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Temporary Services with Carmen Papalia

Temporary Services

Carmen Papalia

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TEMPORARY
SERVICES

WITH CARMEN PAPALIA

Portland State University
Art and Social Practice
Reference Points

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INTRODUCTION

CARMEN TO TEMPORARY SERVICES

Dear Temporary Services,

My name is Carmen Papalia and I am an artist and radical social worker living in Portland, Oregon. I have been making interactive experience-based work that creates the opportunity for productive conversation on the topic of access as it relates to public space, the Art institution and visual culture. I grew up in Vancouver, British Columbia where I co-founded a not-for-profit called the Memewar Arts and Publishing Society—an umbrella organization for an interdisciplinary publication called Memewar Magazine, a monthly reading series called the Short Line, a chapbook press called memePRESS, and a number of writing and publishing workshops for youth and adults. I didn't go to art school, but studied contemporary poetry and poetics during my undergrad—where I developed a critical eye and identified the subjects that I am interested in

exploring in my work. My own personal struggle (I'm visually impaired) with regard to accessing things like print materials, public space and the institutional structure lead me to develop work that both encourages and problematizes accessibility—a practice that I have been devoted to for a year and a half now. It is my interest in exploring themes such as these that drew me to learning more about your work.

I have to admit, since I was steeped, for years, in publishing and literary communities in Vancouver, I hadn't encountered the work of Temporary Services until I experienced a lecture by Deborah Stratman in 2011—who presented about her parking booth collaboration. At that time I was conducting social experiments on crowded city blocks—like walking a route with a 14 ft. mobility cane, and videotaping people as they jumped out of the way. After listening to Deborah's lecture I began to consider the work that I had been doing as a temporary service—and although I was not completely content with my strategy for engaging an audience / participant, I got excited by the idea that I, an artist, could create something useful for a community.

Prior to moving to Portland for my MFA I had worked, for years, as a counsellor and support worker for children and adults at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). I remember always feeling restricted by the parameters within which I was to provide support, and not always agreeing with the goals that the institution had me work toward with my clients. As I met individuals for which the institutional model was not a comfortable fit, I began to think of other possible contexts from which I could offer support. It wasn't until the summer of 2010, when I worked as the Arts programmer and coordinator for a camp for visually impaired youth on a small island off the coast of British Columbia, that I began to conceive of alternative models for education and social work.

The camp was a utopia—an idyllic beachfront resort where deer ate apples from trees in the shade on balmy afternoons. As I facilitated craft-making activities with groups of young campers, and lead casual, impromptu conversations about their fears and their

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adjustment to vision loss, I thought to myself that the institutional approach to providing support was not as productive as a one-on-one, meaningful experience. I soon stopped working for the CNIB and began to develop creative projects that referred to an aspect of my disability experience, and which I felt achieved what my social work was achieving. From that point on my support work would take the shape of experiential non-object-based art projects that were educational and hopefully transformative for the audience / participant. This practice, of creative problem solving and innovative critique, has been the focus of my work for just over a year now, and, I feel, is at the heart of the work of Temporary Services.

With projects such as *Park*, *Midwest Side Story* and the Half Letter Press (just to name a few) it is clear that Temporary Services is invested in promoting and problematizing accessibility. It is at this conceptual starting point that I'd like to open our conversation.

Sincerely,
Carmen Papalia

TEMPORARY SERVICES TO CARMEN

Hi Carmen,

YES! We agree to participate in the Reference Points book series.
Can you please send us a proof before it goes to print so we can
just make sure all of the captions and any edits are correct?

Thanks,

Temporary Services
(Brett Bloom, Marc Fischer, Salem Collo-Julien)

INTERVIEW

CARMEN PAPALIA How do you see the theme of accessibility playing into the work that Temporary Services has done?

TEMPORARY SERVICES There are many different kinds of accessibility. Accounting for people with visual impairments is something we have addressed very little in our work. However, a recent conversation with a friend of ours who can only read very large print prompted us to scan our publications at a higher DPI. Now when we share our publications online, they can be greatly enlarged for readability without a huge loss in image quality. We should also look into software that converts text into audio files, but we struggle with limited time and resources. We'd welcome any insights you or others might be able to share about how to do this.

All of us have worked independently with adults with developmental challenges—which also include physical challenges, and this has greatly sensitized us to their struggles. We have advocated extensively for people with these challenges to be included in exhibitions and projects on the basis of their ideas, and not solely alongside others with developmental challenges. We have also collaborated with artists in these positions and presented their work ourselves.

We have, perhaps, been somewhat more successful in making our work accessible in other areas. For example, we work hard to write without depending on academic art jargon that is highly obscure to

many readers. As long-time self-publishers, we have always made our booklets and books very cheap when they are available for purchase, and we have given away tens of thousands of free publications over the years in an effort to make our ideas and concerns more accessible. We regularly return to our longstanding concern with doing projects in shared city spaces, rather than always working in official art spaces or museums, which many people find intimidating and are reluctant to enter.

Accessibility can also be thought about in terms of the power structures we have to constantly negotiate every day. Who has access to living out their desires and who does not? Do we replicate the power structures or do we try to mitigate them with our work? We ask ourselves this all the time. We often work in ways that create space for people or voices that are excluded or ignored within traditional presentation frameworks for art, and we try to do the same in our negotiation of planned city spaces. Both are highly controlled aspects of our lives that we regularly question.

CP I think that the struggles of people with disabilities relates so well to all of the ways that TS addresses and works through accessibility. People with disabilities often have limited access to the cities in which they live, and to the public institutions that are intended to benefit a community at large. This limited accessibility creates (and institutes) damaging power dynamics and limits the way that people with disabilities can participate in cultural production. People with visual impairments, for example, often feel like art museums are not relevant to them—and this is due to the fact that the institution has designed a visitor experience around what one can gather through their visual sense. Audible and various “accessible” tours (which are often just offered once every week or two) are helpful, but still exist as a less-than-equal substitute for the privileged, visual experience. This limited access to cultural learning (which is reflected in the limited availability of books and reference materials in alternative accessible formats) points to a deep-rooted problem in how the institutional model is limited in serving diverse communities.

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This same sort of thing happens to artists when they participate in traditional models for distributing and exhibiting their work. The art institutions and markets that should serve and support artists actually end up marginalizing them. This is clear in the fact that only a small number of artists are able to sustain their careers through the selling of their work. I think the problem is that if only a small number of practicing artists are recognized for what they do, art and art making becomes a specialized conversation that is limited to a select few. This is a problematic that a lot of the artists that I am currently interested in are combating through the creation of alternative models for exhibiting their work, sharing resources, making art and conversations about art available and relevant to non-artists, and destabilizing some of the damaging power dynamics (such as between artist and audience, artist and non-artist and so on) that have developed throughout the years.

I see many of these issues being challenged in a lot of the work that TS has done, and I'd like to put a spotlight on a few projects that I think highlight this especially well:

Designated Drivers (and the way it allows the audience/participant to generate content in an art context and become both artist and curator) challenges the typical hierarchy of curator / artist / passive audience. The fact that content is easily sharable between participants and future audiences also work against ideas around the unapproachability and preciousness of art.

The Library Project (and the guerilla installation of certain books into a curated public collection) questions the choices that cultural institutions often make, the valuing systems that they often institute, and the ways in which they often design and dictate cultural learning.

Supermax Subscriptions and those wonderful little plastic exhibition ravioli (and the facilitation of a group's access to media and cultural learning) addresses the public's often limited access to art, art resources and conversations around art.

CP Can you discuss how certain forms of accessibility are being addressed in these projects, and speak to how these models might

create accessibility or be productive in thinking through access with regard to art and culture? What are your views in terms of which group's art is available to currently? Can institutions change, or are they already changing in the way that they approach access? Can artist projects that present alternative models for accessibility change access on a large scale or at the institutional level? How can this sort of change be achieved?

TS First, we greatly value hearing about your experiences as a person with a visual impairment and we hope this discussion helps to sensitize others to consider how presentations of art might attempt to greater engage and involve people whose experience of creative work is more dependent on their non-visual senses.

Our strategies for presenting both our work and the work of others that we include in projects change on a regular basis as we test out different approaches for engaging new audiences. Obviously not all projects will serve all audiences, nor will all strategies work in every situation. It's important to consider a range of approaches for both creating and presenting work.

When we first started organizing exhibitions, events, and projects in Chicago, our practice grew out of our frustration with the limitations that come from exhibiting art in a narrow way to a limited audience. Chicago is a tremendously diverse and large city, but this diversity is rarely reflected in the attendance at museums and art galleries. We all worked in and visited museums, galleries, and other arts organizations over the years and during those experiences could easily see what wasn't working and who wasn't coming to these spaces.

When we organized The Library Project, we recognized that the Harold Washington Library Center (the main library in Chicago) and other public libraries function very differently than museums. Libraries are always free to visit, are visited by a great range of people, and their mission is to be inclusive. Of course libraries have their problems—but they often function as free and open safe spaces in the middle of the city.

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The Harold Washington Library Center is the largest public building in Chicago. We thought it would be a great site to plant artists' books. Over eleven years later, some of those books are still hiding in the stacks waiting to be discovered by browsers, while many others have been found and cataloged by the librarians in Special Collections (who turned out to really like the project once they got wind of it). You can visit that library, go to the front desk on the eighth floor, and ask to see books from The Library Project and the staff will show you about a quarter of the books that we added without permission.

Ravioli was a project about democratically produced and distributed multiples (by artists and other creators or manufacturers) which grew out of an earlier project we did called Free For All. Free For All was held in a storefront and involved tables of booklets, stickers, prints, and other items that visitors to the event were invited to collect for free in a screen-printed box. Attendees were then encouraged to share or re-exhibit their collection in a variety of ways that were proposed in a brochure that was included in each box. The event was great fun. We have many friends who still own and treasure their Free For All box, but the event was mainly attended by other artists and people who pay close attention to art events around town. With Ravioli, we made pre-assembled assortments of art, and some useful items, and distributed them in more direct ways around various cities. We pushed some through mail slots, put them under windshield wipers, placed them in the spokes of bicycles, and stapled them to boarded up buildings and telephone poles.

Designated Drivers is, in some ways, like a digital version of the generosity in these other projects where artists are freely sharing things they made. Thousands of files are made available, including many works or resources that were not already online, and people are invited to take whatever they want. They can take one file, or they can copy 20,000 files. People have to come to the exhibit or showing of Designated Drivers in person to copy files from the collection, as we are trying to make the digital file sharing experience a bit more physically social than usual. However, we don't limit who

can come, or how much they can copy, or charge people money for their time or file sharing.

Supermax Subscriptions is a project that attempts to procure magazines and newspapers for every prisoner at Tamms Prison using donated air miles. Tamms is a supermax prison in Southern Illinois where prisoners are isolated and experience no human contact. In short, subscription donors who get to travel all over the world use a byproduct of their experiences to benefit incarcerated men who can't go anywhere. The project also is a way of demonstrating to the prisoners and the Tamms administration that people on the outside care about prisoners and are paying attention to the rampant human rights abuses that are happening in this facility—a place that in recent months is being strongly considered for closure.

Institutions can change a lot more than the people who run them say they can. It takes a courageous curator or administrator to not replicate the ideology of the commercial art market. These folks are few and far between. Art museums in the U.S., in some form or another, are funded and supported by taxpayer money (either through direct subsidy or a harder to see and understand form called “taxes foregone” where a private organization is forgiven things like rent, property tax, and so on if their building is on publicly owned land). For this reason alone, radical artists should put their work there and try to leverage this history and the museum's resources in vastly different directions. We need a lot more of this!

Art museums have a specifically non-democratic side to their history that is the purview of the wealthy and the collector classes. Their investments and speculations in art commodities are passed off, through a complex system of culture-washing, as the “very best” of art today. The overwhelming majority of artists whose work shows up in the nation's museums are the pets of these people. They have made art trinkets that cater to the tastes and comfort of these people so that it gets collected and traded for obscene amounts of money. Only a very small number of people actually benefit from this pyramid scheme. The “naturalization” of this process that museums enact is only one story, and to us, it is the least interesting, as more powerful things are happening all over the place in terms

of expansive, exploratory human creativity (not the creative class, that abject fantasy is a completely different thing). Museums create many layers of exclusion. Not least among them are types of art work that gets supported and types of audience interaction that are established. There are deep societal barriers that need to be broken down both in and out of the institutions. We often have to insist to directors, preparators, and others, that people will engage with our work in the ways we say they will. They quite literally can't imagine anything other than someone standing back and having a detached aesthetic experience and they think that this is enough. This is in part because it is always what they do and what their colleagues and peers do and what they feel pressured to replicate. This needs to be cracked wide open and changed.

CP A few museums are incorporating more experiential, non-object-based work these days into shows and programming, which I think challenges the detached aesthetic experience. For me, the fact that this sort of work is finding its way into larger institutions is a step in the right direction in making the Art experience and the Art institution more accessible. Currently, it is common for an artist with a non-object-based practice to be commissioned by a museum to do a project, or contribute to a program, that is running as part of the initiative of an education department. These projects still happen within the walls of the institution, but are not always supported by curators. In this way, museum education departments are creating a space for this kind of work within the institution—a gesture that has the potential to change the culture of the museum at large.

Much of the non-object-based work that happens within museums (which is often the product of a residency or special program) is referred to as “creative problem solving”—a label that is problematic in many ways, but which operates on the logic that the Art institution is full of problems that artists can solve with their work. This idea, that a museum-endorsed project can help create a better institution, works against more traditional models—where it is the museum's job to showcase “the best of the best” of the Art making world. However there are still many problems with the ways in which this important work is valued within the Art institution,

which, I guess, offers interested parties even more reason to develop creative solutions.

As a means of tying together some of the threads that have presented themselves throughout this discussion, can you speak to the ways in which (if at all) Art institutions have changed while TS has been active. Since TS has been committed, for so long, to the development of alternative models of: exhibition, value and participation (to name a few) are there any stories that you can share about your work influencing mainstream institutions? Is the goal of developing these alternatives to influence the mainstream?

Art objects (which often have very little use value) are protected and even restored by institutions, how can artists that develop creative models for change ensure that their work doesn't just disappear after a project ends? How can artists that are working in these ways ensure that their efforts are contributing to change?

TS When new and sometimes younger generations of curators start working in museums, they often bring with them new and different ideas about what kinds of things can happen within the institution. Sometimes this comes from the education department, and sometimes the ideas of change can come from exhibition curators who might be inclined to get a bit more creative about event programming during the course of a show.

Curators like the artists they like and want to work with people whose work they admire, which may in turn mean that they are willing to have some difficult battles on behalf of that art with the Board of Directors and others working in administrative roles at their institution. Some of the museum curators we've worked with (like Stephanie Smith at the Smart Museum of Art at University of Chicago or Nato Thompson, formerly at MASS MoCA) clearly have an agenda to push ideas and expand what museums are and how they can function. Artists can be allies in this struggle with thoughtful and experimental curators as long as we are willing to challenge the ideas of what we "should" do in this relationship and be super clear about our demands, needs, and desires.

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Curators at museums and other cultural institutions often depend on us to propose projects that challenge the traditional notions of what happens or what gets shown in a museum and challenge the common ideas of how the audience can interact with an artist's work. Merely including an artist group in an exhibit might be a new concept for a lot of museums and/or curators. Figuring out how to work directly with a group of artists—rather than just one person, or working with a representative from an artist or group's commercial gallery—might be something unfamiliar.

Our goal is not specifically to transform museums, but our projects do often challenge museums and other cultural institutions with unfamiliar requests or problems. A number of our projects like Designated Drivers, the Self-Reliance Library, and Binder Archives include many other artists and participants. Just because we in Temporary Services received an invitation to do work, and are presumably liked by the curators or institution, does not necessarily mean they planned on including all of the people that come with the showing of those projects.

Sometimes the amount of extra creative material that comes with these projects is enormous, and the works function a bit like a Trojan Horse: allowing many others to slip into a museum who surely would not have been invited on their own. Sometimes the content of the works by some participants in our projects opens up a whole other can of worms.

Often we receive an invitation and want to collaborate with someone outside of the group—like Angelo in the case of Prisoners' Inventions. In this case that person will need to be very clearly credited for their participation and sometimes that is a new challenge for a museum. They have to explain what our group is, who is in the group, and also figure out how to articulate this other (perhaps more temporary and project-based relationship) that is part of the work they are showing. It's fun giving museums these challenges and most of them handle things with great understanding and competency. We hope it's a good expe-

rience for the curators and institutions and makes things easier for the next group that gets invited.

The issue of preservation is complicated. On the one hand, it is frustrating that so much of our work sits in storage doing absolutely nothing. It would be great if more of it could be visible and could be taken care of by others. However, many of our projects are interactive, subject to wear, and hard to maintain. Or they are event-based and can't just hang on a wall or sit under glass. We've never been interested in exhibiting relics from inactive past projects and there hasn't been much interest in people wanting to buy those things from us—for private or public collections.

Few museums care about collecting major works by artist groups. There are some exceptions—like General Idea, who seem to be appearing in collections a lot more lately—but not much else comes to mind, and it's hard to think of many contemporary, still active artist groups that are being collected by museums that aren't directly related to the art market. Artist duos or couples that use their own names and make discrete objects and move through the art world via commercial galleries (Fischli and Weiss, or Bernd and Hilla Becher—for example) are far more common to find in museum collections.

The mentality in museums, for collecting artwork, is directly defined by commercial considerations and validation from that process. Brett was working with another group called Learning Site. The Smart Museum, under Stephanie Smith, commissioned an artwork for a show called Beyond Green, which Temporary Services was also involved with. The Smart was interested in buying the Learning Site work after Beyond Green traveled for a couple of years. The only way that the museum would purchase the work was if some kind of market value could be established and an argument could be made that the work could be seen in that light. This was very frustrating and took a lot of creative thinking and arguing to finally get the work in the museum. But, it was irritating that it could not be defined and valued on its own terms. Fortunately, Stephanie Smith has been a big supporter, of our work and new forms of art making in general, and she did make up for this unpleasant

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situation by creating a living archive around Learning Site's work at the Smart Museum as a way to deal with some of the difficulties the more discursive, dispersed, socially-based works present to stodgy institutions. The living archive collects drawings, publications, and other material related to the work bought by the museum on an ongoing basis establishing a conversation over time between Smith and Learning Site. This is one strategy that seems to be really effective for collecting and preserving this kind of work we and others do. Smith is the only person we know that is actively trying to wrestle with these questions.

If our work shows up in a museum collection at all—The Art Institute of Chicago, or the Museum of Modern Art, for example—it is only in the museum's library. We are grateful that these spaces are preserving some aspect of our practice but they are doing so on a particularly small scale and one that is barely, if ever, publicly visible. If museum librarians had a greater role in the presentation of major exhibitions, many other kinds of practices might enjoy far greater attention. The Museum of Modern Art could tell a completely different history of art if you put all the artwork in storage and put the various histories the library preserves on display.

There is a different situation in European museums where the market doesn't have such a stranglehold on discourse. Many European countries subsidize art practice that is not supported by commercial mechanisms. This allows for a greater freedom of art making and a more expansive programming that one can encounter. It has been like this for many years. Artists in the U.S. who work outside the commercial system need to be better about articulating their practice and demanding access to museums and their resources. There have been times in our history where there was state support for the arts on a broad scale and this democratized museums and art discourse in general. We need to bring this back in a forceful way. But this needs to be a part of a bigger political process to turn back the forces of greed and selfishness that were unleashed by Ronald Reagan in the 1980's.

Ronald Reagan, more than any other ideologue in U.S. history, assaulted the idea that the arts could be a place of human activity

that was free from the concerns of the market. This man, and his policies, cronies, and fellow believers, is directly responsible for the increased monetization of art. He famously said that art should not be funded and that the market should decide whether or not an artist is valued. It was a political attack that had huge implications and was a part of a greater effort to dismantle the welfare state in the U.S. It was an attack on the democratization of art that included a funding process, via NEA grants for “Alternative Spaces”, that opened up the art world to women, people of color, and LGBTQA folks. NEA funding also helped to democratize the forms art could take (performance, video, time-based, installation, artists’ books, etc.). We are benefitting greatly today because of the liberalizing of museum, gallery and public art practice that funding brought. Reagan bears greater responsibility than any other person in the U.S. for hurting arts that expand our notions of what being human is and can look like. We must mention his monstrous power over and over again.

ESSAY

WHAT'S SOCIAL PRACTICE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Abigail Satinsky

I had never heard of a socially engaged art practice until I moved to Chicago for graduate school in 2006. I learned about a book called *Relational Aesthetics* when I read about Rirkrit Tiravanija's work in the "Shouts and Murmurs" section of *The New Yorker*. I started thinking I didn't want to be an art teacher for five year olds for the rest of my life and I wrote a paper at a library in my off-hours on some vague assertion that Bourriaud's micro-utopias were not "critical" enough. So there I was, suddenly in graduate school. And the funniest thing happened; I discovered that this slim little volume that I thought I had personally scavenged from obscurity was a hot topic. Art-world luminaries like Claire Bishop, Grant Kester, and Liam Gillick were out there swinging at each other, trading barbs in the pages of *Artforum* and struggling with how to levy judgment on the world of Relational Art. All right, I thought, this is where I want to be. Let's get *critical*.

But an education in Chicago would not be complete without starting an apartment gallery. I met Brett Bloom from Temporary Services through my friend and collaborator Ben Schaafsma. He came over to our freshly painted storefront one night and told us we should read Margaret Kohn's book *Radical Space: Building the House of the People* and to learn about the local history of alternative spaces, including that of seminal Chicago spaces like Randolph Street and NAME Gallery. And it was through this initial exchange and the platform that is Temporary Services that I was introduced to a loosely knit group of people, projects, and spaces in the Midwest making and living socially engaged art. These were projects like Haha, Feel Tank, Experimental Station, Mess Hall, *AREA Chicago*, The Stockyard Institute, Regional Relationships, the Midwest Radical Cultural Corridor, and things that happened before I arrived like Pink Bloque, Pilot TV, and the Department of Space and Land Reclamation. These folks were working things out, often in non-institutional space, and utilizing art's apparatus for publicity, resources, and space for creative experimentation. At the same time, they engaged with rich histories, communities, and politics that stretched into "Culture" at large. Here was a way to be critical in the sense of being self-reflexive and questioning assumptions, but also to test those critical judgments out with publics of potentially radically different viewpoints and life trajectories. I've come to understand this creative mode as a Chicago thing; we're the "city that works," the no-nonsense, nose-to-the-grindstone folks, with a homegrown radical history and a self-conscious fuck-you attitude.

So while the pithy commentary of *The New Yorker* was my introduction, and graduate school impressed upon me that criticality was a rhetorical skill prized above all else, I like to think of Temporary Services as my access point to actually figuring out what kind of culture worker I wanted to be. I suspect that Temporary Services might be a lot of young folks' introduction to an alternative mode of working with others in the art-world. Rather than one specific piece or project of theirs, it was a model of practice, a sense that being in the arts didn't mean operating only within an insular community. Collaborations could be expansive and risky; accessibility didn't

mean leaving behind criticality; art-world infrastructures could be leveraged for resources and publicity without collapsing into cynicism.

To get from the general to the specific, Temporary Services' projects over the last 14 odd years span publications, spaces, collaborations, libraries, and an experimental online store. They work with lots of different people, for example, making recreations of inventions by Angelo, an artist incarcerated in California's prison system, or, with artist groups Biggest Fags Ever and Ausgang, a giant beer can that unpacks to make a table, grill, and giant balloon inflator, or clandestinely adding over 150 books designed by artists and others into the Harold Washington Library's collection. They co-founded Mess Hall, an experimental cultural center: "a place where visual art, radical politics, creative urban planning, applied ecological design and other things intersect and inform each other." They produce resources, often in the form of publications. Frequently, these are simply-designed booklets stapled and that contain interviews, ephemera, stories, and collaborations, with accounts of their exhibitions and others; or cataloguing how to get resources or be more self-sufficient in general; or simply just talking to people that are interesting like Aaron Hughes, Peggy Diggs, or Jean Toche. They are scattered all over the place. You can encounter them in bookstores, at friends' houses, at art galleries. Basically, they're out in the world, in various worlds, in a generous spirit of ideas, people, and books everywhere—a cacophony of production and dissemination. Hopefully, like this book you're reading right now.

You could characterize the work of Temporary Services as a study in democracy; not the facile kind where openness and consensus drowns out those voices often not heard, but an embrace of the mess of participation. Carl Wilson describes it best in *Let's Talk About Love: A Journey to the End of Taste*, his book about Celine Dion and his struggle to understand his own taste as a critic and the "mass culture" he usually dismisses:

This is what I mean by democracy—not a limp open-mindedness, but actively grappling with people and things not like me, which brings with it the perilous question of what I am like. Democracy, that dangerous, paradoxical and mostly unattempted

ideal, sees that the self is insufficient, dependent for definition on otherness, and chooses not only to accept that but to celebrate it, to stake everything on it. Through democracy, which demands we meet strangers as equals, we perhaps become less strangers to ourselves.

Socially engaged art, social practice, whatever you want to call it, is formed by these encounters and by people like Temporary Services that struggle with why being artist is important in an incredibly fucked up world. I work in a non-profit now, a really great one, staking out a little territory in the non-profit industrial complex. I spend time trying to figure out how to get people with more money than me to spend money on the arts, supporting artists that don't have access to money and giving them opportunities to expand their work, while trying to retain the politics that got me into this in the first place. And I love this set of negotiations as a testing ground for what kind of art-world I want to operate in. It teaches me how to deal with those that are different than myself and work out how a democratic and ethical art-world could possibly function. I couldn't do this without also understanding how artists are also always dancing within and around institutional space, negotiating the power dynamics and compromises happening therein. It brings to mind what the artist collective Group Material once said, "In general, we see ourselves as the outspoken distant relative at the annual reunion who can be counted on to bring up the one subject no one wants to talk about." This was in relationship to their *Democracy* project at the Dia Foundation in 1988, a series of installations on education, electoral politics, cultural participation, and AIDS with roundtable and town meeting discussions, later compiled with other writings into a book. These were complex and pressing social issues (still are), and some of the participants involved got mad that these discussions were happening within an art institution. Temporary Services—Brett Bloom, Salem Collo-Julín, and Marc Fischer—continue this discussion in their own way, with their own strategies, in multiple venues. They grapple with the world, as it exists, question what or who is getting left out of the conversation, and make the whole thing a little messy and weird, as it should be.

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Abigail Satinsky is the Program Director at threewalls in Chicago and a member of InCUBATE, a research collaborative on arts administration as a creative practice. She's a regular contributor to Bad at Sports podcast and blog and has written for Proximity Magazine, AREA Chicago, Journal of Aesthetics and Protest, The Artist-Run Chicago Digest, as well as a forthcoming essay in Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art, published by the Smart Museum of Art and the New Press in 2012. She also edited the most recent edition of PHONEBOOK, a directory of artist-run spaces and projects across the United States, published by threewalls, and co-organized a national conference for independent arts organizers called Hand in Glove in October 2011.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY #1

DESIGNATED DRIVERS

TIME FRAME

Launched April 2011–ongoing.

DESCRIPTION

For Designated Drivers, we invited an international selection of twenty people and groups to each fill one four gigabyte USB flash drive with material of their choosing. These drives are then presented in exhibition spaces, attached to wall-mounted retractable laundry lines. Visitors are able to load their own drives or laptops (or use a host computer and CDs or DVDs) with any of the material they would like from each of the flash drives.

PSU ART AND SOCIAL PRACTICE REFERENCE POINTS

The drives include images, films, audio, programs, and many publications worth of writing and graphic design. File types include: MP3, JPEG, PNG, AIFF, TIFF, PSD, DOC, PPT, PDF, AVI, and more. The participants have included mountains of material, often at higher resolution than is commonly seen on a personal website, and in many cases material that is not duplicated online at all. Some participants used this opportunity to present a few recent projects with great depth, while others chose to survey their entire creative output over more than a decade.

The contents of the flash drives in *Designated Drivers* are deliberately not available online from one centralized location. We want you to get out of your house. We want you to mingle, in person, with others and talk about which files look interesting to transfer and which might be more to someone else's liking.

FUNDING

We launched *Designated Drivers* with the financial support of the The James B. Pick and Rosalyn M. Laudati Fund for Arts Computing, with support from The Alice Kaplan Institute for The Humanities and the Department of Art Theory and Practice at Northwestern University and the Block Museum of Art.

BUDGET

Approximately \$3,000.00 for initial fabrication and the first showing, including flash drives, fabrication of the flash drive holders, retractable wall-mounted laundry lines, vinyl wall text, and printing for 1,000 copies of a booklet about the project and the work of each contributor.

REFERENCE POINTS

The culture of tape trading (audio cassette, but also VHS recordings) was of particular interest as this took hold before the internet (1970s and 1980s) when copying required more physical and social interaction to transpire.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Drives were created by Lisa Anne Auerbach, Cara Baldwin, Matt Bua, the Cake And Eat It Collective, Electronic Disturbance Theater and b.a.n.g. lab (Brett Stalbaum, Micha Cárdenas, Amy Sara Carroll, Elle Mehrmand, and Ricardo Dominguez), Dan Gleason, Ryan Griffis and Sarah Ross, Terence Hannum, Hideous Beast, IC-98, Tim Ivison, Gregory Jacobsen, Vladan Jeremic and Rena Raedle, Tim Kerr, Loud Objects, Alexis O'Hara, Rob Ray, Deborah Stratman, Adam Trowbridge and Jessica Westbrook, and You Are Here.

CONTEXT

The initial showing of *Designated Drivers* happened within a gallery of the Block Museum of Art (a non-profit contemporary art museum housed on the Northwestern University campus in Evanston, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago). We plan on exhibiting *Designated Drivers* in other contexts, but the next scheduled showing will also be at a university's art gallery (University of Texas - San Marcos in 2013).

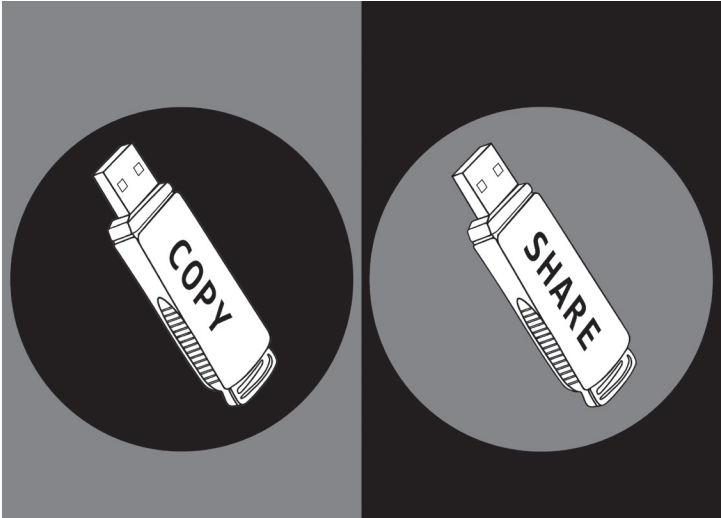
AUDIENCE

Since the Block Museum is open to the general public (and offers free admission), a wide array of folks who live in the area were able to see the work for the first exhibition. That said, the audience for that location does lean toward the older white middle class patrons of the museum along with university staff, faculty, and students. We always hope for a more diverse audience for all of our projects but we are also cognisant of the limitations of different venues. Consequently, we try to arrange for our work to happen in an array of sites, both formal and informal, to expand the nature of the audience for the work. Subsequent showings of *Designated Drivers* will no doubt reflect this.

CONTINUITY

We plan to continue finding new venues and situations in which to share this project. There is a booklet available for the public to read (through our imprint, Half Letter Press), but our intention is for people to come out and use and download these works while being in the same physical space as other curious folk.

PSU ART AND SOCIAL PRACTICE REFERENCE POINTS



TEMPORARY SERVICES



CASE STUDY #2

THE LIBRARY PROJECT

TIME FRAME

Launched in March 2001. Approximately 25% of the books in the project that were intercepted by the library can be viewed in the Special Collections archive at Harold Washington Library (the main branch of the Chicago Public Library system). A handful of books remain hidden in public view in the general collection.

DESCRIPTION

The Library Project was an unexpected gift of 100 new books and artists' projects for the holdings of the Harold Washington branch of the Chicago Public Library (CPL). We asked fellow artists, writers, and groups to suggest or create books and projects that the CPL should have in general circulation. After a three-day viewing at our then office space (located in Chicago about three blocks away from the CPL), we covertly brought the books into the library and shelved them in the subject areas that we thought they should belong to.

PSU ART AND SOCIAL PRACTICE REFERENCE POINTS

Each title was checked against the library's catalog to verify that it was not already owned by the library. Several books that were already in the collection were added in creatively altered new versions. Creating new juxtapositions of materials not normally possible in common library practice was one component of this project. Another major goal was to bring obscure, subversive, self-published, hand-made, or limited edition works by underexposed artists to a wider audience.

Every reasonable effort was made to make the donated books look like they already belonged to the CPL. We placed call numbers on their spines, manila cardholders inside for the due date cards, reference stickers, and facsimiles of other CPL stamps and markings. Supplies were purchased from the same mail order outlets that most libraries use. In some cases, books were purchased from the library's used bookstore (where discards were sold to raise funds for the library) for their bindings or stamped forms and cardholders.

FUNDING

Funding was self-initiated. Nearly all of the books were donated by the artists, authors, and publishers that participated in the project.

BUDGET

Approximately \$500.00 for library supplies for modifying the books, custom-made rubber stamps, posters, and printing fees for free copies of a booklet about the project.

REFERENCE POINTS

There are many precedents for people hiding books in libraries or adding books to library collections on their own, but most of them are on a much smaller scale. In the booklet for this project we detailed some of those gestures including stunts by Joe Orton and Cookie Mueller. The book *Pranks!* by RE/Search was also surely an inspiration with this and other projects.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An "Uncontrollable", Janell Baxter, E.C. Brown, The Center for

TEMPORARY SERVICES

New Community, Brooke Chaffee, Raimond Chaves, Salem Collo-Julín, Jim Duignan, Paul Druecke, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Flotsam, Fordham Urban Law Journal, Emily Forman, Paul Gebbia, Helidon Gjergji, Kenneth Goldsmith, Kenneth Hirsch, Steven Hudosh, Douglas Huebler, James Hugunin, Rob Kelly and Zena Sakowski, Nance Klehm, Kathleen Kranack, Stephan Laphisophon, Aemin Annie Lee, Cindy Loehr, Josh MacPhee, Ryan McGinness, Rebecca Moran and Rosie Sanders, Simon Morris and Helen Sacoor, Leah Oates, OK and OR, Stephanie Ognar, Trevor Paglen, Laurie Palmer, Robert Peters, Michael Piazza, Andrea Pinal, Jennifer Ramsey, Karen Reimer, REPOhistory, Bruno Richard, Chris Ritter, Jorge Rivera, Van Harrison, Chemi Rosado Seijo, David Shrigley, The Somnambulist, Dana Sperry, Deborah Stratman, Ervin Stuntz, Jocelyn Superstar 2001, Royal Torres, Samuel Torres, Pedro Velez, Oli Watt, Tara Zanzig, and Pam Zimmerman.

CONTEXT

The project was launched from a small office space on the corner of State and Adams streets in Chicago that was used by Temporary Services. After a three day viewing period, the books were slowly introduced into the collection of the Harold Washington Library Center, where they could be viewed by all visitors to the library—the largest public building in the city of Chicago.

AUDIENCE

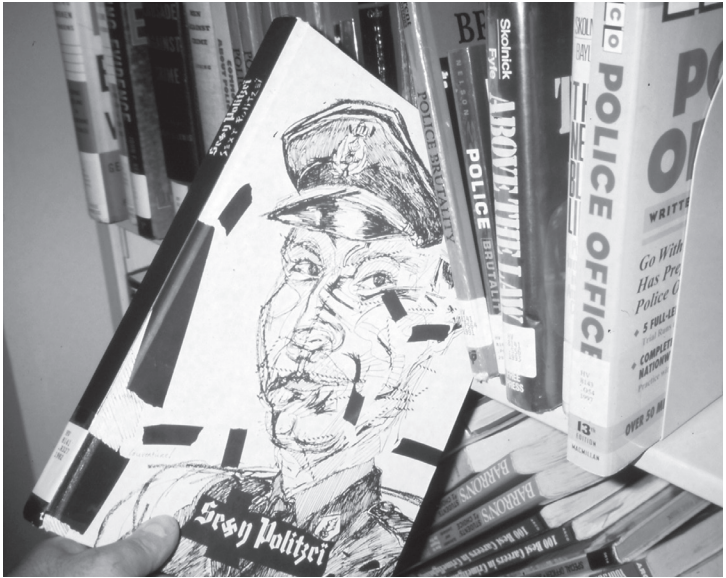
The potential audience for this project was the entirety of library users that patronize the Chicago Public Library's Harold Washington branch. We also found an unexpected series of allies/audience members in the CPL librarians who found and took care of several of the offerings.

CONTINUITY

This project led to Temporary Services developing a friendship with some of the librarians in the Visual and Performing Art Department of Harold Washington Library. We now donate copies of our self-published materials to the Chicago Artists Archive and the library has since cataloged over twenty of these publications, in addition to filed but unlisted ephemera.



TEMPORARY SERVICES



CASE STUDY #3

RAVIOLI

TIME FRAME

2000–2004

DESCRIPTION

Temporary Services made large, twelve-inch “ravioli”, constructed from see-through plastic shells (plastic sleeves usually sold for record albums) heat-sealed on all four sides to keep the “stuffing” in and rain or snow out. The shells contained a variety of ingredients contributed by Temporary Services members and invited guests. Some of the items were practical, like sample packets of shampoo, a bandage, and a condom. Other items were included for fun or to encourage experimentation by the finder of the ravioli (a piece of sandpaper, a stick of white chalk, a birthday candle, etc.).

The ravioli were distributed in public places. They were attached to walls with staples and double-sided tape. They were left in front of doorways and strung up on clotheslines in town squares. The ravioli were gifts to unsuspecting passersby that encountered them.

FUNDING

Self-funded and produced through donated contributions from participants.

BUDGET

The two primary components of this project are an impulse heat sealer (approximately \$75.00 or less) and clear plastic sleeves commonly used to store LPs (about \$12.00 per 100).

REFERENCE POINTS

This project was, in part, an extension of *Free For All*. We weren't entirely happy with the attendance at *Free For All*, which was mostly artists and others 'in the know' and considered the ravioli idea as a way of extending further into shared city spaces.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

San Juan Participants: Temporary Services.

Chiang Mai participants: Temporary Services.

Boston Participants: Jennifer Schmidt, Meg Rotzel, Aimee LaPorte, Jenn Pipp, Tim Dzewit, Alicia Gibson, Daniel Espeset, Abraham Schroeder, Aaron Luckman. Robin Kukiel, William Matelski, Christina Koski, Katie Klenchesk, Kirsten Gronberg, Emmy Grant, Mike Wolf, Brennan McGaffey, Ausgang, People Powered, Temporary Services, Marc Fischer, and others.

Chicago Participants: The Attendant, The Build-up, Melody Aleene, Stephanie Barton, Jacqueline Badzin, Jessica Berger, Jason Cangioli, Lori Couve, Corina Delman, Paul Dougherty, Tarik Echols, Deva Eveland, Erik Fabian, Fat Rat Printing, Alan Leon, Flo McGarrell, Huong Ngo, Joshua Pereira, Stephanie Pereira, Alonzo Potter, Sheetal Prajapati, Danielle Robinson, Ben Russell, Secret Knock, Deb Sokolow, Timothy Sullivan, Tasty Productions, Temporary Services, Stephan Tsapatoris, Chris Ward.

San Francisco Participants: Dave Whitman, Temporary Services.

CONTEXT

Different variations of this project have been presented on the streets of San Juan, Puerto Rico, Chiang Mai, Thailand, San Francisco, Boston and Chicago.

AUDIENCE

It is unknown how many ravioli were made—perhaps a total of 750 examples for all of the cities combined? The Ravioli were set out into the world with the intention that passersby would be able to take, keep, and/or redistribute items within them at their will.

CONTINUITY

We have ceased using this distribution strategy.





CASE STUDY #4

SUPERMAX SUBSCRIPTIONS

TIME FRAME

2008–ongoing

DESCRIPTION

Supermax Subscriptions is an ongoing service project that we initiated with our collaborator Sarah Ross and the Illinois-based organization Tamms Year Ten. We ask those with surplus or otherwise unused airline miles (racked up from participating in frequent flyer consumer programs) to donate the miles toward magazine and newspaper subscriptions for prisoners at the Tamms supermax prison in Illinois.

FUNDING

Self-initiated; dependent upon donations of frequent flyer miles from participants.

BUDGET

Uncertain but probably under \$500.00 since the project began. Costs included postage, postcards, and printing for announcements and flyers about the project. Website hosting for the project happens through Temporary Services' preexisting website.

REFERENCE POINTS

Our ongoing relationship and collaboration with the incarcerated artist Angelo (author of the book *Prisoners' Inventions*) was an important influence. We got him a couple magazine subscriptions with some airline miles that were about to expire and from there it became clear that this form of gift-giving could be applied to many others in his situation if a network could be created to locate and utilize unneeded air miles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Temporary Services, Sarah Ross, Tamms Year Ten.

CONTEXT

The activity inherent in this project has mainly taken place through email and correspondence (potential participants with miles contact us and we match their mileage with requests from prisoners that we have received through the mail). However, Tamms Year Ten hosted a few awareness-raising events in which *Supermax Subscriptions* was discussed and highlighted.

AUDIENCE

The audience is primarily composed of people on the outside that learn of or contribute to the project, and those on the inside—employed or incarcerated at Tamms supermax prison who either process the mail or are receive subscriptions through the project.

CONTINUITY

In February of 2012, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn announced the closure of Tamms, citing budget deficits. Closing Tamms would not only save the state money but be a real relief for men currently incarcerated there and their friends and families who have worked so hard for their transfer. While the announcement of closure sounded like a victory, AFSCME Local 31 (the state's largest public employee union and the union of the prison guards in Illinois) went to work to stop the closure. In August 2012, they filed a lawsuit against the state to stop prisoner transfer out of Tamms and other prisons slated for closure claiming the closures would pose a safety threat to officers. As of this writing, the state has stopped the transfer of prisoners and the court case is still being litigated. In the meantime, the *Supermax Subscriptions* project continues.

SUPERMAX SUBSCRIPTIONS

A Project of Tamms Year Ten, Sarah Ross, and Temporary Services

7-13-08

Bear Friends

I write you this note in hopes you can Add my NAME to the Supermax Subscription request.


I have been held captive here at Tamms since 1998 and to receive a magazine subscription would truly be a blessing.

Cordially Yours
Ted

Magazine Selections: 1) Time
2) Sporting News
3) The Wall Street Journal

Wishing there were a special way to say "Thank You" that's as special as the nice things you always find to do.

THIS CORRESPONDENCE IS FROM
AN INMATE OF THE ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



049J82045726
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02/15/2011
Mailed From: 62988
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Att: Coordinator
Temporary Services 4 Prs.
P.O. Box 121012
Chicago, IL 60612

TEMPORARY SERVICES

CASE STUDY #5

FREE FOR ALL

TIME FRAME

The initial Free For All event took place on February 5, 2000.

DESCRIPTION

Over 10,000 objects were given away! More than fifty artists, individuals, and organizations contributed work that was distributed for free at this one-day-only event. Artists' work was integrated with a wider range of material, submerging the work in a broader context than it normally enjoys. Religious tracts, booklets, flyers, stickers, matchbooks, posters, audiotapes, and postcards were among the items given away.

We provided free silk-screened storage boxes to encourage the collection and transportation of the work, and to make it easier for people to keep the things that they collected together as a portable exhibit. There was also a free booklet given away which included an essay that discussed suggestions for where and how to exhibit the work that one had collected from *Free For All*.

FUNDING

Self-initiated and shared by some participants through the production of their work.

BUDGET

Probably less than \$500. Space was donated for the event and most of the materials that were given away were donated. Money was primarily spent on printing free booklets about the project, printing stickers that were used in the making of promotional postcards, purchasing blank cardboard boxes that were used by attendees to collect multiples and objects, and purchasing silk-screen materials (used for the production of the collection boxes). Artists that contributed to the project received boxes with many multiples produced by other participants as compensation for taking part.

REFERENCE POINTS

We were thinking a lot about the many places art could go beyond the usual gallery situations and looking at the distribution models used by cheap, mass-produced objects like stickers, religious tracts, business cards, and other inexpensive vehicles for ideas. It felt natural to include materials like this from outside of art alongside similar items by artists so that they could be in conversation with one another.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tony Alamo, Matti Allison, Anonymous, María José Barandiarán and Michael Bulka, Baur Au Lac Zürich, Bible Helps, Shawn Calvert, Charm School Industries, Coalition for Positive Sexuality, Credit Suisse, Wilfrid Désir, Jim Duignan, Anthony Elms and Joel Score, Ending the Begin Tract League, Evangelical Tract Distributors, Fellowship Tract League, F.T.L., Nicolas Floc'h, Grace and Truth, Emily Jacir, Jews For Jesus, Kevin Kaempf, Kim and Mike, Nance Klehm, Kate Kranack, Liberation Rock, Josh MacPhee, Ryan McGinness, Adam Mikos, Mr. Nash, Ralph Nielsen, Leah Oates, Old Paths Tract Society Inc., Krista Peel, Michael Piazza, Pilgrim Tract Society, Inc., Ben Rubin, Bob Shaw, David Shrigley, Shy Girl, Owen Smith, Dana Sperry, Jocelyn Superstar 2000,

TEMPORARY SERVICES

Temporary Services, Threadculture, Several Unknown Individuals, Vladlen Voronin, and Oli Watt.

CONTEXT

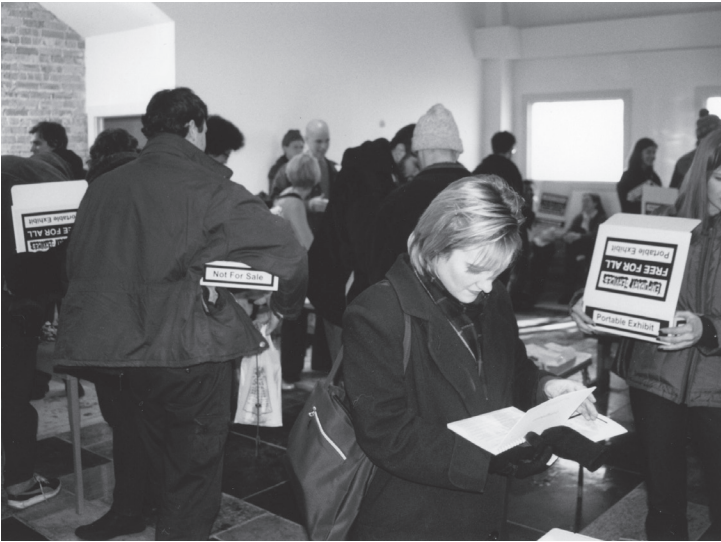
The initial event took place in a borrowed storefront space within a residential neighborhood in Chicago.

AUDIENCE

It is estimated that around 125 people attended this one-day event. Those who took away boxes were encouraged to re-exhibit them in other contexts. It is unknown how many people did this, but many boxes remain in various attendees' homes. Additionally, Temporary Services has exhibited a complete box from the project in several exhibits in years since the event. Most recently, the project was exhibited at the Block Museum of Art in Evanston, IL in 2011.

CONTINUITY

We continue to sporadically exhibit a complete Free For All box from this project but the event itself has not been repeated.



TEMPORARY SERVICES

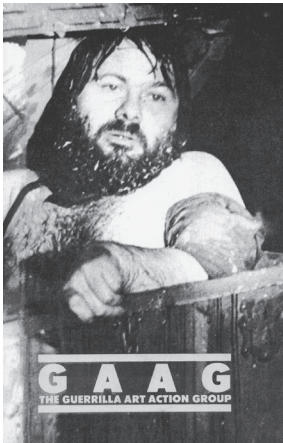


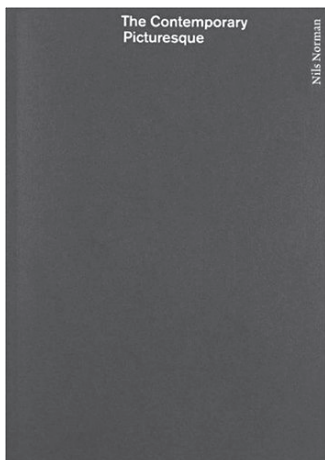
VISUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

PSU ART AND SOCIAL PRACTICE REFERENCE POINTS



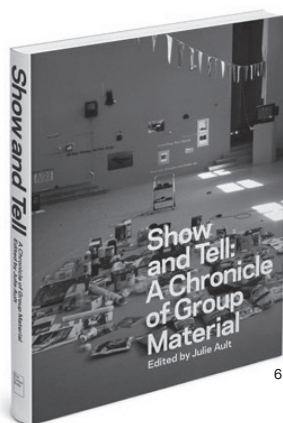
- 1 *Dark Matter*, Gregory Shoulette
- 2 Haha
- 3 GAAG (Guerrilla Art Action Group)
- 4 General Idea





5

- 5 *The Contemporary Picturesque*, Nils Norman
- 6 Group Material
- 7 PAD/D



6



7

TEMPORARY SERVICES

- 1 — *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*, Gregory Sholette, Pluto Press, 2010.
- 2 — Group: Haha (Chicago: 1987-2007) *Haha: Everyday Matters*, University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- 3 — *GAAG : The Guerrilla Art Action Group. Second edition 1969–1976 : A Selection*, Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche, New York, NY: Printed Matter Inc.. 2011
- 4 — Group: General Idea (Toronto, New York - 1969-1994) Book: *General Idea: FILE Magazine*. Ruf, Beatrix, ed. JRP|Ringier, 2008.
- 5 — *The Contemporary Picturesque*. Norman, Nils. London: Book Works, 2000.
- 6 — Group: Group Material (New York - 1979-1996) Book: *Show and Tell: A Chronical of Group Material*: Ault, Julie, ed. Four Corners Books, 2010.
- 7 — Group: Political Art Documentation / Distribution (PAD/D) (New York: 1980-1986)
- 8 — Group: Black Mask / The Family / Up Against the Wall Motherfucker (New York: started in 1968) Book: *Black Mask & Up Against The Wall Motherfucker*, ISBN 1-873176-70-8, Unpopular Books, 1993
- 9 — *Culture Incorporated: Museums, Artists, and Corporate Sponsorships*. Rectanus, Mark W. University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- 10 — *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do*. Terkel, Studs. Pantheon Books, A Division of Random House, 1974.
- 11 — Group: The Weather Underground (Chicago and various other locations: 1969-1973)
- 12 — *Endcommercial / Reading the City*, Böhm, Florian; Pizzaroni, Luca; and Scheppe, Wolfgang. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2002.

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Temporary Services with Carmen Papalia

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