




DUOX4Larkin  
DUOX



*DUOX4Larkin* is the first exhibition in New York City by DUOX, a collaborative formed in 2009 by Baltimore based artists Malcolm Lomax (born Abbeyville, South Carolina, 1986) and Daniel Wickerham (born Columbus, Ohio, 1986). Through functional as well as metaphorical aspects of re-purposed objects, fragments of video, sculpture, digital images and printed matter, DUOX affect a vivid speculation on individual identity, and its self-conscious “design” through visual codes, physical possessions, and forms of labor.

*DUOX4Larkin* draws on the historical example of The Larkin Company, a now defunct soap and home decorations company founded in the late 19th Century. Housed in an administrative building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Larkin achieved notoriety for its endeavors to promote harmonious working conditions and “pure” values amongst its workforce, in synthesis with the purveyance of lifestyle solutions to its customers. Considering Larkin as a prescient *Gesamtkunstwerk* of branded product and corporate values, *DUOX4Larkin* incorporates arrangements of objects and images that relate to the changed notion of labor – overly designed and dysfunctional workstations, détourned workwear, customized commodities, and the use of screens for both display and concealment.

The physical qualities of DUOX’s work, in which related elements indicate hierarchies of “the simulated” and “the real”, build on the application of physiological ideals of cleanliness and hygiene within contemporary culture. Underlying processes of customization suggest both the standardizing of aesthetic choice, and its extension into the realm of biopolitics. The composite inhabitant of their workspaces is part health worker, part surrogate parent, part fashion victim.







Dear DUOX4Larkin Directors and Managers:

I hereby reluctantly submit my resignation from my position as Lead Surrogate at DUOX4Larkin, effective January 28, 2012. As a result, all forms of identification – badges, monogrammed uniforms, and office stationery – will be returned within the next two weeks. Hopefully, the baby-proofing task that I have already performed will be considered sufficient and the new protagonist that will be birthed, whom you have named BOY'D, is exactly what you desire. In my preparatory analysis, I have validated the precedents for this protagonist: Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Chaucer's *Wife of Bath*, Gaëtan Dugas as Patient Zero, James Bond, and the ensemble cast of Oliver Stone's *Any Given Sunday*.

My time at DUOX4Larkin was a wonderful challenge. At the risk of sounding presumptuous, I would like to recommend Casper Sondar as my successor to finish the final three months of my, already brief, nine month intervention. I realize the work environment looks as though I've left it in disarray, but I have devised a deliberate system so that everything can continue seamlessly in my absence. It relies on three separate spaces: the incubation space, the Hub, and a site to customize your strife. Actually, I may be back for a day following my departure to see how everything has taken effect. Please let me know if I might be of further assistance.

As a parting gesture, I've left everyone a see-through vial with a terrycloth landing pad, a sanitizing pen, an uncommitted ID badge, and a change of clothes – well, an iron-on :)

Thank you, and the best of luck.

Debra A.K.A.  
Lead Surrogate

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## (SEEKING) a probe, a prodding for a host... – m4w (Downtown)

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PLEASE be capable of time travel, mm4w,  
You must have an artificial live action child in your real life DATA storing machine.  
Then do something CARNAL (OUTPUT). SET A STAGE: Baby proof  
NEXt leave an index. Leave your child not before naming him.  
And then suggest to us your name is DEBRA.

THIS WOMAN FROM A DISTANCE  
DRAWN IN BY A DRINK, but please ABSTAIN.

We need you. LOVE loyalty. Employalty. (FOUND)

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LOST it along that journey... send back trinkets along your trail-  
Find a way to CUSTOMIZE your STRIFE.  
And THEY all loved you in the "FISH BOWL"  
the movie we watched last week,  
mm4m, be the MEDIUM access their world.  
NO SCRUBS, SANS SCRUBS, ONLY SCRUBS.  
YOU are part of the Force (ENERGY)  
THEN, POST-PRODUCTION... RETIREMENT

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BRAINSTORM

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Stanzas in Bibliography

Duox 2012-01-5 5:37PM

Tan Lin

Research by R. Birkett, A. Lien

Tan Lin is the author, most recently, of *Heath Course Pak, Bib. Rev. Ed, Insomnia and the Aunt.*, and *7 Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary 2004 The Joy of Cooking*. He is the recipient of a 2012 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grant, a Getty Scholar's Grant, as well as a Warhol Foundation/Creative Capital Arts Writing Grant to complete a book on the writings of Andy Warhol. He is working on a sampled novel, *Our Feelings Were Made By Hand*. He is an Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing at New Jersey City University.



# The “I Designed It Myself” Effect in Mass Customization

Nikolaus Franke Institute for Entrepreneurship and

Innovation, Vienna User Innovation Research Initiative, WU Vienna University of Economics

and Business, A-1090 Vienna, Austria, [nikolaus.franke@wu.ac.at](mailto:nikolaus.franke@wu.ac.at) Martin Schreier

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Management, Bocconi University, I-20136 Milan, Italy, [martin.schreier@unibocconi.it](mailto:martin.schreier@unibocconi.it) Ulrike

Kaiser Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Vienna User Innovation Research

Initiative, WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, A-1090 Vienna, Austria,

[ulrike.kaiser@wu.ac.at](mailto:ulrike.kaiser@wu.ac.at) MANAGEMENT SCIENCE Vol. 56, No. 1,

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Contributors	Arthur Kroker, Michael A. Weinstein
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LITA FURBY Eugene Research Institute, 474 Stillamette, Suite 310, Eugene, OR 97401 **A**  
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# Plank Girl

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<http://olebjerg.dk/Tekster/TCS2006uddrag.pdf>



**The Larkin Soaps are  
made for use, not for  
Dealers' Profits . . .**

**T**HERE is a prejudice that goods with which premiums are given, and the premiums, too, are inferior in quality. The unprejudiced judges of the Omaha Exposition gave the Gold Medal and Diploma to the Larkin Soaps. Does not the Larkin Factory-to-Family Idea explain how we easily can afford to give superior soaps and premiums to our patrons? Don't you think it safe to try goods when the maker tells you: "We do not ask you to send money in advance. Give our goods a thorough trial for thirty days, and then return them or pay for them, as you prefer?" Don't you think it reasonable to expect from us as good goods and as good treatment as all our customers in your vicinity will assure you they have received?

**Sweet Home Family Soap**

Is an absolutely pure laundry soap, sweet and wholesome, made from refined tallow and vegetable oils. It is scientifically complete, lathers very freely, and does thoroughly and easily all work for which good soap is designed. It is a labor-saver,

and is agreeable to the most sensitive skin. Won the Gold Medal and Diploma, on these claims, at the Omaha Exposition. Our customers everywhere appreciate its great superiority and economy over other soaps "made to sell," which, being freely adulterated with "make-weights"—silex, powdered rock, etc., go all to pieces in use. The thrifty housewife knows the great advantage in buying soap by the box, to improve with age.

**Maid o' the Mist Soap**

Is a wholesome floating bath soap of virginal purity and whiteness, and of a convenient size. The retail price, 5c. per cake, like the 5c. price of Honor Bright Soap, marks the difference between our prices, based upon cost of production, and the high prices asked for soap in which the cost of the expensive methods of advertising employed equals the cost of making, and doubles the price to the consumer.

**Our Superfine Toilet Soaps.**

The purest soap scientifically saponified and medicated, absolutely neutral and bland, producing a lather emollient, profuse, creamy.

Some people think imported toilet soaps must be the best, but ours are the peer in purity and antiseptic and dermatological qualities of any soaps, at any price, from any source whatsoever. Our Modjeska Complexion Soap is not excelled by any made. Its subtile perfume is derived by consummate skill from the rich spices of Arabia combined with the delicious and costly odors of rose, violet, geranium, jasmine and orange blossom, gathered from the cultivated fields of France, Italy and Algeria.

Our soaps contain no free alkali and all excess of moisture is perfectly abstracted by the French Milling Process, as exhibited by us at the Pan-American Exposition, which also insures full fragrance until they wear to a wafer. They have nothing in common with the alleged toilet soaps sold to-day—soaps which are imperfectly saponified, cheaply and carelessly made from inferior materials by incapable men, who allow them to contain hurtful free alkali, and perfume them with various cheap artificial, coal tar “perfumes.”

Our Toilet Articles are the product of

laboratories in which no care or expense is ever spared to create the best that human skill and knowledge can devise.

In decided contrast to the wise economy of the Larkin methods in the conduct of our business departments, is the almost lavish expenditure in our toilet-goods department. Nowhere else do we more liberally observe the proverb, “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.”

### White Woolen Soap

Is a perfectly pure, white, potash and borax soap. It is absolutely perfect for washing flannels without shrinking, and for laces, infants' clothing and all fine things.

### Honor Bright Soap

“To Brighten and Clean.”

Makes the cleaning of all metallic and mineral surfaces a pleasant task. To clean crockery, cutlery, cooking utensils and marble, oil-cloths and woodwork, and for removing oil, gum, grease or rust from any place and for the lessening of labor.

All Good Soaps . .  
Improve With Age.  
Thirty Days' Free Trial.



Any Girl or Boy Can  
Earn a Larkin Pre-  
mium. . . . .

**Boraxine.**  
"A Laundry  
Luxury."

We have manufactured soaps in Buffalo, N. Y., for 26 years, during which our floor area has increased from 2,600 square feet to 16 acres. We now operate the largest and best-equipped soap factory in this country; capacity, a hundred million pounds—fifty thousand tons—of Soap a year.

By our facilities for the scientific manufacture of soaps in immense quantities at low cost and for distributing them economically direct to the family, and because we use to such advantage the saving made by your co-operation with us, *you receive twice as much as your money would pay for* in the ordinary way. The Larkin Idea helps you, without expense to us.

For cleaning woodwork, washing dishes and dairy utensils, removing grease spots or stains from carpets, etc., or for general housecleaning, it has no equal. Used in soaking clothes, it saves half the labor of washing; it is a blessing to every housekeeper who uses it. It is pleasant for the hands and cannot possibly injure the finest fabric.

Many wise parents think it well to encourage a business-like disposition in manly boys and industrious girls. We have a plan that enables active young folks to earn by their own efforts one or several of our premiums. They visit their friends and neighbors, and obtain orders for an assortment of our Soaps and Toilet Requisites to the retail value of \$10.00. They then have their order sent to us signed by the head of the family, or send \$10.00 with their order, for a box packed with just the quantity of each brand of soap, etc., they have sold, which we ship with the premium selected. On arrival of goods they deliver them as ordered, and the \$10.00 proceeds pays our bill. "Young America" has "the middlemen's profits" in the form of a beautiful, useful desk or other premium, that will last a lifetime, and we have thus won permanent customers, purchasers-to-be of our Combination Boxes. In a day or two, anyone can earn a valuable premium FREE. Try it!

The widespread success of this plan is the strongest proof that our Soaps alone are worth the price we charge for Soaps and premium.



# Mens Sana in Corpore Sano (or Keep Taking the Tablets) Andrew Goffey

A recent report, in a broadsheet newspaper, that a favourite holiday destination in Thailand promises eager tourists a week of colonic irrigation, offers a potent image for the fate of the ethics of self-governance under global multinational capitalism. The *caput mortuum* of decades spent as an avid consumer in the West is sluiced into a Southeast Asian bucket, leaving you and your intestines free to jet back West to accumulate another year of crap. Beneficiaries of this process report – after a feeling of faintness – an enormous sense of well being. This is hardly surprising, given that the fat which can clog the intestine from decades of consumption sometimes gets so thick that the weight of one's bowels has been known to shoot up to around 40lbs.

I mention this vignette not to shock or to condemn – although there is something a little perverse about the geopolitics of it all – but to make a point about the almost neurotic medicalisation to which current techniques for the care of the self testify. It is not so much the curiously solid links between the anally retentive dynamics of capital accumulation and the bourgeois concern with the clean and proper which needs emphasis. A technique of the self which involves washing out your insides – in much the same way that you might wash a car on a Sunday morning (if you had one) or unblock a sink, while not an entirely surprising development, provides us with a strangely empty concept of the body. Other examples suggest that this is not an isolated phenomenon: the pill popping antics of vitamin munchers anxious to boost 'their' immune system; Michael Jackson, or Montgomery Burns from *The Simpsons*, both of them with Howard Hughes-type phobias about germs; the National Socialist regime in 1930s–40s Germany and its obsession with the health of its people all point towards the pervasive medicalisation of identity. The British media and political elite's recent willingness to

focus public energies on the state of the National Health Service only confirms the issue. In fact, technologies of government here might suggest that being ascribed a medically informed identity (being 'normal' is a reputedly positive clinical condition), and being constantly enjoined to manage your own health, are functional weapons in capitalist crisis management.

I would not of course claim to be the first to have noticed this phenomenon, or wish to be interpreted as saying that the odd bit of internal hygiene or reform of the NHS is necessarily a bad thing. For starters, Michel Foucault's identification of bio-power as the primary form in which power exercises itself in contemporary society has already led a generation of researchers in the natural sciences down the path which I have been trying to signpost here. And, that certain social actions can have unintended consequences or occur within a framework unknown to the actors themselves will surprise few social scientists – this is the main lesson of Max Weber's work on the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. More pointedly, the spread of AIDS and the consequent highlighting of a supposed norm of health, of which it would be an apparently monstrous contravention, shows quite clearly what an 'epidemic of signification' we have been subjected to, which almost certainly had some role to play in the current intensification of medical policing.

Not so much has been said, though, about the sciences that play such a key role in defining the substrate of the clean and healthy body and determine the operations that can be performed on it. Foucault himself – his early work *The Birth of The Clinic: The Order of Things* and his identification of 'bios' as a focal point for the exercise of power notwithstanding – had little to say about the life sciences and preferred to confine his attention to the social sciences.

However, in an exemplary work, the Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, has explored some of the ramifications of the development of modern biopower, and given us food for thought when it comes to assessing the state of play in the life sciences (Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*). Agamben's argument is that "We are not only animals in whose

politics our life as living beings is at stake, according to Foucault's expression, but also, inversely, citizens in whose natural body our very political being is at stake." It is, he further contends, impossible to undo the strict interlacing of the naked biological life (or *zoe*) and the cultural form of life (or *bios*), for once and for all. Instead, he says, we would do better to "make of the biopolitical body, bare life itself, the place where a form of life which is entirely transposed into bare life, is constituted, where a bios which is nothing but its zoe is instituted." Agamben believes that, in so doing, a new field of research will open up, one beyond the limitations to be found at work in the disciplines which have hitherto attempted to think something like a bare life. It is an open question as to how this new field of research will eventually look. However, the convergence of the biological and the political in modern immunology might give us some suggestions about an answer.

The link between the self and the political is not an affair of simple "discursive articulation", as some people would profess to believe, any more than it is a particularly new one. Whilst the self is certainly something defined in language, it is also something produced physiologically. In the 19th century, Nietzsche, for one, was not only disinclined to think of the self as peaceful coexistence – witness the prevalence of the themes of war and combat in his writings. He was also very much inclined to emphasise the physiological dimensions of European culture's morbid disorders. Freud, as is well known, took a keen interest in the defensive approach of the ego to forces beyond its control. In his 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Freud's approach is based on the quantification of energy flows, and not the interminable hermeneutic question of "what it all means". Immunology has a background curiously congruous to Nietzsche's physiological accounts of strength and weakness. Although the discovery by Edward Jenner in 1798 of the smallpox vaccine had been suggestive of the mechanics of the immune system, it was not until the 19th century, with the growth of public health reforms, that modern immunology really came into being. The astonishing efficacy of the practice of vaccination was strong evidence for

the existence of a remarkable “system” for protecting organisms from infection. The immune system seemed somehow to “know” what was not good for the organism and thence to destroy it. Quickly, a paradigm for research developed, around the work of Paul Ehrlich, which adopted a “humoral” (read: chemical) explanation for how the system functioned. Later, in the 20th century, research drawing on the findings of biologists into genetics, conferred on immunology the privilege of being the “science of self-nonself distinction.”

The remarkable successes of immunology should not obscure what is effectively its less palatable inscription within the modern apparatus of biopower. This makes it a *prima facie* candidate for critical analysis. It is not simply because of its background in the very public health reforms of the late 19th century, which Foucault has flagged as evidence of the paradigmatic shift in the exercise of power. Nor is it the fact that its innocently scientific status – bolstered by its phenomenal success in treating the most publicly worrying of illnesses – has contributed to a sense of its benevolent neutrality as science (and hence also, in the Foucauldian optic, to its efficacy for power). We cannot ignore the fact that, like many other subfields of the life sciences, immunology benefited enormously from advances in genetics in the late 1950s (although it wasn’t until the 1980s that some of the fundamental genetic mechanisms of immunological functioning were experimentally confirmed). An innocent enough fact perhaps, but of great importance for the economy of the science’s explanations, explanations which demonstrate a remarkable congruence with “scientific” developments elsewhere.

According to Giorgio Agamben, one of the noteworthy facts about National Socialism is that its politics developed through a decisive mobilisation of science in a synthesis of biology and economy. One Otto von Verschuer, Professor of Genetics and Anthropology at Frankfurt University, argued, in a semi-official publication called *State and Health*, that doctors should see “in the state of health of the population, the condition for economic profit” and that the “oscillations of biological substance and those

of material equilibrium generally go hand in hand.” Arguing against the view that the biopolitics of the Third Reich should be seen uniquely under the epithet of “racism”, Agamben suggests that the extermination of the Jews must be seen in a perspective whereby the “protection of health and [the] struggle against the enemy have become absolutely indiscernible.”

If Agamben is correct, it is somewhat disquieting to find a parallel convergence between immunology, politics and metaphysics. In its routine arguments about the fundamental function of the immune system, immunology uses a language which is loaded with political and metaphysical connotations. The immune system is primarily a system of defence against attack, immunology seeks to explain how it is that the self can differentiate between friend and enemy, or between molecular compounds which are non-lethal and those foreign pathogens which are lethal. Of course, no one is saying that this isn't what the immune system does. But it is curious to see how the immune system is immediately inscribed within the political and the metaphysical. Since there is no intrinsic property to mark out biochemical elements as belonging to this organism rather than another, to talk of a self at a chemical level is clearly a wishful metaphysical fiction. And to make sense of what is going on at the molecular level, by using the language of the political – friend and enemy, the foreign body – raises questions about what it is, exactly, that immunology is doing.

Excerpt from Andrew Goffey, 'Mens Sana in Corpore Sano (or Keep Taking the Tablets),' *Mute Magazine*, Volume 1 #24, Summer 2002; republished in *Proud to be Flesh: A Mute Anthology of Cultural Politics after the Net*, ed. Josephine Berry Slater et al, Mute Publishing, London, 2009, pp. 143-146



# Junkspace

## Rem Koolhaas

Junkspace does not pretend to create perfection, only interest. Its geometries are unimaginable, only makeable. Although strictly nonarchitectural, it tends to the vaulted, to the Dome. Some sections seem to be devoted to utter inertness, others in perpetual rhetorical turmoil: the deadest resides next to the most hysterical. Themes cast a pall of arrested development over interiors as big as the Pantheon, spawning still-births in every corner. The aesthetic is Byzantine, gorgeous, and dark, splintered into thousands of shards, all visible at the same time: a quasi-panoptical universe in which all contents rearrange themselves in split seconds around the dizzy eye of the beholder. Murals used to show idols; Junkspace's modules are dimensioned to carry brands; myths can be shared, brands husband aura at the mercy of focus groups. Brands in Junkspace perform the same role as black holes in the universe: they are essences through which meaning disappears ... The shiniest surfaces in the history of mankind reflect humanity at its most casual. The more we inhabit the palatial, the more we seem to dress down. A stringent dress code – last spasm of etiquette? – governs access to Junkspace: shorts, sneakers, sandals, shell suit, fleece, jeans, parka, backpack. As if the People suddenly accessed the private quarters of a dictator, Junkspace is best enjoyed in a state of postrevolutionary gawking. Polarities have merged – there is nothing left between desolation and frenzy. Neon signifies both the old and the new; interiors refer to the Stone and Space Age at the same time. Like the deactivated virus in an inoculation, Modern architecture remains essential, but only in its most sterile manifestation, High Tech (it seemed so dead only a decade ago!). It exposes what previous generations kept under wraps: structures emerge like springs from a mattress; exit stairs dangle in a didactic trapeze; probes thrust into space to deliver laboriously what is in fact omnipresent, free air; acres of glass hang from spidery cables, tautly stretched skins enclose flaccid nonevents. Transparency only

reveals everything in which you cannot partake. At the stroke of midnight it all may revert to Taiwanese Gothic; in three years it may segue into Nigerian Sixties, Norwegian Chalet, or default Christian. Earthlings now live in a kindergarten grotesque ... Junkspace thrives on design, but design dies in Junkspace. There is no form, only proliferation. Regurgitation is the new creativity; instead of creation, we honor, cherish, and embrace manipulation ... Superstrings of graphics, transplanted emblems of franchise and sparkling infrastructures of light, LEDs, and video describe an authorless world beyond anyone's claim, always unique, utterly unpredictable, yet intensely familiar. Junkspace is hot (or suddenly arctic); fluorescent walls, folded like melting stained glass, generate additional heat to raise the temperature of Junkspace to levels at which you could cultivate orchids. Pretending histories left and right, its contents are dynamic yet stagnant, recycled or multiplied as in cloning: forms search for function like hermit crabs looking for a vacant shell...

[...]

Change has been divorced from the idea of improvement. There is no progress; like a crab on LSD, culture staggers endlessly sideways ... The average contemporary lunch box is a microcosm of Junkspace: a fervent semantics of health-slabs of eggplant, topped by thick layers of goat cheese – canceled by a colossal cookie at the bottom. Junkspace is draining and is drained in return. Everywhere in Junkspace there are seating arrangements, ranges of modular chairs, even couches, as if the experience Junkspace offers its consumers is significantly more exhausting than any previous spatial sensation; in its most abandoned stretches, you find buffets: utilitarian tables draped in white or black sheets, perfunctory assemblies of caffeine and calories-cottage cheese, muffins, unripe grapes – notional representations of plenty, without horn and without plenty. Each Junkspace is connected, sooner or later, to bodily functions: wedged between stainless-steel partitions sit rows of groaning Romans, denim togas bunched around their

huge sneakers ... Because it is so intensely consumed, Junkspace is fanatically maintained, the night shift undoing the damage of the day shift in an endless Sisyphean replay. As you recover from Junkspace, Junkspace recovers from you: between 2 and 5 A.M., yet another population, this one heartlessly casual and appreciably darker, is mopping, hovering, sweeping, toweling, resupplying ... Junkspace does not inspire loyalty in its cleaners ... Dedicated to instant gratification, Junkspace accommodates seeds of future perfection; a language of apology is woven through its texture of canned euphoria; “pardon our appearance” signs or miniature yellow “sorry” billboards mark ongoing patches of wetness, announce momentary discomfort in return for imminent shine, the allure of improvement. Somewhere, workers sink on their knees to repair faded sections, as if in a prayer, or half-disappear in ceiling voids to negotiate elusive malfunctions, as if in confession. All surfaces are archaeological, superpositions of different “periods” (what do you call the moment a particular type of wall-to-wall carpet was current?) – as you note when they’re torn. Traditionally, typology implies demarcation, the definition of a singular model that excludes other arrangements. Junkspace represents a reverse typology of cumulative, approximative identity, less about kind than about quantity. But formlessness is still form, the formless also a typology...

Excerpt from Rem Koolhaas, ‘Junkspace’, *October*, Vol.100, Spring 2002, MIT Press, 2002, pp.175-190

# Hidden Labor and the Delight of Otherness: Design and Post-Capitalist Politics

## Tom Holert

### Thinking Like a Craftsman

Dedicated to the ideas of libertarian communism, [libcom.org](http://libcom.org) is a website that pursues the “political expression of the ever-present strands of co-operation and solidarity.” In March 2009 a contributor posting under the alias “Kampling” ventures the interesting thought that “the artisan” may qualify as “a rather attractive concept for a post-capitalist subject – it certainly beats the bourgeois star artist or proletarianized designer as a way of organizing creative activity.” However, “Kampling” continues, the concept of the artisan is at the same time

doomed as an attempt to overcome capitalism, as it can be so easily drawn back into capitalist processes of accumulation and dispossession. This is precisely the problem with a lot of autonomist (and anarchist) strategies for resistance or “exodus”—including some forms of anarcho-syndicalism.<sup>1</sup>

This skepticism is only too familiar by now – any candidate put forward for the new revolutionary subject will be quickly rendered inappropriate, deficient, co-optable. The reasons for such pre-emptive skepticism, popular even among the most hard-line autonomists, anarchists, or anarcho-syndicalists, are manifold. However, a central argument for this co-optation is linked to the awe-inspiring malleability and adaptability of capitalism as such, accompanied by post-political renderings of “democracy,”

1 “Kampling,” comment on “Autonom(ous)(ist) Marxism – Half baked anarcho-syndicalism?,” *libcom.org*, comment posted June 5, 2009

helpful in reducing politics “to the negotiation of private interests,” as Slavoj Žižek puts it in his discussion of what he considers to be a symptomatic proximity between contemporary biopolitical capitalism and the post-operaist productivity of the multitude: “But what if, in a parallax shift, we perceive *the capitalist network itself as the true excess over the flow of the productive multitude?*”<sup>2</sup>

The structure of the argument has been so thoroughly rehearsed in past decades that it has assumed a somewhat mythical truth. Capitalism is the shape-shifting creature-beast always already ahead and above – regardless of which revolutionary force tries to overthrow or subvert it – as it continually vampirizes any signs of resistance. It may be necessary to deploy the perceptual model of the parallax, as Žižek does, in order to maintain the structurally paranoid – if absolutely legitimate – belief in capitalism’s shrewdness, which sometimes seems to resemble the clever hedgehog family in the Grimms’ fairytale “The Hare and the Hedgehog.” Its remarkable ability to re-invent itself and stay alive even as the current full-fledged crisis in interlinked systems of state and corporate capitalism turn capitalism-as-such into a transcendent miracle and/or metaphysical force with increasingly violent repercussions on the ground, with its most recent turn being the recruitment of state and legal powers. Referring to Carlo Vercellone’s 2006 book *Capitalismo cognitivo*, Žižek points to how profit becomes rent in postindustrial capitalism.<sup>3</sup> The more capitalism behaves in “de-regulatory, ‘anti-statal,’ nomadic, deterritorializing” fashions, the more it “relies on increasingly authoritarian interventions of the state and its legal and other apparatuses.”<sup>4</sup> While the “general intellect” in reality doesn’t appear to be that “general” or shared – with the products of the innumerable and increasingly dispersed multitudes becoming copyrighted, commoditized, and legally encapsulated as part of

2 Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (Verso: London and New York, 2009), p.136, p.141

3 Carlo Vercellone, *Capitalismo cognitivo: conoscenza e finanza nell’epoca postfordista* (Manifestolibri: Rome, 2006)

4 Žižek, *First as Tragedy*, p.145

the accumulation of wealth by way of “rent” – the unity of the proletariat has split into three parts, following Žižek’s Hegelian idea of the future: white-collar “intellectual laborers,” blue-collar “old manual working class,” and the “outcasts (the unemployed, those living in slums and other interstices of public space).”<sup>5</sup> Any possibility of solidarity amongst these factions appears to have been foreclosed, and in many respects the separation seems absolute. The liberal-multicultural self-image of the cognitive workforce doesn’t rhyme particularly well with the populist, nationalist position of the “old” working class, and both are further ostracized by the unruliness, illegality, and poverty of the outcasts who alienate white collar workers and blue collar workers alike, as they seem to indicate through their fate how imperiled their remaining privileges of citizenship may be.

But Žižek’s Hegelian triad of postindustrial proletarian factions is debatable. The identities (intellectual laborers, working class, outcasts) are much too unstable, much too fluid and transient for a theorization of the (im)possibilities of overcoming capitalism. And it remains doubtful whether their insertion into the discourse provides more than a paralysis characterized by deadlock, tribal oppositions, and endless desolidarity.

In fact, these and other identities shift according to (but also against) the self-transformation of capitalist institutions enabled by various neutralizations and recuperations. And these self-transformations entail wars of position, to use Gramsci’s term. As Chantal Mouffe put it a few years ago in pre-9/11, pessimism-of-the-intellect/optimism-of-the-will style: “although it might become worse, it might also become better.”<sup>6</sup> Even Žižek—who has always endorsed a strong idea of capitalism, evincing a certain obsession with the task of proving capitalism’s fascinating, horrifying, and stupefying superiority as one that could only be seriously challenged by a return to the Leninist act – is himself looking for other actors

5 Ibid., p.147

6 Chantal Mouffe, “Every Form of Art Has a Political Dimension,” interview by Rosalyn Deutsche, Branden W. Joseph, and Thomas Keenan, *Grey Room*, no. 02, (Winter 2001), p.118

and different processes now. Currently, his hope lies with the hopeless, the people fooled and victimized by “the whole drift of history” – in other words, the very “outcasts” from the proletarian triad mentioned above, those who are forced into improvisation, informality, clandestinity, as this is supposedly all they are left with in a “desperate situation.”<sup>7</sup>

To rely on the desperation of others for one’s own idea of a successful insurrection is of course deeply romantic and utopian. Žižek may be right in asserting that waiting for the Revolution to be undertaken by others has been the fundamental error of too many leftists. However, would he count himself or anyone in his vicinity to be “desperate” enough to act, especially in a spirit of voluntarism and experimentation that would effectively dissolve the constraints of “freedom” as it is granted by neoliberalism?

The “artisan” evoked by “Kambing,” though immediately disregarded as allegedly “doomed” to fail in the face of capitalism like so many others, may be an interesting figure to reconsider here – less out of interest in revolutionary politics than in envisioning alternate ways of organizing “creative activity” to replace and/or evade capitalist modes of production. As Raqs Media Collective have pointed out in their essay “Stubborn Structures and Insistent Seepage in a Networked World,” the figure of the artisan arrived historically before the worker and the artist, before “the drone and the genius,” while it enabled the “transfiguration of people into skills, of lives into working lives, into variable capital.”<sup>8</sup> “The artisan,” Raqs claim, “is the vehicle that carried us all into the contemporary world.” However, after the artisan’s role in “making and trading things and knowledge” had been replaced by those of the worker and the artist, by the ubiquity of the commodity and the rarity of the art object, the artisan now seems to be returning, but in different guises – the migrant imbued with all kinds of tactical knowledges, the electronic pirate, or the neo-luddite, many of whom are immaterial laborers, pursuing processes of “imagining,

7 Žižek, *First as Tragedy*, p.155

8 Raqs Media Collective, “Stubborn Structures and Insistent Seepage in a Networked World,” in *Seepage* (Sternberg Press: New York/Berlin, 2010)



understanding, and invoking a world, mimesis, projection and verisimilitude as well as the skillful deployment of a combination of reality and representation.”

Interestingly (and similarly), “Kampling” distinguishes the “artisan” from the “bourgeois star artist” and the “proletarianized designer.” However, one may also imagine these distinct figures aligning –with each other and with others beyond themselves. These alignments or fusions would depend on an ability and a willingness to recognize and accept difference and diversity not only in one’s own social surroundings, but also within oneself as a subject. To acknowledge the fact that one may simultaneously inhabit more than one identity leads almost inevitably to co-operation with others that would go beyond the model of the homogeneous community.

But, in *Capital*, Marx is highly skeptical of “co-operation” as a way out of capitalism: “Co-operation ever constitutes the fundamental form of the capitalist mode of production.” Its power is

developed gratuitously whenever the workmen are placed under given conditions and it is capital that places them under such conditions. Because this power costs capital nothing, and because, on the other hand, the labourer himself does not develop it before his labour belongs to capital, it appears as a power with which capital is endowed by Nature—a productive power that is immanent in capital.<sup>9</sup>

The very power of co-operation that Marx located at the center of the capitalist project has become the keystone of post-operaist theories of post-Fordism. They have observed that the value-increasing function of co-operation has become increasingly tangible in a system based on an essential superfluity of labor and the permanence of unemployment, a system that simultaneously captures and exploits the very “power” of non-labor-based communality and communication. “Since social cooperation

9 Karl Marx, *Capital: The Process of Capitalist Production*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, and ed. by Frederick Engels. Volume 1 of *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Charles H. Kerr & Company: London, 1921), pp.365-6

precedes and exceeds the work process, post-Fordist labor is always, also, *hidden labor*,” as Paolo Virno wrote in *A Grammar of the Multitude*.<sup>10</sup> Defining hidden labor as “non-remunerated life” in the very “production time” of post-Fordism that exceeds “labor time,” Virno also provides an opportunity to discuss un-accounted for, unpaid labor –exploitable and valorized by capital as it is – as a realm of potential freedom and disobedience. Indeed, the politics of cooperation and communication (which include affective labor) operate at the heart of the post-operaist project, and the mingled and sometimes dirty practices of such cooperation between different factions of contemporary laborers are illustrated by one of the many examples of the hidden labor of artisanry in Richard Sennett’s book *The Craftsman*. Reflecting on the debilitating split between head and hand that occurred when architects and designers began to use computer-aided design (CAD) programs, Sennett postulates the need “to think like craftsmen in making good use of technology,” and to consider the “sharp social edge” of such thinking. Thinking like craftsmen could entail a certain kind of work that one executes after the designers have left the building. Particularly interested in the parking garages of Atlanta’s Peachtree Center, Sennett noticed a specific, inconspicuous kind of post-factum cooperation between designers and artisans/craftsmen:

A standardized bumper had been installed at the end of each car stall. It looked sleek, but the lower edge of each bumper was sharp metal, liable to scratch cars or calves. Some bumpers, though, had been turned back, on site, for safety. The irregularity of the turning showed that the job had been done manually, the steel smoothed and rounded wherever it might be unsafe to touch; the craftsman had thought for the architect.<sup>11</sup>

10 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson (Semiotext(e): New York, 2004), p.103

11 Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2008), p.44

The labor of modifying and repairing the work of others is certainly not groundbreaking in terms of anti-capitalist struggle per se. However, the physical skills, the attitude of care and circumspection, the inscription of a hand that performs “responsible” gestures, and so forth, all engender a shared authorship –in this case a cooperation between the absent architect’s and/or construction company’s work and the subsequent, careful labor of detecting and correcting the building’s design problems. This cooperation is neither contractually negotiated nor socially expected, but instead results from a specific situation in which a problem called for a solution. It is inseparable from local conditions and constraints, and should not be taken as a model for action. Yet, on other hand, it is intriguing, as it displays relationalities within material-social practices that usually remain unnoticed, and whose resourcefulness is thus overlooked.

In some respects Sennett’s concept of “thinking like craftsmen” resembles a definition of “design” that Bruno Latour introduced the same year *The Craftsman* was published. Speaking at a conference held by the Design History Society in Cornwall, Latour differentiated “design” from the concepts of building or constructing. The process of designing, according to Latour, is marked by a certain semantic modesty – it is always a retroactive, never foundational, action, always re-design, and hence “post-Promethean.” Furthermore, the concept of design emphasizes the dimension of (manual, technical) abilities, of “skills,” which suggests a more cautious and precautionary (not directly tied to making and producing) engagement with problems on an increasingly larger scale (as with climate change). Then, too, design as a practice that engenders meaning and calls for interpretation thus tends to transform objects into things – irreducible to their status as facts or matter, being instead inhabited by causes, issues, and, more generally, semiotic skills. And finally, following Latour, design is inconceivable without an ethical dimension, without the distinction between good design and bad design – which also always renders design negotiable

and controvertible.<sup>12</sup> Here, at this site of dispute and negotiation, especially on an occasion in which the activity of design is “the whole fabric of our earthly existence,” Latour finds “a completely new political territory” opening up.<sup>13</sup>

Excerpt from Tom Holert, ‘Hidden Labor and the Delight of Otherness’, *e-flux journal*, #17, June 2010

<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/hidden-labor-and-the-delight-of-otherness-design-and-post-capitalist-politics/>

12 See Bruno Latour, “A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Toward a Philosophy of Design (with Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk),” keynote lecture at the “Network of Design” meeting held by the Design History Society in Falmouth, Cornwall, September 3, 2008. This paragraph is partly cited from Tom Holert, “Design and Nervousness,” trans. Gerrit Jackson, *Texte zur Kunst* 72 (December 2008), p.108f

13 Ibid.

# Alt.Bondage,.Alt.Se;lr..Alt.Fetishes: On Growing a Cyber-Body

## Arthur Kroker and Michael A. Weinstein

Simply switch on your Mac/Des screen, and the ideology of virtualized capitalism, is brilliantly displayed. Everything is there. Bodily flesh is reduced to a digital servomechanism. The centering-point of organic perspective is displaced outside normal ocular vision to the nowhere space of virtual optics in the Net. Individual subjectivity crashes as it swiftly merges with an info-economy of data bytes. Here, the mind is filtered by organs without a body, and the body is suspended in the illusion that digital reality maximizes the zone of freedom (misplaced [virtual] facticity), *whereas actually we are (finally) growing a cyber-body*. Those flickering screens of personal computer “work stations,” therefore, as fantastic sites of embedded flesh for virtual capitalism. The personal computer functions as performance art for the body electronic, a densely encrypted ideogram as virtualized flesh zooms across digitalized space. Switch on the power, and the electronic grid is immediately activated (RUA-CYBERSPACE); switch off the energy and the force-field of the cyclotron instantly falls into high voltage inertial ruins. Crash and inertia, (global) immediacy and (territorialized) localness, hyperspace and bounded time: this is the mirrored world of the endlessly recursive virtual flesh.

Indeed, what if “Windows” were not a computer application, but a form of elevated (telematic) consciousness? In this case, we could speak of the sequencing of the body electronic as a switching-station: a multi-platform site for downloading and uplinking data. Hard-wired to the speed-backbone of the universal BBS and addicted to a diet of fibre-optics, the “Windowed” body would become that switch it always thought it was only using: a file-transfer function. Bodies with plugged-in, high-performance editing studios for cutting, pasting, and copying the mutating scenes of the imaging system. “Windowing” memories for filing the event-

scenes of post-history in the matrix of quick-access folder flesh. Utility-functions for re-energizing the recline of the body with organs with new android menus: *Adobe Illustrator* speech, *Pagemaker* writing, *Micro-Mind Director* for re-editing visual reality, and *Real-Time Digital Darkroom* for a substitute sleep-function. *Double click... delete...It's now safe to switch off your machine*: the slip-stream rhetoric of the android processor.

Forget philosophy: all the super-charged debates among nominalism, sensationalism, analytical positivism, and critical theory have been abruptly displaced by the emergence of MS-DOS as the ruling epistemology of virtual reality. *Virtual positivism* for the era of windowed culture: a recursive space of ambivalent signs that slips away into an infinity of mirrored, fractalized elements. Not only a gateway culture, but a Windowed process economy as the terminus ad quem of virtualized capital, occupying no fixed geographical space, but colonizing the imaginary landscape of digital dreams. A screenal economy put into the command-function by an elite of sysops manipulating the language of internal disk drives, but containing nonetheless an indeterminate array of file menus: a perfect act of homeostatic exchange between code-functions and emergent value-principles. Certainly not a closed cybernetic universe of input-output functions as envisioned in positivist sociology, but an imploding universe at the violent edge of an impossible refraction between opposing tendencies towards crash and systematicity.

Crash is the open secret of virtualized economy, and on behalf of which capitalism mutates into the will to technology and the latter into the will to virtuality. Capitalism in its windowed phase *demand*s the crash experience: scenes of primitive energy where the fibre optic backbone of the system as a whole is strengthened by the sudden reversals at the vanishing-centre of crash. Crash capitalism is the desired-object haunting the imagination of virtualized flesh. In that impossible reversal between primitive direct action and windowed data exchanges, between abuse value and virtualized exchange, is to be found the driving momentum of virtual economy as disappearance. When we can speak of money as suddenly hyper-driven and flipped into virtual, twenty-four hour data exchanges, of

the slip-streaming of consciousness, of feeling as software to the hardware of the electronic brain, and of spooled politics, then we can also finally know virtual economy as a fatal, delirious crash-event. The organic body shatters into mirrored fractals, vision explodes into a delirium of virtual optics, speech dissolves into the ecstasy of the rhetoric machine, and the sex organs happily opt for the alt. bondage file of future sex.

In the windowed world, we pass time by slipping into our electronic bodies, deleting for a while the body with (terminal) organs, and becoming *alt. subjectivity* in the ether-net of organs without a body. The drag of planetary time eases, and we flip into the hyper-role of “lurkers” wandering through the virtual rooms of the city on the digital hill. Voyeurs of our own disappearance into a recombinant subject-position: perfectly relational and positionless, and, for this reason, fascinated all the more. All twitching fingers as we become a computer keyboard, all burning sex as we stand around the dark edges of virtual bondage dungeons, all drifting feelings as we slip from node to node on the electronic net, and all virtual intelligence as we actually dissolve into a mouse that cursors across hyperspace.

Our technological future has never been more transparent: *alt.bondage, alt.sex, alt.fetishes, alt.conspiracy, alt.TV Simpsons, alt.nano-technology, alt.politics, alt.Star Trek, alt.Bosnia, alt. jokes, alt. vacant beach...*

Excerpt from Arthur Kroker and Michael A. Weinstein, *Data Trash*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 1994, pp. 75-77





Nov 4, 2010  
Fuck Yeah Menswear



Nature vs. nurture?

It's tough to say.

When your DNA is this fucking crispy.

And as a young'n you kicked it in Pari.

Your kid probably geeks out over trivial shit.

Like butterflies.

Or clouds.

Or glitter.

My kid gets wide eyed.

When we discuss the merits of white jeans in winter.

Monochromatic palettes.

And well worn DB's in exclusive colorways.

We took him out of school 2 years ago.

So he could blog full time.

His diffusion line for Heelys hits Target next month.

Apparently it's Jil inspired.

I've only seen the sketches.

You probably heard him at SXSW.  
Moderating a panel with Lil Gevi.  
And that dude who created Mad Men's son.  
Talking about the merits of social media.  
And musing on what it means.  
To inspire a generation of designers.  
Who made names for themselves.  
Before any of these Rugrats were even born.  
They say rents live vicariously through their seed.  
I'd have to agree.  
I tweet vicariously through him.  
Because he has more followers than me.  
While you're in a Town & Country.  
Stuck in traffic.  
Taking your worthless brat to soccer practice.  
I'm speeding in a Hummer limo.  
With my kin.  
And Uncle Karl.  
Popping bottles.  
Making our way to the front row.  
This really shouldn't come as a shock.  
I mean.  
He was conceived.  
In Brunello's booth.  
At Pitti Uomo.  
My meal ticket.  
My only son.  
The truth.  
The future.  
My legacy.  
Steezus Christ.  
My only son.

Blogpost from Fuck Yeah Menswear, November 4, 2010  
<http://fuckyeahmenswear.tumblr.com/post/1479708920/nature-vs-nurture-its-tough-to-say-when-your>





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