

11 X 17, 2 PAGES

UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES: ON THE COLIN DE LAND AND PAT HEARN  
LIBRARY COLLECTION AND THE NETLETTER  
HANNAH MANDEL

4.25 X 11, 8 PAGES + 4 X 6 POSTCARD

ADHESIVES: AGGREGATING IDENTITY

A WALK WITH YUJI AGEMATSU (03-15-19, 4:04-4:56 PM)

8.5 X 11, 16 PAGES

2-6 THE NETLETTER: A CHRONICLE ABOUT FINE ART

7-10 WEIRD CRUMBS AND RELICS: INFORMAL HISTORIES OF  
THE NETLETTER AND OF THE 1990'S DOWNTOWN NEW YORK  
CITY SCENES  
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11-14 TOWARDS A NEW ART ORDER:  
GOSSIP AS VIRAL CRITIQUE IN THE NETLETTER  
SELBY NIMROD

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4.25 X 11, 8 PAGES

PUBLISHING AS COLLECTIVE PRACTICE - "MORE VERB,  
LESS NOUN"  
AN INTERVIEW WITH EVA WEINMAYR

11 X 17, 4 POSTERS

A VISUAL CHRONICAL FROM THE NETLETTER

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# CCS Recollection 1: THE NETLETTER

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EDITED BY: EVAN CALDER WILLIAMS

When eight second-year students at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (CCS Bard) encountered *The Netletter*, the “issues”—seven seemingly separate collations of printed paper and ephemera in plastic sleeves—were securely stored in labeled archival folders. These folders were systematically housed in a numbered system of Hollinger metal-edge document boxes, specially designed for long-term preservation of paper items. The order of the items was devised to promote discovery amongst the investigators of *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection*, the larger archival collection in which *The Netletter* run resides. Though this imposed order may have appeared intuitive and seamless to its users, the reality is far more complex. From its inception as an intellectual entity, *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection* resisted categorization into standardized archival systems, eluding the traditional confines of taxonomies and categorizations: a metaphorical square peg in a round hole. If the intent, scope, and origins of *The Netletter* are obscure and defy definition, it is partially a reflection of the idiosyncrasies of its parent collection.

*The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection* includes the personal libraries of the gallerists Colin de Land (1955-2003) and Pat Hearn (1955-2000), as well as those of their respective galleries, American Fine Arts, Co., and Pat Hearn Gallery. The collection is a portrait of de Land and Hearn as individuals, business owners, and as a couple. Comprising approximately 2,300 books, periodicals, catalogs, and media items, the collection encompasses items from obscure German artists’ books and catalogs, to mass-produced pamphlets on Eastern medicine and holistic diets.

In 2014, the Library and Archives at CCS Bard acquired *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection* from the German art collector and gallery owner Alexander Schröder in 2014. Schröder first bought the collection in 2006 from Daniel McDonald and Christine Tsvetanov, representatives of the Colin de Land estate. It is important to note that the collection did not get its current name until it was acquired by CCS Bard, at which point “The Colin de Land Library” was changed to “The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection.” Though contrary to the archival principles of provenance and *respect des fonds* (the idea that items in archival collections should be organized according to their original order), this intervention, which reflects the significant input and involvement of Pat Hearn and Pat Hearn Gallery in the development of the collection, was a crucial and well overdue adjustment.

The primary idiosyncrasy of *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection* is that the collection is an archival repository of bibliographic material. Generally, archives are distinct from libraries: the former houses unpublished materials, while the latter houses publications that may have copies in many locations. Yet it was clear to the Archives staff that the value of the items in *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection* lay in their unique attributes. Inscriptions, marginalia and inserts, such as a lipstick kiss mark on the inside of the jacket of Benjamin Buchloch’s *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*, or locks of hair pressed into the pages of *Books and Portraits* by Virginia Woolf, along with copious inscriptions from artists, fellow gallerists, friends, and family, provide extraordinary distinguishing value for each item.

Thus, the Archives staff decided to create an archival finding aid in which bibliographic records are described as archival objects. This required that overrides and customizations be added to ArchivesSpace, the collections management software used to create finding aids and to process the archival collections at CCS. Each publication was entered individually, with each entry noting “unique attributes,” for which an internal standardized vocabulary was specifically developed. With this in place, it is possible for a user of the collection to perform a keyword search with the finding aid for the term “postcard insert,” and discover all publications in the collections containing an extraneous 4 x 6 inch postcard.

Scholarship on the *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection* is scarce, and scholarship on *The Netletter* is virtually nonexistent. *The Netletter*’s conglomerates in their plastic book bags do not outwardly display a wealth of distinguishing information, and their significance to de Land and Hearn is shrouded in mystery. Yet, in many ways, *The Netletter* fits perfectly within The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection, as a distillation of the facets of the collection that resist categorization. As with the collection in which it is found, *The Netletter* refuses to be one thing. It is a publication that was ostensibly distributed to readers, but contains unique handwritten items that cannot be reproductions. It orbits contemporary art, but spins without a clear path to other topics—the NFL, the Gulf War. As with the *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection*, *The Netletter* presents a portrait of its creator, Red Ed, highlighting their incongruities and multiplicities.

YUJI AGEMATSU’S PRACTICE IS DEFINED LARGELY BY DAILY WALKS DURING WHICH HE COLLECTS DEBRIS SCATTERED ACROSS DIFFERENT NEIGHBORHOODS OF NEW YORK CITY. HE PLACES THE MATED MATERIALS INTO RECTANGULAR CELLOPHANE WRAPS, THE KIND TYPICALLY USED FOR CIGARETTE CASES. OCCASIONALLY, AGEMATSU GATHERS OBJECTS LARGER THAN THE CELLOPHANE PACK; THESE GO INTO A PLASTIC BAG.

ACCIDENT:  
SUSPENSION AND ADHESION

TRANSMUTATION	JUNCTION	ORDINARY SCALE	DANCE	ADDITION AND SUBTRACTION
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"So we're walking, walking process is very important, you know. Usually, I walk faster."

"Faster? We can go faster if you want."

"No, no, no."

"People need throw away things. It's very important for us human beings to toss. Our brain as well, we automatically need to sleep, right? This is because, we have to clean up our brain. We always build up junks in our brain and we have to sweep them out."

"So I came from another country. [When I arrived] I was so panicked."





2

"I love the junction area, because of people walking, a very energetic area. Also I am very familiar with junctions. It's easy to walk because of the grid... [the city] structure is totally made of grids. So easy to turn around, make a right, make a left."

The heightened energy at intersections reflects the lively rhythm of rush hour, during which he purposely arranged to meet me.

"City always has the name of the corners. Everything has a name. And then, stuff like this..." He picks up an object, which calls to him through some combination of shape, color, or form. "The fragments of consumption. Each object has human gestures. Because it came out from another person. Someone made a shape."

The first objects he picks up are a pair of plastic wrap bits—red and dark turquoise—partially adhered to each other by street gunk of unrecognizable origin.

3



3

DANCE



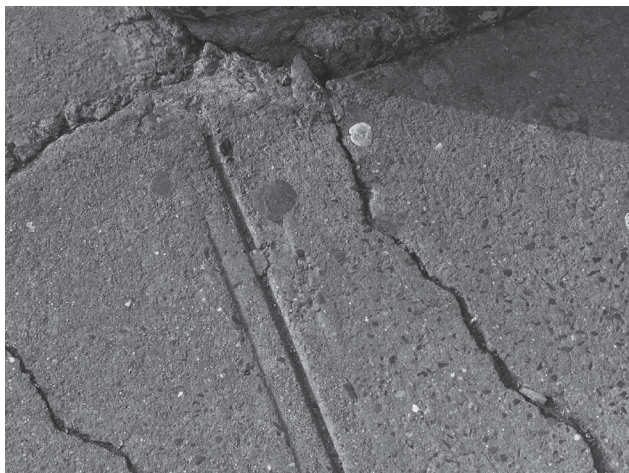
3



“My heartbeat is my heartbeat, my tempo—the rhythm is totally different. For example, Japanese rhythm, is very on beat. Like Ma (間); the in-between silence, very calm, and meditative. I noticed that I lost my own original beat, because of the influence from western culture. But I’m not against western culture. I’m not interested in being a nationalist. But, I would like to try to catch up on my original things.”

Every street number and every step is a beat that turns into a pulse. Agematsu’s unique footsteps start to measure different units of space and time. This distinct metric is a micro-diagram of his height, weight, walking pace, mood, etc. that combine to determine the distance and rhythm of his footsteps. This metric enters and joins tenuously with the city grids it navigates, just like the flow of debris that circulate through the same structures. The moment when an object calls to Agematsu and he stops, he interferes with the regular rhythm of the streets. His relatively disproportionate beats are subsumed by the city’s seeming regularity. On the ground, there is chaos. Cracks, spit, pulp of some kind, cigarette butts—all uniquely shaped particles of unrecognizable stuff. Against the grid, this material flux of trash, left over and visibly worn, becomes a kind of a syncopation. “It’s like dancing, floating, dancing. Walking is like dancing. Very fun.” Most passersby do not even glance over at our stoppage, our fixation with the stuffs of the street.

3



4

#### ORDINARY SCALE

“I became very sensitive about where to go, how to spend time. I have to be very responsible for myself, in using time and space, because everything is limited. I used to be a freelance worker, so I’d get a job and then I got to go exactly on time, you know, nine o’clock to five o’clock. And then wages, I get sent the invoice by mail. You also have to work in teams. Finding an apartment with a budget, comparing the numbers, always with numbers. It’s all systems.”

4



Agematsu’s daily walks and collection of materials are similar to any of his other routines, like his previous day jobs. This is “ordinary scale” and “consumption.”



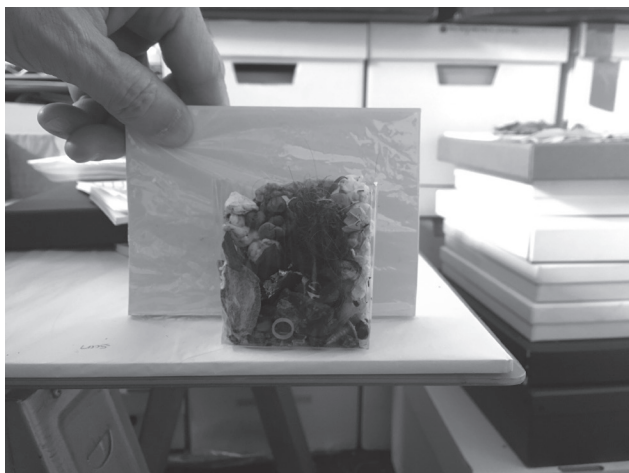
At another cross street, he finds shattered pieces of red glass and immediately gravitates towards them. They seem to have once belonged to a car's taillights. "This is from an accident," he says, as he picks up quite a few pieces.

"I am in between. I am always suspended in between. Like a moment. All objects are also suspended in between. My responsibility is to represent those stuffs which we call trash or waste. They are lost identities because they have lost value. I want to change the value. That is why objects are very important for me." Agematsu does not collect what he personally discards. He only collects what he calls "accidental objects."

5a. The taillight can't be made whole again, but those fragments of the crash can still adhere to each other, through other adhesive or binding substances: gum, tangled hair, spit, exhaust, runoff, or a sticky resin. Agematsu uses these substances to hold his assemblages together, too. Such materials are vital to his compositions. Sometimes he picks up a pre-existing assemblage, already held together, and sometimes he produces a new assemblage. Regardless, creating compositions for Agematsu is a way to see details with a "different attitude."

"Adhesives are like language. They put things together. They are vehicles."

## 6





1

1

Sometime in the early 1990s (when, exactly, is hard to say with any certainty), Edward “Red Ed” Braddock III, a chronicler of sorts, began distributing a subversive underground zine called The Netletter in small pockets of Manhattan’s Lower East Side (LES), East Village (EV) and SoHo scenes via unconventional channels. Red Ed handed out The Netletter, a transparent plastic baggie of loosely collected heterogeneous material, including self-published newsletters and promotional announcements, to passers-by on the bustling sidewalks of these downtown neighborhoods. Just how many copies of this self-proclaimed “CHRONICLE ABOUT FINE ART” Red Ed circulated, to whom—whether (un)interested friends, acquaintances, and/or strangers—and at what price remains undetermined, as does the purpose of this effort and the motivations behind the various strategies of production and distribution it utilized. This grab bag stretched from the frivolity of nightclub fliers to the seriousness of safe sex kits by Gay Men’s Health Crisis, Inc. Speculation abounds.

Regardless, it is clear, from our present vantage point, that we can decisively say at least three things about The Netletter. First, its contents document the LES, EV, and SoHo neighborhoods at a particular and particularly transformative time. As many of the establishments and social scenes referenced no longer exist, The Netletter serves as a time capsule, whether or not it was intended for such a fate. Second, if those neighborhoods were in the process of major transformation, so too was the distinct and transitional media landscape within which The Netletter was situated, one that straddled zine distribution, copy centers, 24-hour news cycles, and the spread of digital sociability. And third, if this recent past feels sharply separated from our present moment by those transformations in how information and memory was stored, circulated, and experienced, the lived reality and urgencies—“Money For AIDS, Not For War”<sup>1</sup>—that show themselves between The Netletter’s snark and ephemera have hardly vanished.

1 ON JANUARY 23, 1991, ACT UP DECLARED A “DAY OF DESPERATION” IN NYC. PROTESTS TOOK PLACE ON DOWNTOWN STREETS, ACTIVISTS MARCHED AGAINST U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE GULF WAR AND ADVOCATED FOR AIDS AWARENESS ON THE HOME FRONT.

THIS IS A SERIOUS  
CALL FOR ART  
THAT’S AS HOT  
AS THE WEATHER  
IS OUT, RIGHT  
AT THIS POINT  
IN TIME.<sup>2</sup>

LIBRARY, COLLECTION, ARCHIVE

We, eight second-year students at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (CCS Bard), were introduced to *The Netletter* by Ann Butler, Director of the Library and Archives, and Evan Calder Williams, professor of critical theory and media history. If the intent, scope, and origins of *The Netletter* remain obscure, the history of our access to it is less so. *The Netletter* came to rest—bagged, foldered, boxed, and shelved safely—within CCS Bard as part of *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection*, which includes the personal library collections of the New York City gallerists Colin de Land (1955–2003) and Pat Hearn (1955–2000), as well as those of their respective galleries, American Fine Arts, Co. [A.F.A.] (1982–2004) and Pat Hearn Gallery (1983–2002).<sup>3</sup>

The Library and Archives at CCS Bard acquired *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection* from art collector and commercial gallery owner Alexander Schröder in 2014. Schröder first bought the collection in 2006 from Daniel McDonald and Christine Tsvetanov, representatives of the Colin de Land estate. Prior to entering CCS Bard’s archives, the collection was cataloged by Juliette Blightman, Alex Gartenfeld, and Magnus Schäfer.<sup>4</sup> Schäfer’s short essay on this process, *Unpacking a Library* (2012), mentions several small-run artist periodicals present in the collection, including *PIG* magazine and Bernadette Corporation’s Made in USA. There is no mention of *The Netletter*.

If *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection* “read as a whole [...] presents a unique portrait of each gallery, the artists they represented and interacted with, and the lives of Pat Hearn and Colin de Land,”<sup>5</sup> then *The Netletter* read as a whole may also be understood from a particular perspective to be doing the same, representing a network of relations, social scenes, and neighborhoods, albeit on a smaller scale and during a much shorter time period. As a particularly loud form of bricolage, *The Netletter* reveals the idiosyncrasies of its producer, muddying any clear division between its seemingly personal and commercial content. It swerves across registers, in terms of both its medium (from the designed to the found and from the one-off to the mass produced) and its tone (from the prankster and ironic to its punkish anger and manifest social commitments). In this way, and no matter its intention, *The Netletter* makes visible a handful of relationships mediated by print, people, and place, albeit in especially entangled forms.

In this sense, it is not so much the significance of any individual piece of material in *The Netletter*, but rather the relationship between the materials, that allows making meaning out of its accumulated scatter. It is unclear whether or not Red Ed was soliciting galleries like Pat Hearn and A.F.A., or their proprietors or patrons,

2 THE NETLETTER. A CHRONICLE ABOUT FINE ART, VOL. 1, ISSUE NO 99.9, FINE ART NETWORK; COLIN DE LAND AND PAT HEARN LIBRARY COLLECTION; MSS.012; 53; CENTER FOR CURATORIAL STUDIES LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES, BARD COLLEGE.  
3 THIS LIBRARY COLLECTION IS COMPRISED OF 85 LINEAR FEET AND DIVIDED INTO TWO SERIES, PUBLISHED MATERIAL AND MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL AND FRAGMENTS, WITH THE BULK OF THE ENTRIES FALLING BETWEEN 1984 AND 1999.  
4 MAGNUS SCHÄFER, “UNPACKING A LIBRARY” IN DEALING WITH – SOME TEXTS, IMAGES, AND THOUGHTS RELATED TO AMERICAN FINE ARTS, CO. (BERLIN : STERNBERG PRESS, 2012), 70.  
5 GUIDE TO THE COLIN DE LAND AND PAT HEARN LIBRARY COLLECTION; MSS.012; CENTER FOR CURATORIAL STUDIES LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES, BARD COLLEGE, ACCESSED ONLINE: HTTP://WWW.BARD.EDU/CCS/FINDINGAIDS/INDEX.HTML/MSS.012/CDLPHLIBRARY.HTML

to include their materials or to sell them *The Netletter*, and, if so, whether or not this was done by invitation. Regardless, Red Ed, *The Netletter*, these galleries, their owners, and the various communities they each served were in one another’s orbits, even if only momentarily—on city sidewalks, in galleries, restaurants, and clubs in broad daylight, neon glow, and under dark of night.

### THE NETLETTER

Red Ed’s playful numeration of *The Netletter*’s issues, which appears serialized at first glance, does not provide a coherent timeline. This absence of a definitive sequence makes it difficult to place *The Netletter* in time. As such, we have had to date issues based on their contents, cross-referencing various dated materials. *The Netletter* is arcane, “intermedial,”<sup>6</sup> and heterogeneous. Yet, based on proverbial crumbs left behind (and gathered in sealed bags), our best guess as to *The Netletter*’s place in overlapping and diverging social scenes—gallery, BDSM, party, restaurant, club, etc.—is that it served as an *aggregator* of goings-on in the neighborhood. This use of the term “aggregator” is intentional, as a gesture toward the ways in which *The Netletter*’s postmodern whole was constituted through the recombination of disparate elements. It also points towards Red Ed’s early adoption, IRL (in real life), of newly forming digital organizational, display, and production practices. A networked newsletter—a netletter.

As a mutant mash-up and alternative source of collected and peddled information, *The Netletter* therefore found its shape through the appropriation of various print and digital media forms: porn mags, tabloids, zines, newsletters, chatrooms, computer desktops, and websites. If these modes of production and reception can be recognized by not only their distinct contents or purposes but also their respective aesthetics, then the visual language of *The Netletter* comes to be defined above all through their conglomeration. Overall, it earnestly and sarcastically embraced a dissolving DIY ethic inherited from 1980s hardcore and 1970s punk scenes in New York City.

As a partial map with many holes, suffused with Red Ed’s ALL-CAPS commentary and various advertisements, *The Netletter* now defines, as much as it was once defined by, the personal and commercial environments in which it emerged. *The Netletter* provides a granular glimpse into micro-histories that are long-gone or may have never been, a serial time capsule overflowing with things. While it was assembled with an acute understanding of the role of ephemera in the dissemination and promotion of underground scenes, its subsequent institutionalization of underground histories was likely unanticipated by Red Ed. To a group of “outsiders”—to those who are not members of a particular scene, community,

neighborhood, etc.—*The Netletter*’s material appears, at first glance, to be chaotic, haphazard, enigmatic.

### FORM(S) / CONTENT(S)

What, then, did *The Netletter* gather together? At its simplest level, it aggregated different printed material that reflected aspects of the art and nightlife of the LES, EV, and SoHo in New York City of the 90s, as well as specific social dynamics of those scenes at the time. Seemingly shambolic loose-leaf material was stuffed into a single transparent plastic mag-bag that was usually, but not always, sealed shut with a sticker adhered directly to its outer surface. The ephemera that appeared as part of each issue was simultaneously quotidian and esoteric: newsletters, memos, and short stories; promotional material, such as exhibition announcements and postcards; party, club, and BDSM dungeon flyers; brochures, restaurant menus, resumes, and business cards; currency, like food and drink coupons; other miscellaneous printed items like matchbooks, stickers, flexi disc samplers from hardcore bands; and safe sex kits (condoms, lubricant, and instructions).

In most issues of *The Netletter*, a newsletter authored by Red Ed partially frames the collection of bagged materials of which it is a part, even if the connections between its contents and those materials remain tenuous. These newsletters provide loosely structured thematic introductions, self-referential updates with recurring characters, like “Green Gina,” “Slut Slave Cathi,” and *The Netletter*’s own “Red Ed”, lists of neighborhood galleries, and tables of contents. Within the table of contents (titled as “CONCEPTUALIZED CONTENTS”), frequently repeated headlines read:

APRIL ART ACTION:  
CONTINUED.....  
LIFE IN THE DOWNTOWN ART SCENE<sup>7</sup>

GALLERY GOINGS-  
ON.....  
HOT STUFF IN GALLERYLAND TODAY<sup>8</sup>

THE FINEST IN FINE ART  
NETGOSSIP.....  
THE HOTTEST PROMO-SCHMOOZE \$\$\$  
CAN BUY !!<sup>9</sup>

THE SLUT SITUATION.....INSIDE, IN THE  
PART SECTION  
STORIES ABOUT SEX, FROM A REAL  
LIFE SLUT<sup>10</sup>

Typically ranging between two and six pages in length, typed in ALL-CAPS, and printed on letter paper of various colors, Red Ed’s newsletters reflect the frenetic night-life pace of various New York City neighborhood environments at the time, with quick fragmentary quips and lots of name-dropping. Periodically, however, it deals more explicitly and caustically with the gap between the commercial art scene and the world beyond it, even taking on a manifesto-like tone:

“A NEW ART ORDER.....” AN ART/  
EDITORIAL: NEW WORLD ORDER. NEW  
ART ORDER. WHO’S IN THEM????WHO’S  
NOT??? GRAHAM? GINO? ENA? JOSH?  
RED ED? SLUT SAVE [SIC] GINA? MARK?  
MARY? GET THE IDEA. ORDERS ARE  
CONSTANTLY IN A STATE OF FLUX, NO  
MATTER HOW MUCH SOLIDITY THERE  
IS. WE ARE PART OF THE NEW WORLD  
ORDER. WE ARE PART OF THE NEW  
ART ORDER. WE’RE AS UNSTOPPABLE  
AS THE COALITION FORCES. WE’RE  
NOT AT WAR WITH THE GALLERIES, OR  
THE ARTISTS, OR THE DEALER’S.....  
WE JUST WANT WHAT IS RIGHT AND  
JUST. WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED THE  
GULF WAR, AND HOPE YOU ENJOY THE  
CEASEFIRE EVEN MORE. FOR NOW  
YUOU [SIC] WILL HEAR THE STORIES  
OF ATROCITIES. ATROCITIES NOT  
COMMITTED BY US IN ANY FASHION.  
BY THE OLD ART ORDER. THINGS ARE  
CHANGING. TO THE NEW ART ORDER.  
NOW, AND FOREVER.<sup>11</sup>

### SITES OF (RE)PRODUCTION AND (RE)DISTRIBUTION

We can’t be sure if Red Ed had paying customers: attempts to sell this mag-bag of goods on the sidewalk could have easily resulted in giveaways or trades. But, seemingly bound to a consideration of affordability, the issues weren’t priced as expensive art objects like those sold by the galleries mentioned (and sometimes mocked) in its newsletter. Rather, list prices ranged from \$1.88 to \$2.13, the differences likely the result of fluctuation in the price of supplies at the time of production. Although the project never openly includes an explicit self-narration about its pricing structure, it does reference changes in the price of materials (for example, *THE “MAG BAGS WENT UP 60%...60%!!!!!! ISSUE*). This direct relation to production costs is apt, as *The Netletter* openly and thoroughly embraced everyday materials and modes of (re)production: above all, the cherished 1990s copy center, Kinko’s (bought by FedEx in 2004 for \$2.4 billion and gradually folded into its generic FedEx Office moniker).

As a commons of sorts, Kinko’s was regularly frequented by Red Ed for the toner-printed letter paper of select colors that was characteristic of all volumes/issues

of *The Netletter*. The specificities of this scene of self-production are also articulated in Red Ed’s impassioned remarks on a perceived injustice committed against an employee—and by extension, against *The Netletter*—at the Kinko’s frequented as a site of production.

### BIG TROUBLE AT KINKO’S COPIES

THERE’S BIG TROUBLE AT  
KINKOLAND. IT ENDANGERS THE  
WAY NETLETTERS ARE CURRENTLY  
BEING PRODUCED.

THE TROUBLE INVOLVES THE  
FACT THAT GRAHAM WONG IS  
BEING DENIED A RAISE. MR WONG  
IN FACT, IS PROBABLY KINKO’S  
BEST EMPLOYEE OVERALL.

MR. WONG IS BEING SUBJECT TO  
MUCH UNWARRANTED HARASS-  
MENT ON THE JOB. THIS HA-  
RASSMENT FINDS ITS WAY BACK  
TO RED ED IN THAT HE CAN’T  
MAKE NETLETTERS.

RED ED IS ABOUT TO UNLEASH  
THE NETWORK ARSENAL ON THE  
MANAGERIAL PERSONNEL  
ABOUT THEIR MISTREATMENT.<sup>12</sup>

A twenty-four hour establishment at the time, Kinko’s was itself a rhizomatic network of interconnected nodes sustained by job seekers, small businesses, artists, and publishers. It was a site where band fliers were copied side by side with restaurant menus, BDSM dungeon ads, missing-dog posters, job applications, and expense reports. In this sense, *The Netletter*’s form and content reflected its ad hoc production environments, including spaces other than just Kinko’s: by some accounts, A.F.A.’s copy machine also served as a means for Red Ed’s undertaking.

As a technical, political, and social practice of production and circulation, publishing has often been understood to have a unique capacity to disrupt and inflect not just public opinion but also the categories of access, privilege, and legibility that reinforce the idea of a public or a people. The act of publishing, in Red Ed’s instance, was definitely a practice, and perhaps one that looks in retrospect *like* practice, a form of play and testing. Whether to consider *The Netletter* ‘artistic,’ ‘experimental,’ or something else remains up for discussion. So too does the question of whether this labor of self-publishing engendered a community and a public—be it counter, alternative, subversive, or underground—or if it remained a solo exercise, indifferent to reception as it tracked out its own idiosyncratic logic. To strictly and firmly define *The Netletter* in any one way would be to miss a significant point, because it was, if anything, a project that

6 DICK HIGGINS, FLUXUS CO-FOUNDER AND FOUNDER OF SOMETHING ELSE PRESS, CHAMPIONED THE TERM “INTERMEDIA” IN THE 1960S TO DESCRIBE THE TRANSFORMATIONS OCCURRING WITHIN NEW ART FORMS OF THE TIME THAT MOVED BETWEEN PRESUMED BOUNDARIES IN MEDIA/GENRE.  
7 THE NETLETTER. A CHRONICLE ABOUT FINE ART, VOL. 1, ISSUE NO. 99.9, FINE ART NETWORK  
8 THE NETLETTER. A CHRONICLE ABOUT FINE ART, VOL. 2, ISSUE NO. 99.9, FINE ART NETWORK  
9 THE NETLETTER. A CHRONICLE ABOUT FINE ART, VOL. 9, ISSUE 99.9, FINE ART NETWORK; COLIN DE LAND AND PAT HEARN LIBRARY COLLECTION; MSS.012; 53; CENTER FOR CURATORIAL STUDIES LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES, BARD COLLEGE.  
10 THE NETLETTER. A CHRONICLE ABOUT FINE ART, VOL. 7, ISSUE, 99.9, FINE ART NETWORK



remained transitional, drifting between various aesthetics, modes of production, and scenes of circulation.

RESEARCH, DESIGN, PRINT, ASSEMBLE, CIRCULATE

Designed in conversation with David Wise, the form and content of this co-authored student-publication turns toward *The Netletter* as a source of reference, reflection, analysis, inspiration, reconsideration, appropriation, and departure. Conscious of the ways in which meaning is co-produced through the overlapping and diverging experiences of a publication’s producers and readers, contributions included within—generated through conversation with historians, artists, scholars, gallerists, curators, and professionals—appear in no particular order.

“Unique Attributes” offers an archivist’s account of *The Netletter* as well as its relationship to *The Colin de Land and Pat Hearn Library Collection*, and to CCS Bard’s Library and Archive. Hannah Mandel, CCS Bard Archivist, firmly situates this student-publication in an institutional context thereby underlining some of the possibilities and limits of engagement. “Weird Crumbs and Relics” parses different issues of *The Netletter* and of a threadbare network of social relations. Author, curator, and popular-culture critic Carlo McCormick comments on the histories of 1990s New York City downtown scenes, focusing on street, nightlife, and zine cultures, as well as the EV’s emerging queer scene. “Towards a New Art Order: Gossip as Viral Critique in *The Netletter*” takes up *The Netletter* to discuss its direct connection to, and love of, gossip as a mode of delivery within the shifting media landscapes of the time. Navigating various historical precedents, scholarship, and art world stars, Selby Nimrod explores this strategy of information dissemination. “Adhesives: Aggregating Identity, A Walk with Yuji Agematsu” documents New York City’s sidewalk detritus today, paying particular attention to its under-acknowledged potential as material for routine collection and artistic production. Agematsu muses on the reconfiguration of memories and identities—object-based and personal—as well. “Publishing as Collective Practice – ‘More Verb, Less Noun’” takes the form of an interview with Eva Weinmayr discussing modes of production and dissemination across various print forms and platforms. Weinmayr, by way of several projects she has participated in, helps to build a general understanding of publishing practices—solitary and collective—as a means of “finding comrades.”

As some contributors engage explicitly with *The Netletter*, others build on its form and content, or depart from it entirely. In reconsidering *The Netletter* and its past, present, and future (mis)recognition, we have struggled, as a student-group, with its institutional historicization. This struggle has given way to collective processes of scattering and sifting: picking up *The Netletter*’s historical material to listen to its memories, looking for connections in our present and daily lives. In attunement with these findings, the resulting student-publication fills

yet another transparent plastic mag-bag with loose-leaf material—text, graphics, and images—aggregated in 2019, but carrying with it the unmistakable impression of another moment and situation, from the early 1990s, in New York City, and with Red Ed.

A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL.<sup>13</sup>

7 A CONVERSATION WITH CARLO McCORMICK

There is a lot of slippage in The Netletter. Things that slipped through to our time, and things that had critical mass and momentum back then. They are all in a shambolic state, and you can see the vestiges of punk rock, hard-core, and nightlife. All these different worlds were desperate to get people in the door. The NetLetter offers a rare insight into those scenes, if you want to get into these and read the weeds. It allows you to take the measure of what New York City was then, to see who was still around, who was doing things in clubs, and who was coming up.

Everyone was putting on a show. Clubs were more than just lifestyle and fun, they were also where you would go to find people if you had a gig and needed extra hands. It was literally a place where you could go and get a job. It was a place of interchange for writers, filmmakers, choreographers, painters, and musicians. Nightlife was so important then, it was a whole economy with so much energy.

Red Ed was a club guy. I first saw him around some of the lesser-known clubs that have since gone downhill—the ones that are no longer personal bastions for downtown experimental weirdness because they are catering to more and more people. He was a friend of Mark Kostabi and Baird Jones, and other people like that. He was distributing The Netletter on the street, riding around on his bike, I think, with this little book bag, and asking, “Did you get the new issue yet?” He was trying to fob it off and get a few bucks out of you for it, and otherwise he’d shove it in your hands anyway. It was his way of connecting with people. We all had different ways of connecting and interchanging.

AS HISTORIANS OR ARCHIVISTS SOMETIMES YOU GET TO GO THROUGH THE QUEEN’S JEWELS AND OTHER TIMES YOU HAVE TO SORT THROUGH TYPHOID MARY’S INTESTINES. BUT THEY ALL HAVE THEIR WORTH AND THEIR PLACE.

STREET CORNER TRANSACTIONS

WE WERE PRETTY EASY, YOU KNOW, WE WOULD GO TO THE OPENING OF AN ENVELOPE FOR A FREE DRINK.

*The Netletter* was a weird adaptation of street marketing. Not only would Red Ed try to sell it on the street, but he was also making it an art piece and a multiple. That was the idea. It was the time of street marketing, before the internet. Back then, if you had a big space or a big show, and you wanted to get the word out, you would hire kids, usually cool or cute kids, and ask them to hang out in front of the big or cool concerts at nightclubs to hand out flyers for other things.

It’s funny to see drink tickets and other coupons in *The Netletter*. These were currency in New York. Clubs were so big, and the way they made their money was through something we would condescendingly call “bridge-and-tunnel crowds,” which were people coming in on weekends from Connecticut, Long Island, New Jersey, or even outer boroughs. The thing is you couldn’t fill a club with *just them*, because they wouldn’t want to come to be with just them, so there was this endless amount of bribery to try and get the downtown scene out to these clubs. You can see how Red Ed was working in helping to promote that by putting these ads and flyers in the hands of people in the scene. There was this hope that, with a couple of drink tickets, they would be like: “Oh, okay, we’ll come, we’ll come to that.”

QUEER CULTURE AND EAST-WEST VILLAGE DIVIDE

One of the things that happened in the East Village versus the West Village was the birth of queer culture, which we didn’t quite realize was taking place at the time. We just realized that the gays were much more into punk rock than Judy Garland.

There was a group called *FAFH*, *Fags Against Facial Hair*, and Keith Haring was part of it. He did this big graffiti, right at Astor Place, which was in a way the gateway to the East Village, back when St. Mark’s was a strip, and the graffiti said “Clones Go Home,” signed *Fags Against Facial Hair*. It was an early Haring piece which certainly testified to what was going on at the time. That event was definitely part of the sensibility of the time.

It is important to understand that it wasn’t just that the people on the west side were boring as hell, but they were really conservative. They were adamantly against a lot of what was happening on the piers: the leather, S&M, fisting, and trans. It was always a real rift within the gay community. Red Ed was thoroughly into that stuff, while the conservative gay culture clearly wasn’t. That was Red Ed’s self-expression, his voice, or his proclivities, and not necessarily his audience or his contributors.

This was not a great moment in queer culture, LGBTQ worlds, and sex clubs. Obviously, AIDS had done a fair share to kill it. One of the great things that happened in the sex clubs in New York was the interclass and interracial contact—from the Times Square movie theaters to a whole litany of clubs, like uptown Plato’s Retreat, the Continental Baths (where Bette Midler got her start performing), a lot of early disco happening at

Cock Ring or these huge cavernous places like Mineshaft and Crisco Disco. You would have both limousines and street hustlers at those places. The only other place where I saw that kind of mixed races and classes happening so seamlessly was in graffiti art. Graffiti was all city and all types.

KINKO’S AND ZINE CULTURE

At one point in *The Netletter* there is a Kinko’s rate sheet, which makes me think: “Okay, Red Ed probably got a discount on this.” *The Netletter* is a very transactional publication, which reflects our low-level downtown economy and makes it perfect for our present where everything is also transactional. Kinko’s and copy shops were really central at the time, although at that point they were on the downside of it. Xerox machines were a vital tool for artists. Todd Jorgensen started Todd’s Copy Shop, a coffee and Xerox place open to artists. A Xerox was like a buck a page, and that buck was a lot of money. It’s not like a buck now.

Red Ed was coming out of zine culture. At the time, there was an amazing bookstore filled with zines in New York called See Hear, which was run by this guy Ted Gottfried. It was vital for graffiti and outsider voices that had no power or cultural traction. With mimeograph and later Xerox machines, they were able to get to broadcast in some limited way.

Punk had created certain vernaculars that still had a lot of traction throughout the ‘80s. The first important punk zines were *Sniffin’ Glue*, in London; *CLE*, which stood for Cleveland; *Search and Destroy*, in San Francisco; and *Punk Magazine* in New York. Those zines were foundational, and so were the underground comics, which started in the free weeklies. In New York, for example, we had the *Rat* (Subterranean News). Zines allowed for a lot of non-mainstream events to get peer review. All of this was based on fan culture and was more hardcore than punk: a lot of the bands that are mentioned in *The Netletter* were hardcore bands, rather than punk. Music was in a shambles at this time. Nirvana hadn’t hit, and rock was not in a great shape, but there were a lot of other things going on.

*The Netletter*’s mode of distribution finds its roots in the ‘60s and ‘70s, as well as in the ‘80s. The ‘60s gave us the “Free Weekly,” which was an important outlet for music, because the clubs could use it to get the word out. You would pay for an ad in the back of *SoHo Weekly News* and the *Village Voice*, and people would know what bands were going to be playing at places like the Mudd Club that week. The ‘80s in turn gave us hardcore music, and the growing participation of suburban kids in its subculture, who had more money than the ones in the burned-out cities.

EARLY BITS OF OBSOLETE TECHNOLOGY

You can tell Red Ed was an early arriver. He was early with his idea of a “Fine Art Network,” both a telephone hotline and a pager, and he also promoted

digital art. The only people I knew who had pagers were drug dealers: it was a weird early technology. The hotline probably worked very much as the magazine did, but on a more current basis or something approximating internet time, where basically you would call and it would say: “Tuesday night, there’s a party here. Wednesday night, there is an opening there.” But I can’t be sure.

The flexi discs are also an odd little thing in *The Netletter*. They were even cheaper than vinyl, these acetate discs. The first ones I saw as a kid were on cereal boxes, and then they started to be included in magazines. The whole point was that it would contain something new, and for that reason you could charge fifteen dollars for a magazine, because people wanted that flexi disc.

VHS was another important, now obsolete technology. There was also Target Video and Survival Research Laboratories where artists were getting their work out in non-mainstream ways and having an impact. This early distribution of zines or VHS was underground, through word-of-mouth, different from the instantaneousness of the internet. The trading of music cassettes was also part of zine culture. A lot of the Riot Grrrl scene actually started specifically because girls were trading their music back and forth as this was the only way for distribution. It was a girls-only network. A lot of things could happen through these combinations of then-new media and emergent voices.

QUICK TAKES ON THE NETLETTER	
1	BUILDING: ON THIS FLYER FOR BUILDING, PROBABLY A GOTH OR INDUSTRIAL CLUB, IT SAYS CHRIS & COSEY ARE PERFORMING. THEY WERE FROM THE BAND THROBBING GRISTLE, WHICH PRODUCED GENESIS P-ORRIDGE. KAREN FINLEY, WHO DID STRONG FEMINIST WORK WITH FOOD AND WAS SMACK DAB IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CULTURE WARS, IS ALSO PERFORMING. I ALSO NOTICED ONE OF THE ACTS HAD CAPTAIN WIZZO, ONE OF THE FIRST GENERATION OF LIGHT ARTISTS WHO DID LIQUID LIGHT SHOWS. HE WAS AN ALCHEMIST WITH LIGHT AND WITH OILS, AND HIS MAIN GIG FOR YEARS HAD BEEN WITH THE SIXTIES BAND HOT TUNA.
2	CONTINENTAL DIVIDE: THERE’S A FLYER FOR CONTINENTAL, CALLED CONTINENTAL DIVIDE BACK THEN, AND WHICH JUST CLOSED. IT WAS TRIGGER SMITH’S CLUB. ON THAT FLYER YOU HAVE: JOHNNY THUNDERS PLAYING, WHO WAS IN A BAND CALLED THE NEW YORK DOLLS, WHICH IS THE PROTO PUNK BAND MALCOLM MCLAREN BASED HIS BAND THE SEX PISTOLS OFF OF; CHEETAH CHROME WHO WAS FROM THE DEAD BOYS, SYLVAIN SYLVAIN ALSO FROM THE NEW YORK DOLLS; AND DEE DEE RAMONE. THESE ARE FIRST GENERATION, IMPORTANT PUNK GROUPS THAT WERE ALL DOING SOLO ACTS THERE.
3	EMILY HARVEY: MOST OF THE THINGS IN THE NETLETTER WERE BAD GALLERIES FOR WHICH THERE’S NO TRACE ANYMORE, BUT IT’S INTERESTING THAT SOMEHOW EMILY HARVEY IS IN THERE: SHE WAS AN IMPORTANT DEALER FOR FLUXUS ARTISTS. HER GALLERY HAS NOW BECOME THE EMILY HARVEY FOUNDATION.
4	TOMPKINS PARK RESTAURANT: THERE IS A MENU FOR THE TOMPKINS PARK RESTAURANT, WHICH WAS THE FIRST MAINSTREAM, BORING RESTAURANT OF THE EAST VILLAGE. HOWEVER, SINCE YOU COULD ACTUALLY SIT TWENTY PEOPLE AT A TABLE THERE, A LOT OF EARLY EAST VILLAGE GALLERIES, WHICH HAD SUCCESSFUL SHOWS, LIKE GRACIE MANSION OR CIVILIAN WARFARE GALLERY, WOULD GO THERE FOR THEIR POST-OPENING DINNERS.
5	JANET BORDEN AND KATHY RUTTENBERG: THERE IS AN INVITATION IN THERE FOR MARTIN PARR’S SHOW AT JANET BORDEN, AN INTERESTING DEALER. PARR IS NOW AN IMPORTANT BRITISH PHOTOGRAPHER, BUT BACK THEN HE WOULD HAVE BEEN TOTALLY UNKNOWN. KATHY RUTTENBERG ALSO HAD A SHOW PROMOTED IN THE NETLETTER AT AN OBSCURE GALLERY, BUT SHE’S MORE KNOWN NOW.
6	KNITTING FACTORY: THERE ARE KNITTING FACTORY NOTES IN THE NETLETTER. THE KNITTING FACTORY WAS ORIGINALLY ON HOUSTON, THEN THEY MOVED DOWN TO TRIBECA, WHERE THEY HAD FIVE ROOMS, AND MY FRIEND GLEN MAX WAS BASICALLY BOOKING FOUR BANDS IN EACH ROOM, SEVEN NIGHTS A WEEK. YOU COULD ALSO SEE WEIRD THINGS THERE, LIKE READINGS, WHERE SOMEONE LIKE LYNNE TILLMAN, AN IMPORTANT ART WRITER, WOULD BE READING.
7	ABC NO RIO AND CHEAP ART COLLECTIVE NYC: ABC NO RIO HAS A VERY INTERESTING LEGACY OF A MOMENT OF INTERVENTION IN NEW YORK. ON DECEMBER 31ST, 1979, NEW YEAR’S EVE, A GROUP CALLED COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS, OR COLAB, PUT ON THE REAL ESTATE SHOW, WHERE THEY TOOK OVER AN ABANDONED BUILDING ON DELANCEY STREET. WE HAD A LOT OF ISSUES WITH DEVELOPMENT OR NON-DEVELOPMENT AT THAT TIME, AND COLAB TOOK OVER THIS PLACE AND THE NEXT DAY, BECAUSE IT WAS SUCH A REAL POKE IN THE EYE OF THE CITY, THE CITY SHUT IT DOWN, AND THAT BECAME A CAUSE. YOU HAD JOSEPH BEUYS PICKETING OUTSIDE. THE CITY WAS SO EMBARRASSED BY THE REAL ESTATE SHOW THAT THEY GAVE COLAB THIS BROKEN DOWN BUILDING ON RIVINGTON STREET, AND THAT BECAME ABC NO RIO. ABC NO RIO WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN RED ED’S SCENE, BUT IT’S CHEAP ART.

THAT SUMMER, IN 1980, COLAB ALSO DID A SHOW CALLED THE TIMES SQUARE SHOW IN ABANDONED MESSAGE PARLORS. IT’S THE FIRST PLACE WHERE A LOT OF PEOPLE GET SHOWN. SOME OF THE COLAB ARTISTS WHO ARE STILL KNOWN TODAY INCLUDE KIKI SMITH, TOM OTTERNESS, JOHN AND CHARLIE AHEARN, JANE DIXON. IT WAS POLITICAL ART, BUT WE WEREN’T POLITICAL ARTISTS IN THAT MOLD OF THE PREVIOUS GENERATION OF LIKE LUCY LIPPARD OR HANS HAACKE. FIRST, BECAUSE THEY HAD NO SENSE OF HUMOR, BUT THE MAIN THING WAS THAT THEY WERE ALL TRACING AT THAT POINT THE IDEOLOGIES AND



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PROGRAMS OF WHAT THE '60S WERE ABOUT. THEY WERE STILL CHASING IT IN THE LATE '70S, WHICH MEANT THAT THEY WERE DOING A FORM OF POLITICAL TOURISM, LIKE GOING TO NICARAGUA TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM MARCHING THROUGH LATIN AMERICA. COLAB REPRESENTS ANOTHER FORM OF ENGAGEMENT AND EVEN THOUGH IT'S STRICTLY A GROUP OF VISUAL ARTISTS, A LOT OF THE IDEAS THAT THEY WERE WORKING WITH ARE PART OF A SOCIAL ART PRACTICE TODAY. SO THEY'RE THERE, BUT SO IS LEE QUI ONES, FAB 5 FREDDY, JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT, AND KENNY SCHARF. THE IDEA THEN GETS CODIFIED, HALF A YEAR LATER, BY DIEGO CORTEZ IN NEW YORK/NEW WAVE [AT MOMA].

PUBLIC-ACCESS CABLE SHOWS: PUBLIC-ACCESS WAS ANOTHER MEDIA THAT ATTRACTED A LOT OF WEIRD PEOPLE. GLENN O'BRIEN, WHO DID TV PARTY WAS ONE OF THE BEST, WITH CHRIS STEIN FROM BLONDIE, JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT, FAB 5 FREDDY, AND OTHERS. IT WAS A GREAT FREAK SHOW. WE DIDN'T HAVE CABLE DOWNTOWN IN NEW YORK, IT DIDN'T GO SOUTH OF 23RD STREET, AND WE DIDN'T GO NORTH OF 14TH STREET. I WAS THE ART CORRESPONDENT FOR WILLOUGHBY SHARP'S TV WEEKLY SHOW. COLAB HAD SOMETHING CALLED POTATO WOLF TV. AL GOLDSTEIN HAD HIS MIDNIGHT BLUE SHOW.

PSYCHEDELIC SOLUTIONS: ALTON KELLEY'S PSYCHEDELIC SOLUTIONS WAS AN IMPORTANT GALLERY WHICH WAS SHOWING A LOT OF THE 60S PEOPLE.

CB'S 313: CB'S 313 GALLERY WAS HILLY KRISTAL'S SPACE NEXT TO CBGB'S, AND HE TRIED A FEW THINGS WITH IT, LIKE A PIZZA PARLOR. IT WAS LIKE A CAFE BAR, WHICH THEN TURNED INTO A DEADBEAT BAR, BUT REALLY IT WAS A GALLERY. HERBERT HUNCKE WOULD HANG OUT THERE, WEIRD OLD PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT TIMES, BECAUSE THEY COULD DRINK FOR FREE.

JAPAN: JAPAN WAS A REALLY BAD PLACE, BUT IT WAS A LEGENDARY SPOT BECAUSE IT USED TO BE CALLED MILK BAR, WHICH WAS AN EARLY TRANSGRESSIVE PLACE IN NEW YORK.

## 11 Selby Nimrod

“IT STARTED BEFORE THE GROUND WAR. BUT IT HAD ALL THE SAME OBJECTIVES. LIBERATE ART. AND RED ED DID JUST THAT FRIDAY, AS HE STORMED 100 GALLERIES.”<sup>1</sup>

The first two years of the 1990s were bleak on many fronts. Ann Fensterstock's insightful chronicle of the time, Art on the Block: Tracking the New York Art World from SoHo to the Bowery, Bushwick, and Beyond, recounts how the economic downturn of 1989 wrought havoc on New York's commercial art world: "around early 1990...the phone just stopped ringing[.]" The glut of East Village galleries that had opened in the 80s created the "inevitable" conditions by which art's "quantity would come to rule [its] quality;" while the Whitney Biennials of the late 1980s stagnated, showing the same big-name artists year after year.<sup>2</sup> Beyond this, Fensterstock notes that real estate speculation during those years became especially predatory, abetted by New York University's expansion through tentacular and insatiable property mongering. Driven by the city's desire to clean itself up and cash in on property values, the implementation of broken windows policing and the forced removal of homeless populations from the former 24-hour sanctuary of Tompkins Square Park in these years resulted in multiple violent clashes between East Village denizens and the city's police.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, George Bush's war against Iraq was raging live via satellite, and the international HIV/AIDS crisis was in full swing.

TOWARDS A NEW ART ORDER: GOSSIP AS VIRAL CRITIQUE IN THE NETLETTIER

During this period, a cryptic and intractable publication known as *The Netletter* circulated in editions of unknown numbers around Manhattan's Lower East Side art communities.<sup>4</sup> It comprised a newsletter, printed on various colors of standard copy-paper, along with flyers promoting the BDSM club Paddles, gallery postcards, and other small items—among them matchbooks, business cards, and “safe sex kits.” The newsletter and accompanying gallery and club-night flotsam were stuffed into large

plastic bags with a zip closures of the variety that sheaths soft-core porn magazines on newsstands. *The Netletter's* issues ranged in themes from "THE 'FIRST MAX FISH NOW SOHO ART DAILY!!!' ISSUE," to "THE 'MAG BAGS WENT UP 60%...60%!!!!' ISSUE"<sup>5</sup> and "THE 'REALLY, IT WAS ABOUT FISTFUCKING? ISSUE."<sup>5</sup> Much of its content satirically banal, gossipy in a trolling kind of way, *The Netletter* purported to update readers on the goings-on of the Lower East Side's

1 “AND A BIG, HUGE 100 GALLERY ATTACK,” THE NETLETTER, VOL. 1 ISSUE 99.9; COLIN DE LAND  
AND PAT HEARN LIBRARY COLLECTION; MSS.012; 53; CENTER FOR CURATORIAL STUDIES LIBRARY AND  
2 ANN FENSTERSTOCK, ART ON THE BLOCK: TRACKING THE NEW YORK ART WORLD FROM SOHO TO THE  
BOWERY, BUSHWICK AND BEYOND, (NEW YORK: PALGRAVE MCMILLIAN, 2013), 121-24.  
3 IBID., 130.  
4 THE NETLETTER BECOMES A SOURCE OF INTEREST FOR THIS PUBLICATION, AS MANY OF ITS ISSUES  
WERE INCLUDED IN THE JOINED PAPERS OF THE LATE ART DEALERS PATH HEARN AND COLIN DE LAND,  
5 PROPRIETORS OF PAT HEARN GALLERY AND AMERICAN FINE ARTS, CO., RESPECTIVELY.  
THE NETLETTER; VOL. 15 ISSUE 9; VOL. 16 ISSUE 99; AND VOL. 7 ISSUE 99.9.



coexisting art, sex, and party scenes. Additional regularly occurring columns and features included gallery roundups; reports on the BDSM escapades (and changing hair colors) of “slut sex slave” Green Gina; and appeals to readers to “give sports a chance,” head to the Clit Club, or try a twelve-step program. Published, edited, and distributed, likely single-handedly, by Red Ed (a pseudonym for the media artist and East Village denizen Edward Braddock III), the rather enigmatic publication reads less as newsletter than as conceptual artistic project. More specifically, *Netletter*, is a publication-as-artwork employing the viral rhetoric of gossip as one amongst many of its user-generated media strategies, to define a network of artists and cultural producers in the changing downtown scene, while also delivering excoriating commentary on the economic and political forces at work in the neighborhood and at large. Now ubiquitous, but first appearing in the 2000s, the term user-generated media, describes the production of content by members, or “users,” of online communities, from Wikipedia to YouTube to social media. Though its vernacular use post-dates *The Netletter* by more than a decade, the term is apt here and is pointedly employed here to mark the way in which the publication functions as an analogue to contemporaneously emerging media counterparts on the World Wide Web and to suggest that user-generated media itself existed in forms, like gossip, that long pre-dated such technology.

“FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE TUNED IN LATE: RED ED & GREEN GINA ARE GOING TO HAVE A BABY!!!! THE BABY IS DUE 12-25-91 IT’S NAME WILL BE: CONCEPTUAL ART.”<sup>6</sup>

As *The Netletter* mashes up tabloid, newsletter, and punk zine formats, it shares the formal specificity of unbound contents with an earlier publication, *Aspen*. This now legendary boxed conceptual art publication was published by Phyllis Johnson between 1965 and 1971, with guest-editors and designers that included Dan Graham and Andy Warhol. Writing about the serial publication as an alternative space for art, Gwen Allen suggests that *Aspen*’s unbound format not only freed it from the aesthetic and sequential constraints of “traditional codex form,” but also served to “encourage... multiple rhizomatic connections among its components.”<sup>7</sup> Undergirded by a recurring newsletter with a consistent format, *The Netletter*’s loose, ephemeral accompaniments of gallery cards and party flyers take on a similarly rhizomatic role. As the various components of *Aspen* shared multiple conceptual and social inter-sections, the mag-bag materials relate in similar fashion

to the contents of Red Ed’s newsletter, their multivalent points of connection serving to map the network of the downtown *milieu*. There is, admittedly, a perversity in comparing publications with such divergent resources and aspirations, but despite substantial differences in their tenor and production values, both share an affinity for the unbound format, and, perhaps more importantly, an investment in the publication as a space of artistic production in its own right.

The opposing ways this latter idea manifests in each also reflect a crucial moment of rupture. “Dematerialized forms,” like the “texts, photographs, and other ephemeral documents,” that comprised the conceptual art of the 1960s and 70s were, as Allen suggests, ideally “suited for distribution in the reproducible printed format of the periodical.”<sup>8</sup> The twenty years between *Aspen* and *Netletter* saw major shifts in the reception and production of conceptual art and the related concerns of institutional critique—not least artists’ interest in cultural theorizations of postmodernity, which, according to its primary theorist, Frederic Jameson, are marked by a drive to self-consciously efface “the frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture.”<sup>9</sup> The earnest innovation of *Aspen*’s format and content is replaced in *Netletter* by an unceremonious conglomeration of appropriated media formats and satirical rhetoric. A gestating baby, for example, due on Christmas of 1991 and named “Conceptual Art,” becomes a running gag, as mentions of the ‘pregnancy’ appear in several issues, sometimes couched as an “action” or performance.<sup>10</sup> It’s no coincidence, then, that *Netletter* made the rounds in 1991, the same year that Andrea Fraser (then represented by *Netletter* regular American Fine Arts, Co.) made *May I Help You?* a video performance which refocused her critique of art institutions from the museum onto the desiring, but ultimately profit-driven commercial art gallery. While *Aspen* figures the unbound publication as both an artistic project and an alternative space for the timely presentation of a new, dematerialized form of art, *Netletter*, too, is an artistic project perfectly in stride with its time. It uses old media formats in ways that anticipate new ones, and it replaces high-brow conceptualism with institutional critique and a postmodern interest in the (supposedly) low media formats of citizen journalism, the newsletter, and the tabloid. In this way, *The Netletter*’s insistence on certain coded, minor, and unregulatable forms of communication—gossip, for instance—can also be understood as relating to the concerns of postmodernity and of institutional critique, especially as they were articulated and reproduced within art institutions and publications themselves.

GOSSIP.....SOMETIMES I FEEL SO BAD, LIKE TODAY, I JUST DON’T WANNA TYPE ANY...BUT SOME OF YOU OUT THERE JUST GOTTA HAVE SOME DIRT.....SO HERE GOES.....”

Some gossip is about sex. Some is about money. With a regularly occurring segment titled “THE FINEST IN FINE ART NETGOSSIP (*THE BEST PROMO-SCHMOOZE \$\$\$\$ CAN BUY*),” *The Netletter* demonstrates a firm grasp on the implications of being gossip-worthy, both by way of cultural and direct economic capital.<sup>11</sup> Irit Rogoff’s essay “Gossip as Testimony: A Postmodern Signature,” claims that gossip functions as a “postmodern,” device because of its potential to “destabilize the [exclusionary] historiography of Modernism.”<sup>12</sup> Gossip does this, she argues, through its ability to “point...to alternative economies inscribed in the business of cultural production.”<sup>13</sup> *The Netletter*, in apparent agreement with Rogoff’s thesis, gestures towards these alternative, art-adjacent, and artist-led communities—those of sex clubs, night clubs, and community activism. Further, *Netletter* seems to flatten out these intersecting points into a single plane—an anti-commercial field of cultural production that prizes lived experience—where gallery shows, sex parties, and quips from neighborhood restaurant-workers are aggregated and non-hierarchically presented. For Rogoff, the act of gossip additionally elucidates “psychic fantasies whose constant dissatisfaction with existing accounts continues to generate unproven speculation.”<sup>14</sup> Such dissatisfaction is exemplified in *Netletter*’s regularly occurring gallery goings-on segment. One entry employs military metaphors to describe a day of visits to commercial galleries, satirizing the art world and the Gulf War. Another bemoans the lack of “notable pieces of art,” pointing out that “highlights of the tour included [famed art dealer] Leo Castelli at his desk at 11:15 am.”<sup>15</sup>

Emerging from a dissatisfaction with the art market, *The Netletter*’s speculative accounts were not confined to figures of Castelli’s stature. A goings-on entry titled “AMERICAN FINE ARTS CO. STILL QUIET,” intimates that the “really quiet streak going” at the notoriously non-commercial gallery, known for presenting challenging and unsaleable work, *might* be due to its proprietor “Colin [de Land] getting himself hooked up with [Soho art dealers] Brooke Alexander and Jay Gorney.”<sup>16</sup> The insinuation here is that de Land, an early supporter of artists including Cady Noland, Moyra Davey, and Andrea Fraser, has sold out. In this

way, *The Netletter*, self-consciously employs the rhetoric of gossip as a tool of subversion. In the context of an art world that, as painter Peter Halley said, had “lost its claim to integrity,” *The Netletter*’s speculative gossip critiques the rampant and content-free commercialism that had slithered its way into the art world of the 1980s.<sup>17</sup> At a time when the prevailing feeling was that “art is...seen as a sham by the public,” *The Netletter*’s rhetorical use of gossip and its satirical tone, reproduces this disaffection, while also undermining dominant narratives of art’s commodification.<sup>18</sup> “WE ARE PART OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER. WE ARE PART OF THE NEW ART ORDER,” an editorial-cum-manifesto in *Netletter* shouts in its signature all-caps.<sup>19</sup> “WE’RE NOT AT WAR WITH THE GALLERIES, OR THE ARTISTS, OR THE DEALERS.....WE JUST WANT WHAT IS RIGHT AND JUST.”<sup>20</sup> “FOR NOW,” the text continues, “YOU WILL HEAR THE STORIES OF ATROCITIES. ATROCITIES NOT COMMITTED BY US IN ANY FASHION. [but?] BY THE OLD ART ORDER.”<sup>21</sup> What’s significant here is a self-reflexive awareness of how gossip might be harnessed, weaponized, and deployed as a tactic to galvanize a community, a readership, and a scene, against real and perceived losses of integrity within the art world.

Perhaps it is a consequence of my position of outsider-ness relative to the artistic scene *The Netletter* so tightly circumscribes, but observing how gossip—which as Michael Warner observes is “is never a relation among strangers”—functions in *Netletter*, I’d argue that its deployment as a highly particular form of communication is as significant as its informational content.<sup>22</sup> In addition to understanding gossip as “alternative archival material” with which to write histories against the grain of normative “archivally sanctioned” practice, queer art historian Gavin Butt observes gossip’s viral potential.<sup>23</sup> “As one gossips,” he writes, “one participates in a viral economy of communication”—an economy which “proliferat[es] information while “forever stall[ing] an “authoritative ‘truth’ by means of the various mutations of the narrative content and emphasis.”<sup>24</sup> Expounding on Butt’s claims about gossip’s virality, and considering the media-theoretical implications of such an understanding, gossip, then, can be framed as a template for a peer-to-peer method of sharing information. In other words, as gossip spreads from speaker to speaker, it creates a network whose informal structure is not unlike that of the World Wide Web. Conceived of in 1989, the Web transformed the internet, then a military technology, into something closer to the widely-accessible utility

6 THE NETLETTER VOL. . 2 ISSUE 99.99, 3. AUTHOR’S NOTE: THE QUOTATIONS FROM THE NETLETTER INCLUDED IN THIS ESSAY ARE PRESENTED AS THEY APPEAR IN THE NEWSLETTER. RED ED’S STYLISTIC CONCEIT OF ALL CAPS TEXT, AS WELL AS GRAMMAR AND SPELLING ERRORS HAVE BEEN REPRODUCED.

7 GWEN ALLEN: ARTISTS’ MAGAZINES: AN ALTERNATIVE SPACE FOR ART (CAMBRIDGE, MA: MIT PRESS, 2011), 52.

8 ALLEN, 49.

9 FREDERIC JAMESON, POSTMODERNISM, OR, THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF LATE CAPITALISM, (DURHAM, NC: DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1991), 2.

10 “THE FINEST IN FINE ART NET GOSSIP,” THE NETLETTER VOL. 16, ISSUE 9.

11 IBID. (AND OTHERS)

12 IRIT ROGOFF “GOSSIP AS TESTIMONY: A POSTMODERN SIGNATURE,” IN THE FEMINISM AND VISUAL CULTURE READER, ED. AMEILA JONES (LONDON: ROUTLEDGE, 2003), 274.

13 ROGOFF, 274.

14 ROGOFF, 274.

15 “AND A BIG, HUGE, 100 GALLERY ATTACK,” THE NETLETTER, VOL. 1 ISSUE 99.9.

16 “AMERICAN FINE ARTS CO. STILL QUIET,” THE NETLETTER, VOL. 6, ISSUE 97.

17 PETER HALLEY QUOTED IN FENSTERSTOCK, 125.

18 IBID.

19 “‘A NEW ART ORDER.....’ AN ART/EDITORIAL,” THE NETLETTER, VOL. 2 ISSUE 99.9.

20 IBID.

21 IBID.

22 MICHAEL WARNER, “PUBLICS AND COUNTERPUBLICS,” PUBLIC CULTURE 14, NO. 1 (2002): 59.

23 GAVIN BUTT, BETWEEN YOU AND ME: QUEER DISCLOSURES IN THE NEW YORK ART WORLD 1948-1963 (DURHAM, NC: DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2005), 8.

24 BUTT, 18.

it is today.<sup>25</sup> Given that *Netletter* is littered with references to nets and networks, not least of all in title, this historic event was likely not lost on its creator and protagonist, Red Ed.

Considering gossip as an analogue model for user-generated media transmission, within the context of a publication as a conceptual artistic project, brings the various strands of *The Netletter* artist-publisher’s interests into focus. Red Ed is one of a few known pseudonyms for Edward Braddock III, who now goes by Carol Braddock.<sup>26</sup> Today, she lives in Los Angeles, a self-described “Visual Block Chain Artist... Working [on] a massive 378 blockchain artwork.”<sup>27</sup> In the East Village, though, Red Ed was, in addition to the publisher of *The NetLetter*, the co-host and producer of *On the Avenue*, a public access television program that appeared twice per week on Manhattan Neighborhood Cable from 1989 to 1992. In an interview with Calmx, Ed describes the show as “top of the line spiritual guidance for the East Village.”<sup>28</sup> Made with a crew that included recurring figures in *The Netletter*—artist Paul Kostabi, Green Gina, and others—*On the Avenue* included “art, music, and food reviews” and a regular two-and-a-half minute news segment. “The Ray Report,” as it was called, featured “commentary” on stories in the day’s newspaper from “Ray the Turkish guy that owns the tiny twenty-four-hour concession stand at 113 Avenue A.”<sup>29</sup> In time, structure, and concept, Red Ed’s On the Avenue, and *The Netletter* are related projects, both offering a specific, critical take on life in the rapidly-changing East Village. Both, also, prioritize the quotidian, equating the experience of art-making in the East Village with adjacent social and political activities. Most importantly, both projects usurp and subvert mass media formats—public access, self-published newsletters, and tabloids—for the creation and distribution of critical and anti-commercial content pertinent to, and legible to, a small community.

Writing about a later artist-made public access tv show, *Cash from Chaos/Unicorns and Rainbows* (1994–1997) Lauren Cornell points out that “the last decade of the twentieth century was marked by the turn from broadcast to user-generated media.”<sup>30</sup> Such a turn, she argues, indicates not only a “change in the conception of ‘the people’ from passive receivers to critical agents empowered not only to unstitch” the “ideological mechanisms, messages, and psychic impressions” of mass media. It also suggests a move towards artist interventions

that “recode,” and “redistribute” these conventions “in the context of the art world.”<sup>31</sup> Red Ed’s *On the Avenue* and *The Netletter* are indicative of this shift, anticipating the banality and the freedom presented by user-generated content that would come to define the first decade-and-a-half of the internet. Though *The Netletter*’s codified jibes are no longer legible to most, its gossip and goings on out of date both the tone of its critiques and the ephemeral nature of its content can be thought as a predecessor to artist-made meme accounts that in 2019 circulate trolling-but often deserved-criticism of contemporary art communities, markets and institutions by way of social media.<sup>32</sup> As in *The Netletter*, the use of unverifiable and decentralized gossip, is integral to their content—giving form to their equally ephemeral transmissions. Yet it is this context, along with gossip’s supposed oppositional position to sanctioned histories, that heightens a final irony in the annals of the largely forgotten *Netletter*. For all its ephemerality, *The Netletter*’s current status as an object of art-historical study, and its assured continued existence, are in fact direct results of archival practice. Preserved within the papers of the late art dealers Pat Hearn and Colin de Land, *The Netletter*’s gossip, and all the rest—now subsumed by the archive—has become a matter of historical record.

25 A RELEVANT DIGRESSION HERE IS THAT WITH THE CONTINUAL ENCROACHMENT OF CORPORATE INTERESTS, MONETIZATION OF SERVICES, AND 2018 REPEAL OF NET NEUTRALITY, THE INTERNET IS MORE ACCESSIBLE THAT EVER, BUT MARKEDLY LESS “FREE,” AND UTOPIAN THAN MANY 90S UTOPIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB.

26 IN A 1995 POST DIGITALLY ARCHIVED ON CRYPTOANARCHY.WIKI, SHE SIGNS OFF “LOVE ALWAYS, CAROL ANNE. HTTP://MAILING-LIST ARCHIVE.CRYPTOANARCHY.WIKI/ARCHIVE/1995/01/3BDBFC6C8BAA-6419C9599A79119BC384CD32FD1D7958B3439E190A80A1B12353/

27 TWITTER BIO FOR RED ED @COLORSIGN HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/COLORSIGN ACCESSED, MARCH 24, 2019.

28 CALMX, “INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD BRADDOCK III, AKA RED ED, AKA CAROL ANNE BRADDOCK,” IN CAPTURED: A FILM/VIDEO HISTORY OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE, EDS. CLAYTON PATTERSON, PAUL BARTLETT, AND URANIA MYLONAS (NEW YORK: SEVEN STORIES, 2005), 367.

29 IBID.

30 LAUREN CORNELL, “EXPERIMENTAL PEOPLE,” IN THE CONDITIONS OF BEING ART: PAT HEARN GALLERY & AMERICAN FINE ARTS, CO., EDS. ANN BUTLER, LIA GANGITANO, AND JEANNINE TANG (NEW YORK: CCS BARD AND DANCING FOXES, 2018), 254.

31 IBID.

32 A FEW EXAMPLES OF SUCH SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS, ACTIVE ON INSTAGRAM AS OF APRIL 2019, INCLUDE: @BRADTROEMEL; @BRAININTHEFRONTSEAT, AND @JERRYGOGOSIAN. THIS IS BY NO MEANS AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST.

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Eva Weinmayr is an artist, educator, and researcher based in London, United Kingdom, and Gothenburg, Sweden. In her work, she investigates the intersections between contemporary art, feminist pedagogy, and institutional analysis by experimenting with modes of intersectional knowledge formation. In this interview, we discuss with Weinmayr the production and dissemination of underground publications, the politics of authorship and reproduction, and publishing in relation to collaborative knowledge practices. The conversation also offers insights on collectivity in higher education and methods for archiving ephemeral materials.

**In 2010, you and Andrea Francke launched the Piracy Project, dedicated to creating “a platform to innovatively explore the spectrum of copying / re-editing / translating / paraphrasing / imitating / re-organizing / manipulating already existing works.” How did the two of you go about assembling this framework? What was the impetus behind it?**

Eva Weinmayr: The impetus was actually a very practical one, because The Piracy Project started out as a response to restrictive university policies. In 2010, the management announced the closing of the library of the Byam Shaw School of Art in North London, due to a merger with the larger University of the Arts. As an immediate reaction, students and staff protested, and kept the library running, making it self-governed, public, and intellectually and socially generative. AND Publishing, a publishing collective I am involved with, was part of this collective endeavor.

At this time AND was in conversation with Andrea Francke, who had come across Daniel Alarcon’s article on pirate book markets in Peru. This article planted the seed. We learned that some book pirates in Lima were modifying and amending the content of the books they were copying and circulating. That really triggered our imagination!

Because the now self-governed library of Byam Shaw had no budget for new acquisitions, we had a good reason to ask people to make copies of the books they thought should go into it. Through the international call for contributions, copies produced by staff and students at the art school, as well as through our field research in China, Turkey, Peru and elsewhere, we eventually gathered a collection of roughly 150 books that are also indexed on an searchable online catalogue.

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**When considering the large geographic range and quantitative scale of the project, we have often wondered about your working process, specifically, your interaction and engagement with different publishers and artists. Can you speak a bit about this? Have you ever been involved in legal issues regarding copyrights? If so, how did these incidents unfold?**

The Piracy Project is not directly involved in peer-to-peer file sharing, as many digital shadow libraries are. So unauthorized dissemination is not a big issue.

Because we work with printed books, and have only one copy of each, we are not actively distributing material. The Piracy Project can perhaps be best described as a publishing, exhibition and archive project, but, most of all, it is a discursive project because we use the copies as a starting point for reading rooms, discussions, workshops, and debates, to rethink the ways we engage with each other’s work and to understand the problematics of copyright and the impact policy development has had on knowledge practices.

We are interested in the approaches and strategies of copying, in transformations and modifications, and, most importantly, the motivations behind these acts.

The “cases” within the Piracy Project vary immensely in their motivations and practical approaches. They range from creative appropriation to critical rewriting to political activism and acts of civil disobedience (in order to circumvent enclosures such as censorship and market monopolies), but they also include acts of piracy generated by commercial interests.

What all the books have in common is that they have been produced by building upon somebody else’s work without previous authorization – by being altered, improved, translated, reprinted or recirculated. Therefore, we would like to replace the term “piracy” with “unsolicited collaborations.” It’s really to inject some complexity in the discussion, because the debate around copyright produces such a reductive dichotomy.

It’s quite interesting – Gary Hall points out in his book *Pirate Philosophy* that when the word “pirate” first appeared in ancient Greek texts, it was closely related to the noun “peira,” which means trial or attempt. The “pirate” would then be the one who “tests,” “puts to proof,” “contends with,” and “makes an attempt.” “Contending with,” “making an attempt,” and “teasing” are at the core of the Piracy Project’s practice. Its aim is twofold: first, to gather and study a vast array of piratical practices, and second, to build a practice that is itself collaborative and generative at many different levels.

But your question about legal issues is relevant: even such exploratory artistic practice would be deemed unlawful in the courts, as three invited intellectual property lawyers confirmed during the performative debate “A Day at the Courtroom,” which the Piracy Project organized as part of its residency at the Showroom in London. The law does not like it when one instigates others to pirate books.

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**By locating creativity and originality in the way that material is handled and made public, many of your projects involving publishing (and publications) destabilize conventional notions of authorship (and ownership). What have been some of the more meaningful experiences for you that have played out across this borderline between reproduction and creative intervention?**

I’ve actually gotten to be quite careful using the term “originality,” as it tries to make us think there is one specific moment of origin attached to the creative expression of one individual’s unique mind. And this corresponds with the logic of current copyright law, which is based on the constructed interdependency of authorship, originality and property. Copyright, after all, is not a transcendent moral idea, but a specifically modern formation of property rights produced by printing technology, marketplace economics, and the classical liberal culture of possessive individualism, as Mark Rose has shown.

My experience working in this field has been that it is quite hard to get out of this institutionalized reciprocity between authorship, originality, and property. It really stands in the way of collective intersectional feminist knowledge practices.

**Collaborative work, with friends, strangers, and institutions, plays an important role in your practice. Can you speak to the importance of collectivity within the production, distribution, and circulation of publications?**

Collectivity – very bluntly said – is one way to fight the increasing demand for individualization that we encounter throughout many facets of our (institutional) life. One experiment practicing collectivity within institutional contexts took place at Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg, in 2016. A workgroup comprising staff, students, and administrators worked over the course of a year to query critical pedagogies in the arts and to rethink normative knowledge practices by organizing the three-day international event “Let’s Mobilize: What is Feminist Pedagogy?”.

For this event, we replaced the term “conference” with “mobilization,” in order to shift the framework: in a conference, usually, individuals present their papers, whereas in a mobilization the emphasis is put on the agency, on that which follows. So participants who join a mobilization come with different desires, energies, and mindsets – wanting to work out together practical ways to translate research or knowledge into practice.

The mobilization’s workbook was not a finished object to be “delivered” – it had to be assembled and bound by the readers themselves. Four weeks beforehand, the workgroup organized an assembling day in the main entrance of the Academy, to introduce members of our own institution to the questions and topics posed by the event. Passing students, staff, administrators, and technicians sat briefly down to produce their copy while chatting with each other and exploring the content of the book and the upcoming event. This generated a social and intellectual moment bringing together members of the institution who hadn’t had much interaction before. In a second step we enlarged every page of the workbook to A1 size posters, and transformed the academy building into a walkable book by pasting the posters along the walls of shared spaces such as staircases, corridors, elevators, and bathrooms.

Such experiments try to think of publication not as a finite end product of something, but more as a “prop,” as Fred Moten and Stefano Harney describe it in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* “If you pick it up you can move into some new thinking and into a new set of relations, a new way of being together, thinking together. In the end, it’s this new way of being and thinking together that’s important, not the prop.” Here, publishing becomes a process of co-constructing meaning, and that includes all moments of production, dissemination, and use.

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**In your essay “Library Underground – a reading list for a coming community” (2016), you have written that, within higher education settings, “collaborations among students are only valid, when each collaborator’s part can be clearly defined (and assessed).” Instead of such an understanding, you suggest that collaboration**

**goes beyond the “sum of individual parts,” and that it is more important to inspire each other than to define each participant’s contribution. Can you elaborate further on these ideas? What are alternative approaches to collaboration, within higher education contexts, that stimulate active and continuous participation among collaborators?**

It’s funny that you are asking this question, because I am currently struggling with how to do a PhD in artistic practice without falling into the normative modes of knowledge practices based on individual authorship and everything this entails. A PhD is basically constructed by two assumptions: it constitutes an “original contribution to knowledge,” and is made by an individual author. You can imagine how that goes against the very core of my inquiry and practice. I try to understand publication as a “verb” (a communicative process) rather than a “noun” (a static object, a result), because this shift from noun to verb privileges collective practice over individually authored objects.

But is it possible to approach a PhD thesis as a “verb,” as a collective and collaborative knowledge practice? One of my experiments uses a collaborative wiki as a site for writing the thesis. The wiki operates simultaneously as a platform for co-production, discussion, and dissemination. I am wary of framing collaborative practices from a single perspective (mine), because it would show only one side of the coin and could potentially streamline and historicize these joint projects. Instead, I would like to see the thesis as a site for thinking together and having disagreements.

However, there are also conflicts: I will be granted a PhD title, but others helped to achieve it. Even if I credit all the contributors to this wiki – by definition – there can be only one author who earns the PhD.

Secondly, as a doctoral researcher I am authorized by the university to conduct this inquiry as part of an artistic research framework. This affiliation comes with privileges, such as five-year employment, a monthly salary, and the financial security and headspace allowing me to commit to this inquiry. This authorization stands in stark contrast to most of my past, current, and potential future collaborators, who mainly live on precarious short-term teaching contracts.

How could I ask them to engage with this project, to invest time and effort to add their observations and perspectives? Could I find resources that would remunerate them for their time? Could I possibly share my employment contract with them? It’s interesting that I would not hesitate to ask for help, ideas, and critique in a non-institutional context outside of economies of money, authorization and audit, where other values govern an economy of exchange.

But as soon as a collaboration forms part of an institutionally authorized and validated setting – given its implicit merit system – working with non-institutional collaborators becomes ethically conflicted. In order to make these conflicts visible, instead of shying away from them, I developed contracts with each of my



collaborators, paying attention to this incommensurability, and seeing how the conflicted relationship between “disciplined” and “undisciplined” research could be bridged. (I am borrowing these terms from Femke Snelting and Kate Rich, who are currently making a similar PhD research collaboration experiment.) These contracts lay out what’s in it for my collaborators, our mutual expectations, and the economies of exchange at play. These documents expose the micropolitics of co-authorship and set the conditions for our collaboration. They also expose the tensions and contradictions at play, something we rarely pay explicit attention to.

**In your essay “One Publishes to Find Comrades,” you discuss the performativity of posters via the Museum of Modern Art library in New York, which has been carefully amassing a collection of printed invitations and flyers since the 1960s. More significantly, you point out that this ephemera is also a form of “currency.” To me, the meaning and value of this currency shifts, as does its method of circulation, when it moves from the hands of its intended addressees to the vaults of institutions. What do you think about this relationship between the ephemerality of invitations and flyers and the permanence of institutional archives that seek to preserve them?**

Anthony Huberman once described his skepticism about contemporary exhibition practices, saying, if I remember correctly, that much of the difficulty in making an exhibition lies in the fact that to extract something from circulation – an object, image, practice, or idea – and to interrupt it, examine it, and exhibit it, is to do it great injustice. Especially for ephemera from social or political activist movements, these questions are key, because cultural institutions love to extract, appropriate, and sometimes streamline and co-opt these practices via exhibition without engaging with the often messy social and political complexities at stake. I am reminded here of Suzanne Briet’s thoughts in “What is Documentation?” She points out that a newly discovered antelope living in the wilderness would not be regarded a document. However, once captured and brought to Europe to be subsequently exhibited in a zoo – described, categorized and classified – it would become a document, because as Lisa Gitelman states: “it would be framed - or reframed - as an example, specimen, or instance.”

But, of course, there is no question that there is value in institutional archival practices, as they are able to provide resources, space and care to preserve these ephemera for later generations. It’s a question of care. This is particularly important for feminist practices, as learning from past generations’ struggles means we don’t always have to reinvent the wheel.

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PUBLISHING AS COLLECTIVE PRACTICE – “MORE VERB, LESS NOUN”

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AN INTERVIEW WITH EVA WEINMAYR

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