, and the outlining of performativity. Also, Judith Butler articulates that instead of being a singular act, performativity is the reiteration of a set of norms.⁵⁷ It is not based on the self-conscious intention of the subject but is part of a historicized discourse created through chains of iterations.⁵⁸ Performativity exists in discourse with a matrix of power relations that regulate and maintain norms. As a result, performativity cannot be theorized apart from these regulatory regimes. Visibility does not necessarily mean empowerment, since according to Butler, "Hegemonic subject-positions have come to structure and contain the articulatory struggles of those in subordinate or erased positionalities."⁵⁹ In order to maintain norms, visibility can lead to externalization or disavowal. As Butler points out, performativity works through reiteration, but also exclusivity. At the same time, bringing recognition to the

disavowed is not enough and can be just as problematic as current norms. Butler states:

The ideal of transforming all excluded identifications into inclusive features—of appropriating all difference into unity—would mark the return to a Hegelian synthesis which has no exterior and that, in appropriating all difference as exemplary features of itself, becomes a figure for imperialism, a figure that installs itself by way of a romantic, insidious, and all-consuming humanism.⁶⁰

Therefore, instead of placing emphasis on the construction of identity and focusing on the self-conscious intention the subject, it is more effective to consider these constructions in relation to international uptake.

In the case of *Consumption of War*, the ability of the work to challenge presumptions of Iraqi identity depends on the uptake of the viewers and their ability to recognize visual tropes in addition to the uptake of the international community. By 2011, the United States had been fighting in Iraq for eight years and at that point was phasing out its involvement by helping train a national military and garnering support for an autonomous Iraqi government. On December 15, 2011, the United States war in Iraq was officially declared over, which was marked by a flag lowering ceremony in Baghdad. Understanding the relationship between the Iraqi pavilion and current events in Iraq is not a matter of cause and effect, but rather the art presented in the pavilion reveals the intentions of Iraq to become an autonomous nation, free from US military interventions. At the same time, the pieces included in *Wounded Water* attempt to relate Iraqi issues to more “global” issues of environmental pollution, which increasingly have become a common concern for nations all over the world. Moreover, the Iraqi

national pavilion is an opportunity to articulate its national identity, challenging the national identity associated with the former dictator Saddam Hussein by presenting a nation that is contemporary and “global”—qualities that encourage the “positive” international uptake. In an article titled “The Art World’s New Darlings” in the *New York Times* printed on June 3, 2011, Julia Chaplin quotes Abidin: “The revolution in the Middle East has made me believe that we still have the capacity for believing in our dreams [...]. Change is beautiful.”⁶¹ Chaplin goes on to describe how Abidin, as well as fellow Iraqi artist Ahmed Alsoudani “had been sought after in Venice, receiving invitations to palazzo dinners and a decadent reception.”⁶² The popularity of these artists at the Venice Biennale acknowledges their acceptance, but what does the uptake of Iraq’s national performative by the transnational art world entail? On the one hand, Iraq is welcomed into the fold of the international community through positive reception of the artists. On the other hand, this community is accepting artists who participate in the compliance of international relations—artists who arguably are more transnational than Iraqi. It is possible that what is presented at this pavilion is an example of what Butler refers to as a “figure for imperialism, a figure that installs itself by way of a romantic, insidious, and all-consuming humanism.”⁶³ Also, the “global contemporary” of the Iraqi pavilion can be read as the perpetuation of US/European imperialism—an example of a former rogue state submitting itself to the whims of its supposed liberator as a means of attaining international acceptance as it is incorporated into the neoliberal free market. The pavilion functions as a *Spielraum* that aestheticizes while also containing the strife

experienced within Iraq during the military invasion and its economic redevelopment.

Haiti: An Ongoing Case of International Uptake

At times, the international uptake of the Venice Biennale participates in a longer history of national recognition, as exemplified by the Republic of Haiti's inclusion in 2011.⁶⁴ That year, Haiti presented two exhibits as an officially recognized participating nation, *Haiti Kingdom of This World* and *Death and Fertility*. *Death and Fertility* was presented in shipping containers on the Riva Sette Martiri near the Giardini, while *Haiti Kingdom of This World* was located deep in the city of Venice at the Fondazione Querini, which is off the beaten tourist track and in a more residential area. Haiti's inclusion in the Venice Biennale exists as part of a longer history of a nation seeking recognition as an autonomous state by the international community.

Death and Fertility was commissioned and curated by Daniele Germiniani with the support of The Island, a nonprofit gallery and organization in London. In the catalogue description, Germiniani describes how in this exhibit “opposites are joined together—head and tail, heads and tails—a trade turnover which returns like a specter from the slave ships, without Hollywood, to the geographic triangle with its eye in the center.”⁶⁵ The artists included in the exhibit, Jean Hérard Celeur, André Eugène, and Jean Claude Saintilus, are part of a collective of sculptors who refer to themselves as *atis rezistans* (resistance artists), though they are more generally known as “the artists of the Grand-Rue.”

These artists live and work in downtown Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which Donald Cosentino describes as “a warren of interlocked junkyards, auto salvage shops, and craftsmen ateliers that used to produce tourist handicrafts.”⁶⁶ According to Cosentino:

[The artists] grew up in what is essentially a vast scrap yard for the busted products of someone else’s industrial society [...] they are politically aware (often railing against oppressive *boujzwa* norms), and have developed a sense of connectedness to a larger “raw vision” art world in which they now play a walk-on role.⁶⁷



Figure 28. Locations of the Haitian pavilions at the 2011 Venice Biennale. *Death and Fertility* is indicated by the blue marker and *Haiti Kingdom of This World* is indicated by the yellow marker. Imagery © 2012 Google.

It is fair to state that the art of *atis rezistans* differed from the rest of the art of the Venice Biennale due to the rich influence of Vodou on the work, a religious and cultural tradition rooted in Haiti. Also the exhibit takes a nontraditional form of pavilion installation by being presented in shipping containers along a tourist route that happens to also be a popular spot for people to dock their private yachts and ships. The “architectural” framework of the pavilion makes it unavoidable as it starkly contrasts with the architecture around it. Also, the juxtaposition of shipping containers to Venice’s mercantile history and current tourist economy emphasizes Haiti’s history as part of European Triangle trade. The works in the pavilion evoke the imagery and concepts of Vodou, but also bring to mind everyday objects found in the ruins of a natural disaster, like the 2010 Haitian earthquake. For example, in one sculpture, a dirty Cabbage Patch doll attempts to feed at the breast of a skeleton woman. The gesture of breastfeeding, associated with fertility, is jarring in relation to the skeletal body of the woman. This juxtaposition of death and fertility is not only connected to the recent earthquake, as Haiti works to emerge from extensive physical and structural damage, but also harkens back to Haiti’s beginnings as a sovereign state when the death of slavery brought about the birth of a nation. The awkward positioning of the pavilion also evokes the challenges the nation has faced in terms of international uptake. The pavilion, like the nation, may be recognized as autonomous, but unfortunately this is in terms that place Haiti low in the international world order. The contrast of the pavilion’s impoverished state with the pleasure boats docked beside it further emphasizes the context of Haiti’s performative declaration and international

uptake. At the same time, the fiscal and institutional parameters that support the Haitian pavilion replicate the conditions of numerous former colonized nations that remain depend on foreign investors for their survival. In this *Spielraum*, neoliberal globalization has infiltrated the mechanisms of pavilion support structures and the material relations involved in their development and presentation.



Figure 29. Interior shot of *Death and Fertility*, 2011. Photograph by EL Putnam.



Figure 30. Installation Shot of *Death and Fertility*, 2011. Photograph by Mary Zurigo.

Haiti is the only nation in the world that was declared to be an independent republic as the result of a successful slave revolt. In turn, this legacy taps into the systematic racism of the western world and currently influences how the nation is treated in terms of international politics. According to Laurent Dubois, the 2010 earthquake that shook Haiti to its core has led to a re-emergence of familiar tropes concerning the nation:

Nearly every mention of Haiti in the press reminded readers that it was “the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere,” a moniker incessantly repeated like some dogged trademark. The coverage often made the country sound like some place entirely outside the West—a primitive and incomprehensible territory—rather than as a place whose history has been deeply intertwined with that of Europe and the United States for three centuries.⁶⁸

Dubois goes on to recount how the cause of Haiti’s poverty is not mysterious, but results from the extended struggle Haiti faces in terms of its national performative and international uptake. Decades after Haiti declared independence in 1804, France refused to recognize the new nation, with the United States and England

following its lead. If recognition is the uptake of the national performative, then the international community is refusing to accept Haiti's declaration, resulting in an unhappy performative. As a result, political isolation and external threats informed Haiti's governmental infrastructure, which placed great emphasis on military needs over those of the civilians.⁶⁹ According to Dubois, France only recognized Haiti's independence once the fledgling nation agreed to:

[...] pay an indemnity of 150 million francs (roughly \$3 billion in today's currency) to compensate the slaveholders for their losses. To pay the indemnity, the Haitian government took out loans from French banks, which added interest payments to the crushing debt load.⁷⁰

These formative decades greatly influence Haiti's present condition as a nation.

Considering France's influence over Haiti's national development, it is not surprising that a number of French cultural institutions were involved in bringing the Haitian pavilion at the Venice Biennale into fruition. According to the curator of *Haiti Kingdom of the World*, Giscard Bouchotte, support for the Haitian pavilion came from Haitian and foreign private and public institutions, including among others, the French Institute, the Ministry of Culture in Haiti, and the Cultural Services Embassy of Haiti in Paris.⁷¹ Bouchotte credits the debut of the pavilion as the resulting efforts of a team in France along with a small team in Venice in order to get it off the ground. He points out how international assistance was necessary, considering Haiti's period of political instability—at the time of the Biennale the island nation was in the midst of elections.⁷²

Even with private and international support, Haiti's presentation of two exhibits at the Venice Biennale was a costly endeavor. Bouchotte does not disclose the actual cost, but he does state that it was expensive and required a collaborative effort to provide adequate funding, including collective contributions from Haitians.⁷³ Generally, the cost of inclusion at the Venice Biennale varies between nations as well as Biennale years. The erection of permanent pavilions become cultural outposts maintained by their founding nations, which require financial resources to maintain these "colonies." The claiming of impermanent national pavilions does not require such an extensive commitment. A lesser financial commitment means that a nation may not be present from Biennale to Biennale, or may change location of the pavilion depending on resources and availability. Presenting work as an official national representative typically involves the financial support of the nation's government in addition to private sponsors. For example, the US pavilion at the Fifty-fourth Biennale included the United States Department of State and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs along with Hugo Boss, Christie's, the Puerto Rican coffee company Café Yaucono, and a number of private individual donors. The exact cost of *Gloria* has not been disclosed, but the cost of purchasing and transporting the British military tank that composes the main apparatus of *Track and Field* is said to have been well over \$1 million.⁷⁴

What's at Stake? What's the Payoff?

Considering the financial investment of participating in the Venice Biennale—not to mention the costs of producing the event from year to year for

the city of Venice—what is the payoff? Besides providing a stage for international uptake, there is more at stake with the Venice Biennale that has contributed to its success and longevity. According to Caroline Jones, the Biennale initially was part of a larger impetus for urban development and city branding, which had been instigated by the popular world’s fairs of the nineteenth century. At the same time, Jones states that these exhibitions foster “the various (national, regional, and local) economies in which art and artists circulate.”⁷⁵ Simon Sheikh describes how “biennales are placed within an eco-system as well as an economic system of exhibitions (and exhibition venues) in geopolitical terms.”⁷⁶ The material relations of the Biennale are produced through complex economic relations at local, national, and transnational levels, creating a web of financial exchange that is part of what Sheikh refers to as the “experience economy, with the whole experience of the city and the exhibitions being the commodity rather than the singular works of art.”⁷⁷ The Venice Biennale is a brand, and over time has become a prestigious brand associated with the display of contemporary art. According to Sheikh, this branding is “twofold: partly the city as attraction and allure giving context and value to the biennial, and partly the glamour and prestige of the biennial branding and upgrading the otherwise non-descript or even negative image of the city, region, or country.”⁷⁸ Moreover, the relationship between Venice and its Biennale are financially symbiotic, with each contributing to the other in the creation of a unique experience of contemporary art in Venice.

There is potential payoff of the Biennale brand both for national participants and for the city of Venice. In his account, Torres discusses how the

Biennale functions as a financial and national investment. Even though the Philippines was not prepared for the financial commitment of the event due in part to the lack of governmental support, Torres makes it clear that just the inclusion of the Philippines in the prestigious art event potentially opened up more opportunities for the nation in the transnational art scene. He states:

The main purpose of our going to Venice was not to angle for prizes but to be noticed officially; and this we accomplished. A small splash, but a good start. (What matters is that if a bigger splash is to follow the initial plunge, the time to prepare for it is NOW) [emphasis in original].⁷⁹

His last parenthetical sentence emphasizes the significance of financial preparations necessary to effectively present work at the Biennale. He notes in the article that while in the midst of writing, the exhibition organizers are still “in the throes of raising funds, this time to pay the cost of transporting the entries *back* [to the Philippines] [emphasis in original].”⁸⁰ Having never received funds or material support from their national government, Torres describes other costs they struggled to meet while in Venice, including hotels, food, the publication of catalogues, and advertising. Throughout the article, he emphasizes the importance of investing in the Biennale because of what it does to “stimulate the creative powers of participating artists and to foster the image of contemporary Philippine art abroad.”⁸¹ For the Philippine government to not lend material support, according to Torres, is overlooking a vital investment opportunity in the future of the nation’s art and culture.

In addition, the financial structure of the Venice Biennale has changed since Torres wrote his article. According to Caroline Jones, initially the Biennale functioned as an art market “with sales yielding commissions to finance the exhibition.”⁸² This practice lasted until activists in the late 1960s “declared such commerce anathema to art.”⁸³ Sociologist Sarah Thornton describes some of the arrangements involved in the backing of national pavilions by private dealers:

With some pavilions, selling is not officially supposed to happen. With others, the government body that owns the pavilion is supposed to receive a percentage of sales. Having found that dealers subvert the system by claiming that the art was sold after the Biennale closed, a third arrangement seems to have become most common. The dealers underwrite the fabrication, shipping, and celebratory party; in return, they can sell as freely as they would out of their own gallery space. Nonetheless, it’s not something anyone likes to discuss openly with the press.⁸⁴

As Thornton makes evident, the role of private dealers in relation to sales of Biennale art is not always clear-cut, but these arrangements have become commonplace. At the same time, inclusion in the Biennale can do a great deal for promoting the value of an artist’s work through the visibility and the prestige associated with the event. Haitian curator Bouchotte notes how a number of works included as part of *Haiti Kingdom of This World* were sold in Paris and Venice, though the works are required to remain part of the exhibition for the next three years as it makes its rounds to other galleries.⁸⁵ Also, Sheikh points out that biennials offer potentiality that extends beyond capital to prospects of cultural production. He states:

The biennial is not only a container of artworks, but also a mass medium in itself, and must as such establish a social space, that is,

a place where meanings, narratives, histories, conversations, and encounters are actively produced and set in motion.⁸⁶

The investment in a biennial is an investment in financial as well as cultural capital.

Entering “Murky Zones”

Whether the national exhibition model is considered a dated hindrance or an opportunity to express sovereignty, the Venice Biennale invites national performative gestures. At the same time, this event reveals the limitations of twenty-first century international relations, especially when attention is drawn to the liminal spaces of the murky zones. Joseph Fallon uses the phrase “murky zone” to describe the non-statehood status that the United States Congress uses to designate the governance of territories acquired after the War of 1898. These territories exist somewhere between formal statehood and official independence, but in the cases he cites, are all under the influence of the United States.⁸⁷ These territories lack self-determination and autonomy, and so their political destiny and their economic and social organizations exist in what Giorgio Agamben refers to as states of exception that have become the norm.⁸⁸ While Fallon uses the phrase “murky zone” to refer specifically to regions governed by the United States, including Puerto Rico and the Federated States of Micronesia, the term can also be used to describe other territories currently lingering in a state of national limbo, such as the occupied territories of Palestine. Paying attention to “murky zones” tests the limits of the national performative, as it challenges the institutional

structure of international uptake that ultimately results in a happy or unhappy performative.

While the Biennale is not considered an authoritative, legal body in determining national sovereignty, what takes place here participates in the power relations of national and international support systems. The Italian government recognizes the nations that participate in the Biennale, which in turn are also recognized by major players in the international community like the United States. These nations are also members of the United Nations General Assembly, providing them legitimate sovereignty and autonomy in terms of national determination. What's at stake for a nation participating at the Venice Biennale, therefore, is the opportunity to claim a place in this transnational art community. These nations are legitimized politically, economically, but also culturally. A happy or unhappy national performative at the Venice Biennale has consequences that extend beyond that particular scenario as it concerns the acceptance of the nation in the eyes of the hegemonic world order and its encompassing power relations.

The Ongoing Question of Palestine

The power relations and institutional support systems involved in the presentation and uptake of national performatives are not only revealed by what is presented on the Biennale stage, as with Iraq and Haiti, but also through its exclusions. Palestine in particular has experienced a history of contested inclusion at the Venice Biennale in correlation with its prolonged struggle against national

disavowal. While Palestinian artists have not been completely absent from the Biennale exhibition halls, Palestine has no officially sanctioned “national” presence. In 2003, curatorial director Francesco Bonami proposed a Palestinian pavilion. When this did not materialize, he commissioned Palestinian artist Sandi Hilal and her Italian husband Alessandro Petti to create an installation of Palestinian identity for the Giardini as part of his curatorial theme, “Dreams and Conflicts.”⁸⁹ The resulting work, *Stateless Nation*, consists of ten seven-foot-tall, freestanding replicas of various travel or identity documents issued to Palestinians. The title of the piece encompasses a paradox—how can a nation be stateless?—that relates to Palestine’s current circumstances as a “murky zone,” specifically a nation that was dissolved and whose territory has been occupied since the formation of the State of Israel in 1948. Dispersed amongst the national pavilions, Jean Fisher describes how *Stateless Nation* spoke “to the paradox of globalization where the borderless movement of capital and a minority of the world’s elite are inversely mirrored by the rise of restrictive border controls and the numbers of dispossessed refugees and detainees.”⁹⁰ This statement describes the ambivalence associated with implementation of neoliberal free market ideology in the twenty-first century. On the one hand, there are those, including Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, who claim we have entered a new era of sovereignty and “empire” where the existent borders of nation-states are becoming obsolete.⁹¹ On the other hand, there are instances that reaffirm the significance of nationalism and tightening boundaries, as can be seen in the case of Palestine and the tightening of immigration laws in parts of the United States,

where the border with Mexico has been transformed into a war zone in efforts to keep out illegal immigrants.

In her study of geography and borders, Irit Rogoff states:

The logic of the border is far less one of containment than it is one of division. Those concepts of division fluctuate between the concrete boundaries between hostile and geographically embedded adversaries such as warring and safe havens, to symbolic cultural permissions for transgression.⁹²

Whether cultural, imaginary, or geographic, borders are liminal spaces loaded with contradictions. As territorial margins, borders are simultaneously porous and fortified, but never completely absent. The border may be a space of cultural fusion or a heavily militarized zone, but either way it is omnipresent even in a "global" society, maintaining the nation as the major unit of social relations. Borders are not just physical barriers, but also symbols of division. The demilitarized zone (DMZ) of North and South Korea, the Berlin Wall, the wall between Mexico and the United States, and of course, the cartographic "borders" demarcating the Palestinian territories in Israel are all contested margins that function as sites of military tension, cultural transgression, and at times, artistic exploration.⁹³ National borders are re-inscribed at the Venice Biennale to create the counter-sites, or heterotopias, of nations—cultural outposts for the presentation of a national performative. Moreover, national absences and erasures are just as significant as national participants, since the reason for a nation or group's absence may extend beyond the scenario of the Biennale and into the contested realm of international relations.

The inclusion of *Stateless Nation* brings attention to absence of a Palestinian pavilion, as articulated by Christopher Hawthorne's 2003 *New York Times* article, "The Venice Biennale's Palestine Problem." Hawthorne describes the resistance Bonami faced when he proposed adding a Palestinian pavilion. These problems extended beyond just the restrictions of the Biennale structure. As a state-financed event, the "Biennale is subject to what [Bonami] called 'certain foreign-policy regulations'—notably, that pavilions can represent only those countries officially recognized by Rome."⁹⁴ The erasure of Palestine as a national entity is translated into a gesture of erasure from the Biennale pavilions, relegating it to a marginal position in the walkways of the Giardini. As a result, *Stateless Nation* resonates as a politically correct compromise that allows Palestine to exist in the liminal space of the Giardini's walkways, highlighting the absence of the pavilion that in turn emphasizes the erasure of a nation.

Despite such setbacks, Palestinian efforts of inclusion persisted. In 2009, curator Salwa Mikdadi with the support of Vittorio Urbani of Nuovo Icona Venice helped realize the collateral event *Palestine c/o Venice* for the Fifty-second Venice Biennale, which became the unofficial Palestinian pavilion that year. Urbani has been responsible for sponsoring other marginal groups and nations at the Biennale including Wales, Azerbaijan, and Lebanon.⁹⁵ The title of the exhibition—which includes "c/o," or the shorthand for mailing to someone who does not have a home address—is poignant as it enunciates Palestine's "statelessness," or lack of a nation as home. Jean Fisher outlines some of the difficulties faced when putting together the exhibit:

Success presented unprecedented challenges requiring a range of sensitive negotiations, not least Mikdadi's determination to raise the finance from private Palestinian sources unaffiliated to either political factions or foreign aid programmes, a contortion that, one suspects, other Biennale participants do not have to perform.⁹⁶

The careful efforts that went into funding and putting together the exhibit speaks to the contested geopolitical terrain this exhibit inhabited, which was reiterated through the location of the event in the city of Venice as well as the controversy that emerged surrounding Emily Jacir's proposed work, *stazione. Palestine c/o Venice* was located on the island of Guidecca, which is only accessible by boat from the main islands of the city. This site is not only off the tourist's beaten path, but also off the beaten path for the typical Biennale spectator. Tucked away in this locale, *Palestine c/o Venice* is disengaged from the main thoroughfares of the Biennale, notably distant from the Israeli pavilion that is located in Giardini (right next to the US pavilion).



Figure 31. *Palestine c/o Venice* (yellow marker) in relation to the Giardini, where the Israeli Pavilion is located (red marker). Imagery ©2012 Google.

Jacir's piece, *stazione*, would have transcended the physical parameters of the Palestinian exhibit, inhabiting one of the most well-traveled routes of the city. The work intends to reveal the long history of Venetian and Arab relations through the use of language and translation, using Venice's main means of public transportation: the *vaporetto*. For this piece, Jacir proposed to translate into Arabic the names of the *vaporetti* stops along line #1, which begins at Lido, runs through the Grand Canal, and ends at Pizzale Roma. This popular line is a major thoroughfare of Venice's public transportation, as it cuts through the heart of the city and is visible to many tourists. The Arabic names were to be placed next to their bilingual counterpart. According to Jacir:

Vaporetto #1 stops at every station along the Grand Canal where centuries of cross-cultural exchange between Venice and the Arab world is clearly visible in the architecture along its banks. The Arabic names inscribed into the *vaporetti* stops will put them in direct dialogue with the architecture of urban design of the surrounding buildings, thereby linking with various elements of Venice's shared heritage with the Arab world.⁹⁷

Jacir performed extensive research of the historical relationship between Venice and the Arab world, citing various instances of cross-cultural exchange in her statement about the work. Examples include: the architecture of the Doge's Palace and *Ca' d'Oro*; the legendary theft of St. Mark from Alexandria by two Venetian merchants in 829 C.E.; the exchange of Arab goods facilitated by Venetian trade; the emulation of Arab craft styles by Venetians, including bookbinding, metalworking, textiles, and glass blowing; the shared maritime traditions of Venice and the Middle East; and so on. The work is both specific to the history

and culture of Venice as well as relating the artist's general interest in themes that address forced and voluntary movement.⁹⁸

Her multifaceted intentions are signaled by the title of the work, which has multiple meanings. At first, the title seems to reference the stations of the vaporetti that mark the site of the artist's intervention. Jacir describes how the title reveals a deeper meaning of the work as it references how Venetian ships "dominated the transport of pilgrims to the Holy Land; thus Venice fashioned itself as a 'station' on the sacred itinerary of the pilgrimage route to Jerusalem."⁹⁹ "Stations" also bring to mind a number of religious connotations, including the Christian Stations of the Cross, an artistic motif found throughout the cathedrals and palaces of Venice. At the same time, *stazione* may refer to how the pavilions function as national and cultural "stations" for spectators, with the Palestinian "station" being located off the tourist beaten path on the island of Guidecca. By presenting the work *stazione* on a highly traveled route, Jacir's work would bring Palestinian art from the literal and figurative margins of the Biennale as a collateral event to the center of the city.

At first, the project was received with enthusiasm with written approval from the Biennale Committee, the commissioner Nuova Icona, and the Venice commune, along with verbal agreement by the *vaporetto* company, ACTV. However, one month into production, Jacir was informed by ACTV by means of Nuova Icona that the project was cancelled. No reasonable explanation concerning the cancellation was provided, but according to Fisher there were "vague allusions to 'political pressure' from an 'outside source,' and equally

oblique references to the Gaza bombing.”¹⁰⁰ The circumstances surrounding *stazione* resonate with *Stateless Nation* in terms of theme and execution. The unrealized work can be considered an institutional gesture of erasure—on behalf of ACTV—that reveals the general erasure of Palestine as a nation. This erasure occurs both at the level of the Biennale through delegation as a collateral event instead of an officially sanctioned and recognized national pavilion, as well as at the level of international geopolitics. This gesture also reveals how the Venice Biennale functions as a place to enact the performative structure of the nation for international uptake. The location of the pavilion at the margins of the Venice Biennale and the cancellation of Jacir’s work emphasize Palestine’s struggle for national recognition, which has been a contested topic of debate leading to violent conflict since the creation of Israel in the mid-twentieth century.

Palestine c/o Venice (33) ▼

Convento dei Santi Cosma
e Damiano, Giudecca Palanca 619
(Campo San Cosmo)
from June 7 to September 30

Artists Taysir Batniji, Shadi HabibAl-
lah, Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti,
Emily Jacir, Jawad Al Malhi, and Khalil
Rabah present new commissioned
work for the first exhibition of contem-
porary art from Palestine in Venice.
Their art explores diverse conceptual
readings of local and global issues,
employing sound and multimedia
installations, performance, site-specific
work, animation, photography, and
video. Organization: Nuova Icona As-
sociazione Culturale per le Arti



Figure 32. Listing for *Palestine c/o Venice* from the short guide to 2009 Venice Biennale, *Making Worlds*, including digital image of Emily Jacir’s unrealized work, *stazione*.

The 2009 collateral event *Palestine c/o Venice* provides an opportunity to investigate an unhappy national performative in terms of presence, absence, and erasure. With this exhibition, Palestinian artists were included as part of the Venice Biennale, without the official recognition of having a national pavilion. According to the curator, the exhibit was self-aware of this marginal treatment, with the title underscoring “the chronic impermanence faced by Palestinian artists, a condition they surmount with creative resistance.”¹⁰¹ The inclusion of Palestine as a “collateral event” draws attention to their absence of a national pavilion and the lack of recognition of a Palestinian nation—a territory that can be

considered “collateral damage” in terms of post–World War II international relations. As noted previously, this exhibit also involved an act of erasure in the prohibition of Jacir’s work, *stazione*. Even though the work was never manifested in the physical environment of Venice, a digital image of the intended piece is paired with a description of the exhibit in the short guide to the 2009 Biennale. The presence of the work in the virtual realm heightens its erasure, just as the categorization of the exhibit as a collateral event highlights the absence of a Palestinian nation state. The national performative in this instance is not acknowledged by the authority of the Biennale or the context of the exhibition. Rather, like an internationally recognized Palestinian nation, the work remains merely in the space of a proposal. Like contested boundaries drawn on the map of Israel, *stazione* is only realized as an image, not as a physical manifestation. The work simultaneously exists, but does not exist, depending on the discursive positionality of the recipient and the realm of presentation. At the same time, the interplay of absence, presence, and erasure realizes the complexity of Palestinian geopolitics, drawing attention to the potentiality of iterability. In other words, the fate of *stazione* at the 2009 Venice Biennale parallels the discourse surrounding Palestine at the United Nations, where the performative of a Palestinian nation is deferred, but not defeated.¹⁰² The strife experienced in the context of the Venice Biennale *Spielraum* replicates the strife experienced by Palestine in terms of international relations.

The weight of authority replicated in the institutional structure of the Biennale explains the challenges Bonami faced when he proposed the possibility

of inviting Palestine as a national participant. Since Palestine is not recognized as a sovereign nation in the eyes of the Italian government, to invite them as national participants would constitute an unhappy performative utterance as defined by Austin.¹⁰³ This declaration does not fulfill the criteria for a happy uptake, since it is not recognized as a nation by the hegemonic international authority of the United Nations. Also, while the circumstances of the Biennale are appropriate for the presentation of national performatives, they are not the appropriate circumstances for national declaration, since the Venice Biennale is not a political, governing body. Without the support of the Italian government or the international community of the Biennale, Bonami's act functions as a gesture intending to provoke controversy rather than constituting national recognition.¹⁰⁴

It is in the liminal spaces of murky zones where the continued significance of the national model and the limits of neoliberalism are made apparent, since both of these models of relations are involved in the structuring of international uptake and the presentation of the national performative at the Venice Biennale. At the same time, the persistent faith in both these models of relations is revealed, along with power relations that make up these models and their economic and political consequences. Using the common language of contemporary art, nations are able to communicate with each other in terms that are asserting the national, but using transnational channels. Also, the tension between national boundaries and an open global approach are revealed through the discerning inclusion of national participants at the Venice Biennale. On the one hand, neoliberalism has opened up a plentitude of opportunities for communication and transculturation

through the promotion of free markets. On the other hand, the increased transport of ideas and bodies has resulted in the clamping down of national borders and the exclusivity of national citizenship. Even though neoliberalism has apparently opened up networks of trade, governments in turn enact sanctions as weapons against nations like Iran and North Korea when these nations behave out of line with international agendas.

The past two Venice Biennales (2009 and 2011) have exhibition titles that explicitly engage with the global and the national. The title of the 2009 exhibit, *Making Worlds*, alludes to the construction of nationalist presentations involved in national performatives. The term “making” implies building—an act of production on behalf of the national participants, but also through engaged relations with the international community. By presenting “worlds” as plural, attention is brought away from the nation as the unit of international relations and brings to mind the possibility of many global communities—a postmodern turn of phrase that breaks down the international meta-narrative that informs the Biennale. Despite the neatness of the phrase, however, the “worlds” of the 2009 Venice Biennale are influenced by political and economic power relations involved in the international community that comprise the uptake for national performatives. These “worlds” are in fact an institutional web of relations that determine whether a performative act is happy or unhappy. Even though the title *Making Worlds* attempts to minimize the importance of the national model, it continues to persist as the foundation of the Biennale’s structure and in the international order.

The 2011 title, *ILLUMInations*, reintroduces the word “nation,” but intentionally diminishes its importance by placing it in lowercase letters and presenting it as part of the word “illuminations.” This title also evokes the language and mindset of the enlightenment, a time during which the concept of the modern nation came into being. In this instance, instead of being constructed, the nation is illuminated or revealed in a teleological manner that implies its persistence as the basis of international relations. Though minimized, nations persist as part of the imaginary landscape of the Venice Biennale that extends to the global community. However, to whom is the nation illuminated? One answer is the international community that comprises the uptake of national performatives. Both titles, *Making Worlds* and *ILLUMInations*, attest to the interplay of the national and the global at the Venice Biennale, one coming from a position of construction while the other arises from enlightenment. While the alluded approaches may differ, both attempted to make concrete the abstract relationship between the global and the national at the Venice Biennale in the twenty-first century.

It is over the structural parameters of the Biennale that performative gestures of presence, absence, and erasure take place. Absences and erasures take the form of the ban and the boycott, with each of these gestures involving a different set of intentions and relations to social hegemony. The ban is an act of forbiddance by the Venice Biennale board, while the boycott is a refusal by nations. The ban and boycott are both involved in power relations, but how this occurs varies between these two types of acts. In terms of the Biennale, the ban is

enacted against an institutional participant and functions as a means of enforcing hegemonic authority. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the ban as an “authoritative proclamation” as well as a “denunciation” and “prohibition.”¹⁰⁵ The ban is a forced act of erasure that allows an institutional use of power as a means of silencing. As an “authoritative proclamation,” the ban is an involuntary act of prevention for whoever and whatever is being erased. In the Biennale, bans are not mere acts of censorship, but carry geopolitical implications. For example, the unrealized work of Jacir’s *stazione* in the 2009 Venice Biennale is the result of a ban initiated by the ACTV. According to Fisher, the “Biennale Committee declined to intervene on the grounds that it was a matter between the artist, curator, and ACTV.”¹⁰⁶ In this instance, the Biennale’s decision not to act condones the ACTV’s decision, which through their silence underwrites this ban.

The boycott is a different type of gesture than the ban. Instead of being an enforced act of erasure, the boycott is a withdrawal as protest—a refusal to engage. There is a voluntary quality to the boycott, and like the ban, the boycott has geopolitical implications at the Venice Biennale. An example of a boycott took place in 1968 in the midst of student protests in Venice and across Europe. During this year, Venetian students, inspired by other student activists in Europe and the United States, demonstrated against the Biennale and succeeded in closing it briefly and in postponing the awarding of prizes.¹⁰⁷ Estimates at that time put the number of student protestors between one hundred and five hundred, and after the Biennale reopened, the Giardini included a heavy police presence. These events led to boycotts by at least twenty-one artists, who withdrew their work in a

show of solidarity for the students. According to Lawrence Alloway, this group included at least fifteen Italian artists, three French artists, and one each from Sweden, Denmark, and Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁸ He states:

It was an opportunity for them to show kinship with the young, as well as express some of the resentment they felt about the existing system of merchandising their wares, in which the Biennale plays a prominent role. Artists feel caught, as indeed they are, with no available alternative to dealers' galleries, museum exhibitions, and international shows.¹⁰⁹

This small but potent display of transnational support for the student activists through boycott resulted in an absence like the banning of Jacir's *stazione*, but unlike *stazione*, the instigator of this gesture was the artist.

Boycotts and the responses to bans introduce antagonism into the Biennale discourse. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe analyze the significance of antagonism and hegemony in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. In this book, Laclau and Mouffe offer a post-structuralist reading of Leftist political theory as they consider Marx in conjunction with Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Lacan's treatment of the subject as split and decentered. Laclau and Mouffe argue that a functional democratic society is not based on consensus, but instead depends on antagonism as the means of revealing and challenging social and political limitations. This understanding is based on Lacan's model of subjects not as unified or whole, but rather split, decentered, and incomplete. At the same time, they argue, "There is no single underlying principle fixing—and hence constituting—the whole field of differences."¹¹⁰ Antagonism reveals social limitations, and it is through debate

and the introduction of conflictual tension that democracy is able to perpetuate and evolve.¹¹¹ For Laclau and Mouffe, “The logic of equivalence is a logic of simplification of the political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity.”¹¹² Antagonism emerges from but also encourages differences, which in turn challenge the centralization of power and false impressions of unification and homogenization.

Understood in terms of Jameson’s cognitive mapping discussed in the previous chapter, the Biennale attempts to frame a comprehensible, “global” totality. However, this totality is incomplete, and it presents a limited presentation of the art world. The art included in the Biennale tends to represent a unified definition of what constitutes art, which is greatly determined by the tastes and influences of the US and European critical discourses and art markets. For all its diversity in the particulars, there must be some continuity in what defines art in order to allow accessibility to the viewer.¹¹³ Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the absences and erasures in addition to what is present at the Biennale, since these gestures are what introduce antagonism to the scenario.

Can the Venice Biennale function as a potential platform for antagonism that challenges institutional hegemony regarding the recognition and uptake of national performatives? Okwui Enwezor argues that the “biennial phenomenon” offers “the possibility of a paradigm shift in which we as spectators are able to encounter many experimental cultures without wholly possessing them.”¹¹⁴ Enwezor emphasizes how spectators must not be treated as “passive consumers and receivers of culture but as active participants and agents whose critical

engagement with culture makes the complexity of its meaning more focused.”¹¹⁵

The new type of spectatorship created by biennials involves a spectator whose performance as traveler and tourist is intertwined with that of art viewer. The Biennale spectator is a cultural explorer, navigating the terrain with no certain promises of being able to experience the whole event—she must contend with what can be unveiled during the time spent in the local environment. For Enwezor, this new type of spectator is informed by post-colonial subjective claims including “multiculturalism, liberation theology, resistance art, feminist and queer theory, questions of third cinema, antiapartheid, environmental and ecological movements, rights of indigenous peoples, minority demands, etc.”¹¹⁶ Just as the city of Venice does not provide a *tabula rasa* for the Biennale, but enriches the event with its particular cultures and histories, the Biennale spectator is not a passive vessel of aesthetic consumption. As Enwezor points out, the Biennale spectator is a product of the Biennale society, which has changed since the event originally opened its doors in 1895. From the era of modern nation-states and the waning of European colonialism to present-day neoliberalism and stateless groups, the Biennale spectator witnesses national performatives at the Venice Biennale. The interaction of the national with the global and local in terms of geography, economics, and politics introduces experiences through art and culture in a unique manner that Enwezor argues provide opportunities to challenge the hegemony of global capitalism.¹¹⁷

Critic and self-proclaimed biennial Luddite George Baker directly challenges Enwezor’s position, arguing that the biennial and mega art exhibitions

represent the “*total institutionalization of the practice of art*, the onset of art’s *total administration or bureaucratization* [emphasis in original].”¹¹⁸ Baker faults the exhibits for being too large: “Mega-exhibitions cannot be taken in, digested, understood, or read in any complete manner, and this sublime scale serves the function of obfuscation.”¹¹⁹ Instead of inviting opportunities to challenge hegemony as Enwezor argues, Baker contends that these exhibitions exclude public participation through their sheer immensity. However, before stating his argument, Baker points out how he avoids mega-exhibitions and biennials: “I get lazy in the face of their attempt to make all intellectuals involved in the field of art into itinerants in an updated version of the Grand Tour or a parody of forced migration.”¹²⁰ Such contempt prior to investigation leads one to question the validity of his claims, since if biennials are as he describes, too large to be contained, then the most effective way to experience a biennial would be total immersion.

Moreover, further analysis of the Biennale spectator can provide insight into how this particular subject offers potentiality in relation to institutional hegemony. As Caroline Jones makes clear, the biennial presents art as experience that is informed by links to event structures, tourism, and apparatuses of knowledge production.¹²¹ If potentiality is limited by the institutional structure of the Biennale, ultimately informed by Italian and Venetian politics as well as Euro-American aesthetic tastes, then it must reside elsewhere, including murky zones like Palestine and the gestures of the spectator. The experience of the Biennale spectator is not limited to the act of viewing art, but encompasses the performance

of the tourist. The next chapter of this dissertation examines the specific qualities of the Biennale tourist/spectator and what gestures contribute to the production of meaning and the benefits of Venice functioning as a theatrical space for these relations to unfold.

Chapter 4

Lost in Place: The Experience of the Tourist/Spectator and the Theatricality of Venice

Whether a resting spot for pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land, a point of interest along the Grand Tour, or a destination for honeymooning newlyweds, the city of Venice has a long history of cultural mixing as the result of trade, travel, and tourists. For centuries, people have been seduced by an inexplicable desire to experience the city, resulting in a romantic aura based both in material reality and marketable fantasy. Travel writings about the city both recount and perpetuate this mystique, as can be observed in Judith Martin's account:

Since the Middle Ages, Venice has been attracting dazed foreigners: pilgrims venerating holy relics, crusaders commissioning ships, Jews escaping persecution, artists looking for civic commissions, writers looking for dramatic settings, filmmakers looking for eerie urban scenery, royalty experiencing unpopularity at home, millionaires pursuing experiences that would have made them unpopular at home, and a millennium's worth of traveling tradesmen and tourists from whatever has constituted the known world at any given time. Together, we form an endless caravan of Marco Polos in reverse, journeying from around the globe to discover Venice.¹

Notably, Martin implicates herself in the legacy she describes in the last sentence of this quote. Like other writers before her, she contributes to the mythical aura that surrounds Venice, forming a simulacrum where the stories and images of the city seem more real than the place. Some writers and scholars have celebrated this process, while others have problematized it, drawing attention to the issues that arise for inhabitants when tourists mistake fantastical expectations for reality.²

Either way, for centuries Venice has been treated as a stage for the unfolding of performance events, both real and imagined. Instead of the “stage” being a metaphor, it is also literal, as the city is built upon thousands of petrified posts, making it a physical stage set in the marshland of the Venetian lagoon. From its inception, Venice has emerged through constitutive gestures that seek to defy its natural surrounding.

Subsequently, the influence of outsiders in Venetian cultural affairs is not novel to the Biennale, but is part of its histories and customs that extend back centuries. As the city grew to be a renowned mercantile center and eventually a highly marketed tourist destination, Venice has functioned as a stage for the interplay of cultures. The Biennale audience, comprised of tourist/spectators who behave both as tourists of Venice and as spectators of contemporary art, contributes both to the continued evolution of the event and the cultural topography of Venice. And with each passing rendition, this crowd grows as the Biennale draws more visitors and participating nations.

In this chapter, I analyze Venice and the Biennale as theatrical events where political, cultural, and economic relations and support systems are made apparent. According to Janelle Reinelt, “Many theatre scholars use ‘theatricality’ uncritically to mark aspects of texts or performances that gesture to their own conditions of production or to metatheatrical effects.”³ Despite a common understanding of the term in relation to performance, it has varied implications of meaning depending on the cultural context of its application, which is dominated by conflictual Anglo-American and continental European definitions. I intend to

challenge the application of Anglo-American definitions of theatricality rooted in the philosophy of Plato and perpetuated by modernist criticism, which tend to equate the term with inauthenticity and therefore something to be avoided. Rather, I offer a reading of Venice as a different kind of theatrical space informed by its history as a meeting place between East and West, which in turn provides an opportunity to construct new realities. Reading the work of Thomas Hirschhorn and Santiago Sierra with attention to the presence of the body in place and the experience of the tourist/spectator offers an opportunity to analyze the theatricality of the Venice Biennale and identify its particularities.

Thomas Hirschhorn and *Crystal of Resistance*

At the Fifty-fourth Venice Biennale in 2011, Thomas Hirschhorn's installation *Crystal of Resistance* occupied the pavilion of the Swiss Confederation located in the Giardini. On its surface, *Crystal of Resistance* is incomprehensible. Hirschhorn creates a spectacle of suffering using a mish-mash of consumer products and graphic images that engulfs the spectator upon entering the pavilion. There are plastic lawn chairs covered with cellphones and packing tape that resemble growths on a petri dish; oversized crystals made of tin foil, tape, and Q-tips; other crystalline forms made of glossy magazines from the United States, Europe, and the Middle East, taped together like periodical honey combs. Tape is also used to create webs with violently graphic images from war zones that seem to grow and take over the room. Empty beer cans and broken bottles of liquor litter the space. This enormous collection of objects brings to mind hoarders, individuals for whom collecting and accumulating have become

addictions. The interior of the pavilion becomes the container for the artist-guided process of crystallization as he uses the material to geometrically partition the room. At every turn, sculptural forms that dominate the space confront the spectator. Light is emitted from florescent bulbs and through skylights but is refracted and reflected by the quantity of tin foil and semi-transparent materials that Hirschhorn used to build the “crystals.” Hirschhorn may use consumer objects as his materials, but through the sheer immensity of the work and the odd juxtapositions he creates, he imbues a sense of the uncanny that makes the familiar overwhelmingly unfamiliar. The compartmentalization of space induces a sense of claustrophobia as the spectator moves from confined sections into more open, though still crowded areas. The exhibit is like a cross between a frat house, Wal-Mart, and a child’s science fair, fully immersing the spectator and overwhelming the senses. The work also evokes an immersive natural history or anthropological diorama attempting to recreate the essence of twenty-first century consumer society. The artist describes how he wanted to produce a work “that is reminiscent of the AESTHETICS of a 'science-fiction' B-movie film set, that derives from the AESTHETICS of a self-made rock-crystal museum, of the AESTHETICS of a 'crystal-meth' laboratory, or that resembles the AESTHETICS of a cheaply decorated provincial disco [emphasis in original].”⁴ In addition, Hirschhorn spray-painted banners with quotes by Édouard Glissant, a Black poet and literary critic from Martinique, Department of France.⁵ The presented quotes are: “WE MUST FIGHT AGAINST TRANSPARENCE EVERYWHERE,” “DEMAND FOR ALL THE RIGHT TO OPACITY,” and “THE OTHER IS IN

ME, BECAUSE I AM ME. EQUALLY, THE I FROM WHOM THE OTHER PERISHES.” This final quote is presented with Glissant’s name in parentheses and the accent missing from the first letter of his given name. While he does not articulate the reasons for selecting these quotes, Hirschhorn lists two texts by Glissant, *Poétique de la relation* and *Le discours antillais*, on his reference books list, which is comprised of the books he read while working on *Crystal of Resistance*.



Figure 33. Thomas Hirschhorn, *Crystal of Resistance*, 2011. Photograph by MaryAnne Davis.



Figure 34. Thomas Hirschhorn, *Crystal of Resistance*, 2011. Image by designboom.com.

In his artist statement, Hirschhorn emphasizes how he believes art “can provoke a dialogue or a confrontation—one-to-one.”⁶ At the same time, he wants to “produce a work that is irresistible.”⁷ Art both entices and confronts the spectator, who is invited to simultaneously participate and resist. Hirschhorn attempts to do this by constructing a labyrinth so full of imagery and objects that the spectator cannot turn away, drawn to the loosely organized chaos like rubberneckers unable to resist a look at a highway traffic accident. Hirschhorn welcomes this discordance:

I am not afraid of resistance, conflict, contradiction, or complexity. Resistance is always connected with friction, confrontation, even destruction—but also, always with creativity. Resistance is conflict between creativity and destruction. I want to confront this conflict in *Crystal of Resistance*. I am myself, the “conflict,” and I want my

work to stand in the conflict zone, I want my work to stand erect in the conflict and be resistant within it.⁸

This desire to make work in a conflict zone results in an ambivalent emotional and physical experience in the spectator, who is thrust into a state of aesthetic discomfort.

The immersive qualities of the installation can initially overwhelm the spectator, who must move through this maze, resulting in a feeling that I describe as “lost in place.” Even though the spectator is physically grounded in the defined parameters of the exhibition, or the context of a place, she may feel the emotional and intellectual confusion associated with the experience of being “lost.” One spectator recounts her experience of the work as follows:

The installation made me very anxious. After a few minutes, I just wanted to leave [...]. It was like being attacked. Once I got out of there, I went over to the Venezuelan Pavilion that had the floating caricatures of world leaders and felt very relieved.⁹

Some critics express appreciation for this tension. In his positive review of the work published in *Artforum International*, David Joselit applauds Hirschhorn’s ability to introduce complexity into what he considers a “critical laziness” in recent art. He argues that this stems from people commonly positing Guy Debord’s definition of the spectacle as a “quasi-totalitarian condition of visual domination, both in the art world and in consumer culture at large.”¹⁰ In his classic text, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord describes how the spectacles that have come to inform, mediate, and replace our lived experiences

are the result of a confluence of media, the capitalist mode of production, and enabling governmental systems.¹¹ He states:

The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation. [...] The spectacle appears at once as society itself, as part of society, and as a means of unification. [...] The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.¹²

These spectacles, which replace social relations with relations through commodities and images, result in isolated and alienated subjects who are no longer participating in their own existence, but only its representations. This loss of unity between subjects has profound effects on society as well as a subject's understanding of herself in society. According to Joselit, Hirschhorn introduces challenges into the "mechanism of the spectacle to push viewers beyond either blind affirmation or blanket condemnation."¹³ The confrontation that Hirschhorn invites results in a necessary discomfort in order to evoke a state of ambivalence in the spectator who is both repulsed by the experience and cannot look away.

As the spectator moves through the installation, the body navigates a zigzag path laden with overwhelming stimuli, which Joselit argues is a sign of our times: "The specificity of our current moment lies in a degree of image saturation that was unimaginable throughout most of the past century."¹⁴ Instead of laying a breadcrumb trail for viewers to trace the meaning of the work through a chain of signs and clues, Hirschhorn throws all meaning into the spectator's face and lets

her decide where they may fall. Joselit calls this confrontation a kind of witnessing:

You and I don't need an artist to tell us for the thousandth time that fur is bad. We need to feel it incumbent on us to decide for ourselves. Witnessing requires us to shift our spectatorial position: to enter the time of image circulation and make a judgment about what we see there.¹⁵

Echoing the sentiments of Hirschhorn as articulated in his artist statement, Joselit argues that *Crystal of Resistance* welcomes a spectatorial agency that is manifested in this experience of witnessing. The overwhelming complexity of the work's form prevents a linear reading, both physically and conceptually. Subsequently, *Crystal of Resistance* invites ambivalence, which arguably can be an uncomfortable experience for a spectator who cannot decide whether to appreciate or disregard the work.

Claire Bishop also emphasizes Hirschhorn's relationship to his audience, stating that his work "represents an important shift in the way that contemporary art conceives of its viewer."¹⁶ She describes how Hirschhorn evokes a relational artistic practice that does not require the spectator to participate literally with the work, such as eating noodles as part of Rirkirt Tiravanija dinners or activating a sculpture, but rather asks her "only to be a thoughtful and reflective viewer."¹⁷ As a result, Hirschhorn asserts an independent stance for his work, even though it is produced collaboratively, and, according to Bishop, "the viewer is no longer coerced into fulfilling the artist's interactive requirements, but is presupposed as a subject of independent thought, which is the prerequisite for political action."¹⁸

However, this type of relational engagement that encourages an interaction with the spectator is not always welcoming, as noted in the spectator's comment above.

Another significant factor of Hirschhorn's art for Bishop is his ability to provoke antagonism, as described by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, through his constructed scenarios. Reading Hirschhorn in conjunction with the theories of Laclau and Mouffe, Bishop states:

[Hirschhorn's] work acknowledges the limitations of what is possible as art ("I am not an animator, teacher, or social-worker," says Hirschhorn) and subjects to scrutiny all easy claims for a transitive relationship for art and society. The model of subjectivity that underpins their practice is not the fictitious whole subject of harmonious community, but a divided subject of partial identifications open to constant flux. [...] Hirschhorn [...] provide[s] a mode of artistic experience more adequate to the divided and incomplete subject of today.¹⁹

Treating the spectator as an incomplete subject, the artist promotes antagonism due to the objects and images used to construct his installation, which are consumer products and graphic images that already come loaded with controversial meaning. The antagonism is not only detected in the form of the installation, but also in the ambivalence of the audience response.

While Hirschhorn's work involves a relational antagonism, as noted by Bishop, and introduces an opportunity for politically activated spectatorship, as described by Joselit, Grant Kester questions whether Hirschhorn's constructed antagonisms can translate into direct action on behalf of the spectator. According to Kester, "in Bishop's account, the disruption and 'antagonism' produced by [...] Hirschhorn involves various attempts to force privileged art world types to

encounter the poor and working class as they slog through the galleries of their favorite biennial.”²⁰ Kester problematizes the assumptions that Hirschhorn makes in terms of the "Other" being presented through the work, which in *Crystal of Resistance* can be gleaned from the images from war-torn regions and battle scenes. The ability to experience emotional empathy in relation to others' tragedy without taking any action in order to resolve this suffering involves a position of privilege. This privilege is the ability to disengage and withdraw from a situation when the suffering comes to be too much. This act of spectatorship is not necessarily politically charged. He states: “The corrective exposure to race and class Others engineered by Hirschhorn [...] generalizes both the viewer [...] and the individuals whose ‘participation’ is choreographed for their benefit.”²¹ At the same time, Kester challenges the critics' assumptions concerning the spectators who witness the work, which he describes as being “considerably more complex and contradictory”²² than anticipated, as the work may cause unforeseen elements of self-affirmation in the spectator. He argues that the decisive point in reception is not the difference between an active or passive viewer, which Joselit describes in his discussion of political spectatorship, but is actually is about these assumptions that in turn are tied to material relations and the scripted nature of the presumed spectator's response.²³ What the spectator actually contributes to these scenarios is not defined by the level of engagement, but is informed by the material relations that shape her response to the installation.

In my experience of Hirschhorn's installation, I found myself in a state of physical revulsion when exposed to the images of war zones. The use of imagery

to convey the violence of conflict is not new, though with the rise of digital telecommunications technology, these images are spreading faster and farther than ever. Susan Sontag considers the rhetoric of war photography in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*. She describes how through photography, people can now witness the violence of foreign wars in the mediated comfort of their own homes.²⁴ The camera bears witness to the suffering of others, but also distributes it along the chains of communication for people to observe, contemplate, and debate. The photographs participate in the discourse of conflict, allowing people who are not directly involved in the action to become seemingly informed observers. She states: "photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing responses. A call for peace. A cry for revenge. Or simply bemused awareness, continually restocked by photographic information, that terrible things happen."²⁵ The bodies in the images of *Crystal of Resistance* belong to anonymous participants in conflicts unfolding in what are to me distant and foreign lands. These images encapsulate pain and suffering that is far removed from my immediate existence. For these images to bombard my protected state of comfort as a visitor to the Venice Biennale left me feeling both ambushed but also guilty of certain privileges that I take for granted. Presented with this violent and graphic imagery, I felt disoriented and frustrated when it came to moving through the rest of the installation. As I continued, I found myself simultaneously seeking and avoiding these images. While initially I was turned off by the explicit political sentiments that the images and other objects evoked, I found this experience as whole to be fascinating as I lost my sense of spatial orientation. The combination

of the physically visceral with the strong emotions that it evoked definitely distinguished my experience with the installation from other types of art spectatorship experienced at the Biennale. A combination of disgust with a desire to experience more continued to propel me through the installation. Considering this experience in retrospect, I realize that it was the artist's intention to provoke such a response through his orchestration of space. The work invites discomfort and resistance, but is also, as Hirschhorn describes, "irresistible."²⁶ The experience of *Crystal of Resistance* is a visceral experience, as the installation pushes and pulls the body through the room with its organized mess of objects and images. While walking through the work, I found myself extremely aware of my body's presence, particularly when faced with the images from war zones—witnessing other bodies that have been violently damaged forced me to contend with my own body's vulnerabilities and fragility, leaving me both horrified and grateful that I am still in one piece.

In addition to the critical responses examined above, I am offering another reading of Hirschhorn's *Crystal of Resistance*. Emphasizing the physiological qualities that the work evokes, I treat the work as a theatrical event where Hirschhorn has organized a stage for the performances of spectators to take place. Josette Féral lists the essential foundations of all performance are the "manipulation to which performance subjects the performer's body [...], the manipulation of space [...], and finally, the relation that performance institutes between the artist and the spectators, between the spectators and the work of art, and between the work of art and the artist."²⁷ These qualities are all found present

in Hirschhorn's work. Even though the artist's body is absent from the presentation of the installation, Hirschhorn “appropriates” the human body. In *Crystal of Resistance*, Hirschhorn incorporates both the bodies of the spectators, who through their reception of the work become the performers, as well as the bodies of violence captured in the graphic imagery. Féral describes how performance is meant to be a physical accomplishment, where the manipulation of the body becomes the means of the work’s execution. Through this process, the “body is made conspicuous: a body in pieces, fragmented and yet one, a body perceived and rendered as a place of desire, a displacement, and fluctuation, a body the performance conceives of as repressed and tries to free—even at the cost of greater violence.”²⁸ With the images of war zones, Hirschhorn presents bodies literally fragmented through violence, which in turn can affect the spectator, who, as Féral articulates, is “harassed by images that both violate him and do him violence.”²⁹ The presentation of manipulated bodies in turn manipulates the bodies of the spectators as helpless witnesses to the violence that has been captured through the images. The spectators are helpless in the sense that they could not have stopped the violence of the past captured in the images, and they remain helpless in relation to the scale of violence presented through the work.

In addition, antagonism is introduced through the physical space of the installation, which is constructed in such a way that it becomes disorienting to the spectator, whose navigational footing is shaken by the twists and turns of the work. This disorientation of the spectator combined with the explicit and grotesque nature of some of the imagery from war zones and the saturation of

material pushes the limits of immediate comprehension, resulting in a response that is physical and emotional. Some of the images and texts incorporated into the installation, such as taping cell phones to plastic chairs and creating honeycombs of magazine covers, are so blatantly critical of consumer culture that they border on empty rhetoric. However, the effectiveness of the installation resides in the sheer massiveness of the collection of objects and images, and how Hirschhorn uses these materials to completely transform the space from a white cube gallery into a seemingly endless site of potential navigation. Féral notes how in performance, “space becomes existential to the point of ceasing to exist as a setting and place. It no longer surrounds and encloses the performance, but like the body, becomes part of the performance to such an extent that it cannot be distinguished from it.”³⁰ Hirschhorn’s installation is the set within which performances of the spectators unfold. These performances do not just receive the work, but constitute the work. Time is dissolved as the past and future merge into a continuous present. Féral describes how gestures come to dominate this scenario:

This is Derrida's *différance* made perceptible. From then on, there is neither past nor future, but only continuous present—that of the immediacy of things, of an action taking place. These gestures appear both as a finished product and in the course of being carried out, already completed and in motion [...]: gestures that reveal their deepest workings and that the performer executes only in order to discover what is hidden underneath them [...]. And the performance shows this gesture over and over to the point of saturating time, space, and the representation with it—sometimes to the point of nausea. Nothing is left but a kinesics of gesture.³¹

Féral emphasizes how these gestures do not aim at a particular meaning, but allow the performance to make meaning. For Joselit, what distinguishes *Crystal of Resistance* from other types of political art is its “positive decision to testify, which is a decision not only about how and what a spectator sees but also a weighing of its veracity, its authority, its ethical consequences, etc.”³² As Féral points out, the subject is conscripted both as a “constituted subject and as a social subject in order to dislocate and demystify it.”³³ Consistent with Laclau and Mouffe’s treatment of the subject as decentered, these subjects are not complete entities, but subjects in process—always becoming.

Theatricality and Staging Bodies

Instead of reading *Crystal of Resistance* just as a sculptural installation, I treat it as a theatrical event in order to expose and discuss its exhibitionism and how it functions as a spectacle. In turn, this allows me to reveal how it constitutes a site for constructing new realities. Moreover, the pavilion functions as a stage, which is networked with other pavilions under the institutional framework of the Biennale. By examining how theatricality functions on the scale of this specific pavilion, I extend this analysis to include how the Venice Biennale can be considered a theatrical event with the city as its stage, paying particular attention to affects on the human body.

The term theatricality has a particular set of meanings in the history of its usage in Anglo-American and European contexts. In the United States, most theatre scholars use theatricality in relation to a spectator’s awareness of

witnessing. Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis note how US art critic Michael Fried, whose (in)famous essay “Art and Objecthood” has come to function as a key text in understanding the relationship between performance and art, describes how “whenever a consciousness of viewing exists—in life or in painting—absorption was sacrificed and theatricality resulted.”³⁴ Fried describes how the theatricality associated with the minimalist installations of Donald Judd and Robert Morris is degenerative for visual arts, arguing that the “success, even the survival, of the arts has come increasingly to depend on its ability to defeat theatre.”³⁵ He treats theatre as a corrupting force in the perversion of the visual arts, perpetuating negative connotations of the term due its relationship to falsehood. Fried’s attitude was informed by the work of his mentor, Clement Greenberg. In his essay “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” Greenberg condemned kitsch as “vicarious experience and faked sensations,”³⁶ which is echoed in Fried’s treatment of theatricality. Generally, theatricality involves an awareness of witnessing a performance, or as Davis describes: “theatricality is not likely to be present when a performance is so absorbing that the audience forgets that it is spectating.”³⁷ These associations between theatricality and inauthenticity extend back to Plato’s discussion of mimesis. In *The Republic*, Plato treats art as the third-degree imitation of the idea, or truth. As such, this imitation, or mimesis, can be detrimental to the development of human beings, as it evokes artificial emotions in the recipient.³⁸ Subsequently, Plato evokes an injunction against the artist, whom he refers to as an “imitator.”

This condemnation has been challenged by artists and philosophers ever since. In the visual arts, Immanuel Kant attempts to get around Plato's injunction against the artist by placing aesthetics in the mind of the subject and giving up content for form. According to Kant, a disinterested subject contemplates the forms of an autonomous object. The subject is not distracted by an object's mimetic properties; rather it is the free harmony of imagination and understanding that results in the judgment of taste.³⁹ According to Davis and Postlewait, part of this process involves subduing the mimetic properties of art using a naturalistic idea of theatre, or on the other side, through anti-realistic alternatives, such as symbolism, surrealism, and expressionism.⁴⁰ This may involve the creation of alternative realities onstage that invite the spectator's complicity in mimesis.⁴¹

In recent decades, with the advent of postmodernism, artists and theorists have emphasized theatricality in order to expose or reveal the artificiality of performance. Awareness is no longer condemned in the spectator, but becomes a platform for engagement that influences the uptake of the work. Brecht, in particular, took advantage of these qualities in his application of theatre. Davis states:

[Brecht] called for a theatre that indexed its own features in order to subvert role-playing and mimesis so that actors could signal the falsity or duality of their own acting, selectively helping spectators reject empathy and identification. [...] To be politically efficacious Brecht needed spectators to reject the commensurability of stage and world, to step out of the Möbius loop of the *theatrum mundi*, and use the dystopic example of the dramatized story to better their social condition.⁴²

In the Anglo-American understanding of theatricality, emphasis is placed on the term's connections to mimesis. According to Reinelt, as a result there is a tendency to use the term "performativity" when "rejecting the mimetic aspects of representation, whether in 'theatre' or in 'life.'"⁴³

In Europe, the usages and understandings of theatricality have developed along a divergent path than in the Anglo-American context. Thus, the term evokes a different set of associations for theorists. According to Reinelt, while Anglo-American thinkers tend to "embrace performance and performativity as central organizing concepts, European theorists have stressed theatricality."⁴⁴ Erika Fischer-Lichte traces a history of theatricality in German theatre studies that draws from the work of Max Herrmann and Nikolai Evreinov. Unlike his contemporaries at New York University and Northwestern University in the United States, Herrmann considers the process of embodiment, and not the text, as central to the theatrical experience. Fischer-Lichte writes how this embodiment "had to be experienced and empathized with by other bodies, those of the audience, in each unique manifestation of the art."⁴⁵ A performance, therefore, results from the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators, which creates a relationship of co-subjects that contributes to the production and reception of meaning.⁴⁶ As Fischer-Lichte notes, Herrmann's definition of performance depends on "the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators and their physical actions. This dynamic and ultimately wholly unpredictable process precludes the expression and transmission of predetermined meanings; the performance itself generates its meanings."⁴⁷ Perception becomes the means of interpretation for the

spectator. Instead of being instigated by the dramatic text, the audience's participation is an experience based what Fischer-Lichte describes as "synaesthetic perception, shaped not only by sight and sound but by physical sensations of the entire body. The audience responds not only to the actors' physical actions but also to the behavior of the other spectators."⁴⁸ Placing emphasis on the materiality of the body increases the ambiguity of the event, moving away from consensual interpretations and towards dissensus. Fischer-Lichte argues that since the eloquence of the body is "not realized according to a given code, the process of meaning generating referring to its elements (gestures, postures, movements) was open to different results depending on the different presuppositions of each spectator."⁴⁹

Fischer-Lichte focuses attention on embodied action in the experience of theatre as a social event, while also emphasizing "the semiotic processes of transforming materials (bodies and objects) into signs of signs."⁵⁰ While theatricality can be applied to theatre, as well as processes in culture and in everyday life, she "wants to keep from blurring them together."⁵¹ Maintaining this distinction is important for emphasizing the ubiquities of the theatrical as a mode of analysis. Unlike everyday life, Fischer-Lichte argues: "theatre turns out to be a field of experimentation where we can test our capacity for and the possibilities of constructing reality."⁵² By placing emphasis on theatrical processes as opposed to content, Fischer-Lichte's definition of theatricality provides an effective means of deconstructing Hirschhorn's spectacle.

This approach to theatricality treats the stage as a *Spielraum*, which some scholars, including Heidegger and Benjamin, refer to as a free space or room-for-play.⁵³ Josette Féral argues that theatre offers an opportunity to witness actions in an out-of-the-ordinary context, functioning as a “revelatory force.” As such: “[theatre] becomes an important cognitive tool where the messages it transmits have important conceptual consequences. Theatre permits the interpretation of a world not easily interpreted by classical categories.”⁵⁴ Much like Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt*, the theatre allows for material and social relations to be made evident as constructed, and therefore alterable. Relations are transformed into aesthetic gestures—offering opportunities for strife and play that may otherwise not be possible.

In contrast to the Anglo-American treatment of the term, I stress theatricality as a mode of visual perception along with an emphasis on, as Reinelt states, “the body and on verbal, visual, auditive, and gestural signs performed in front of an audience, which is a co-creator of meaning.”⁵⁵ Returning to *Crystal of Resistance*: the work provides an immersive experience, overwhelming the senses through its massive accumulations and the artist's manipulation of the space. It is disorienting and confusing, but also grounding since it makes the spectator aware of her body's presence in place as opposed to taking these qualities for granted. As Fischer-Lichte notes, “Spectators do not merely witness these situations; as participants in the performance they are made to physically experience them.”⁵⁶ In her analysis of Marina Abramovic’s 1975 performance *Lips of Thomas*, she emphasizes how theatrical events are distinctive situations in that the audience is

“suspended between the norms and rules of art and everyday life, between aesthetic and ethical imperatives.”⁵⁷ The gap that theatrical events open up provides an alternative space for experiencing and contemplating the practices of everyday life from an embodied, aesthetic perspective. In *Lips of Thomas*, Abramovic partakes in acts of self-harm that are typically considered unacceptable according to some twentieth-century social norms. Up until the end of the work, the audience witnessed as Abramovic performed self-flagellation, cut into her skin with a razor, consumed large quantities of wine and honey, and lay down on a cross made of blocks of ice. It was only during this last action, after thirty minutes of being on the ice, that the audience intervened, removing the artist from the cross and covering her with coats. The unanticipated audience actions brought an end to the performance, much to the artist’s dismay, as she intended to be on the ice until a radiator had melted it. This is not the first time nor the last that Abramovic would incorporate acts of self-harm into her work that could potentially be fatal, thereby resulting in audience intervention. In fact, the core of Abramovic’s practice is based on testing the limits of her body through such actions. Fischer-Lichte posits Abramovic’s work as significant in the slippage she creates between the roles of artist and audience, resulting in situations that transform the spectators into actors:

Such a performance eludes the scope of traditional aesthetic theories. It vehemently resists the demands of hermeneutic aesthetics, which aims at understanding the work of art. In this case, understanding the artist's actions was less important than the experiences that she had while carrying them out and that were generated in the audience. In short, the transformation of the performance's participants was pivotal.⁵⁸

Abramovic was not the first artist to evoke these types of transformation in her audience, as this was a shared goal of Futurist *seratas*, Dada-soirées, and Surrealist “guided tours.”⁵⁹ However, as opposed to these other examples where spectators were provoked into action through bullying and deliberate shock, unfolding in a manner dictated by the parameters of the situation as directed by the artists, Abramovic’s intents are more uncertain, resulting in actions that she may not have predicted, as the spectator is moved to protect her bodily integrity.⁶⁰ Moreover, Abramovic’s performances operate in a feedback loop, or what Fischer-Lichte refers to as autopoietic systems that are “simultaneously producers and products, circular systems that survive by self-generation.”⁶¹ Here, art is treated as an event and self-organizing system, as opposed to an autonomously created work of art that “continually receives and integrates into that system newly emerging, unplanned, and unpredictable elements from both sides of the loop.”⁶² Fischer-Lichte emphasizes the interactions of participants in a performance, which includes performers and spectators, arguing, “Performances are generated and determined by a self-referential and ever-changing feedback loop. Hence, performance remains unpredictable and spontaneous to a certain degree.”⁶³

As noted in his artist statement, Hirschhorn welcomes this type of interactivity. While he creates a fixed form through the installation, his philosophy is rooted in the conviction that art is resistance, a concept he associates with the words "Headlessness, Hope, Will, Madness, Courage, Risk, Fight."⁶⁴ In order to evoke the sensations that move the spectators to act,

Hirschhorn states: "I want to work in necessity, in urgency, and in a panic. [...] I want to work in over-haste, I want to work in headlessness and I want to work in panic. I want to work with the precarious and in the precarious."⁶⁵ He translates these sentiments into experience through his handling of the materials and creating a form that induces emotional responses in his spectators. His role becomes that of the director, negotiating in absentia with his performers, the spectators, who move through the staged event he creates. Thus, his presence is deferred as the architect of liminal experience, attempting to provoke ambivalence in his audience, though not directing them how to respond to the emotions he stirs up. Hirschhorn considers the potential of art offering opportunities for constructing new realities. He states:

My work can only have effect if it has the capacity of transgressing the boundaries of the "personal," of the academic, of the imaginary, of the circumstantial, of the context and of the contemplation. With *Crystal of Resistance* I want to cut a window, a door, an opening, or simply a hole, into reality. That is the breakthrough that leads and carries everything along [...]. With my work *Crystal of Resistance* I want to give a form that creates the conditions for thinking something new.⁶⁶

This hole into reality is the theatrical event orchestrated by the artist. Here, he defers the gesture of political action onto the spectator who holds responsibility both within the installation and upon re-entering the world.

In addition to the relationship of the spectator to the work, the institutional context of its presentation informs uptake. Considering the continued significance of the national pavilion system, Hirschhorn and his work must be read in the context of the nation that he represents. A Biennale national pavilion, like a

nation, is a politicized space. Whatever relations that take place in this space, whether intended to be neutral or not, are going to be politically charged. However, Hirschhorn does not perceive the work in this manner and explicitly states that it can be "shown at a different location, in a different city, in a different country, or on a different continent."⁶⁷ Instead, he sees the pavilion as a shell that contains the work. While Hirschhorn claims not to concern context in the execution of the work, that does not negate the influence of the national pavilion on the work's reception. We can consider Hirschhorn's gestures involved in creating *Crystal of Resistance*—constructing an intricate, non-linear database of objects and images for the spectator to decipher—in relation to Switzerland's role in international relations.

Switzerland and Hirschhorn—Staging Politics

The Swiss Confederation, which is a federal republic consisting of twenty-six cantons, has a long history of neutrality and has not participated in an international war since 1815. Switzerland did not participate in the fighting of the two world wars that ravaged its European neighbors in the twentieth century. Nor did it become a full member of the United Nations until 2002, even though Geneva houses the second biggest center of the organization. This tradition of neutrality when it comes to international politics, particularly armed conflict, makes the Swiss Pavilion seem like an unlikely site to come across the politically charged content of Hirschhorn's installation. At the same time, Switzerland has functioned as a site where political actions take place, such as the formation of the League of Nations after World War I. Like Switzerland, Hirschhorn's installation

functions as a space where the data are made available and a place where political and social relations can occur, providing a site for political action to take place. In addition, the artist, like Switzerland, functions as a host for this sort of dialogue.

However, even though both Hirschhorn and Switzerland invite participation while retaining a distance, both are highly invested in the outcome of the relations that take place. Even though Switzerland is not a member of the European Union, the country is heavily invested in international politics and economic affairs, particularly those surrounding Western Europe. Switzerland may maintain a detached stance from various political and economic relations and entanglements, but it is not completely disengaged from the process. Hirschhorn's self-described position in relation to his art, as presented in his artist's statement, follows a similar behavior pattern as Switzerland does in terms of international relations. Like Switzerland, Hirschhorn creates a space that invites an expression of the spectators' ideologies and may reveal these systems while allowing the artist to take a step back. This pavilion functions as a *Spielraum* for the staging of political and aesthetic strife and play.

An analysis of my emotional response to the work makes clear that the work evokes an empathy and ideologies commonly associated with the "white-savior industrial complex." Teju Cole popularized this phrase in his response to the *Kony 2012* viral video, produced by Jason Russell and Invisible Children. This video intended to garner popular support for the arrest of Joseph Rao Kong, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. *Kony 2012* rapidly became one of the most viral videos in YouTube history when it was launched March 5, 2012,

bringing attention to issues that at that moment have been pushed to the side of the US foreign policy table. It also promoted a range of critics to speak up about how Uganda is portrayed as “infantilized” and unable to determine its future as a sovereign nation without the assistance of outside forces in the form of NGOs and religious missionaries.⁶⁸ Cole originally posted the phrase “white-savior industrial complex” in a series of Twitter messages, which he later reproduced and expanded upon in an article published in *The Atlantic*:

From Sachs to Kristof to Invisible Children to TED, the fastest growth industry in the US is the White Savior Industrial Complex. [...] The white savior supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening. [...] The banality of evil transmutes into the banality of sentimentality. The world is nothing but a problem to be solved by enthusiasm [8 Mar 12].⁶⁹

In turn, scholars have picked up the phrase "white-savior industrial complex," while also considering its implications for humanitarian action. They describe how *Kony 2012* and the actions of Invisible Children are involved in a larger trend where humanitarianism is repackaged as commodity activism and “clicktivism.”⁷⁰ Commodity activism is a recent incarnation of the capitalist economy and humanitarianism that results from the circumstances of neoliberalism, digital consumerism, and branding. Political and social strife is transformed into business opportunities. In the introduction to a collection of essays examining the topic, Sarah Banet-Weiser and Roopali Mukherjee define the term “commodity activism” as happening when social activism, which traditionally has been considered “outside” the official economy, is “harnessed, reshaped, and made

legible in economic terms.”⁷¹ Moreover, according to the authors, social action can be shaped into a marketable commodity.

Melissa Brough argues that recently, humanitarian visual culture, which formerly emphasized realistic spectacles of suffering and "sympathy-worthiness," are now being associated with pop culture spectacle: "the earnestness of 'real' portrayals of suffering is being matched with—or even supplanted by—more lighthearted, postmodern pastiche and youth culture aesthetics, and glamorized or playful representations of the humanitarian donor-as-consumer."⁷² Through this process, the identity of the beneficiary is supplanted by the identity of the donor, which has become increasingly relevant in the age of commodity activism when the public "is increasingly asked to buy into humanitarianism and adopt it as part of their individual and collective consumer identities."⁷³ She posits Invisible Children at the helm of this trend. Building upon Cole's and Brough's critiques, Lars Waldorf describes how the video is calling its viewers to action in order to arrest and prosecute the former dictator Joseph Kony through military action, summarizing the campaign as "human rights on steroids."⁷⁴ By minimizing Ugandans to the role of voiceless victims, *Kony 2012* turns to tweeting celebrity activists and US-based "clicktivists" as those who can instigate change in these circumstances. A "clicktivist" can be described as a person who participates in social causes by means of social media like Facebook or Twitter. On the one hand, this method is celebrated as a means of spreading knowledge and enlightening people in order to bring them to action. It also shortens the gap between knowing and taking action. Waldorf states: "The *Kony 2012* video

invites viewers to act immediately by sharing the video, signing a pledge, contacting policymakers and celebrities, and ordering the ‘action kit.’ All it takes are a few clicks.”⁷⁵ Critics of this approach, including writer Malcolm Gladwell, relegate clicktivism to “slacktivism,” as it motivates people to participate in simple actions they are already doing, such as surfing the web, as opposed to making the actual sacrifices necessary to instigate change.⁷⁶ It is important to note that not all uses of social media can be dismissed as such. In certain cases, the actions of social networks result in real change. As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, social media played a significant role in the Arab Spring uprisings of early 2011.

Reading *Crystal of Resistance* through this lens effectively reveals the shifts of social activism through neoliberalism that have given rise to “white-savior industrial complex” and videos like *Kony 2012*. Juxtaposing consumer products with images encapsulating the pain and suffering of victims of violence visually brings together what already has been occurring in the neoliberal economy with the rise of commodity activism. Violence against others is something to be consumed as one would any other commodity. Hirschhorn’s aesthetic also evokes the postmodern mash-up of *Kony 2012*, though intentionally exaggerated to an overwhelming degree. The towers of television screens containing videos of a hand scrolling through violent images on a iPad resonates with the act of viewing and sharing these types of images on the Internet, moving at a speed so rapid that the image changes before the brain has time to register its implications.

Hirschhorn's bombardment of the senses resonates with twenty-first-century "clicktivism," though instead of being viewed on the safety of a computer screen, the experience unfolds as a theatrical event in the safety of a Biennale pavilion. Even though Hirschhorn's installation reveals the neoliberal commodification of activism, it is also implicated in this system, as the Venice Biennale participates in the transnational art economy. This apparent paradox does not mean the work should be dismissed as hypocritical or ineffective. Banet-Weiser and Mukherjee point out that commodity activism is rife with such contradictions, and to participate in either "uncritical exuberance" or "blanket condemnation" is futile:

Instead, we situate commodity activism within its larger historical contexts, its emergence over time revealing the vexed and contradictory means by which individuals and communities have marshaled the ideological and cultural frameworks of consumption to challenge, support, and reimagine the political and social dynamics of power.⁷⁷

My reading of *Crystal of Resistance* is based on this model that neither attempts to condemn nor celebrate the outcome of actions. Rather, I am interested in the gestures involved in the production and uptake of the work. In this instance, Hirschhorn promotes a liminal experience in the spectator as a means of shocking her into action. Erika Fischer-Lichte describes the liminal experience as follows:

The state of betwixt and between, the experience of a crisis, is primarily realized as a physical transformation, in other words a change to the physiological, energetic, affective, and motoric state. A liminal state or crisis may also be induced by the conscious realization of physical change. Strong emotions triggered in the perceiving subject when confronted with sudden appearances in the space fall under this category [...] strong emotions bear the

largest responsibility for triggering impulses to intervene and create a new set of norms for the acting subject.⁷⁸

Instead of putting the spectator in a position of comfortable reception, a liminal experience evokes emotional and physical uncertainty—pity, fear, and horror—sentiments associated with Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, functioning as a certain kind of critical theatricality. With *Crystal of Resistance*, the objects and images may provoke sentiments of empathy and a desire to act, but the artist never directs the spectator how to respond. The strife simulated through the play of aesthetic gestures may stimulate strife and conflict in the spectator. The response in the spectator may be visceral—evoking sensations of physical disgust. As such, Hirschhorn intends to activate the spectator, who first decides how to engage with the work: how to move through it, where to proceed, how long to remain, how far to go, and so on. The next series of actions takes place when the spectator leaves the installation. If she cannot intervene in the physical form of the installation (for a work of Biennale art, intervening with the installation constitutes vandalism), then she can take actions in response to what the installation reveals, which includes the commodification and spectacle of suffering informed by neoliberalism in the twenty-first century.

The specificities of this outcome are not necessarily of interest, since the purpose of the work is to introduce a state of emotional ambivalence to destabilize the subject through a liminal experience. Hirschhorn asserts that he is not a “political artist,” rather an artist who “makes art politically.”⁷⁹ Grant Kester describes how there is a detachment associated with this approach:

Instead of seducing the viewer, the artist's task is to hold him at arm's length, inculcating a skeptical distance (defined in terms of opacity, estrangement, confusion, or ironic distanciation) that parallels the insight provided by critical theory into the contingency of social and political meaning.⁸⁰

By providing this space for the spectator, the author invites dialogic exchange through experience of the installation.

While Kester may be dubious of Hirschhorn's distinction, the artist's assertion corresponds to what Jacques Rancière has recently termed the aesthetic regime of art making.⁸¹ According to Rancière, the installation functions as a quintessential aesthetic regime work of art. Rancière states:

The device of the installation can also be transformed into a theatre of memory and make the artist a collector, archivist, or window dresser, placing before the visitor's eyes not so much a critical clash of heterogeneous elements as a set of testimonies against a shared history and world.⁸²

Hirschhorn attempts to provoke his spectator into action by incorporating a range of materials, including text, photographic images, video, and consumer goods. These intentions are not directly tied to the materials he uses, but how he uses them. Rancière continues:

Installation art thus brings into play the metamorphic, unstable nature of images [...] they are interrupted, fragmented, reconstituted by a poetics of the witticism that seeks to establish new differences of potentiality between these unstable elements.⁸³

Working as an artist in the aesthetic regime, Hirschhorn does not make political art, since to do so would be to create art that imitates politics, and therefore functioning as part of the representative regime. Instead, Hirschhorn makes art

politically, taking advantage of the primacy of expressiveness of the aesthetic regime. According to Steve Corcoran, this means "that language or images of the world are now used as poetic powers and ends in themselves, beyond any mimetic function."⁸⁴ Hirschhorn's art does not replicate politics, but participates in politics, hence his interest in creating a liminal experience for the spectators as a means of provoking them into action.

In this context, Hirschhorn's decision to include the quotes by Édouard Glissant makes sense. Celia Briton analyzes Glissant's use of the term "opacity," noting that he considers respect for the "Other" as including respect for "the 'opacity' of the Other's difference, which resists one's attempts to assimilate or objectify it."⁸⁵ When Glissant states: "We must fight and against transparency everywhere," he is arguing against the assimilation and objectification of the "Other." Britton points out how Glissant treats opacity as a right when he states "Demand for all the right to opacity," which he equates simply with freedom in *Le discours antillais*—one of the books listed on Hirschhorn's reference list.⁸⁶ Hirschhorn's inclusion of the quotes by Glissant articulates the position of the artist in conjunction with the ideas and relations that his work provokes. Instead of replicating colonialist gestures of assimilation and objectification, which is a risk with present-day commodity activism, Hirschhorn introduces Glissant's post-colonial ideas as a warning to spectators. Challenging the Enlightenment notion that "if only people knew, they would act accordingly,"⁸⁷ the artist creates an installation that provokes, but does not qualify, a spectator's ideological response. Hirschhorn is not trying to clarify or elucidate, but to confuse and antagonize,

creating a distance between the spectator and the people portrayed in the images. Hirschhorn creates visual art that function as political gestures, with emphasis placed on process as opposed to particular ideological ends. The effectiveness of his work relies on the introduction of strife and conflict, replicating the conditions of neoliberalism.

The above reading of Hirschhorn's *Crystal of Resistance* at the 2011 Venice Biennale as not only an installation, but also a theatrical event, emphasizes physical and bodily qualities of its reception. Even though in this instance the receiving subject is placed in the role of spectator, spectators present at the Venice Biennale are also typically tourists of the city. The designation tourist/spectator is used to describe this particular breed of recipient, as behaviors of both types of subject are key to understanding the theatricality of the Biennale and its relationship to the city of Venice.

Tourist/Spectator

When it comes to understanding the interplay of tourist and spectator behavior at the Venice Biennale, Richard Schechner's definition of restored behavior provides a useful guide. He states:

Restored behavior is living behavior treated as a film director treats strips of film. These strips of behavior can be rearranged or reconstructed; they are independent of the causal systems (social, psychological, technological) that brought them into existence [...] The original “truth” or “source” of the behavior may be lost, ignored, or contradicted—even while this truth or source is apparently honored and observed [...] restored behavior is the main characteristic of performance.⁸⁸

Some Biennale attendees are not merely tourists, nor are they merely spectators. Instead, the actions of this particular type of subject can be considered a combination of the two. At times, the institutional structure of the Venice Biennale will emphasize certain behaviors over others, resulting in a performance that is comprised of restored behavior that is also in flux, depending on the context of the experience. For example, viewing work in the Arsenale, where the galleries easily flow into each other, the witness can behave more like a spectator in a museum. Here, the galleries are withdrawn from the urban scene, and since this location requires a ticketed entry, everyone present in the space presumably is there to view work. In contrast, exploring the offsite pavilions scattered throughout the city of Venice results in actions that emphasize the tourist behaviors due to the integration of the galleries into the Venetian cityscape. When experiencing work in offsite pavilions, the spectator can escape the tourist scene momentarily by entering the gallery but is shortly reinserted into the masses. The experiences of these pavilions are truncated compared to the Arsenale or even the Giardini, where the galleries are presented in a specialized context, isolated from the overall tourist matrix. Moreover, even for a single subject, the mixture of tourist and spectator restored behaviors will vary depending on what is demanded by the context.

Compared with other types of art spectators, there are a number of notable qualities that differentiate the Biennale spectator as unique. Just as the biennial has created a particular venue for the viewing of art and a particular means of experiencing it, it also developed its own type of viewing audience. Theorist Boris

Groys argues that large-scale exhibitions, including biennials, triennials, documentas, and manifestas, are not made primarily for commodities in an art market. Rather, "All these big exhibitions, in which so much money and energy is invested, are not made primarily for art buyers, but for the large mass, for the anonymous visitor who will perhaps never buy an artwork."⁸⁹ That is not to say that the market has no role or influence on biennial art; rather, Groys argues that the primary purpose of these works is not for commodification. Groys points out that the emphasis on contemporary art as installations and events in public spaces meant to attract "people who have no interest or not enough money to buy art"⁹⁰ is a notable quality of biennials and other large-scale exhibitions. Recognizing that the biennial spectator is part of a visitor collective that participates in theatrical experiences as opposed to investigating a work for potential purchase is important to note. While something similar can be observed of museum attendees, the massive scale introduced by a city-wide biennial trumps any museum in terms of what can be experienced spatially and temporally.

These qualities of time and space are also what differentiate the biennial spectator from other types of art viewers. Spacing out large-scale exhibitions with a gap of two, three, or even five years is an intentional move on behalf of organizers, which Groys identifies as a "biennial rhythm [that] reflects accurately enough the time span between nostalgia and forgetting."⁹¹ A biennial presents an interesting balance between historicity and variability. Historical structure and consistency through institutionalization has resulted in the longevity, success, and recognition of the Venice Biennale. Groys argues that this has created "a niche

market, a specific identity, reputation, and prestige that can place it on the map of the world and the art world alike."⁹² History is what lends legitimacy to the Venice Biennale, but it is the temporal quality of the exhibits that attracts spectators to experience the work for a limited time only. Caroline Jones states: "The biennial, despite its manifestly repetitive nature, was intended to instantiate the freshly renewing and unprecedented."⁹³ The interplay between temporality and historicity functions as a draw for spectators, contributing to the appeal for travelers willing to make the financial investment of making the trek, but also invites future opportunities for biennial experience that will be distinctive from previous trips. In other words, the temporary format of the Biennale consistently invites spectators to return at regularly scheduled intervals that unfold over time—a strategy that evokes both short- and long-term investment and payoff.

As noted, Biennale spectators also tend to be tourists. As with other practiced social behaviors, the actions of the tourist are a type of performance. There are certain gestures and actions that are considered acceptable for tourists, including staring, pointing, wandering aimlessly, photographing strangers, stopping and staring abruptly, etc., which would be treated as rude or inconsiderate in other contexts. These behaviors have developed and are not unique to particular individuals, but have come to characterize tourists as part of their performances and rituals. When it comes to Venetian tourism, the performance behavior of tourists is informed by the city's urban topography as well as its historical legacy as a travel destination, both of which contribute to the continued appeal of the city for foreigners. As with the Biennale pavilion, a

tourist destination constitutes a theatrical event—a performance context where the modes of behavior are made visible as such.

Various scholars have considered tourism through the lens of performance. According to Michael Haldrup and Jonas Larsen, a “performance turn” in tourist research and theory became popular in the 1990s. They state:

The performance turn highlights how tourists experience places in multisensuous ways that can involve multiple bodily sensations: touching, smelling, hearing, and so on. Tourists encounter cities and landscapes through corporeal proximity as well as distanced contemplation. Metaphorically speaking, in addition to looking at stages, tourists step into them and enact them corporeally.⁹⁴

Instead of focusing on the gaze, or what tourists perceive, understanding tourism as performance places greater emphasis on the behaviors and interactions of tourists within a particular place. Tourists are not reduced to passive consumers, but as with the spectators described by Fischer-Lichte, they are treated as active participants in the production of meaning. In fact, Haldrup and Larsen seek to define a model of tourism that resonates with Fischer-Lichte’s autopoietic system: “We need a circuit of performance model that blurs the distinction between production (choreographing) and consumption (acting) and instead see them as interrelated and overlapping in complex ways.”⁹⁵ Tourists are involved in the modes of production that give rise to tourist places, which include the practices of consumption.

As one of the forerunners of the performance turn in tourism, Dean MacCannell articulates how the “tourist may be involved in the production of culture by his movements, markings, deployment of souvenirs, and, of course, the

creation of entire environments for his pleasure.”⁹⁶ Through consumption, the tourist helps inform the specificities of the place in order to attract others, as the local economy becomes intertwined with the spending habits of these temporary visitors. MacCannell bases his reading of tourism as performance on the dramatological sociology of Erving Goffman. In *The Presentation of Self of Everyday Life*, Goffman uses theatre as a metaphor for human behavior. Goffman proposes structural division of social establishments into “front-region” and “back-region”:

When one’s activity occurs in the presence of other persons, some aspects of the activity are expressively accentuated and other aspects, which might discredit the fostered impression, are suppressed. It is clear that accentuated facts make their appearance in what I have called a front region; it should be just as clear that there may be another region—a “back region” or “backstage”—where suppressed facts make an appearance.⁹⁷

MacCannell uses this model as a means of describing how tourists seek an authentic, or “back-stage” experience of a city, when in actuality they are presented with a “front-region” presentation of “staged authenticity.”⁹⁸

In a critical response to this analysis, Haldup and Larsen argue that MacCannell presents tourist experiences as stage illusions and subsequently inauthentic. In contrast, they propose, “all cultures and places are constructed through performances and connections with other places and therefore in a sense [are] contrived or inauthentic; they are fabrications in the sense of something made.”⁹⁹ Tourist actions constitute material relations both in the visited site and even after the tourist leaves through the telling of tales and publication of

experiences, increasingly on Web 2.0 social networking sites, photo sharing sites, and online travel communities. According to Haldrup and Larsen:

The performance turn acknowledges that in the act of consuming, tourists turn themselves into producers; they create, tell, exhibit, and circulate tales and photographs that produce, reproduce, and violate place myths that tourism organizations have designed and promoted.¹⁰⁰

Instead of restricting the analysis of the tourist experience to a particular time and place, Haldrup and Larsen attempt to extend the discussion across multiple sites, including exploring how tourists integrate travel experiences into their everyday lives while continuing to inform the meaning of a place.

Even though tourism is interconnected with everyday experiences, to be a tourist is still considered a privileged subject position. This privilege extends from the tourist's status as a temporary visitor, with tourism qualifying as voluntary travel, which entails that a tourist has the social and financial means in order to travel for leisure.¹⁰¹ At the same time, MacCannell argues that the motivation for most tourists to travel is related to desire for deeper involvement in culture and society.¹⁰² Tourist travel activities, especially sightseeing, allows for a kind of involvement with social appearances, allowing the tourist to construct a totality out of disparate experiences.¹⁰³ Unlike other forms of twentieth and twenty-first century travel, including voluntary and involuntary migrations, the tourist maintains only a temporary association with a place and also has the options and means to leave at any point. Even though, as Haldrup and Larsen make evident, tourists' actions participate in material relations that constitute place, we cannot

disregard that a tourist is by definition an outsider and privileged subject whose actions are inevitably made visible, or in other words, theatrical. Instead of considering these qualities as promoting performance as a “deception, a trickster mode of false impressions,” as Haldrup and Larsen put forth, I treat the theatricality of tourism in the same terms as Fischer-Lichte and Féral perceive theatricality in art—as an opportunity for the constructing of alternate realities.

Some artists, such as Santiago Sierra, take advantage of the particularities of the Venice Biennale tourist/spectator, intentionally playing with the overlap of these roles. Sierra participated in the Biennale both in 2001, as part of the Arsenale exhibit, and in 2003 as the representative for the Republic of Spain. He is recognized for his controversial scenarios where he pays people to participate in degrading acts, such as *Ten People Paid to Masturbate* (2000), *160 cm Line Tattooed on Four People* (2000), and *Eight People Paid to Remain in Cardboard Boxes* (1999). Typically the participants in his works come from impoverished social circumstances, leading to questions of exploitation that perpetuates the social conditions of his participants, as Sierra receives commissions from galleries throughout the Americas and Europe. As part of the 2001 Biennale, Sierra presented the work *133 Persons Paid to Have Their Hair Dyed Blond in the Arsenale*. The work consisted of paying 133 immigrants 120,000 lire, or some \$60, to dye their hair blond, with the only condition being that their hair was naturally dark. Most participants are illegal-street vendors found throughout the city of Venice and include a range of ethnicities and nationalities, such as Senegalese, Bangladeshi, Chinese, and some Southern Italians. Some vendors,

though not all, are undocumented immigrants. According to Davis and Marvin, these vendors are drawn to Venice because of its high density of tourists and interactive pedestrian environment.¹⁰⁴ Unlike their usual transactions that take place in the public space of the alleys, the hair-dyeing procedure took place behind closed doors at a warehouse situated in the Arsenale during the opening days of the Biennale. After the procedure was complete, the participants would re-enter the city of Venice, with the bleach-blond hair functioning as an identifier of their participation in the work. In this instance, the action challenged the defined exhibition site by having the action closed off to the public in the Arsenale, but then distributed throughout the city of Venice.¹⁰⁵

According to Sierra's website, 200 people were originally scheduled to take part in the work, though this number was reduced to 133. He states:

[This reduction was] due to the arrival of immigrants in a staggered way, making it difficult to calculate with precision how many people had already entered the hall. It was then decided to shut down the entrance and calculate the number by informal count. This caused numerous problems at the door, due to the never-ending flow of people leaving or entering.¹⁰⁶

In this instance, a gesture of exclusion is imposed on the work's participants, who are already considered marginal in Venetian social structure. Even though the restriction placed on the participants was an institutional gesture and not part of the initial intentions of the artist, it reinforces the conventional treatment of illegal street vendors already in place in the city. Even though tourists regularly come across these vendors when walking along the alleys of Venice, their actions are

illegal, and at a moment's notice, the sellers are prepared to grab up their wares and move to another location. Davis and Martin state:

When the police turn up, the lookouts give their warning (usually with a cell phone) and there is a general rout [...] as everyone gathers up his goods with lightning speed, stuffs them into his duffel, and dashes off every which way. In the process, they can bowl over less agile or alert tourists, although some visitors still consider these chaotic moments as sufficiently amusing to make them worth a photograph.¹⁰⁷

Always on the move and functioning in the periphery of the consumer market, though always in plain sight of the tourists, these vendors are excluded from the official Venetian economy and society.

In addition, the action of dyeing their hair blond has a number of racial, social, and cultural implications. First of all, it evokes the history of hair bleaching in Venetian fashion, which has been performed for centuries by natives of all classes and visitors attempting to emulate local styles. The beginnings of this trend are associated with the Venetian artist Titian in the late sixteenth century, as women bleached their hair to mimic the red-gold hair color that appeared in his paintings.¹⁰⁸ In contrast to this tradition, most of the people who participated in Sierra's work are male and darker-skinned. Currently, the act of bleaching the hair or becoming blond in Western culture is associated with a hegemonic definition of the beautiful that is informed by Caucasian standards. Considering that the participants were paid, it can be argued that fashion was not the foremost motivation for the change in hair color, but the implications of the gesture literally highlights these racial and ethnic disparities. At the same time,

the participants blend the experiences of tourists and spectators who happen to come upon the work. By having the participants go back into the city, as opposed to remaining in the officially sanctioned gallery space of the Arsenale, the sellers return to their posts along the tourist paths. Most people who confront these vendors may be unaware that they are participating in a Biennale work of art. Those who are informed of Sierra's action simultaneously experience the roles of tourist and spectator when they come upon a vendor with bleached hair. What once was merely an opportunity for consumerism becomes a moment of aesthetic contemplation, further blurring the roles of tourist and spectator.



Figure 35. Santiago Sierra, *133 Persons Paid to Have Their Hair Dyed Blond*, 2001.

Claire Bishop argues that Sierra produces an "ethnographic realism, in which the outcome or the unfolding of his action forms an indexical trace of the economic and social reality of the place in which he works."¹⁰⁹ She notes how the relations he produces through the performances and installations introduces and

"sustains a tension among viewers, participants, and context."¹¹⁰ This tension is meant to antagonize and confront the spectators, with the intent of preventing complacency or comfort in the experience of perception. This antagonism results from the audience's engagement with the work as an event, as opposed to just arising from the content that Sierra presents. What makes his work so effective in producing tension in the viewer is not just the act of paying clandestine sellers to dye their hair blond, but doing so in the context of a work of art that is part of the prestigious international Biennale. Emphasizing the corporeal, Fischer-Lichte describes how production and reception occur at the same time and place. The levels of audience uptake in receiving this work, from art world experts to US tourists attempting to purchase knock-off Gucci purses from one of Sierra's designated sellers, contributes to the production of meaning of the work.

According to Fischer-Lichte:

The pivotal point of these processes is no longer the work of art, detached from and independent of its creator and recipient, which arises as an object from the activities of the creator-subject and is entrusted to the perception and interpretation of the recipient-subject. Instead, we are dealing with an event, set in motion and terminated by the actions of all the subjects involved—artists and spectators.¹¹¹

Sierra's work introduces the antagonism that inevitably has social implications.

With *133 Persons*, Sierra uses theatrical processes in order to integrate two contradictory economic systems. On the one hand, there is the tourist black market that is infamous for the distribution of cheaply reproduced designer goods. On the other hand, there is the elitist luxury market of the transnational art world. While the former can be considered a poor mimesis of the latter, Sierra collapses

this dichotomy by bringing the two together—now tourists who are purchasing designer knock-offs are in fact participating in an art event that is complacent in the prestigious network of contemporary art. Here, as described by Fischer-Lichte the "performance provides the opportunity to explore the specific function, condition, and course of this interaction."¹¹² It is important to maintain that Sierra's gesture is theatrical, since defining the actions within the institutions of art is what contributes to its material implications.

Sierra regularly uses bodies in his works, and his practice is not unanticipated. As noted in chapter one, Allora and Calzadilla regularly involve delegated performance in their work. Claire Bishop recognized this trend as a manifestation of the “social turn” in contemporary art that became popularized in the 1990s. While Bishop considers delegated performance “as an artistic practice engaging with the ethics and aesthetics of contemporary labor, and not simply as a micro-model of reification,”¹¹³ others, including Grant Kester, challenge it. Kester states:

Artists can now “appropriate” the human body itself. Liberated from its referential function, the body can be employed with the same tactical precision as any other semantic element toward the deconstruction of particular cultural or social discourses, thus neatly eliding the distinction between an image and a living being.¹¹⁴

According to Kester, the living body is reified, placing it on the same level as any other artist’s material. For Sierra, however, Kester’s critique constitutes the effectiveness of his social commentary. In the case of *133 persons*, as with his other works, the pool of participants and the amount these participants are paid

contributes to the form and content of the work. By selecting workers or individuals who are disenfranchised by the mainstream economy and paying them measly wages to perform tasks, Sierra both participates in and critiques these financial relations. As a result, his work causes an ethical discomfort. Bishop observes:

In [Sierra's] 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.¹¹⁵

He manages to highlight how the workers he hires are exploited by exploiting them himself. While Sierra creates a theatrical event, his gestures are performative since they are both self-referential and constitutive of reality. Informed by the institutions of art that give rise to these actions, Sierra's gestures are differentiated from their everyday context as part of a theatrical event. Even when the workers in *133 Persons* return to their positions as participants in the black market, they do not cease to function as participants in Sierra's work, blurring the distinctions between the theatricality of art and the theatricality of tourism.



Figure 36. Santiago Sierra, *Wall Enclosing a Space*, 2003.

Santiago Sierra returns in the Venice Biennale in 2003 as the representative for the Spanish pavilion, when he presented several theatrical gestures that expose and critique the exhibitionism of the Venice Biennale, including *Wall Enclosing a Space* and *Covered Word*. The former work involved sealing off the interior of the pavilion so that it would be inaccessible to visitors. If visitors happened to be carrying a Spanish passport, they were invited to enter the pavilion by means of the back door, where immigration officers at a makeshift “border checkpoint” verified their credentials. Inside, the pavilion contained nothing except remnants from the previous Biennale exhibition. Sierra's gesture directly challenges the performances implied by the pavilion's architecture, and like Hans Haacke in 1993, he renders the building as a site of institutional critique. Presented in conjunction with *Wall Enclosing a Space*, *Covered Word* consisted of using black plastic and masking tape to cover the word “Spain” over

the entrance to the pavilion. His third work as Spanish representative was *Hooded Woman Seated Facing the Wall*. This action took place on May 1, prior to the opening of the Biennale, and was staged without an audience. For this piece, an old woman wearing a black hessian hood sat on a stool facing a corner for an hour. Taken together, these three pieces for the Spanish pavilion are gestures of exclusion. The work introduces barriers and borders in the supposed open, transnational space of the Giardini.¹¹⁶

Considering that Sierra returned only two years after his previous appearance at the Biennale, *133 Persons* still lingers at the periphery of the imagination. In particular, the exclusionary nature of *Wall Enclosing a Space* evokes the unintended exclusion of sixty-seven participants from *133 Persons*. This time, however, instead of the exclusion reinforcing the social relations already at work by targeting illegal vendors, *Wall Enclosing a Space* excludes a significant segment of the Biennale audience, particularly members of the art world. These associations from the external world and previous performances are what Marvin Carlson refers to as “ghosting.”¹¹⁷ He describes how in performance, the “real” and the “illusory” cannot be isolated or disassociated. He states:

The perceptual change involved in the process of framing or ostentation never involves a simple change from viewing an object as part of everyday reality to regarding it as a signifying image. Framing or ostentation adds this function but it does not completely remove the perceptual awareness of the object as an object in the real world.¹¹⁸

In two Biennales just two years apart, Sierra has produced works explicitly derived from the context of Venice and the Biennale while exposing and

challenging the event's material relations and exhibitionism using theatrical processes. The exclusiveness based on national identity inherent to *Wall Enclosing a Space* undermines the purpose of the national pavilion system for spectators. By only allowing Spanish nationals with the appropriate documentation to enter the Spanish pavilion, Sierra is replicating the restrictions that accompany international travel in the twenty-first century. Notably, 2003 is also the year *Stateless Nation*—an installation by Palestinian artist Sandi Hilal and her Italian husband Alessandro Petti that is discussed in the previous chapter—is presented in the Giardini.

Sierra takes the architectural-geometric space of the pavilion and transforms it into a performative space. According to Fischer-Lichte, “Performative space opens up possibilities without defining how they will ultimately be used and realized. Moreover, the performative space can be employed in ways neither planned nor foreseeable.”¹¹⁹ In the Giardini, the ability to freely move between and within national pavilions is one of the benefits of attending the Biennale; it is possible to be exposed to art from different parts of the world without coming up against the restrictions of national boundaries, which contrasts with present-day world travel, where border checkpoints are key sites of exclusion. If traveling to Venice from abroad, the spectator would have to pass through customs, which is a necessary step in the arrival and departure process that is typically truncated from the experience of art spectatorship. As with *133 Persons*, Sierra blurs the experiences of the tourists and spectators within a theatrical context at the Venice Biennale. However, while *133 Persons* incorporates the bodies of clandestine

workers, *Wall Enclosing a Space* relies primarily on the bodies of the spectators. The inclusion or exclusion of spectators from entering the pavilion depends on a person's national affiliations. Through the modification of the architectural parameters of the pavilion and the introduction of entry restrictions through the creation of a checkpoint, Sierra manages to direct the spectators' experience of the work. In Fischer-Lichte's terms, by preventing a majority of spectators from entering the pavilion, Sierra disrupts the autopoietic system of the Venice Biennale. He reveals the structural parameters of the system, which is based on the spectators' ability to move freely in and out of pavilions, but continues to participate in the system, as the work is institutionally sanctioned by the Biennale. The success of the event is dependent on the presence of the spectators, even if just to be turned away at the checkpoint. The effectiveness of *Wall Enclosing a Space* rests in its restrictions and its gesture of exclusion. Grant Kester notes how "large numbers of art world cognoscenti from Europe and the United States were denied entry."¹²⁰ For many critics and spectators, the experience of the work resides in imaginary forays into the pavilion, which has been transformed from a space open to various nationals to examine the work of Spain to a cell restricted to Spanish use only, contradicting the building's intended purpose. Sierra has disrupted the Biennale structure, providing an opportunity for non-engagement, where the art is covered and rendered inaccessible to many spectators, something that also contradicts the open markets of neoliberalism. The bodies of the spectators become the work itself through their inclusion or exclusion in relation

to the space. What defines the space is not the enclosure, but the bodies that do and do not fill it.

Theatricality: Another Perspective

Even though Sierra is Spanish-born and represented Spain in 2003, he works in Mexico City and exhibits predominately in Latin America. The time that Sierra spends working and living abroad arguably influences his processes of art production, meaning that the way performance and theatricality functions in his work may not be consistent with the Anglo-American or continental European models. Juan Villegas offers a non-Western—that is, not European or US—perspective concerning performance and theatricality. Villegas points how the term "performance," as used in conjunction with performance art, has no direct translation into Spanish. Standing on the shoulders of Villegas, Reinelt notes:

The lesson of these cross-cultural misunderstandings includes both a critique of narcissism (the U.S. thinking its own configurations of these issues are the only ways of seeing them) and also a critique of Eurocentrism. [...] The example from the South American hemisphere provides the “Other” view of both first-world positions.¹²¹

Villegas raises valid concerns about the potential misunderstanding of marginal cultures when the strategies of interpretation from hegemonic cultures do not take into account historical and cultural specificities.¹²² Moreover, he suggests that "theatricality" may be more effective in the Latin American context. Villegas states:

I propose that [...] "theatricality" be understood as a means of communicating a message by integrating verbal, visual, auditive,

body, gestural signs to be performed in front of an audience. The perception of the message is intended to be received visually. The message is ciphered according to codes established by the producer's or receiver's cultural systems.¹²³

His emphasis on cultural contextualization and historical conditions is significant, particularly in relation to the Venice Biennale. Since the fall of the Venetian republic, there has been a tendency to slot Venice into the Western, or European, cultural category. However, traveling through the Venetian topography makes evident the undeniable influence of Byzantine and Arabic culture on the development of the city. Treating Venice as yet another Italian—or European—city erases its centuries-long history as an independent republic that thrived on trade between the East and West. Rather, Venice should be treated as a different kind of theatrical space that is appropriately historicized and situated in this context of a cross-cultural meeting place. As such, Villegas's nuanced definition of theatricality can effectively be used to analyze the experience of the tourist/spectator at the Biennale and how this subject contributes to the production of meaning.

Venetian Theatricality

As noted in the beginning of the chapter, Venice forms a physical stage for the Biennale to take place. I am not the first person to read Venice in theatrical terms, as travel writers and novelists have already been doing this for centuries. Referencing Milly Theale, the heroine of Henry James's novel set in Venice, *The Wings of the Dove*, Judith Martin both contributes to and exposes how the city has come to be a stage for foreign and local escapades. She states:

“The thorough make-believe of a settlement”: Such is the eternal lure of that miracle-from-the-swamp, Venice. Refugees from the mainland conjured it up from mud and reeds as they [...] tried to outrun death, in the very palpable form of Attila the Hun. And if the city's mere existence is not preposterous enough, their prosperous descendants had it gilded.¹²⁴

Perpetuating the city's fantastical aura, her use of the terms “preposterous” and “prosperous” in relation to the city's builders is loaded with classism, presenting these inhabitants as garish in the use of their wealth. The reference to “gilding,” a process of applying gold leaf to wood, stone, or metal in order to give an object the appearance of being made of solid gold, supports these sentiments. Even though Martin dedicates her book to explaining her love affair with the city, her language furthers an understanding of Venice as an unreal city, a “make-believe of a settlement.”

Venice's appeal to travelers has not been consistent, as over time the city reinvented itself in order to attract travelers of different sorts. Its history as a tourist destination is full of moments of revitalization, contributing to its theatricality. Once Venice lost its prominence as a trading port, it attempted to attract the cultural travelers of the Grand Tours. According to Davis and Marvin, taking advantage of the “changing intellectual attitudes, a spreading desire for useful experience, and more disposable wealth in Germany, Holland, France, and, above all, England,”¹²⁵ Venice became an obligatory stopping point in the Grand Tour circuit of Italy. What Venice offered, however, was different from other destinations. Davis and Marvin point that even though Venice lacked the standard Italian attractions, “it had different, special qualities that set it off from other

tourist haunts in Italy.”¹²⁶ These included the unique topography of the city and its waterscape, which captivated and bemused tourists centuries ago as it does today. Like a “great cabinet of curiosities,” Venice offered sights and experiences that were made available for the enjoyment of its visitors.¹²⁷ The pastiche of art, architecture, and objects from various cultures, as well as uniquely Venetian hybrids, appealed to foreign travelers. Others visited the Arsenale to witness its legendary ship building process in action. Still others were attracted by the more insidious pleasures Venice offered, including its prolonged Carnival,¹²⁸ the gambling halls, and its legendary courtesans. Increasingly, Venice developed a “carnavalesque” atmosphere. Mikhail Bakhtin describes how the carnival celebrates

[...] temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it mark[s] the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival [is] the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It [is] hostile to all that [is] immortalized and completed.¹²⁹

For numerous travelers, Venice became a place where a young man’s fantasies, which would otherwise be restricted due to social norms at home, could unfold. By the eighteenth century, it was a well-established trope that Venice is a meeting place between East and West, leading to a tendency to Orientalize the republic.

Davis and Marvin state:

This inclination [...] included a tendency among some Grand Tourists to project what were evidently their own vices and desires onto their hosts, allowing themselves, as mere visitors, to pass through this exotic/erotically charged “contact zone” as passive, innocent dabblers, rather than as the debauchers, voyeurs, and libertines that many of them evidently were.¹³⁰

Thus, Venice is also a site where fantasies can be projected, contributing to its theatrical qualities as foreigners suspend their everyday lives on this constructed island in the waterscape.

With the collapse of the Venetian republic in 1797 and the rise of modern tourism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Venice once again transformed in order to welcome the evolving demographics of travelers. Davis and Marvin describe how the arrival of the French and then Austrian occupiers brought an end to Venice's "role as the Fleshpot of Europe, the Vice Capital of the Continent."¹³¹ In attempts to promote a safer and more family-friendly city, gambling and prostitution declined. After a hiatus, Carnival was resurrected in 1880, but only as an allusion to its glory days. The city continues to be a center of cross-cultural exchanges in the twenty-first century. According to Davis and Martin:

With visitors coming from every corner of the globe, Venice might claim to be one of the great multiethnic cities of the post-modern world. Of course, all these transients do not really live there, at least not in the sense of residing and paying taxes; yet in terms of human life and public activity, and certainly from the Venetian point of view, they are permanently there all over town.¹³²

The rise of capitalism and the consumer economy in conjunction with the tourist industries have resulted in the commodification, packaging, and marketing of Venice, further contributing to its imaginary existence. These ideas of Venice are informed by personal and cultural nostalgia, constructing and perpetuating an imaginary construction of the city that is both rooted in, though absent of, the actual.¹³³

This city has an allure that can only be fully appreciated by firsthand exploration. The tourists that seem to constantly fill the Venetian alleys and canals have contributed to the development and interplay what Davis and Marvin define as two parallel realms: “one of determined fantasy, the other stuck in a far too real world of overcrowding, decay, and discomfort.”¹³⁴ In addition, Martin describes how, despite local proclaimed distaste for tourism and its negative effects on the city, including the disrespect for local people and customs, tourism has always played a prominent role in the Venetian economy:

Venice has been in the tourist business almost throughout its history, and exclusively in that business for the last two hundred years. Her entire economy is based on tourism. And for all her complaints, she is good at it. In each era, Venice ingeniously went about providing whatever attractions drew the tourists of the time.¹³⁵

The introduction of the Venice Biennale can be considered as participating in this legacy. As noted, these visitors are not only spectators of the visual arts, but also predominantly tourists, contributing to the Venice’s tourist flow through the consumption and utilization of amenities and accommodations. Biennale director Paolo Baratta compares the art festival to a great wind machine,¹³⁶ but it is also a machine involved in the marketing of Venice as an international center of contemporary art, extending the variety and types of tourists beyond those merely drawn to the architectural and cultural “wonders” of this city of canals.

As noted in chapter two, the physical topography of Venice informs the experience of navigating the Biennale. The merger of these roles brings together the art spectator with a particular type of traveler, creating a unique consumer of

the arts and culture, whose interests, actions, and experiences are specific to the Venice Biennale. This merger is not accidental. Caroline Jones points out the rituals of tourism and pilgrimage were already in place when the Biennale debuted in 1895: “a preexisting set of economies that had witnessed the replacement of the Grand Tour by universal expositions, Crystal Palaces, and world’s fairs complete with imported natives, industrial innovations, exotic goods, and package tours.”¹³⁷ The traveler to Venice during the Biennale can experience both the urban setting and exhibitions of contemporary art. Subsequently, Jones emphasizes how biennial culture is a type of art-as-experience.¹³⁸ The aesthetic experience of the Biennale is informed by Venetian tourism, with its pavilions and other exhibition sites dispersed throughout the city, an urban landscape renowned for the challenges it poses to navigation.

Exploring Venice is unlike visiting any other Italian or European city. There are no cars, no mopeds, and no bicycles. The only ways of transport are on foot or by boat. Davis and Marvin describe how this lack of modern transportation has contributed to the city’s reputation as an enchanted and dreamlike place.¹³⁹ A map, and sometimes a compass, are indispensable for the tourist trying to get around. Martin describes how challenges of navigation can also result in heavy reliance on other people for direction and support: “The topography and system of assigning addresses is so confusing that pedestrians depend on one stranger after another to pass them along to their destinations, and hosts talk their guests in by mobile telephone like Air Traffic Control.”¹⁴⁰ One of the most effective ways to experience the city as a tourist is just to “get lost” without any particular

destination in mind. Getting lost is (in)famously part of the Venetian experience—a unifying tourist experience. Martin states:

Getting lost in Venice is a rewarding experience. Some things are closer than they would seem, some farther away, some are around unfathomable corners, and, quite possibly, the islands that comprise the city regroup themselves like a kaleidoscope when no one is looking.¹⁴¹

Getting lost in Venice is both disorienting and grounding in the sense that it raises awareness of the surroundings. When lost in Venice, one may not have an understanding of exactly where she may be in relation to the city as a whole, but this person will be connected to the environment itself in attempts to propel the body through this place—in other words, this person is “lost in place.” This process is exemplified by an experience I had with a colleague at the 2009 Biennale when attempting to locate one of the offsite US pavilions. That year, the exhibition by US representative Bruce Nauman, *Topological Gardens*, was housed at the official US Pavilion in the Giardini and two off-site pavilions located at Università IUAV di Venezia at the Tolentini and the Università Ca’ Foscari. We went searching for the Università IUAV di Venezia with the assistance of a poorly rendered tourist map that was obtained free at the hotel. After wandering the alleys for some time, it became apparent that we were well off the beaten tourist path, and in fact had no sense of where we actually were located in the city itself. At this point, we were becoming frustrated by our inability to locate the university, and we entered a sandwich shop with the intent of asking for directions. When we asked the shopkeeper where we were, he lifted his hands in the air and laughed, “You are in Venice!” A little taken aback by this

response, we showed him our map and found out that our particular location was not included in the boundaries of this cartographic reproduction of the city. At this point we could only laugh at our predicament, which constituted a quintessential experience for tourists navigating Venice, as the shopkeeper's exclamation emphasized. Even though we did not have a sense of our exact location, our experiences allowed us to form a physical relation with the city itself as we wound our way back and forth, in and out the alleys.

However, not everyone perceives this experience with the same degree of optimism. Depending on the disposition, mood, and physical state of the tourist/spectator at that moment, this experience exists on an emotional spectrum from fun adventure to frustrating inefficiency and even navigational failure. As a result, the offsite Biennale pavilions do not “flow” into each other, as galleries do in a museum. The tourist/spectator travels the alleys and canals of Venice attempting to find particular locations, making the ability to experience the art dependent on the navigational abilities of the spectator. In addition to the challenges that the city's physical topography pose, searching for offsite pavilions commonly means being immersed in the flow of Venetian tourist traffic, which carries its own set of difficulties, especially during the hot summer months of the Biennale. Alleys with high foot traffic can easily become claustrophobic, and so attempts to find alternative, less-traveled routes can take any seasoned navigator off track. It is a common experience to see a pavilion just across a canal, but then get lost trying to find a walkable route there. In the summer, this process is combined with the unobstructed sun reflecting off the water's surface, requiring

regular hydration breaks or rests in the only available shelters: restaurants, bars, and of course, the many shops that inhabit the city.



Figure 37. Maps can be indispensable for locating offsite pavilions. Photograph by EL Putnam.

Not all cultural theorists support reading Venice as theatrical. For example, it is not uncommon to refer to the city as a labyrinth, though this label was not contributed by its indigenous inhabitants, but by foreign visitors. Davis and Marvin problematize this description, arguing that calling a living space a labyrinth carries with it “the implication that here is a construct made deliberately complicated and perplexing, designed to thwart easy movement and communication, and intended to amaze and amuse.”¹⁴² Davis and Marvin go on to state:

Very few people, of course, are likely to think they were born and grew up on a stage set. Foreigners who do experience the city this way, or as a maze waiting to confound them, are really saying less

about Venice's topography than about the fact that they experience it the wrong way round, not as it was built over centuries, as a commercial, industrial, and social site for human use, but as a site for pleasure designed for themselves.¹⁴³

Adding spectacular presentations of contemporary art to the mix only heightens its theatrical qualities. With each recent iteration of the Biennale, more buildings within the city of Venice are being transformed into pavilions as the list of participating nations and collateral events increases. When interpreting the Biennale as theatrical from an Anglo-American perspective, these qualities appear ingenuine, or to an extreme, ineffective. Sociologist Sarah Thornton describes how the "Biennale, set in one of the most beautiful cities in the world, often feels strange and stagy."¹⁴⁴ She quotes collector David Tieger to support the awareness of this exhibitionism: "The Biennale is like a high school reunion where everyone turned out to be a success. It's not the real world."¹⁴⁵ These descriptions place emphasis on the content of the Venice Biennale, as opposed to its processes, and can make it seem easy to dismiss as a falsified and hyped-up version of an art world that is out of touch with reality. This rejection perpetuates the tendency of Anglo-American theorists to prefer the performative to theatrical.

Even though some critics, like Davis and Marvin, speak of Venice's dream-like qualities in terms of inauthentic theatricality, Fischer-Lichte's description of theatricality shows how these processes can be constructive. As a result, there is a "radical subjectification in the process of reception: of experiencing time, of perceiving, of generating meaning."¹⁴⁶ Keep in mind that the subjectively determining conditions will vary from spectator to spectator, and

so will their experiences. The process of reception becomes a process of production where, according to Fischer-Lichte, each "spectator brings forth his/her own performance. The process of reception is realized as a subjective construction of theatrical reality."¹⁴⁷ The "dream world" of Venice is just as much a product of imaginations as it is of the city itself. The implication that there is an authentic and inauthentic Venice, however, is misleading. Instead of treating Venice as a "dream world" or a representation of a more authentic city existing elsewhere, the region's history reveals how Venice has always consisted of theatrical processes as a meeting place for cultural intersection. Its temporary, transient inhabitants, from traders and sailors to tourists and ex-pats, have contributed as much to constructing the reality of Venice as its permanent residents.

From its gilded architecture to its petrified foundations, Venice is a theatrical space. As the examples discussed above and the theories of theatricality forwarded by Fischer-Lichte and Villegas make evident, the Biennale functions as a site where the constitution of realities through the interplay of gestures is made possible in this context. Venetian theatricality is informed by its lengthy history as a site of cultural exchange. Early Venetian architecture and religious ritual were heavily influenced by the Byzantine art, aesthetics, and culture. In her description of Venice at its height of the *Serenissima* republic, Jan Morris emphasizes how people of various ethnicities congregated throughout the city's center:

There were travelers from the east about: Slavs, Greeks, Arabs, Persians, pilgrims of every nation returning from the Holy Land; for another the Venetians themselves, from long association with

eastern countries, had acquired something oriental in their temperament. They were more familiar with the east than any other Europeans. They had been trading for generations with the countries of the fertile crescent, with Egypt, and Persia, and Byzantium itself, and so strong was their taste for orientalia that a century before, the Doge Domenico Selvo had ordered every Venetian merchant ship returning from the east to bring back eastern substances and works of art for the embellishment of the city. The two columns of the Piazzetta were oriental booty. The agate-eyed lion of St Mark was a Syrian chimera. The Patriarchal throne was a superannuated Muslim tombstone.¹⁴⁸

As a mercantile empire, Venice was immersed in trade throughout the Asian, African, and European continents, resulting in an interplay of cultures and ideas. Over time, Venice increasingly became absorbed into the European geographic imagination, first through the increase of European visitors making the Grand Tour, and later as it joined the nation of Italy. At this point, Venetian theatricality would shift as visitors from all over the world came to the city, both as tourists and as participating nations in the Biennale. Theatricality is not inauthentic or disjointed from reality, according to the Anglo-American definition of the term articulated by Michael Fried. Instead theatricality becomes an opportunity to both expose constructions and build realities. For Josette Féral:

Theatricality is a condition in which a certain cleavage in space opens up where the spectator looks to engage and to create the theatrical. Outside of the everyday, or rather a breach in it (*brisure, clivage*), this space of theatricality requires both the gaze of the spectator and the act of the other, but the initiative lies with the spectator. This theatricality is an experience, then, that is not limited to the theatre, but is an aspect of life that appears whenever its minimum conditions are met.¹⁴⁹

Unlike models of the performative that emphasize the role of institutions and their associated authority, as discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation,

theatricality emphasizes the spectator and its role in the production of meaning. The suspension of urban norms by the carnivalesque atmosphere of Venice and the Biennale fosters what Bakhtin refers to as a “special type of communication impossible in everyday life.”¹⁵⁰ Constitutive, aesthetic gestures open a staged space of strife and play—a *Spielraum*—that give rise to other gestures with local, national, and transnational implications.

Chapter 5

Augmented Biennale: The Impact of Digital Navigational Technology on the Venice Biennale

Over the past few years, the presence of digital technology has increased at the Venice Biennale. In this final chapter, I read and compare two different Biennale smartphone¹ navigation apps in order to examine the rising influence of neoliberalism, communication, and information technology on the geopolitical mappings, material relations, and support systems of the event. By juxtaposing the interventionist augmented reality art of Manifest.AR to the iPhone app developed by Christie's auction house for the 2011 Venice Biennale, this chapter explores what happens when the virtual realm is opened up as another site of meaning-making production at the Venice Biennale. While the Christie's app was created as a product associated with the contemporary art market that thrives on the buying and selling of works as commodities, Manifest.AR's augmented reality functions as an uninvited intervention that uses the smartphone as a means of critiquing and revealing the ideological structures of the Biennale. In addition, these apps offer virtual geographies, which extend the *Spielraum* of the Venice Biennale to the potentially infinite terrain offered by binary code. Both examples utilize the technology of smartphones in order to direct the actions of tourist/spectators, but this is where the similarities end. The Christie's app reinforces the implied performances of the Biennale pavilion system by reiterating the pathways and anticipated actions that the official Biennale maps and guides already support. Utilizing the technology of Google maps, Christie's merely

simplifies the navigational process for smartphone use, with added insight from experts that can potentially add to the popularity—and market value—of certain works.

In contrast, Manifest.AR takes a different approach to its utilization of smartphone navigation. Taking advantage of Augmented Reality technology, Manifest.AR introduces works of art that can be viewed on the screen of the smartphone overlaying the display of the camera viewfinder. Spectators are provided with information on these works in order to view them, utilizing GPS technology so the art only appears when the phone is directed towards particular scenes in the physical world. Through the use of smartphones, Manifest.AR introduces an alternative mapping of the Venice Biennale that challenges the implied performances of place while also introducing a series of artworks that are not officially commissioned by the Biennale and can only be viewed in situ. Even though both Christie's and Manifest.AR take advantage of the virtual realm at the Venice Biennale, the juxtaposition of these examples reveals the continued expansion and changing nature of this *Spielraum*, while reinforcing the influence of the art market and potentially opens up new sites of resistance within the Biennale structure.

Digital Guerrillas

In 2011, the artist group Manifest.AR introduced an unofficial exhibition into the Biennale through augmented reality. This exhibition functions as a technologically mediated experience where the spectator uses her iPhone or Droid

to view art in the virtual realm. First the artist creates a 3-D digital object using software such as Maya.² These virtual objects are known as assets, which are assigned a specific GPS coordinate expressed in latitude and longitude. This creates a point of interest, or POI. Accessing the assets requires downloading an augmented reality browser app, such as Layar, onto the smartphone, which then uses geolocation, marker tracking, and image recognition software to launch the appropriate asset that is superimposed over the scene in the camera's viewfinder as if it existed in the physical world. Layar functions as a browser for AR, not unlike Safari is a browser for Internet websites.³ These assets are accessible to anyone who has the appropriate technology and knowledge of the work.

Manifest.AR describes its work as "interventionist public art"⁴ and in the past has included unauthorized projects at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston. The group's membership is not fixed, though there are a number of founding and associate members, including artists Mark Skwark, Tamilo Thiel, John Craig Freeman, and John Cleater. Other artists have contributed works on a part-time basis, including Patrick Lichty, who produced images included in Manifest.AR's Occupy Wall Street interventions. He has also created 3D images for the Yes Men, another artist collective recognized for their political and interventionist practices. The members of Manifest.AR share an interest in creating digital art that functions as public art—accessible to whomever has the technological means to view the work.

For the Venice Biennale, Manifest.AR released an online manifesto.⁵ The group's message seems to explode from the official website of the Venice

Biennale—a visual design that brings attention to the intrusiveness of the work—
which is also emphasized in the text of the manifesto:

The international cyberartist group Manifest.AR wishes to inform the general public, the President, and the Curator of the 54th edition of the Venice Biennial that we are extending the Giardini with extra pavilions. We have constructed these new pavilions using Augmented Reality (AR) architecture and are showing a selection of AR artworks from renowned artists working in this contemporary medium and *new spatial realm*. [...] In order to "challenge the conventions through which contemporary art is viewed" we have constructed virtual AR pavilions directly amongst the 30-odd buildings of the lucky few within the Giardini [...]. The AR pavilions at the 54th Biennial reflect on a rapidly expanding and developing new realm of Augmented Reality Art that radically crosses dimensional, physical, and hierarchical boundaries [emphasis added].⁶

Through the presentation of digital images that overlay the actual, physical space of the Venice Biennale, Manifest.AR creates a remapping of the event that invites the attention and movement of spectators away from officially sanctioned works, offering alternative options for experience.

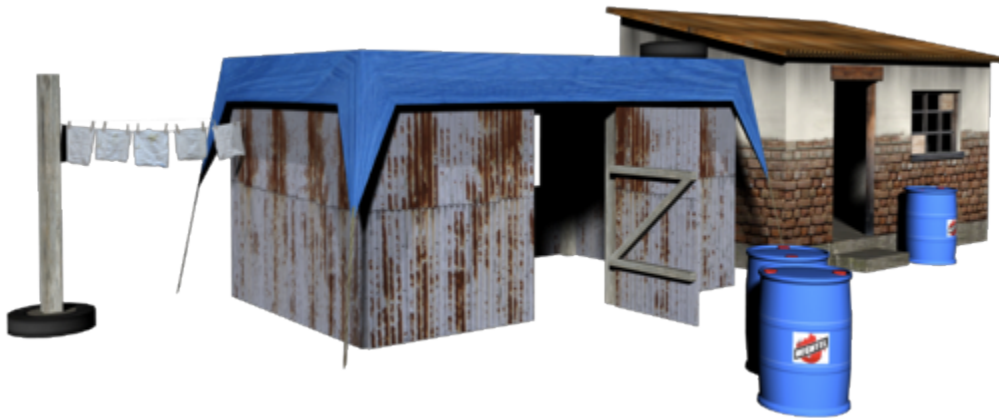


Figure 38. John Craig Freeman, *Water wARs*, 2011, 3D Digital image. Reproduced with permission from the artist.

For the Venice Biennale, John Craig Freeman created *Water wARs*—the “squatters’ pavilion” for undocumented artists and workers found throughout the city. In addition to being a response to the Biennale’s (in)famous pavilion system, the work “anticipates the flood of environmental refugees into the developed world caused by environmental degradation, global warming, and the privatization of the world’s drinking water supply by multinational corporations like Bechtel.”⁷ In *Water wARs*, Freeman designed a 3D image that looks like a temporary shelter, lacking the grandeur of the permanent Biennale Pavilions—though its architecture resonates with the Haitian Pavilion that housed *Death and Fertility*, also present in 2011. The broken windowpanes and rusted paneling add to this look of impoverished desperation, though the added clothesline contributes a quality of resourcefulness and necessity. Even though these are just digital renderings, the building looks “lived in,” contrasting with utopian architectural designs that present renderings of buildings in an idealized state, not as signifiers of abject poverty. The blue barrels labeled with the logo of the Bechtel Corporation emphasize the artist’s political motivations. Bechtel is the largest engineering and construction company in the United States. It began as a railroad-grading operation in Oklahoma Territory during the early twentieth century, and since then has grown into a multinational corporation with an expanded range of services. The company website lists some of the corporation’s “signature projects”: Bay Area Rapid Transit, the Hong Kong International Airport, the Hoover Dam, Hurricane Katrina disaster relief, Iraq reconstruction, controlling the Kuwait oil fires, and the Three Mile Island cleanup.⁸ The brief overview and

vague language provided on the company website barely scratches the surface of the range of Bechtel's increasing influence and multinational reach. This blend of construction projects with disaster cleanup and large-scale industrial renovations does illustrate how, with the rise of neoliberalism, private companies are taking a more extensive role in what was formerly relegated to governmental responsibilities, such as rebuilding the national infrastructure of Iraq.

Considering that refugees were the original inhabitants of Venice, Freeman's project is both reflective of the city's past and a response to current events. Freeman overlays images of the "squatters' pavilion" throughout the city of Venice, including in the Giardini and Venice's most famous public square, Piazza San Marco. *Water wARs*, however, is not limited to the city of Venice. Freeman created the work with the intention that it would spread around the world. Some of the other locations that Freeman has presented the work include DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) in Brooklyn, NY, Lewisburg, PA, and Istanbul in the Republic of Turkey. With each iteration, the work's meaning expands in the creation of a digital network that overlays physical place. The re-utilization of images by Manifest.AR artists takes advantage of digital technology's ability to replicate infinitely, but also becomes a means of preventing the images from acquiring any fixed meaning or interpretative certainty through re-contextualization. Another important quality of this digital work is that even when the event or festival for which the image was presented ends, the work continues to exist in the virtual realm and can be accessed at any

point in time. Like digital versions of graffiti tags, the images of Manifest.AR are both recognizable and modify the *topos* of public space.



Figure 39. John Craig Freeman, *Water wARs* viewed through smart phone at the Giardini, 2011. Reproduced with permission from the artist.



Figure 40. John Craig Freeman, *Water wARs* overlaying Piazza San Marco, 2011. Reproduced with permission from the artist.

Manifest.AR's remapping of physical place is part of a longer history of artistic experimentation. In particular, during the 1950s and '60s, the Situationist International (SI) was actively pursuing the study of "psychogeography," which is described by Claire Bishop as "the study of the effects of a given environment on the emotions and behavior of individuals."⁹ The *dérive*, or goal-less drifting, was the primary means of data gathering for the SI. The intent of these urban

excursions was to increase one's awareness of the surrounding environment. According to Bishop, instead of being an end in itself, the *dérive* was a key means of revealing the material relations and support systems of the urban *topos* in order to “undo and move beyond what they saw as the disciplining, homogenizing and ultimately dehumanizing effect of modernist forms of urban high-rise living, exemplified by the modular architecture of Le Corbusier.”¹⁰ The remapping work of Manifest.AR is foreshadowed by the SI's *dérive* as a means of exposing the hidden structures of social and institutional organization.

Under the influence of Guy Debord and Gil Wolman, the Situationist International emerged from a number of European avant-garde groups active after the Second World War. In 1952, Debord and Wolman had formed the Lettriste International, whose aim was the transformation of everyday life and which perceived the purpose of art not as the production of objects, but as a means of critiquing the commodification of existence.¹¹ Later, the group would join with Danish and Italian artists in 1957 to form SI. Heavily influenced by Marxism and leftist politics, SI reached its peak during the events of May 1968. However, it would soon peter out and eventually dissolve in 1972. SI's relationship to art making would change over time in correlation with shifts in the group's political agenda. From the beginning, the SI was more interested in current events than visual art, which was believed to be distracting from revolutionary activity. Bishop argues that Debord and SI did not intend to subordinate art to politics as numerous scholars have claimed. Rather, she states:

The task of SI was [...] to revive both modern art and revolutionary politics by surpassing them both—that is, by realizing what was the most revolutionary demand of the historic avant-garde, the integration of art and life [...] art is to be renounced, but for the sake of making everyday life as rich and thrilling as art, in order to overcome the crushing mediocrity of alienation.¹²

Even though SI considered their tactics as anti-visual, their methods and ideas would go on to influence radical art makers in subsequent decades. Debord perceived the actions of SI as a cultural practice that would not create new forms, but rather, according to Bishop, be devoted to “‘the existing means of cultural expression’ through the Situationist technique of *détournement*, the subversive appropriation of existing images to undermine their existing meaning.”¹³ Debord writes: “Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can be used to make new combinations.”¹⁴ Even though the actions of SI are the result of a particular historical context,¹⁵ their approaches to interventions and cultural critique remain pertinent in the twenty-first century, though with appropriate modifications to reflect changes in the political and economic climate. During the 1960s, when SI came to prominence, Europe was experiencing the last waning efforts at colonialism, which in France was marked by the end of its official occupation of Algeria in the early 1960s. The consumer economy was growing in France in tandem with other parts of the world, but had not yet experienced the hegemonic influence of neoliberalism that would dominate the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Moreover, interventionist art making in the public realm today is going to call for a different set of tactics than those utilized by the SI. Manifest.AR is at the helm of such efforts with their use of digital technology,

though the lingering influence of SI continues to reside in the background of their efforts.

Arguably, Manifest.AR utilizes digital technology in order to create *détournements*, or the subversive appropriation of images, experienced as twenty-first century versions of the *dérive*. Their work appropriates the landscape of a physical place, though it incorporates digital montages that overlay the scene in order to create alternative perspectives. This appropriation and intervention both defamiliarizes the scene and introduces tension. For the Venice Biennale, Manifest.AR directly responds to the institutional structure of the Biennale in relation to the city in addition to the ideological sentiments expressed in the statements of curatorial director Bice Curiger. Freeman writes:

Our uninvited participation was not bound by nation-state borders, by physical boundaries, or by conventional art world structures. The virtual pavilions at the 54th Biennial reflected on a rapidly expanding and developing new realm of augmented reality art that radically crosses dimensional, physical, and hierarchical boundaries.¹⁶

The introduction of these diversions also leads the spectators along an alternative mapping of the city that is not only revealing, but also engages the spectator to navigate an urban space that may challenge the implied performance of the place.

An important step in Manifest.AR's process involves raising awareness so that people will know how to access their work. Some strategies used by the artists include passing out postcards with a QR code at the physical site. The group also maintains a blog and websites to share information. For the Venice Biennale, they held a common press conference with Simona Lodi and Les Liens

Invisibles of the "Invisible Pavilion," another digital interventionist exhibit that utilizes augmented reality. By taking advantage of various chains of communication in both the physical and virtual realms, Manifest.AR creates a continually growing unofficial network of awareness. After the end of the official exhibit, the group continues to share their work through academic conferences, digital media festivals, press reviews, and other publications. Digital art has an indefinite shelf life—as long as the hyperlinks remain active, the code intact, and the technology functional, the works will remain accessible even in their original context of presentation.

Freeman and the other artists of Manifest.AR take advantage of the fact that the Internet and the virtual realm functions as a public space. "Public" in this context is not meant to be equated with universal or equal access, since there are a number of restrictions concerning accessibility that are inherent to the technology.¹⁷ Rather, the definition of public refers to a common domain that is not privately owned by a specific individual or institution. As a public domain, the Internet increasingly becomes the site where individuals can state viewpoints, participate in unified causes, or express dissent using various blogs, websites, networks, and discussion boards. Many sites contain comments sections that allow users to respond to articles and other posts, extending the discussion both in terms of speed and who can participate in a manner that far exceeds the traditional letter to the editor or radio call-in program. For those who have access to it, the Internet has become a key apparatus in the education and organization of societies. Just as Benedict Anderson describes how the printing press and

increased literacy gave rise to the modern nation-state,¹⁸ the Internet, in association with other developments in communication technology, has contributed to the current era of globalization. Gregory Ulmer argues that the Internet has revolutionized how communication functions and requires a different set of standards than spoken or written media. Ulmer proposes “electracy,” or the quality that is to the digital image apparatus what literacy is to alphabetic print, to be the means by which we engage with and understand the Internet.¹⁹ Instead of leading to a homogenized state of global cohabitation, the Internet functions as a platform around which collective identities can associate in a social sphere, but not without dissensus. It is these qualities that lead Ulmer to describe the Internet as an inhabitable monument.²⁰ He states: “the Internet makes it possible for monumentality to become a primary site of self-knowledge, both individual and collective, and hence a site supporting a new politics and ethics, as well as a new dimension of education.”²¹

Many public squares contain monuments—works of art designed to unify the public through the commemoration of historical events. The pavilions of the Giardini can be considered monuments to each nation’s sovereignty, which one reason why artists such as Haacke and Sierra have effectively transformed pavilion structures into sites of institutional critique. Ulmer proposes, in conjunction with physical monuments, to create electronic monuments in order to bring into awareness what official structures may overlook. Manifest.AR applies these principles by creating electronic monuments on the periphery of the Biennale, providing a platform for testimonies of the institutionally disregarded.

The geographic distribution of these electronic monuments takes advantage of tourists' restored behaviors and redirects it along alternative routes, resulting in a remapping of the Venice Biennale. Ulmer describes how the Internet functions as a "prosthesis of the (political) unconscious by mapping that falls within and outside the lines of the group subject."²² Taking advantage of the electronic apparatuses that are increasingly directing this "society of the spectacle," Manifest.AR can open up alternative routes for the tourist/spectator to take as she navigates the institutional network of the Venice Biennale. These works function as a complement to the physical geographical landmarks, a Derridean parergon that modifies the meaning of the original site. Electronic monuments function as peripheral monuments, which, according to Ulmer, add "functionality to an established [site]. The peripheral is a transitional device, relating literate monumentality to its electrated counterpart."²³ These electronic monuments are created by individuals but are interlinked by the Internet, providing an alternative mapping that traces collective realities of individual actions.²⁴

Art World High-Rollers

While Manifest.AR encompasses a rebellious spirit in its interventionist practices, the Christie's app functions as a marketing tool that ends up enforcing hegemonic material relations of the transnational art market. Appreciating the financial implications of the app requires an understanding of the auction's role in the art market, as well as an overview of how contemporary art acquires monetary value. The app designed by the Christie's auction house helps users navigate the Biennale in the designated areas of the Giardini and Arsenale, as well as locating

pavilions throughout the city. When opened, the app resembles the Google Maps interface upon which it is based. On this map there are icons of various national flags that are used to demarcate pavilions.²⁵ When the flag is clicked, the user is provided with a brief description of the pavilion, directions, and options to save and share the link through e-mail, Twitter, or Facebook. In addition to pavilion location and information, the app also provides locations for places to sleep and eat as well as locations of Biennale events. An “Expert Tip” page provides “insights and tips from Christie’s experts and guests on what to see and do during this year’s Venice Biennale.” Individuals listed include museum directors, curators, representatives from Christie’s including the heads of auctions, as well as the artist Michael Elmgreen, who co-created *Death of the Collector* with Ingar Dragset for the 2009 Biennale.²⁶

According to the Christie’s website, “Christie’s is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise.”²⁷ The auction house was founded in 1786 by James Christie in London, England. Since then, Christie’s has grown to be a prominent institution in the transnational art world, and according to their website, “remains a popular showcase for the unique and beautiful.”²⁸ Christie’s, along with Sotheby’s, controls 98 percent of the world auction market for art. The former holds its major sales of contemporary art twice a year in New York City, in May and November, while the latter holds its auctions three times a year in London during February, June, and October.²⁹ Sociologist Sarah Thornton describes the increased influence that auction sales have on contemporary art’s publicity and circulation: “Now artists can make the

front page of national newspapers simply because their work has achieved a high price at auction.”³⁰ As Christie’s is so financially invested in the contemporary art market, it is no surprise that they would become involved in the Venice Biennale, as this happens to be a prominent site for ramping up the reputations of artists. Closer examination of Christie’s Biennale app—which is available free for download—reveals the significant role that the transnational art world plays in the material relations of the Venice Biennale.



Figure 41. Screenshot of Christie’s iPhone app, specially designed for navigating the 2011 Venice Biennale.

When considered from the market perspective, works of art are understood partially in terms of financial investments. Iain Robertson describes how art can be viewed as a luxury commodity:

[...] an “experience good” that has to be tested or consumed before its true quality is revealed. It is also treated as an “information good,” since so much value is tied to the idea. The acquisition of art, a tangible “consumption good” with “social capital,” is also seen as a positive addiction; the more it is consumed, the more it is desired.³¹

Since the nineteenth century, with the introduction of connoisseurship as a profession, aesthetic judgment and valuation increasingly was informed by its financial value on the art market.³² That is not to say that aesthetics have been completely reduced to or replaced by the market, but it is impossible to discuss material relations at the Venice Biennale, especially from the perspective of Christie’s auction house, without discussing the art market.

From the economist's perspective, the art market trades in something quite distinctive from other commodities, including luxury commodities. Robertson notes how art is made mainly of “cheap raw materials and presented and sold in both the private and public sectors by an underpaid workforce. It enjoys, in short, through the market’s alchemy, extremely high levels of added value.”³³ What can be attributed to this added value is not always clear. Robertson vaguely describes how the “upward and downward shifts in the value of commodities are determined [...] by the commercial and public institutions represented by players working for these institutions.”³⁴ These changes occur gradually and not always uniformly. Robertson outlines a number of factors that play into a work’s value, including the reputation of the artist, where the work was created, cultural tastes, exhibition record, and more.

Robertson's arguments rest on economics and not matters of aesthetics. In his chart illustrating the art market's power structure, aestheticians and scholars provide information for cultural institutions and dealers, but they are treated merely as the gatekeepers of taste. Artists and spectators are not even included in this chart. Derrick Chong points out how "players in the contemporary art market, operating as dealers, critics or curators, have significant roles as intermediaries; moreover, institutions displaying contemporary art also influence taste among non-specialist audiences."³⁵ At the same time, the influence of the artist over a work's value is made minimal.

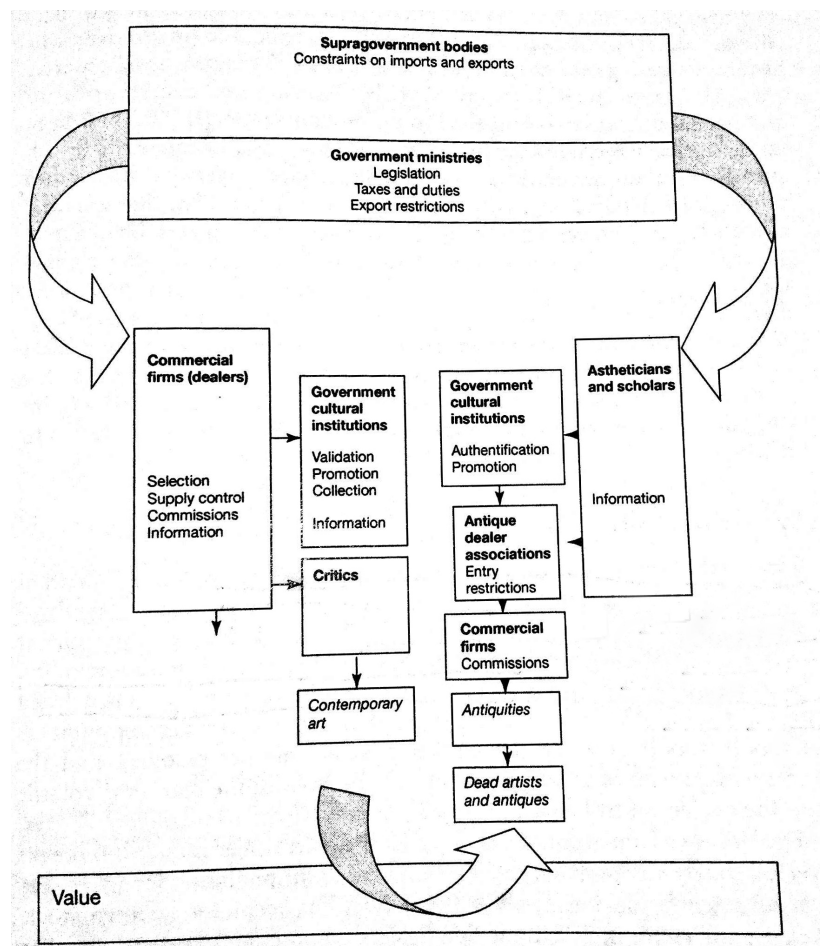


Figure 42. The art market's power structure. Chart by Iain Robertson.³⁶

Just as various participants contribute to the production of meaning of an artwork, numerous stakeholders invest in the financial value of a piece. Chong describes how there are networks of cooperation in place, involving a complex set of relations that help refine and influence market taste.³⁷ Large-scale international art fairs, including the Venice Biennale, participate in these relations, as it provides high visibility for artists.³⁸ In another chart that Iain Robertson created, the Venice Biennale is listed as one of the top-tier exhibition opportunities on the route of an artist attaining stardom. Visibility can be considered a significant motivation in Christie’s creation of a Biennale app, since the purpose of this app is to ease navigation of the Biennale and the city of Venice, while also emphasizing certain works over others as “must see” attractions or highlights.

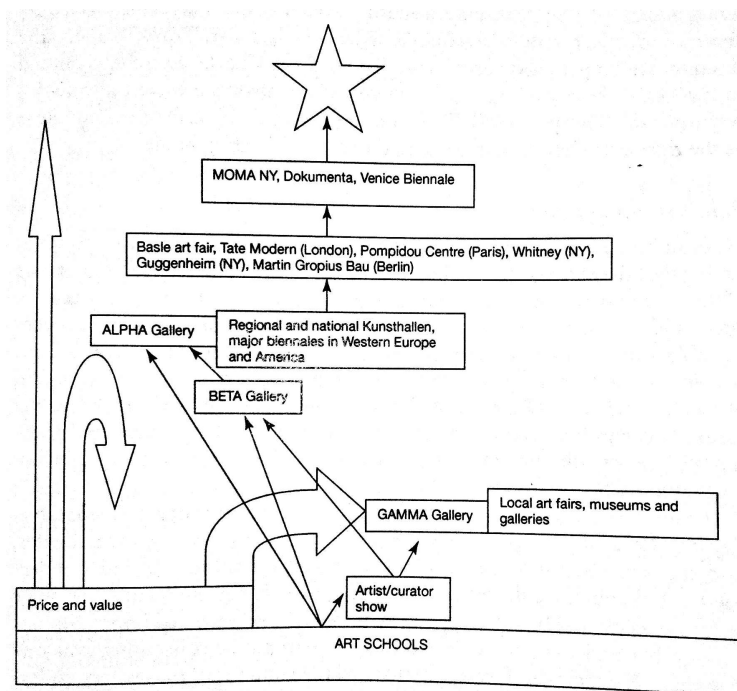


Figure 43. Progress of the artist from art school to stardom. Chart by Iain Robertson.³⁹

While art provides satisfaction through the experience of spectatorship, it also provides utility in terms of ownership and economics.⁴⁰ Even though aesthetics and cultural value may influence buyers in terms of selecting and purchasing works, discussing art as a financial investment involves introducing another set of standards. In an interview with a couple at a Christie's auction, Thornton describes how one bidder purchases art as a means of diversifying his "investment portfolio." In contrast to older or "pure" collectors, he describes how new collectors are taking advantage of this opportunity from a fiscal perspective:

New collectors, who have been making their money in hedge funds, are very aware of alternatives for their money. Cash pays so little return now that to invest in art doesn't seem like such a dumb idea. That's why the art market's been so strong—because there are few better options. If the stock market had two or three consecutive quarters of large growth, then, perversely, the art market might have a problem.⁴¹

One of the most recognized figures of the contemporary art market, Charles Saatchi, obtained his fortune as an advertising mogul and later turned to secondary-market art dealing. Even though he lacks the background of a trained curator or historian, Saatchi has played a major role in bringing numerous artists to the level of stardom, specifically the Young British Artists or YBAs, which includes artist and entrepreneur Damien Hirst. In his assessment of the influence of collectors like Saatchi on the value of art, Chong cheekily states: "In extreme cases, a major collector of art can be likened to a fat boy in a canoe: when he moves, all the others need to change their position."⁴² Moreover, as Saatchi was attempting to differentiate himself from other collectors with his interest in and

acquisitions of contemporary art, his efforts came to influence public attitudes toward the work through exhibitions and a general increase in the work's monetary value.

However, the financial value of art is not consistent, and the way price functions at the auction house differs from the private market. Koji Inoue, Vice President Specialist Head of Evening Sales Post-War and Contemporary Art at Christie's, points out that in contrast to a stock portfolio or other type of investment, art has a cultural, aesthetic, and material value that is not easily reduced to numbers.⁴³ The value of art is not a matter of "fixed income math," as it is more nuanced than other properties, like real estate. As a result, Christie's offers auction estimates as opposed to valuations. These estimates are ranges, since a certain degree of speculation is involved. When developing auction estimates, specialists at Christie's, like Inoue, take into account the price of comparable works by an artist as well as works that have similar ownership histories. The history of a work's ownership, or its provenance, is a significant factor in determining a work's value. For example, in 2012, Christie's sold *Orange, Red, Yellow* by the late Mark Rothko for an astonishing \$87 million, making it the most expensive work of contemporary art sold. Arguably, what contributed to the high price of the work is that it came from the collection of David Pincus, Philadelphia philanthropist and former chairman of apparel manufacturer Pincus Brothers-Maxwell, who died in December 2011. When preparing the work for the sale, Inoue describes the extent of a marketing campaign that was meant to not only bring awareness to the work, but also to the

social contributions and reputation of its former owner. The “Pincus Collection” went on to become the most valuable collection of art ever sold, bringing in \$388.5 million in one evening.

The Rothko originally was estimated to sell at a high of \$45 million but ended up selling at nearly double that price. The ability of art works to garner such high sale prices can be attributed to the unique atmosphere of the auction house, which tends to be the site of all of the headline-grabbing and record-breaking sales. The competitive nature of the auction, which commonly results in just a few people competing in the final bidding for a work, can easily raise the value above that which would be achieved in a gallery or by a dealer.⁴⁴

The Christie’s Venice Biennale app functions as a tool designed to support the art market through the exposure it provides. By easing the navigation of the Biennale, planting highlights in the mind of the spectator, and providing information to facilitate the process of interpretation, the Christie’s app helps foster the increased consumption of art, which it directly and indirectly profits from. Iain Robertson and Derrick Chong emphasize how the appreciation of art is a cultivated taste and point out that cultural economists use the notion of addiction to explain the process of developing this appreciation and maximizing satisfaction: “The state of art is acquired (or discovered) and the rate of art consumption increases over time with exposure—this suggests that art is addictive. Art consumption increases with an ability to appreciate art, which is a function of past art consumption.”⁴⁵ Even if the users of the app do not have the intentions—or the means—of purchasing work by Biennale artists, spectators are

still vital to the consumption of art, as exposure and recognition by a wide audience can influence the prices of works on the auction block. Exposure influences demand, and as Robertson points out:

The eventual price achieved by a work of art is [...] subject to strong demand-side forces, which act often with little regard for the work of art's artistic and historic properties. This is particularly the case in today's market, in which a so-called plutonomy effect [...] is having an impact on the price of art.⁴⁶

The “plutonomy effect” is the influence that a great number of plutocrats—individuals with a substantial amount of money at their disposal—have on prices of art works on the auction block. Arguably, it is the plutocrats who have given rise to the headline-grabbing prices of art works being bought and sold on today's market, which as Robertson points out, does not always take into account a work's aesthetic and historic value. An effective way to increase demand, especially at a Biennale, is massive exposure, which the Christie's app facilitates.

Even though, as Anthony Downey notes, the art market functions in a “manner similar to a conventional consumerist system of commodification,”⁴⁷ this does not mean that art can be reduced to being merely a commodity at the mercy of supply and demand. Downey emphasizes how art has both an aesthetic and financial value, which interplay in the art market to inform the market price of the work. He argues that contemporary art in particular helps reveal these relations, as, ever since Marcel Duchamp and his introduction of the ready-made and “non-retinal” art, “it is the idea, the concept, that matters most in contemporary art practice, not the object per se [...] the ideal of craftsmanship and artistic skill,

often a key component in attributing financial value, is elided here in favor of the concept itself.”⁴⁸ Once the concept takes precedence over the former standard of attributing value—craftsmanship—exposure and knowledge are vital to increase the appreciation of a work. With greater information about the aesthetic value of a work, its financial value can increase so that even the “most abstract of phenomena: an idea”⁴⁹ can be commodified, and subsequently bought and sold on the art market. As a notable and reputable site for the exhibition of contemporary art, the Venice Biennale plays a key role in the education of spectators in the aesthetic value of the works on display. Moreover, just being included in a Venice Biennale increases the financial value of an artist’s productions, as noted with the increase in prices of Allora and Calzadilla’s work at Art Basel during the 2011 Biennale. It is at the Biennale that an artist’s ideas are validated both in terms of aesthetic and financial value.

Downey emphasizes that what makes contemporary art distinctive as a commodity, as opposed to other luxury goods such as cars and furniture, is how aesthetic value can actually function as a critique of the financial value attributed to it. He argues that even though contemporary art cannot escape market forces, “it can at the very least offer a critique of those demands in an aesthetic form it adopts and adapts.”⁵⁰ He goes on to state: “It would appear that aesthetics (specifically, the inter-disciplinarity of contemporary art practices) is being ever more called upon to provide us with insights into politics, mass culture, and socio-politics of financial value.”⁵¹ Contemporary art is one the few commodities that can function as a critique of itself as a commodity, working to reveal the forces

that attribute it its financial worth. This ambivalence is what allows artists like Allora and Calzadilla to critique the institutional support systems that give rise to their work, like the United States government, while the financial value of their art increases. At the same time, just because there is a current demand for their work, that does not mean this value will persist. Even if the financial value of a piece changes, the aesthetic value is not necessarily diminished. Downey states:

In an era of neoliberal globalization, where the sinuous channels of commodification seem to know no bounds and the public/private sphere is being incrementally elided by corporations bent on commodifying our innermost desires, aesthetics can offer—perhaps to a limited but nonetheless necessary extent—not only a critique but a way of rethinking the very idea of financial value.⁵²

The art market may be fueled by economic principles, but financial value is only one factor of what an artwork is worth to the consumer, whether this consumer is a spectator, a collector, or an investor. The forms that contemporary art can take have become so diversified in the twentieth and twenty-first century that taste and reception varies considerably depending on needs and trends. Moreover, it becomes more important than ever for businesses that profit from the art market, like Christie's, to create a common ground or seemingly unified reading of contemporary art. As long as there is some consensus that a work of art has value, then a demand is injected into the buying crowd, which is manifested in the bidding process. According to Robinson, at auctions, which encourage irrational behavior, it is not uncommon for the “combined blind efforts of all bidders [to] have taken price beyond value as represented by the notional estimate.”⁵³ For this to occur, each bidder has to form his or her own opinion of a work, and

considering that the consumption of art is addictive—increased exposure causes increased desire—Christie’s is using the iPhone app as a means of lining its own pockets: of directing aesthetic value as a means of increasing, as opposed to critiquing, financial value. Collector David Tieger describes how at the Biennale “you’re on a marathon hunt for a new masterpiece. You want to see a new face and fall in love. It’s like speed dating [...]. In Venice, you can fall in love with a lamppost.”⁵⁴ Christie’s is attempting to tap into this enraptured emotional state as a way of potentially influencing buyer behaviors.

The Influence of Digital Technology on Navigation

Technology has a much longer history influencing navigation than recent digital innovations. For example, Fredric Jameson describes how changes in navigational technology influenced maritime voyagers:

For the new instruments—compass, sextant, and theodolite—correspond not merely to new geographic and navigational problems (the difficult matter of determining longitude, particularly on the curving surface of the planet, as opposed to the simpler matter of latitude, which European navigators can still empirically determine by ocular inspection of the African coast); they also introduce a whole new coordinate: the relationship to the totality, particularly as it is mediated by the stars and by new operations like that of triangulation.⁵⁵

If the introduction of these analogue tools had such an impact on the understanding of spatiality, then the launch of digital navigational technology has spurred yet another quantum leap in a person’s relationship to space through geography. Instead of stars, now human-created satellites, cell towers, and Wi-Fi stations function as geographic coordinators, positioning a tiny blinking mobile

dot on a handheld device. Technology has come to take on the task of positioning that once required the expertise of a navigator.

Increased reliance on digital tools impacts how a person relates to place, resulting in "navigational fetishism." Glimpses of these effects can be detected in instances when a person blindly follows a GPS, ending up in a destination with very little understanding of the physical path she has taken and no clue as to how to retrace her steps. I use the phrase "navigational fetishism" as a means of referencing Karl Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, which he describes in *Capital: Volume 1*. Marx defines commodity fetish as the alienation of the consumer from the labor used to create a product as a result of capitalist circulation. According to Marx:

The commodity-form, and the value relation of the products of labor within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material [*dinglich*] relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relations between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things.⁵⁶

Capital alienates the consumer from the labor involved in the production of the commodity, resulting in an alienation of consumers from producers. Objects come to replace relations between people with relations between commodities. In the 1960s, Guy Debord incorporated this definition into his description of the spectacle, arguing that not only objects, but also images have come to replace relations between people. Debord describes how the alienating effects of the spectacle result in an acting subject whose "own *gestures* are no longer his own, but rather those of someone else who represents them to him. The spectator feels

at home nowhere, for the spectacle is everywhere [emphasis added].”⁵⁷ In terms of navigation, instead of becoming familiar with the terrain that a map represents by interacting with the scene as moving along to a destination, a person can become wholly reliant on a technological device, the GPS, to do the navigating for her. Like magic, she can reach her destination without acknowledging the relationship of a map to her terrain, as the device does this task. This process results in alienation of the person in relation to her terrain and her own gestures involved in travel, as her knowledge is wholly based on what the technological device indicates, as opposed to the terrain itself.

While these tools have become indispensable for those who have come to rely on them, whether in the form of a car’s GPS, directions printed from the Internet by means of MapQuest or Google Maps, or with the use of a smartphone, their introduction into the Venice Biennale does not necessarily facilitate the navigation of a city (even when intended to do so, like the Christie’s app) that is already challenging to navigate with the aid of a paper or tourist guide map. What these tools introduce is a new comprehension of a person’s body in relation to the space of Venice and the Biennale system as mediated through digital mapping. The geographic totality described by Jameson is approached from a different perspective through the use of digital tools, as it becomes comprehensible to anyone who has access to the technology.

When it comes to understanding the role of technology in both the Christie’s app and the work of Manifest.AR, it is not the manufacturing of the technology that reinforces or challenges ideological structures, but how it is put to

use and what is revealed through this use. In “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger explores humanity’s relationship to the essence of technology. He argues that technology is “a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *alethia*, truth, happens.”⁵⁸ He describes the essence of technology as *Gestell*, or enframing. He states:

Enframing means the gathering together of the setting-upon that sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. Enframing means the way of revealing that holds sway in the essence of modern technology and that is itself nothing technological.⁵⁹

Heidegger is more interested in examining the essence of technology as opposed to limiting his discussion to its mechanics. According to Gregory Ulmer, “From Heidegger’s point of view, the danger of technology is that its rigid cause-and-effect enframing order might blind humanity to alternative orders. It is not the technology itself, but this blindness to its enframing, that must be confronted.”⁶⁰ Enframing plays a role both in the Christie’s app and the work of Manifest.AR, but it is how this enframing relates to the user of the technology that comprises the significant differences between the two—the former intending to reaffirm the material relations of institutional support systems and the latter attempting to expose and subvert these systems.

Even though over time, more and more people can afford to use mobile and smartphones, the device is by no means universal. As a handheld device, the smartphone is designed for individual use and is typically only used by a single

operator as opposed to being shared with others.⁶¹ These technological parameters have led to questions of accessibility. Noted by one critic of Manifest.AR, Pau Waelder describes how “the problem arises of the public needing to possess the necessary resources, without which these works simply don’t exist.”⁶² While he praises the intentions behind the artists’ acts, which he describes as being presented in “a rebellious spirit that recalls that of the pioneers of net art and their relation to the institution of art,”⁶³ he makes sure to emphasize how technological limitations lessen the impact of the work.

These critiques, however, are redundant in neoliberalism where uneven distribution of resources and wealth are already acknowledged. The “rebellious spirit” of Manifest.AR’s work is not dampened by questions of accessibility as Waelder claims—that “spirit” will emerge from the artists’ gestures no matter what the reception. What questions of accessibility reveal are the support systems of the work, which include the technology and the material relations involved in its uptake. Here, accessibility involves both knowledge and the appropriate technology, which in this instance requires disposable income—though considering the cost that it takes to travel to and attend the Venice Biennale, the expectation that these particular spectators will have smartphones is not unreasonable.

The question concerning accessibility can be considered using Heidegger’s definition of enframing. When Waelder questions the success of Augmented Reality as a means of art making that challenges the “limitations of physical space and institutional structure,”⁶⁴ he does so in terms of the works’

accessibility. By downplaying the significance of what the technology reveals due to questions of accessibility, Waelder is ignoring other qualities of the work, including its aesthetic values and the support systems revealed through its execution. As with numerous other critics in the twenty-first century, Waelder is directly connecting the success of the work with its sociological implications.⁶⁵

“Evocative Reimaginings”

The interaction of the virtual realm with physical place creates a hybrid zone of interactivity. This engagement with the digital creates what Henry Jenkins refers to as an "evocative space."⁶⁶ Even though his description of the phrase is specific to the design of places in games, which Alison McKee relates to Venice in the online role-playing world Second Life, it is applicable to digital navigational guides. According to McKee, these spaces are "less about real-world geography than the visitor-builders' reimagining of actual Venice in and through 'existing narrative competencies.'"⁶⁷ McKee goes on to describe how Venice in general, and not just its virtual counterparts, has been informed by these "evocative reimaginings":

The historian's work chronicling Venice's rise from the marshy lagoons beginning in the mid-fifth century CE; Shakespeare's backdrops of Venice as romantic, comedic, or ethnic background in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*; native son Antonio Vivaldi's musical compositions; the later Canaletto's paintings of Venice in the eighteenth century, which romanticized and reinvented place in their imaginative reorientation of location of the perfect tourist view that was, in fact, not available in actual life; Thomas Mann's dark novella *Death in Venice*; Luchino Visconti's famous film of the same title, and now, in the twenty-first century, digital games and virtual worlds; think of almost any century since the European Renaissance, and Venice figures in myriad works of

cultural production that enlarge the body of meanings and associations circulating around "Venice."⁶⁸

The reimagining of Venetian topography in the virtual realm is a continuation of a long legacy of the city in individual and collective cultural imaginations. McKee emphasizes how virtual realms are not to be considered in opposition to the "real," but that both "virtual" and "actual" place are equally experienced as "real."⁶⁹ With the smartphone, the experience of the user is informed by both virtual and physical qualities.

As walking is one of the primary means of moving through the city of Venice, this action is involved in the mapping of place. Digital navigational technology functions as a means of directing the paths that someone may or may not take, playing an increasingly significant role in a person's negotiation and corporeal experience of place. The digital navigation modules discussed thus far take advantage of telecommunications technology that increasingly mediates relations among people and between people and place in the twenty-first century. Marc Augé considers communication networks, along with other transitory networks such as motorways, metros, train tracks, and their appropriate stations, a type of non-place. According to Augé, in contrast to places, which are defined as "relational, historical, and concerned with identity,"⁷⁰ non-places function as a means to traverse and move between places. He states:

The term "non-place" designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, and leisure), and the relations of individuals with these spaces [...] non-places mediate a whole mass of

relations, with the self and with others, which are only indirectly connected with their purposes.⁷¹

Non-places are not rooted in the site that gave rise to them, but are a type of transitory space.

Since non-place can function as a means of directing how a person moves through space, mediating both social and material relations, digital navigational technology can transform place—such as the alleys of Venice—that is rooted in site, history, and identity, into a non-place that the Biennale tourist/spectator uses as a corridor to move from pavilion to pavilion. Augé describes this interplay between place and non-place, identifying the two as “opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten.”⁷² The interplay of place and non-place is not novel to Venice, but digital technology has introduced another type of non-place into the mix that functions as a means of rewriting this palimpsest.

Even though non-places are a type of transitory space, Augé emphasizes how they come with “instructions for use,” such as road signs, check points, or other technological mediators that direct how the space is used. He derives this phrase from Michel de Certeau, who uses it to describe the “ways of operating” that correspond with institutional strategies that seek to create conformity. Much of Augé’s work is built upon the theories and observations of de Certeau and his studies of everyday practices as a means of subverting hegemonic power relations. De Certeau differentiates between the strategies of institutions, which

intend to normalize relations, and tactics, which are the negotiation of consumption, which, he argues, comprises most everyday practices. Tactics are a means of subverting institutional systems, making them habitable by means of acts of consumption that are a type of production, where “users make (*bricolent*) innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules.”⁷³ De Certeau applies his reasoning to the modern urban city, where institutional strategies have created roads, sidewalks, and other paths that come marked with the “instructions for use,” or street signs and directions. Everyday users subvert this geographic order regularly but taking shortcuts, ignoring signs, and creating unofficial gathering places like lovers’ lanes as a means of making the city habitable. Comparing the practice of walking to writing, de Certeau states:

Practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen [...]. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility [...]. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other. Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible [...]. A migrational, or metaphorical, city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city.⁷⁴

This overlay of strategies and tactics is what comes to form the space of the city, as geographic mappings are traversed by migratory negotiations.

Geographic mapping functions as a means of colonizing space, as it totalizes an urban site through the transcription of elements and practices of

diverse origins into an isolated geometrical system presented on a two-dimensional plane. De Certeau argues that maps are constituted as “proper places in which to exhibit the products of knowledge, form[ing] tables of legible results.”⁷⁵ With maps, the practices of navigators become stabilized through geometric ordering as it is absorbed into the geographic discourse. It is not surprising, therefore, that Christie’s, an institution concerned with the buying and selling of art, would rely on geographic maps as the means of directing the users of its app in order to reinforce the “proper” categorization and prescribed uptake of the Venice Biennale.

Lev Manovich reconsiders de Certeau's theories of tactics and strategies for the twenty-first century. Since de Certeau wrote *The Practice of Everyday Life* in 1980, companies have increasingly been producing goods that are designed to be customized by users, assimilating the logic of tactics into that of strategies.⁷⁶ For example, social media sites such as Facebook provide the interface and design for a page that the user then customizes and personalizes. Even physical goods, such as cars, computers, and articles of clothing, come with options of customization that can be implemented even before the user receives the products. Manovich points out that in the 2000s, the introduction of Web 2.0, a more user-friendly Internet platform, is combined with dramatically decreased cost of media culture and playback in conjunction with increasing international travel and growing consumer economies all over the world. Here, users are given the room and the capability to customize their own lives without having to carve it out through everyday practice as de Certeau described.⁷⁷ In turn, tactical creativity

has become codified, as consumers rely on the capabilities provided by institutions for customization. As a result, strategies today look more like the tactics that de Certeau initially formulated, as social media companies and other institutions are focused on flexibility and change, as opposed to the imposition of a fixed order.⁷⁸

However, these observed tendencies do not preclude the potential for creating sites of resistance using tactics of subversion. Rather, what used to be more distinctive means of working have increasingly become intermingled into a strategies-as-tactics phenomenon that needs to be handled a bit differently than what de Certeau originally formulated. It is possible to use the platforms of assimilation, such as Facebook and Twitter, in order to distribute subversive information and incite action, as was observed with the role of these social networking sites in the “Arab Spring.” Also, the proliferation of servers that distribute pirated versions of movies, television shows, and software take advantage of the ease of Web 2.0 in order to propagate illegal acts that undermine the hegemony of the entertainment industry. This explains how Manifest.AR can use smartphone technology as a tactic for subversion for remapping the Venice Biennale, while Christie’s can take the same device and use it as a corporate strategy.

At the same time, in the art world and at the Venice Biennale, tactics of subversion are increasingly becoming institutional strategies under the influence of neoliberalism. Martha Buskirk observes how museums are increasingly playing a role in the creation of works. This happens to be the case for the implementation

of Allora and Calzadilla's *Gloria*, whose supporting institution was the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Buskirk states: "Assimilation of earlier avant-garde gestures has also opened the way for new generations of artists who often walk a fine line between critique and entrepreneurial professionalism as they realize their mutual undertakings with curators and institutions."⁷⁹ What once constituted institutional critique has become invited collaboration, as dissensus is being increasingly co-opted into the institutional art world. In addition to Allora and Calzadilla's *Gloria*, this trend can be observed in Hans Haacke's *Germania*, for which he was awarded the *Leone d'Oro* in 1993, the celebration of cultural difference with the inclusion of James Luna, the replication of transnational material and political relations in the Haitian pavilions of 2011, and the critique of national borders with Santiago Sierra's *Wall Enclosing a Space*, to name a few examples.

While the virtual realm offers a site for potential resistance, as seen in the activities of Manifest.AR, it can also reaffirm the institutional power structures already in place, as is the case with the Christie's app. The digital mappings presented by Christie's and Manifest.AR complement physical place, as they are experienced onsite and unfold in terms of time and space. These virtual overlays contribute to the topography of the production of meaning that results from the interactions of gestures, material relations, and support systems. Juxtaposing the uses of digital technology by Manifest.AR and Christie's exposes how the technology is not inherently responsible for its outcome and accessibility; rather, how it is utilized and distributed through its support systems impact its

contribution to the production of meaning. The technology also introduces a new set of gestures for the tourist/spectator, as it informs the user's interaction with and movement through physical time and space.

At the same time, these digital mappings reveal the support systems already in place at the Venice Biennale, where the participants have a range of intentions, resulting in certain paradoxes and contradictions. The contradictions of Biennale participation in turn relate to the influence of the transnational art market, which treats the production and uptake of art as an industry. In her analysis of the contemporary art scene, Buskirk emphasizes the tensions that arise between the progressive claims for art and “its all-too-easy assimilation into an elite version of spectacle culture.”⁸⁰ Tracing a legacy that extends back to Marcel Duchamp’s gesture of transforming a urinal into a work of art, Buskirk reveals a paradox of market success in the present day creative economy: “Art is set off from other forms of production based on cultural significance assumed to extend beyond monetary value. Yet the more art comes to resemble familiar goods and services, the more that price alone sets it apart.”⁸¹ She ends her analysis with the declaration that no one operating in the larger field of activity that the art world encompasses can claim outsider status, which is particularly relevant for the Venice Biennale, where the staging of exhibitions emphasizes participation within the system. She adds that the “ongoing challenge is to search out productive forms of engagement in the face of art’s corrosive success.”⁸² The financial gestures that contribute to the material relations of the Venice Biennale connect it to the larger realm of the art market economy, encompassing the reality of artists working on

this scale today. Every artist who participates in the Venice Biennale is also participating, whether she claims to or not, in the transnational economy of the art world. The practices of art market institutions in conjunction with the support system of the Venice Biennale make this outcome inevitable. This inevitability is not necessarily a negative quality, since it also means that artists and nations are active participants in an economic system that has very real political, financial, and social outcomes. If, as Agamben argues, gestures are the means by which ethos is brought into the realm of human activity, then the gestures that take place at the Venice Biennale are also an opportunity to introduce new practices. I argue that the augmented reality of Manifest.AR attempts to do just that by providing alternative mappings of the Venice Biennale, but the possibilities are not restricted to this particular technology. Rather, through the use of technology, Manifest.AR reveals what is possible when artists engage with the gestures that comprise the production of meaning at this event.

Parting gestures⁸³

The various cases presented in this dissertation exposes the material relations and support systems of power involved in the production, exhibition, and uptake of contemporary art at the Venice Biennale. From its inception to the present, the geopolitics of the Biennale have participated in transnational politics and economics, with the rise of neoliberalism being no exception. Even though art critics may question the quality of art that constitutes Biennale exhibitions, including Claire Bishop's review of the 2011 Biennale in *Artforum International*,⁸⁴ it remains a consequential site for the transnational art network

and international politics because of the strengths and weaknesses associated with its exhibition structure and institutional framework. Thus, the Venice Biennale functions as a revealing event in the transnational art world for gestures involved in staging nations

By focusing primarily on exhibitions from the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, I have traced the multifaceted roles that gestures play at the Venice Biennale. Each of the examples studied, whether presented in official national pavilions or as collateral events, have sought to expose and question the staging of nations at this prestigious art event, and the institutional influences on these processes. In each chapter, the gestures of different participants—including artists, curators, critics, institutions (national and financial), and tourist/spectators—have been scrutinized. These analyses have revealed different material and power relations with the intent of acknowledging consistencies and contradictions. At the same time, the Venice Biennale is recognized for its legacy and persistence as a unique stage for the gestures involved in the production, exhibition, and uptake of contemporary art to unfold. Here, aesthetic gestures become the political and economic gestures of national identity and neoliberalism in the twenty-first century.

The geopolitical and economic workings of power manifested at the Venice Biennale are a type of soft power, which both institutionally replicates and provides an alternative to the international community. Unlike the United Nations, where national performatives are either recognized or disavowed in geopolitical terms using both soft and hard power, at the Venice Biennale, the transnational art

world functions as the judge of a different kind of national performative. Here, nations and groups are judged on their ability to participate as contemporary cultural players. The Biennale functions as a *Spielraum*, a space of strife and play, which may otherwise be unavailable in the discourse of international relations. In some instances, this alternative can be beneficial for groups, including Palestine and Native North American artists, which are excluded from the proceedings of these international communities. Also, it allows nations like Iran, Iraq, and Syria, whose art and culture may be otherwise inaccessible to a foreign audience due to military conflict or economic sanctions (examples of hard power), to still function as part of a transnational scene.

At the same time, this staging of nations has taken on a more nefarious purpose in recent decades as it functions as a staging ground for neoliberalism. The countries that are recognized as participants in the transnational art world also potentially become part of the transnational art market. What is a stage for the presentation of nationhood is also the scouting ground of an open art market. The Christie's app, which is a virtual mapping of the Venice Biennale, opens a geographical space that potentially directs the workings of soft power into the realm of the open market. Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the Venice Biennale has been informed by the geopolitical and economic changes associated with neoliberalism, which include changes in the type of art being presented, the performances of nationhood, and the increasing number of national pavilions and collateral events. While these changes have opened up opportunities for artists (both invited and uninvited), nations, and groups in this *Spielraum* of

art and politics this freedom is potentially a false freedom as it comes under the domain of the neoliberal market.

Notes

Introduction

¹ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 65.

² David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), Kindle edition, 2.

³ Ibid. Harvey lists some of the following expectations for national governments: guaranteeing the quality and integrity of money, securing private property rights through appropriate structures, and creating markets in areas (such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) when necessary. However, the national government should not venture beyond these roles.

⁴ Shady El Noshokaty, "Contemporary Art and the New Egyptian Identity," (Museum of Fine Arts Boston, 2012).

⁵ "Egyptian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale," e-flux, accessed March 13, 2012, <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/egyptian-pavilion-at-the-54th-venice-biennale/>

⁶ Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, trans. Christine Shantz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 364.

⁷ Translation from German: "Enter the *Spielraum*."

⁸ Ibid., 350.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008), 186.

¹⁰ Samuel Weber, *Theatricality as Medium*, (New York Fordham University Press, 2004), Kindle edition, 64.

¹¹ Ibid., 56

¹² Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Room-for-Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema," *October* 109, Summer (2004): 6.

¹³ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴ Ibid., 11

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *The Freud Reader*, Peter Gay ed., (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 601.

¹⁶ Hansen, "Room-for-Play," 20.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Reproducibility: Second Version," trans. Howard Eiland, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1935-1938*, ed. Marcus Paul Bullock et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 127.

¹⁸ Hansen, "Room-for-Play," 29.

¹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London and New York: Verso, 2006), Kindle edition, 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²¹ Paolo Baratta, "La Biennale Is Like a Wind Machine," in Bice Curiger, ed., *54th International Venice Biennale Art Exhibition: La Biennale Di Venezia* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2011) iBiennale ed.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ For more information about the history of Venice from its beginnings to the fall of the republic under Napoleon, see John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

²⁴ Italy would be fully unified in 1870. It remained the Kingdom of Italy until 1946, when it became the Republic of Italy.

²⁵ Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin, *Venice: The Tourist Maze* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 30–51.

²⁶ Shearer West, "National Desires and Regional Realities in the Venice Biennale, 1895-1914," *Art History* 18, no. 3 (1995): 405.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Up until 1905, the *Palazzo Pro Arte* was the only exhibition site of the Venice Biennale. Over the years, this building has undergone many changes and transformations along with being renamed and rebranded. In its current manifestation, the Central Pavilion functions as a permanent center for the Biennale, complete with cafeteria and bookstore, and it eventually will be the home of the Library of Historical Archives of Contemporary Art in addition to the numerous exhibition halls that remain in use. "La Biennale: Central Pavilion," La Biennale di Venezia, accessed February 21, 2012, http://www.labiennale.org/en/biennale/venues/central_pavilion.html?back=true.

²⁹ Vittoria Martini, "A Brief History of I Giardini: Or a Brief History of the Venice Biennale Seen from the Giardini," *Art and Education* (2009), accessed January 27, 2012, <http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/a-brief-history-of-i-giardini-or-a-brief-history-of-the-venice-biennale-seen-from-the-giardini/>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ West, "National Desires and Regional Realities in the Venice Biennale, 1895–1914," 406.

³² Marla Stone, "Challenging Cultural Categories: The Transformation of the Venice Biennale under Fascism," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 4, no. 2 (1999): 186.

³³ Martini, "A Brief History of I Giardini."

³⁴ Davis and Marvin, *Venice: The Tourist Maze*, 48.

³⁵ West, "National Desires and Regional Realities in the Venice Biennale, 1895–1914," 413.

³⁶ Stone, "Challenging Cultural Categories," 186.

³⁷ During this time, the Biennale administration introduced the Music Festival, Theatre Festival, and International Film Festival. In addition, the Venetian Pavilion was built in the Giardini.

³⁸ Stone, "Challenging Cultural Categories," 187.

³⁹ Ibid., 201–02.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 195.

⁴¹ Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895–1968: From Salon to Goldfish Bowl* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society LTD., 1968), 115.

⁴² Ibid., 116.

⁴³ Ibid., 117.

⁴⁴ “La Biennale: From the Post-war Period to the Reforms of 1973,” *La Biennale di Venezia*, accessed February 21, 2012,

<http://www.labiennale.org/en/biennale/history/vb2.html?back=true>.

⁴⁵ Notably, Impressionists had been excluded from the early years of the Biennale; see Stone, “Challenging Cultural Categories,” 186.

⁴⁶ Placing these works by predominately US artists in the pavilion that represents the cradle of Western civilization seems to foreshadow the increasing transnational influence the US would have on culture. Eventually Guggenheim’s collection would find a permanent home in Venice in her private villa that was transformed into a publicly accessible museum.

⁴⁷ Eva Cockcroft, “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War,” in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 128.

⁴⁸ Martini, “A Brief History of I Giardini.”

⁴⁹ Francesco Bonami, “The Italian Job,” *Artforum International* 50, no. 1 (2011): 284.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ “Paolo Baratta—CV,” Telecom Italia, updated March 2008,

http://www.telecomitalia.com/content/dam/telecomitalia/documents/Governance/biografie_cda_collegiosindacale/pdf/Baratta_Paolo_ENG.pdf.

⁵² Bonami, “The Italian Job,” 284.

⁵³ Martini, “A Brief History of I Giardini.”

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Noël Carroll, “Art and Globalization: Then and Now,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65, no. 1 (2007).

⁵⁶ Neoliberal ideas and practices have their beginnings in the economic policies of Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury of the United States of America. During his time in office, Hamilton supported the funding of state debts by the federal government in order to create credit and the establishment of a national bank, both of which would come to serve as important components of neoliberalism. He supported an economy based on finance, trade, and manufacturing, in contrast to his political rival Thomas Jefferson who favored agriculture as an economic foundation. By planting his policies in the early US capitalist economy, Hamilton helped set the groundwork for neoliberalism in the twentieth century. Particularly, Hamilton’s insistence on developing a debt economy would come to form the heart of neoliberal politics. For more information about Hamilton’s and Jefferson’s economic policies and viewpoints, see Noble E. Cunningham, Jr. ed. *Jefferson Vs. Hamilton: Confrontations That Shaped a Nation*, (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

⁵⁷ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 63. Harvey describes how Reagan and Thatcher implemented a number of major structural changes, including extensive deregulation of the market and privatization of services and resources, entrenching neoliberal ideas into the federal support systems of their respective countries, making it nearly impossible for future leaders to stray from this path. From here it spread like wildfire. As Harvey states:

Once neoliberalism became that deeply entrenched in the English-speaking world it was hard to gainsay its considerable relevance to how capitalism in general was working internationally [...]. [Reagan and Thatcher's] genius was to create a legacy and a tradition that tangled subsequent politicians in a web of constraints from which they could not easily escape. Those who followed, like Clinton and Blair, could do little more than continue the good work of neoliberalization, whether they liked it or not.

⁵⁹ Joseph Stiglitz, *The Roaring Nineties: A New History of the World's Most Prosperous Decade*, (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), Kindle edition, location 66.

⁶⁰ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 5.

⁶¹ Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2012), 8–11.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶³ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁶ Dina Shehata, "The Fall of the Pharaoh," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2011): 26.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Selim H. Shahine, "Youth and the Revolution in Egypt," *Anthropology Today* 27, no. 2 (2011): 2.

⁶⁹ Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, 44

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷¹ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 35.

⁷² Stiglitz, *The Roaring Nineties*, locations 152–53.

⁷³ Shahine, "Youth and the Revolution in Egypt," 2.

⁷⁴ Mohammed Abouelleil Rashed and Islam El Azzazi, "The Egyptian Revolution: A Participant's Account from Tahrir Square, January and February 2011," *Anthropology Today* 27, no. 2 (2011): 23.

⁷⁵ Ahmed Basiony, as quoted by Shady El Noshokaty, "About Ahmed Basiony," last updated February 13, 2011, <http://www.ahmedbasiony.com/about.html>.

⁷⁶ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon, France: Les presses du réel, 2009), 22.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁸ At the 2013 College Art Association conference, a panel organized by the Society of Contemporary Art Historians titled "The Social, the Relational, and the Participatory: A Reevaluation," took an opportunity to critique and expand upon Bourriaud's shortsighted analysis. Panelists included: Shannon Jackson, Julia

Robertson, Martha Rosler, and Anton Vidokle. Also refer to Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), Kindle edition; and Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso, 2012), Kindle edition.

⁷⁹ Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (2004) and Shannon Jackson et al., "The Social, The Relational, and the Participatory: A Reevaluation" (panel presentation at the College Art Association, New York, February 13–16, 2013).

⁸⁰ Jackson et al., "The Social, The Relational, and the Participatory: A Reevaluation."

⁸¹ Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, and Anton Vidokle, *Are You Working Too Much?: Post-Fordism, Precarity, and the Labor of Art* (Berlin and New York: Sternberg Press, 2011), 7.

⁸² Lisa Freiman, Senior Curator and Chair, Department of Contemporary Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art, in discussion with the author, January 25, 2013.

⁸³ Ibid. Freiman describes the difficulties associated with creating the model of the Delta airline seat as the gymnast's apparatus. After some fruitless attempts, Freiman was able to work with people involved in Delta's industrial design who were able to arrange for a gymnast and fabricator to visit a plane that had the particular seat model the artists wanted to use. It was necessary for the gymnast to be present in order to become familiar with the materiality of the object and make appropriate suggestions so the fabricator could make a model that is appropriate for human use as a performance apparatus.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Dave Hunt, President DG Hunt & Associates, in discussion with the author, April 2, 2013. According to Dave Hunt, who coordinated the many people involved in producing *Gloria*, Allora and Calzadilla initially wanted to use an ATM run by an American bank, as this would more effectively convey the conceptual underpinnings of the piece *Algorithm*. However, restrictions of international banking laws meant that the artists had to settle for an Italian bank. This instance illustrates that even though neoliberalism promotes free trade, there are still national and international regulations in place that offer some restrictions to totally open markets.

⁸⁶ Freiman, discussion.

⁸⁷ Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise: Contemporary Art Between Museum and Marketplace* (New York and London: Continuum, 2012), 17.

⁸⁸ Jackson, *Social Works*, 104.

⁸⁹ Fraser, Andrea. "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," *Artforum International* 44, no. 1 (2005): 278-83.

⁹⁰ Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise*, 17.

⁹¹ Jane Blocker, *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 82.

⁹² Elizabeth Albrycht, "Witnessing the Venice Biennale," *Journal of New Communications Research* 2, no. 2 (2007–2008): 91.

⁹³ Blocker, *Seeing Witness*, 84.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ According to Raymond Williams, materialism challenges the assumption that art is reflective, since “the ‘mind of the artist’ can be seen as itself materiality conditioned; its reflection is then not independent but itself a material function.” For more information concerning his analysis of art as mediation in terms of materialism, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1977), 95–100.

⁹⁶ Jonathan Harris, *Globalization and Contemporary Art* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 8.

⁹⁷ Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 4.

⁹⁸ Charlotte Bydler, "Global Contemporary? The Global Horizon of Art Events," in Harris, ed., *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, 464.

⁹⁹ Giorgio Agamben, "What is the Contemporary?" in *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 41.

¹⁰⁰ See Bydler, "Global Contemporary?" 464–78.

¹⁰¹ Harris, *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, 425.

¹⁰² Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise*, 22–23.

¹⁰³ Noël Carroll, "Art and Globalization: Then and Now," 134.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 131.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 131–32.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 136.

¹⁰⁸ Thierry de Duve, "The Global and the Singuniversal: Reflections on Art and Culture in the Global World," in *Open 16: The Art Biennial as a Global Phenomenon*, ed. Jordine Seijdel (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2009), 45.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Simon Sheikh, "Marks of Distinction, Vectors of Possibility: Questions for the Biennale," in *Open 16: The Art Biennial as a Global Phenomenon*, ed. Jordine Seijdel (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2009), 70.

¹¹¹ In 2007, three of the major European global contemporary art exhibitions, the Venice Biennale, Documenta, and Skulptur Projekte Munster, took place simultaneously. Expeditions to the three events came to be referred to as a “grand tour” and are featured under that descriptor in the September 2007 issue of *Artforum International*.

¹¹² Beat Wyss and Jörg Scheller, "The Bazaar of Venice," in Bice Curiger, ed., *54th International Venice Biennale Art Exhibition: La Biennale Di Venezia* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2011), iBiennale ed.

¹¹³ Yahya Madra, "From Imperialism to Transnational Capitalism: The Venice Biennale as a 'Transnational Conjuncture'," *Rethinking Marxism* 18, no. 4 (2006): 531.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 533.

¹¹⁵ Carroll, "Art and Globalization: Then and Now," 135.

¹¹⁶ Josette Féral, "Every Transaction Conjures a New Boundary," in *Critical Theory and Performance*, ed. Janelle Reinalt and Joseph Roach (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 51.

- ¹¹⁷ Fredric Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 5.
- ¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁹ Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 275.
- ¹²⁰ Fritz Graf, "The gestures of Roman actors and orators," in *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 41.
- ¹²¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 198.
- ¹²² *Ibid.*
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 204.
- ¹²⁵ Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre*, 162.
- ¹²⁶ This trajectory is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but for further information see Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double* (New York: Grove Press, 1958) and Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba (New York: Routledge, 2002).
- ¹²⁷ Martin Puchner, *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality, and Drama* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 42–43.
- ¹²⁸ Richard Wagner, *The Art-work of the Future*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., Ltd., 1895), 191.
- ¹²⁹ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) and Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York and London: Verso, 2009).
- ¹³⁰ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (New York City: Hill and Wang, 1964), 188–89.
- ¹³¹ See Chapter 6, "Bertolt Brecht: The Theatre on a Leash" in Puchner, *Stage Fright*.
- ¹³² Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 104.
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*, 159.
- ¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.
- ¹³⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 129.
- ¹³⁶ As quoted in John Rouse, "Brecht and the Contradictory Actor," in *Critical Theory and Performance*, ed. Janelle Reinalt and Joseph Roach (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 300.
- ¹³⁷ Walter Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre?," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 151.
- ¹³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹³⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 77.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 80.
- ¹⁴² Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 79.

¹⁴³ Adam Lowenstein, "Transforming Horror: David Cronenberg's Cinematic Gestures after 9/11," in *Horror after 9/11: World of Fear, Cinema of Terror*, ed. Aviva Briefel and Sam J. Miller (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 65.

¹⁴⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 57.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁴⁶ Roland Barthes, "Cy Twombly: Works on Paper," in *The Responsibility of Forms* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 160.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Pollock's work has been referred to as "action painting." This phrase was put forth by Harold Rosenberg as a way to describe the painting process of American artists of the late 1940s and '50s. He describes the move from the aesthetic to the act as an important moment in modern art. In this shift, painting no longer involves the execution of preconceived images in the mind of the artist. Rather, it becomes a material encounter. According to Rosenberg, emphasis on the act involves a subordination of the formal: "In this gesturing with materials the esthetic [...] has been subordinated. Form, color, composition, drawing, are auxiliaries, any one of which [...] can be dispensed with. What matters always is the revelation contained in the act." This position sharply contrasts with the canonical view espoused by Clement Greenberg, who posited that modern art should be autonomous and self-referential. Acknowledging that action painting is the result of a material exchange emphasizes the importance of the gesture in the creative process. Rosenberg's emphasis on the material and gestural qualities of painting stresses the actions of the artist. As a result, Rosenberg's interpretation acknowledges the kinesthetic quality of painting. This stance does not isolate the work of art, but instead recognizes the importance of an embodied creative process. Greenberg, in contrast, treats art as autonomous. He argues that a "modernist work of art must try, in principle, to avoid dependence upon any order of experience not given in the most essentially construed nature of its medium [...] the arts are to achieve concreteness, 'purity,' by acting solely in terms of their separate and irreducible selves." His emphasis on form hides the actions of the artist behind what is presented on the two-dimensional space of the canvas. The alienation of the artist's body from the work in Greenbergian aesthetics has significant consequences for interpretation, since it limits criticism to what can be seen on the image plane. See Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," in *The Tradition of the New* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1994), 26–27; Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Francis Francina et al. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1982), 5–6; and Clement Greenberg, "Parisian Review 'Art—Chronicle': 1952," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 139.

¹⁴⁹ Allen Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 3–4.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

- ¹⁵² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xiv.
- ¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, xvii–xviii.
- ¹⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 203.
- ¹⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 62–3.
- ¹⁵⁶ Spivak, "Translator's Preface," xix.
- ¹⁵⁷ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*: 65.
- ¹⁵⁸ Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 145.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 165.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 161.
- ¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 162.
- ¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 183.
- ¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 184.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 196.
- ¹⁶⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), Kindle edition, locations 233–34.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, location 235.
- ¹⁶⁷ Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 69–89.
- ¹⁶⁸ Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), Kindle edition.

Chapter 1

- ¹ According to Lawrence Alloway, the pavilions function as “national self-images,” with the architecture functioning as a “model of nonverbal communication, somewhat like an exhibition.” He goes on to describe the US pavilion “with its tiny dome and miniature symmetrical wings,” as “Colonial neoclassic, halfway between Monticello and Howard Johnson.” Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895–1968: From Salon to Goldfish Bowl* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society LTD., 1968), 17–18.
- ² Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso, 2012), Kindle edition, locations 4520–21.
- ³ Early English versions of Brecht’s work have translated *Verfremdungseffekt* as “alienation effect.” More recent scholars have problematized this translation, arguing that it misidentifies the qualities of *Verfremdungseffekt* and leads to misinterpretations of Brecht’s theory. Therefore, I will be referring to *Verfremdungseffekt* as V-effekt or defamiliarization. For more information, see Meg Mumford, *Bertolt Brecht*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), Kindle edition.

⁴ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (New York City: Hill and Wang, 1964), 139.

⁵ "Indianapolis Museum of Art and Allora and Calzadilla Present *Gloria* at 54th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia," (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 2011).

⁶ The words are cited in the following reviews: Kirsty Bell, "International Pavilions," *Art-Agenda*, accessed September 16, 2011, www.art-agenda.com/reviews/international-pavilions/; Jonathan Jones, "Time Flies at the Venice Biennale," *The Guardian - On Art Blog*, accessed September 16, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2011/jun/07/time-venice-biennale-marclay-fischer?CMP=tw_t_gu; Jason Edward Kaufman, "Biennale: Big spectacles, little signifiante," *Washington Post*, June 19, 2011; Jerry Saltz, "Jerry Saltz's Best and Worst of the Venice Biennale," *New York Magazine—Vulture Blog*, accessed September 16, 2011, http://nymag.com/daily/entertainment/2011/06/jerrys_biennale.html#photo=8x00010.; Roberta Smith, "Animating the Inanimate," *New York Times*, July 9 2011.

⁷ Jerry Saltz, "Jerry Saltz on the Ugly American at the Venice Biennale," *New York Magazine—Vulture Blog*, accessed September 16, 2011, http://nymag.com/daily/entertainment/2011/06/jerry_saltz_on_the_ugly_american.html.

⁸ Saltz, "Jerry Saltz's Best and Worst of the Venice Biennale." Other pavilions listed as the "worst" include: Christian Boltanski of France and curator Vittorio Sgarbi of Italy.

⁹ Adrian Searle, "The Balance of Power: It's Got Olympic Gymnasts and an Elvis Impersonator, Plus Lots of Kitsch and Queues—But Has the Venice Biennale Finally Got Political?," *The Guardian*, June 7 2011.

¹⁰ Smith, "Animating the Inanimate."

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Carla Acevedo-Yates, "Allora and Calzadilla: Ironing a Camel's Hump," *ARTPULSE* 2, no. 4 (2011): 38.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Recuperating Performance," in *Gloria: Allora and Calzadilla*, ed. Lisa D. Freiman (Munich, London, and New York: Indianapolis Museum of Art and DelMonico Books, 2011) and Yates McKee, "Venice/Vieques: Marked Sites/Divided Horizons," in Freiman, *Gloria*.

¹⁶ Joselit, David. "Truth or Dare." *Artforum International* 50, no. 1 (2011): 313–17.

¹⁷ Hirschhorn's *Crystal of Resistance* is discussed in greater depth in chapter four of this dissertation.

¹⁸ Lisa Freiman (Senior Curator and Chair, Department of Contemporary Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art), in discussion with the author, January 25, 2013.

¹⁹ Lambert-Beatty, "Recuperating Performance," 50.

²⁰ Allora and Calzadilla as quoted in Lisa Freiman, "'Of Shapes Transformed to Bodies Strange': On Surrealist Tactics in the Art of Allora and Calzadilla," in Freiman, *Gloria*, 39.

- ²¹ Allora and Calzadilla as quoted in Freiman, *Gloria*, 39..
- ²² Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2012), 31.
- ²³ Susan K. Cahn, *Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 130.
- ²⁴ For more information concerning the age controversy of female gymnasts at the 2008 Olympics, please refer to Juliet Macur, "Teeny-Tiny Matter of Age for China's Gymnasts," *New York Times*, August 10, 2008.
- ²⁵ Freiman, "Of Shapes Transformed to Bodies Strange," 41.
- ²⁶ Freiman, discussion.
- ²⁷ *Art21* is a documentary series produced by PBS that provides insight into the lives and creative processes of various artists working in the twenty-first century. Using interviews, the show attempts to reveal some of the vision and inspiration that goes into creating contemporary art. Selected artists are considered "some of today's most accomplished contemporary artists" whose work is featured in museums, galleries, and collections. The series is meant to be educational for a wide range of audiences, providing information that exceeds what may be available in the exhibition context, making it accessible for a non-expert viewer. Allora and Calzadilla are featured in Season 4 Episode 2, "Paradox."
- ²⁸ Allora and Calzadilla are domestic partners and have a child together.
- ²⁹ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, locations 4522–24.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, locations 4712–14.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, locations 4528–30.
- ³² *Ibid.*, locations 4714–17.
- ³³ Carrie Lambert-Beatty provides an interesting and thorough discussion of the retraining process involved in *Stop, Prepare, Repair* using Agamben's definition of the apparatus; see Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Recuperating Performance," in Freiman, *Gloria*.
- ³⁴ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, locations 4764–65.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, locations 4769–71.
- ³⁶ Lisa Freiman as quoted in "Indianapolis Museum of Art and Allora and Calzadilla Present *Gloria* at 54th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia."
- ³⁷ Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 139.
- ³⁸ Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 139.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.
- ⁴⁰ Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 105.
- ⁴¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 59.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 60.
- ⁴⁴ Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), Kindle edition, 12–13.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁹ "Allora and Calzadilla to Represent United States at 54th Venice Art Biennale," (Washington, DC: United States of America Department of State, 2010).

⁵⁰ Freiman, "'Of Shapes Transformed to Bodies Strange,'" 33.

⁵¹ Jyoti Puri, *Encountering Nationalism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 15.

⁵² It is important to keep in mind that the national absences from the Biennale are just as significant, or even more so, than the nations that are present at the art festival. For example, there is no official Palestinian pavilion, but there is an official Israeli Pavilion, though over the past decade, various efforts have been made to include Palestinian artists such as Mona Hatoum and Emily Jacir.

⁵³ However, this soon may change. On November 6, 2012, for the first time in its history, a majority of voters in Puerto Rico supported a non-binding referendum to become the fifty-first state of the United States of America. If the petition for statehood is recognized by the US Congress, then Puerto Rico will transition from being an unincorporated territory of the United States to a full-fledged member of the Union.

⁵⁴ Bice Curiger, "ILLUMInations," in Bice Curiger, ed., *54th International Venice Biennale Art Exhibition: La Biennale Di Venezia* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2011), iBiennale edition.

⁵⁵ Allora and Calzadilla as quoted in Freiman, "'Of Shapes Transformed to Bodies Strange,'" 39.

⁵⁶ Indianapolis Museum of Art, "Indianapolis Museum of Art and Allora and Calzadilla Present *Gloria* at 54th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia."

⁵⁷ Allora and Calzadilla as quoted in *ibid.*

⁵⁸ I am indebted to George Smith for bringing this detail to my attention.

⁵⁹ Florence Howe Hall, *The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1916), 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3–8.

⁶¹ The sunbed is a device used for darkening skin, which provides an interesting subtext to the work considering its relationship to skin color and the institution of slavery. Freiman points out how *Armed Freedom Lying on a Sunbed* in the pavilion rotunda "playfully counterposes natural sunlight and bronzing—the latter as a physical material for traditional sculpture, a material used for sports medals, and as a cosmetic tanning practice meant to transform skin tones from lighter to darker." Made fashionable by Coco Chanel, tanning became popular in the early twentieth century as a way of conveying status for leisured whites. Since tans can be associated with beach holidays, having a tan conveys the ability to spend the time and money on such leisurely pursuits. Ironically, this time is also when eugenics emerged in Europe and the United States. I want to thank Dr. Shannon Rose Riley for bringing this information to my attention. Freiman, "'Of Shapes Transformed to Bodies Strange,'" 35; Hunt, Yvonne et al. "History and Culture of Tanning in the United States," in *Shedding Light on Indoor Tanning*, ed. Carolyn

J. Heckman and Sharon L. Manne (Dordrecht and New York: Springer, 2011), 5-32.

⁶² Freiman, "Of Shapes Transformed to Bodies Strange," 31 and 35.

⁶³ Ibid., 33.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁶⁵ Allora and Calzadilla as quoted in *ibid.*, 47.

⁶⁶ Alex Lingas, "Gloria in excelsis Deo," in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, ed. Alison Latham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁶⁷ Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke Van Hal, and Ovstebo Solveig (Bergen, Norway and Ostfilern, Germany: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010), 244.

⁶⁸ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, trans. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁶⁹ I would like to thank Dr. George Smith for his observations and insights in developing this reading of Allora and Calzadilla's work.

⁷⁰ See Noble E. Cunningham, Jr. ed. *Jefferson Vs. Hamilton: Confrontations That Shaped a Nation*. (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

⁷¹ Elmgreen and Dragset curated both the Danish and Nordic pavilions in the 2009 Venice Biennale. For these exhibitions, known as *The Collectors*, Elmgreen and Dragset transformed the pavilions into two fictional domestic environments in collaboration with twenty-four artists, designers, and collectives. The works meditate on the increasingly porous realms of the public and private spheres as well as reflecting on the sociological and psychological impacts of the 2008 economic crisis. One notable piece in the Nordic Pavilion consists of a life-size mannequin face down in a reflecting pool, as if he had just committed suicide. For more information, please refer to Daniel Birnbaum, *Making Worlds: 53rd Venice Biennial Exhibition Catalogue* (Venice: Marsilio, 2009).

⁷² Jackson, *Social Works*, 183.

⁷³ Ibid., 200.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 201.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 208.

⁷⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, December 2012 (OED Online), s.v. "containment, n.," accessed January 14, 2013, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40050?redirectedFrom=containment>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 53.

⁷⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 87.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Jackson, *Social Works*, 30.

⁸² Michael Brenson, "The Curator's Moment: Trends in the Field of International Contemporary Art Exhibitions," in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke Van Hal, and Ovstebo Solveig (Bergen, Norway and Ostfilern, Germany: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010), 223.

⁸³ In a discussion I had with an American colleague while viewing the work, he noted that this exhibit would not have been possible under the Bush administration, when many of the current military campaigns were initiated. Like *Body in Flight (American)* and *(Delta), Track and Field* can be interpreted in response to a post-9/11 society. However, the tank in *Track and Field* has more explicit implications concerning its targeted criticism.

⁸⁴ Lisa Freiman, "Statement from Lisa D. Freiman, U.S. Pavilion Commissioner," (Indianapolis, IN and Venice, Italy: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 2011).

⁸⁵ Freiman, "Of Shapes Transformed to Bodies Strange,'" 18.

⁸⁶ O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn," 241.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 242.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 251.

⁸⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 9.

⁹⁰ "Allora and Calzadilla to Represent United States at 54th Venice Art Biennale."

⁹¹ Even though the US State Department makes sure to identify the artists as Puerto Rican and Allora and Calzadilla create work that engages with Puerto Rican social issues and politics, according to Yates McKee, the artists do not primarily identify themselves as "Puerto Rican" artists. Jennifer Allora is of Italian-American heritage from New Jersey, and Guillermo Calzadilla was born in Cuba, but was raised in Puerto Rico. Both artists live and work together in San Juan with their daughter. Yates McKee states: "Their decision to live, work, and teach in Puerto Rico—and to embrace the island as their geographic in the US Pavilion Publicity materials—is thus a politically contingent form of regional identification rather than any culturally essential affinity." McKee, "Venice/Vieques," 69.

⁹² Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 87.

⁹³ Alain Badiou, "The Democratic Emblem," in *Democracy in What State?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 6.

⁹⁴ Christopher Livesay, "Art as 'Smart Power' at the Venice Biennale," NPR.org, accessed September 16, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/06/02/136897424/a-tank-an-organ-and-smart-power-at-the-venice-biennale>.

⁹⁵ As quoted in *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Carol Vogel, "Stars of Venice Shine in Basel," *New York Times*, June 17 2011, 25.

⁹⁷ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009), 12.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Chapter 2

¹ John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), xxiii–xxiv.

- ² Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 83.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 265.
- ⁴ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986).
- ⁵ Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 27.
- ⁶ According to historian John Julius Norwich, the beginnings of this ceremony took place in 1000 C.E., when the Doge decreed that in commemoration of the Venetian victory over Dalmatia and the acquisition of its territory, every succeeding Ascension Day, the Doge along with the Bishop of Olivolo and the nobles and citizens of Venice, "should sail out [...] by the Lido port into the open sea for a service of supplication and thanksgiving." Over time, the ceremony grew more elaborate and included the tossing of a propitiatory golden ring into the sea; "thus it was slowly to become identified with a symbolic marriage to the sea—the *Sposalizio del Mar*—a character that it was to retain till the end of the republic itself." *Ibid.*, 55.
- ⁷ The definition of republic in the thirteenth century differs from the modern definition of the republic as nation-state. The Venetian republic was a mixed government that combined elements of a monarchy with "democracy." It headed by a Doge that was elected by the aristocracy. He governed along with a number of councils and other representatives, comprising the *Signoria*. See Gasparo Contarini, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*, Translated by Lewes Lewkeno (London: Imprinted by Iohn Windet for Edmund Mattes, and are to be sold at his shop, at the signe of the Hand and Plow in Fleetstreet, 1599).
- ⁸ Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 155.
- ⁹ Deborah Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice*, Revised and enlarged ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 3.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 261–62.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 263.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 266.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 272–73.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 281.
- ¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008), 349.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 350.
- ¹⁷ Edward Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," in *Senses of Place*, ed. S. Feld and K. H. Basso (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996), 24.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.
- ²⁰ Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 300.
- ²¹ Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 28.
- ²² Yahya Madra, "From Imperialism to Transnational Capitalism: The Venice Biennale as a 'Transnational Conjuncture'," *Rethinking Marxism* 18, no. 4 (2006): 525.

- ²³ Vittoria Martini, "A Brief History of I Giardini: Or a Brief History of the Venice Biennale Seen from the Giardini," *Art and Education* (2009), accessed January 27, 2012, <http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/a-brief-history-of-i-giardini-or-a-brief-history-of-the-venice-biennale-seen-from-the-giardini/>.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Jean Fisher, "Voices in the Singular Plural: 'Palestine % Venice' and the Intellectual under Siege," *Third Text* 23, no. 6 (2009): 789–90.
- ²⁶ Martini, "A Brief History of I Giardini."
- ²⁷ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 25.
- ²⁸ Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," *Artforum International* 44, no. 1 (2005): 278-83.
- ²⁹ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 25.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ilya Noé, "Site-Particular," in *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research*, ed. Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 149.
- ³² Ibid., 150.
- ³³ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 158.
- ³⁴ Jacques Derrida, "Point de folie—Maintenant l'architecture," *AA Files*, no. 12 (1986): section 10.
- ³⁵ Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, 312.
- ³⁶ Derrida, "Point de folie—Maintenant l'architecture," section 10.
- ³⁷ Ibid., section 15.
- ³⁸ Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, 310–12.
- ³⁹ Derrida, "Point de folie—Maintenant l'architecture," section 3.
- ⁴⁰ Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 84.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Celia Clark and David Pinder, "Naval Heritage and the Revitalisation Challenge: Lessons from the Venetian Arsenal," *Ocean and Coastal Management* 42 (1999): 936.
- ⁴³ Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 269.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 85.
- ⁴⁵ Clark and Pinder, "Naval Heritage and the Revitalisation Challenge," 938.
- ⁴⁶ Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 119.
- ⁴⁷ In this description, Dante compares the Arsenal to the crowded darkness of hell's depths in lines 7–15 of Canto 21 (Longfellow's translation). Quoted in Fredric Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 163.
- ⁴⁸ Martini, "A Brief History of I Giardini."
- ⁴⁹ Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice*, 252.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 253.
- ⁵¹ "History of NZ at Venice," NZ at Venice, accessed February 7, 2013, <http://www.nzatvenice.com/history/>.
- ⁵² Leonhard Emmerling (curator of *Giraffe-Bottle-Gun*), curatorial talk, June 13, 2009.

- ⁵³ Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin, *Venice: The Tourist Maze* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 96.
- ⁵⁴ Paul Chaat Smith, "Luna Remembers," in *James Luna: Emendatio*, Elizabeth Kennedy Gische, ed. (Washington, DC: NMAI, Smithsonian Institute, 2005), 44.
- ⁵⁵ As quoted in Elizabeth Kennedy Gische, *James Luna: Emendatio*.
- ⁵⁶ Truman T. Lowe, "The Art of the Unexpected," in Gische, ed., *James Luna*, 20.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Jane Blocker, *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 14–15.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 21.
- ⁶⁰ Smith, "Luna Remembers," 44.
- ⁶¹ Lowe, "The Art of the Unexpected," 22.
- ⁶² Smith, "Luna Remembers," 26.
- ⁶³ Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, 21.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 20.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 21.
- ⁶⁶ Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 54.
- ⁶⁷ Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 2–6.
- ⁶⁸ Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 52.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., 51.
- ⁷⁰ Fredric Jameson and Ian Buchanan, *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2007), Kindle edition, 364.
- ⁷¹ Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 364.
- ⁷² Jameson and Buchanan, *Jameson on Jameson*, 157.
- ⁷³ Ian Buchanan, *Live Theory: Fredric Jameson* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 106.
- ⁷⁴ Madra, "From Imperialism to Transnational Capitalism," 525.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 526.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 531.
- ⁷⁷ Nations awarded the Golden Lion since 1986: France (1986, 1997, 2005), Italy (1988, 1999), United States of America (1990, 2009), Germany (1993, 2001, 2011), Luxembourg (2003), and Hungary (2007). The only "non-Western" nation to be granted a Golden Lion has been Egypt in 1995, which is also the only African and Middle Eastern nation with a pavilion in the Giardini. In 1990, the African Countries Pavilion—Nigeria and Zimbabwe—did receive honorable mention. For a complete listing of the prizes granted since 1986, see "Art—Awards since 1986," La Biennale di Venezia, accessed February 21, 2012, <http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/history/premi.html?back=true>.
- ⁷⁸ Okwui Enwezor, "Place-Making or in the 'Wrong Place': Contemporary Art and the Postcolonial Condition," in *Disapora Memory Place*, ed. Salah M. Hassan and Cheryl Finley (Munich: Prestel, 2008), 107.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 114.

Chapter 3

¹ Emmanuel Torres, "'Because It Is There'...The Philippines at the 32nd Venice Biennale: A Close Look," *Philippine Studies* 13, no. 2 (1965): 330.

² *Ibid.*, 336.

³ *Ibid.*, 332.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 335.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 342.

⁷ See Alfred W. McCoy, Francisco A. Scarano, and Courtney Johnson, "On the Tropic of Cancer: Transitions and Transformations in the U.S. Imperial State," in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 3–33.

⁸ Joseph Fallon, "Federal Policy and U.S. Territories: The Political Restructuring of the United States of America," *Pacific Affairs* 64, no. 1 (1991).

⁹ Ali Assaf, "Curator's Statement: Pavilion of Iraq, 54th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia," accessed March 13, 2012, <http://www.pavilionofiraq.org/upload/index-2.html>. German cultural critic Peter Sloterdijk argues that since World War I and the advent of chemical weapons, wars have shifted from combat scenarios to defeating enemies by making environments inhabitable. See Peter Sloterdijk, *Terror from the Air* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2009).

¹⁰ Shortly after the invasion began, BBC News listed a number of reasons that led up to the Iraq war as articulated by George W. Bush, Tony Blair, and Donald Rumsfeld. The general consensus for the invasion concerns UN Resolution 1441, which states: "Iraq has been and remains in material breach of its obligations under relevant resolutions [...] in particular through Iraq's failure to co-operate with United Nations weapons inspectors and the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency]." However, some other reasons put forward by the US government to justify the invasion included: removing Saddam Hussein from power in order to initiate a "regime change" and potential links between Iraq and al Qaeda (which were never substantiated). Overall, the actions of the executive and legislative branch were found to be grounded on less solid evidence than people were initially led to believe, even though Congress eventually folded into the demands of the executive branch. See "In quotes: Reasons for the Iraq War," BBC News, last updated May 29, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2948068.stm. For a thorough analysis of the build up to the war in Iraq, see Louis Fisher, "Deciding on War Against Iraq: Institutional Failures," *Political Science Quarterly* 118, no. 3 (2003).

¹¹ Shifting rationale and uncertain evidence led to a range of speculation in public opinion concerning the reasons for the Iraq war. Most claims surrounded the idea that the Iraq War was over oil, a notion supported by former chairman of the Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan in his autobiography *The Age of Turbulence*,

released in 2007. Specifically, Greenspan admits that Hussein wanted to control the Straits of Hormuz, a vital route for Middle Eastern Oil out of the Gulf. If this were to occur, oil exports would have been severely restricted, bringing the industry to its knees. See Alan Greenspan, *The Age of Turbulence: Adventures in a New World* (New York: Penguin Press, 2007).

¹² Adel Abidin, *Consumption of War*, accessed March 7, 2012, <http://www.adelabidin.com/index.php/works/2011/consumption-of-war.html>.

¹³ Jacques Derrida defines a rogue state as “a state that respects neither its obligations as a state before the law of the world community nor the requirements of international law, a state that flouts the law and scoffs at the constitutional state of law” (xiii). He emphasizes how it is not a self-determined assertion, but something that a nation is declared to be by another national government. Derrida argues that the idea of the “rogue state” arose only after the Cold War. See Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). This time frame corresponds with the beginning of the first Gulf War, when Iraq was first declared a “rogue state” by the US government. In the build up to the second Gulf war, this declaration was supported by the United Nations with Resolution 1441, resulting in other nations backing it, including Great Britain. Citing Robert S. Litwak, who served on the National Security Council staff under President Clinton, Derrida argues that in official discourse, a “rogue state is basically whoever the United States says it is.” In contrast to this course of political events, Derrida argues that according to his definition noted above, the “most perverse, most violent, most destructive of rogue states would be, first and foremost, the United States, and sometimes its allies.” Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 96–97.

¹⁴ See Shannon Rose Riley, “Imagi-Nations in Black and White: Cuba, Haiti, and the Performance of Difference in U.S. National Projects, 1898-1940,” (PhD diss., University of California Davis, 2006), 169.

¹⁵ J. L. Austin, “Performative Utterances,” in *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 235.

¹⁶ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, second ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22. Austin treats fictional speech acts, such as an actor performing in a play or words in a poem, as derogatory or “parasitic upon its normal use.”

¹⁸ Dorteia von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art: What Performativity Means in Art* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2010), 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Herbert W. Simons, “From Post-9/11 Melodrama to Quagmire in Iraq: A Rhetorical History,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2007): 186.

²³ The continuity between the two wars in Iraq cannot be ignored, especially when considering the similarities in the performances of both Presidents Bush when declaring Iraq a rogue state. When a state is declared rogue, the nation’s performative structure is no longer considered acceptable to the international

community, and actions may be taken from the outside to “correct” this performative, as is the case with Iraq. The motives behind the actions taken tend to exceed the particular circumstances of a nation whose performative is no longer considered acceptable. Susan Buck-Morss describes how the Gulf War was an opportunity for the United States to achieve sovereign legitimacy as a world superpower. Borrowing from the rhetoric of the Cold War, the first President Bush used this opportunity to enact a series of performances, mediated to the public through television, which would attempt to redefine Iraq’s performative structure in order to legitimize the United States as the world’s sole superpower. His son, Pres. George W. Bush, would continue this process with the second invasion of Iraq, culminating with the capture and execution of Saddam Hussein. It is only after the United States takes a step back from this role that Iraq takes the opportunity to challenge the US declaration of rogueness through the presentation of an alternative performative structure of the nation. For more information on Bush and the first Gulf War, see Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 250–59.

²⁴ Simons, "From Post-9/11 Melodrama to Quagmire in Iraq," 183.

²⁵ Edward Said is renowned for taking the seemingly benign term “Orientalism,” which was used to describe a particular academic discipline concerning the study of the Orient or the East, and revealed the maniacal power relations that it entails. Said describes how Orientalism is a constellation of false assumptions underlying Western attitudes towards the East, and that it functions as a means that the West uses to secure dominance and authority over the East. When Said initially published his book in 1978, his ideas were considered a significant contribution to the fledging field of post-colonial studies. In 2003, Said wrote a new preface for the twenty-fifth anniversary edition, within which he describes how the ideas contained in the book were as pertinent as ever after 9/11 and the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq. He states: “I wish I could say [...] that general understanding of the Middle East, the Arabs, and Islam in the United States has improved somewhat, but alas, it really hasn’t. [...] In the United States, the hardening of attitudes, the tightening of the grip of demeaning generalization and triumphalist cliché, the dominance of crude power allied with simplistic contempt for dissenters and ‘others’ has found a fitting correlative in the looting, pillaging, and destruction of Iraq’s libraries and museums.” The reduction of the Middle East to a Western fantasy in order to maintain political superiority and justify intervention into another nation’s sovereignty persists in the aftermath of 9/11 and the rhetorical propaganda justifying the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. See Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Twenty-Fifth Anniversary ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), xviii.

²⁶ Simons, "From Post-9/11 Melodrama to Quagmire in Iraq," 184.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

²⁸ Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, 43.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁰ Jan Cienki, "Bush caps war with speech on aircraft carrier: 'Mission Accomplished': Major operations over, President says in theatrical address," *National Post (Canada)*, May 2, 2003.

³¹ According to the right-wing, popular political magazine, *The National Review*, Byron York describes how Bush flew by jet to the USS *Abraham Lincoln* when a helicopter ride would have sufficed, since, according to former White House press secretary Ari Fleisher, he "wanted to see a landing the way aviators see a landing." Byron York, "The Truth About Bush's 'Lies,'" accessed March 20, 2012, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/207111/truth-about-bushs-lies/byron-york>.

³² In a press briefing on October 29, 2003, former White House press secretary Scott McClellan responded to questions posed by reporters that challenged Bush's declaration that "major combat operations were over." McClellan found himself responding to many questions concerning the "Mission Accomplished" banner, which Bush attempted to distance the White House from by claiming in a Rose Garden Press Conference that it was the sailors' idea, a notion that McClellan supports: "We said all along, and we said previously that it was the idea—that the idea of the banner—for the banner was suggested by those on board on ship. And they asked [...]. And they asked—they asked if we could help take care of the production of the banner. And we were more than happy to do so because this is a very nice way to pay tribute to our sailors and aviators and men and women in the military who are on board that ship for a job well done." See Scott McClellan, "Press Briefing - October 29, 2003," The White House, accessed March 20, 2012, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/10/20031029-2.html#11>. Later reports found that the White House had in fact been behind the banner from the start. Moreover, the banner has been criticized as being a boastful claim articulated before the true extent of the military operations has been realized. See: "Bush's 'Bannergate' Shuffle," *Time Magazine*, accessed March 20, 2012, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,536170,00.html>; and "Spinning Iraq," *New York Times*, accessed March 20, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/03/opinion/03sat1.html>.

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³⁶ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 117.

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- ⁴³ McCoy, Scarano, and Johnson, "On the Tropic of Cancer: Transitions and Transformations in the U.S. Imperial State," 32.
- ⁴⁴ Caroline Jones, "Biennial Culture: A Longer History," in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke Van Hal, and Ovstebo Solveig (Bergen, Norway and Ostfildern, Germany: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010), 77.
- ⁴⁵ Janelle Reinelt, "The Politics of Discourse: Performativity meets Theatricality," *SubStance* 31, no. 2&3 (2002): 204.
- ⁴⁶ Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 7.
- ⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, "Afterword: Toward and Ethic of Discussion," in *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 119.
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- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.
- ⁵⁰ Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater* (London: Routledge, 2006), Kindle edition, 47.
- ⁵¹ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 95.
- ⁵² Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, 47.
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- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.
- ⁵⁵ Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, 46.
- ⁵⁶ Jackson, *Professing Performance*, 190.
- ⁵⁷ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 94.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.
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- ⁶¹ Julia Chaplin, "The Art World's New Darlings," *The New York Times*, June 3 2011.
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- ⁶⁸ Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012), Kindle edition, locations 57–60.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, locations 95–102.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, locations 135–37.
- ⁷¹ Giscard Bouchotte (curator of *Haiti Kingdom of this World*), e-mail message to the author, April 27, 2012.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ *Ibid.* "Travailler sur une exposition à cette échelle-là demande du temps, des financements conséquents et une prise de risque considérable. Tout projet collectif sur Haïti est un challenge! Certes la participation à la Biennale de Venise coûte beaucoup d'argent, mais la volonté de tous les producteurs et de tous les partenaires étaient là dès le départ. Il fallait y arriver. Le fait que ce soit un Pavillon à Venise a facilité également les financements. Il faudra de plus en plus des initiatives collectives de la sorte, venant des Haïtiens eux-mêmes pour que le monde comprenne qu'on a autre chose à offrir."
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- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 331
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁸² Jones, "Biennial Culture," 79.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁴ Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2008), Kindle edition, 237.
- ⁸⁵ From personal e-mail correspondence with Giscard Bouchotte.
- ⁸⁶ Sheikh, "Marks of Distinction, Vectors of Possibility," 75.
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- ⁸⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), Kindle edition.
- ⁸⁹ Christopher Hawthorne, "The Venice Biennale's Palestine Problem," *The New York Times*, June 1, 2003.
- ⁹⁰ Jean Fisher, "Voices in the Singular Plural: 'Palestine % Venice' and the Intellectual Under Siege," *Third Text* 23, no. 6 (2009): 790.
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- ⁹³ Ibid. In *Terra Infirma*, Irit Rogoff examines the cultural critique of borders in the work of Guillermo Gomez-Peña, Ana Mendieta, and others.
- ⁹⁴ Hawthorne, "The Venice Biennale's Palestine Problem."
- ⁹⁵ Fisher, "Voices in the Singular Plural," 792.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid.
- ⁹⁷ Emily Jacir, "Emily Jacir Statement—*stazione*, 2008–2009," accessed February 9, 2012, <http://palestinecoveniceb09.org/emilyfeaturedwork.html>.
- ⁹⁸ T. J. Demos, "Desire in Diaspora: Emily Jacir," *Art Journal* 62, no. 4 (2003): 64.
- ⁹⁹ Jacir, "Emily Jacir Statement—*stazione*, 2008-2009."
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- ¹⁰¹ Salwa Mikdadi, "*Palestine % Venice* Curator Statement," accessed February 9, 2012, <http://www.palestinecoveniceb09.org/curatorstatement.html>.
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- ¹⁰³ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 27.
- ¹⁰⁴ Hawthorne, "The Venice Biennale's Palestine Problem."
- ¹⁰⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary*, December 2012 (OED Online), s.v. "ban, n. 1," Accessed March 3, 2012, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/15092?rskey=xZvOy2andresult=1andisAdvanced=false>
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Ovstebo Solveig (Bergen, Norway and Ostfilern, Germany: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010), 449.

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¹²¹ Jones, "Biennial Culture: A Longer History," 70.

Chapter 4

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² See Robert C. Davis and Garry R. Marvin, *Venice: The Tourist Maze* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

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⁴ Thomas Hirschhorn, "Artist Statement for *Crystal of Resistance*," (Aubervilliers, France 2011).

⁵ I am indebted to Shannon Rose Riley for bringing the significance of Édouard Glissant to my attention.

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⁸ Ibid.

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¹¹ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1995). 12–13.

¹² Ibid., 12.

¹³ Joselit, "Truth or Dare," 315.

¹⁴ Ibid., 314.

¹⁵ Ibid., 315.

¹⁶ Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (2004): 74.

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²² Ibid., 63.

²³ Ibid.

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²⁶ Hirschhorn, "Artist Statement for *Crystal of Resistance*."

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- ⁵¹ Ibid., 207.
- ⁵² Fischer-Lichte, "From Theatre to theatricality—how to construct reality," 104.
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- ⁹⁷ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 111–12.
- ⁹⁸ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 98–99.
- ⁹⁹ Haldrup and Larsen, *Tourism, Performance and the Everyday: Consuming the Orient*, locations 382–83.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, locations 342–48.
- ¹⁰¹ MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 5–7.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 10.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 15.
- ¹⁰⁴ Davis and Marvin, *Venice: The Tourist Maze*, 114.
- ¹⁰⁵ Sierra is not the only artist to incorporate street vendors into Biennale art. In 2003, Fred Wilson hired someone to perform the role of a Senegalese vendor in front the US pavilion. Instead of selling knock-off designer bags, this vendor's goods consisted of one-of-a-kind pieces designed by the artist.
- ¹⁰⁶ Santiago Sierra, *133 Persons Paid to Have Their Hair Died Blond*, October 12, 2012, http://www.santiago-sierra.com/200103_1024.php.
- ¹⁰⁷ Davis and Marvin, *Venice: The Tourist Maze*, 114.

- ¹⁰⁸ According to Victoria Sherrow, women would use a number of bleaching mixtures, such as one that contained alum, sulfur, soda, and rhubarb. The women would sit in the sun as the heat activated a chemical reaction that would develop the color. Also during this time, people would add the costly ingredient of saffron to some hair lightening preparations. Some recipes included wine or horse urine. Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 155.
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- ¹¹¹ Ibid., 22.
- ¹¹² Ibid., 40.
- ¹¹³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, locations 4529–30.
- ¹¹⁴ Kester, *The One and the Many*, 62.
- ¹¹⁵ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, locations 4583–87.
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- ¹²³ Ibid., 316.
- ¹²⁴ Martin, *No Vulgar Hotel*, locations 112–14.
- ¹²⁵ Davis and Marvin, *Venice: The Tourist Maze*, 30.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid., 33.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid., 36. Compared to the standards in other cities, the Venetian Carnival is unusually long. By the mid-seventeenth century, festivities began the day after Christmas and would run for six weeks to a month until Ash Wednesday.
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- ¹³⁰ Davis and Marvin, *Venice: The Tourist Maze*, 48.
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- ¹³⁷ Jones, "Biennial Culture," 78.
- ¹³⁸ Ibid., 69.
- ¹³⁹ Davis and Marvin, *Venice: The Tourist Maze*, 95.
- ¹⁴⁰ Martin, *No Vulgar Hotel*, locations 219–20.
- ¹⁴¹ Ibid., locations 694–96.
- ¹⁴² Davis and Marvin, *Venice: The Tourist Maze*, 104.
- ¹⁴³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁴ Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2008), Kindle edition, 222.
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- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁸ Jan Morris, *The Venetian Empire: A Sea Voyage* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), Kindle edition, 15–16.
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Chapter 5

¹ A smartphone is a multi-purpose mobile device that has more computing power than a "basic" cellular phone, such as the ability to surf the Internet, play music, take pictures and video, and download specialized applications ("apps") that can perform a seemingly endless array of functions, from ordering takeout food to providing guides for exercise regimens.

² John Craig Freeman, e-mail message to the author, October 7, 2012.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Interventionist art is defined as art that is unauthorized by the institutional context of its display. For more information about Manifest.AR and how the group explains their practice, see "About Manifest.AR," Manifest.AR, accessed October 17, 2012, <http://manifestarblog.wordpress.com/about/>.

⁵ "ANNOUNCEMENT: Venice Biennial 2011 AR Intervention by Cyberartist Group Manifest.AR," Manifest.AR, accessed October 17, 2012, <http://www.manifestar.info/venicebiennial2011/>.

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⁷ John Craig Freeman, "John Craig Freeman @ Venice Biennial 2011," accessed October 17, 2012, <http://manifestarblog.wordpress.com/freeman-venice-2011/>.

⁸ "Corporate Overview," Bechtel Corporation, accessed March 7, 2013, <http://www.bechtel.com/overview.html>.

⁹ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso, 2012), Kindle edition., location 1631.

¹⁰ Ibid., locations 1634–35.

¹¹ Ibid., locations 1724–26.

¹² Ibid., locations 1782–83.

¹³ Ibid., locations 1801–02.

¹⁴ Guy Debord and Gil Wolman, "A User's Guide to Détournement," in *The Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 15.

¹⁵ As Claire Bishop notes in her analysis of SI, with the success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, leftist politics were granted a renewed hope. In addition, Charles de Gaulle's rise to power in 1958 marked the end of the nation's fourth republic, ushering a new era of French government. During this time, there were mass rural migrations to the city in addition to rising consumer culture that was not accompanied by corresponding flexibility in social mobility. It was this context of social, political, and cultural flux that gave rise to SI along with a number of other radical artist groups. See Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, locations 1675–83.

¹⁶ Freeman, "John Craig Freeman @ Venice Biennial 2011."

¹⁷ A correlation can be drawn between the Internet as a public space and public television: neither is privately owned by particular individuals or institutions, but neither can be considered universally accessible, since both require technology that is purchased by the consumer.

¹⁸ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), Kindle edition.

¹⁹ Gregory Ulmer, *Electronic Monuments* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xii.

²⁰ Ibid., xiii.

²¹ Ibid., xxi.

²² Ibid., 18.

²³ Ibid., 46.

²⁴ Ibid., 80.

²⁵ Generally, the maps and pavilion locations are accurate, but in 2011 there were some inconsistencies with the location of the pavilion on the map and its existence in physical space. For example, where the Cuban flag was placed with the map did not correlate with its physical location of the pavilion on San Sérvolo. Instead, the map places the pavilion in the Arsenale.

²⁶ Elmgreen's response to the question, "Which pavilions are you looking forward to seeing?" included Allora and Calzadilla's exhibition *Gloria*.

²⁷ "Who We Are," Christie's Auction House, accessed February 5, 2013, <http://www.christies.com/about/company/>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*, (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2008), Kindle edition, 5.

³⁰ Ibid., 6.

³¹ Iain Robertson, "Introduction: The Economics of Taste," in *Understanding International Art Markets and Management*, ed. Iain Robertson (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.

³² Ibid., 2–3.

- ³³ Iain Robertson, "The International Art Market," in Robertson, *Understanding International Art Markets and Management*, 22.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Derrick Chong, "Stakeholder Relationships in Contemporary Art," in Robertson, *Understanding International Art Markets and Management*, 91.
- ³⁶ Robertson, "The International Art Market," 23.
- ³⁷ Chong, "Stakeholder Relationships in Contemporary Art," 84 and 86.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 86.
- ³⁹ Robertson, "The International Art Market," 29.
- ⁴⁰ Chong, "Stakeholder Relationships in Contemporary Art," 89.
- ⁴¹ Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*, 17.
- ⁴² Chong, "Stakeholder Relationships in Contemporary Art," 93.
- ⁴³ Koji Inoue, "Lecture for the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts," (New York: Christie's Auction House, 2013).
- ⁴⁴ Don Thompson provides an overview of this process in his description of the sale of a Rothko that held the record-holding price for the artist and for any contemporary work at auction until the sale of the Pincus collection. The sale was held at Sotheby's, Christie's main competitor. The work, *White Center (Yellow, Pink, and Lavender on Rose)* was previously owned by David Rockefeller and sold for \$72.8 million two-and-a-half minutes after the bidding opened at \$28 million. For more details about this sale and a breakdown of price estimation, see "Branded Auctions" in Don Thompson, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), Kindle edition.
- ⁴⁵ Iain Robertson and Derrick Chong, "Introduction to Studies in Art Business," in *The Art Business*, ed. Iain Robertson and Derrick Chong (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 14.
- ⁴⁶ Iain Robertson, "Price before Value," in Robertson and Chong, *The Art Business*, 29–30.
- ⁴⁷ Anthony Downey, "Selling Used Cars, Carpets, and Art: Aesthetic and Financial Value in Contemporary Art," in Robertson and Chong, *The Art Business*, 55.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 58–59.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 63.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 66.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Robertson, "Price before Value," 31.
- ⁵⁴ Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*, 223.
- ⁵⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 52.
- ⁵⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 165.
- ⁵⁷ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 23.
- ⁵⁸ Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings* (London: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008), 319.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 325.

⁶⁰ Gregory Ulmer, *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 15.

⁶¹ The cost of smartphones can range widely, depending on the brand and if the phone was purchased in conjunction with a wireless contract, which regularly translates into a reduced price for the device. In the United States, the Apple iPhone 5 (16-GB version), the latest version of a popular smartphone, has a list price of \$649 (USD). Most carriers will sell a version of the phone for \$199 if purchased with the activation of a two-year wireless contract. Wireless contracts for iPhones and other smartphones, including those that run on the Google-developed Droid system, cost more than a typical wireless plan in order to accommodate for data usage. For an AT&T subscriber, a monthly bill can range from around \$80 to over \$100, which over two years can cost a user about \$2000 or more. Therefore, in order to have access to smartphone technology requires a certain level of income and willingness to spend this money on a wireless device. This analysis of expense already reveals material relations involved in the execution and uptake of the smartphone apps under discussion. This discussion of cost is not meant restrict consideration of art in the digital domain as public works (both the Christie's app and the Augmented Reality viewing app are free to download and openly available to the public), but it does reveal certain parameters concerning usage and accessibility that cannot be overlooked. These restrictions are not rigid, and the flexibility of technology accessibility is tied to the consumer technology market whose prices fluctuate regularly. Price data gathered from www.att.com for rate plans, current as of September 2012.

⁶² Pau Waelder, "Venecia en la brecha digital / Venice at the Digital Divide," *art.es* 45(2011): 65–66.

⁶³ Ibid., 66.

⁶⁴ Waelder, "Venecia en la brecha digital / Venice at the Digital Divide," 66.

⁶⁵ See Bishop, *Artificial Hells*.

⁶⁶ Henry Jenkins, "Game Design as Narrative Architecture," *Computer* 44 (2004).

⁶⁷ Alison L. McKee, "Actual v. Virtual Venice as Constructed Environments: Place, Space, and Narrative Architecture in Second Life," *The International Journal of the Constructed Environment* 1, no. 3 (2011): 169.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 169–70.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 170.

⁷⁰ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 77.

⁷¹ Ibid., 76.

⁷² Ibid., 64.

⁷³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), Kindle edition, xiii–xiv.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 93.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁷⁶ Lev Manovich, "The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life: From Mass Consumption to Mass Cultural Production?," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. Winter (2009): 323.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 324.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 325.

⁷⁹ Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise: Contemporary Art Between Museum and Marketplace* (New York and London: Continuum, 2012), 17.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 326.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 328.

⁸³ I am indebted to Shannon Rose Riley for helping me articulate my thoughts in this section.

⁸⁴ Claire Bishop, "Safety in Numbers," *Artforum International* 50, no. 1 (2011): 278-81.

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