Rethinking The Status Of The Art Object Through Distribution

Volume_1 Text

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Volume 1 of 2: Textual

Rethinking the Status of the Art Object Through Distribution
by Walter van Rijn

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Abstract

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Current discourse about internet based art practices brings renewed interest to the materiality of the art object and the exhibition event. Digital and internet artists reflecting on the institutionalisation of the internet find that the turn away from the world of the institutionalised gallery has become untenable, and now create artwork that functions in both realms: the gallery and online. My research acknowledges this dual approach and proposes that accordingly areas of interest, such as negation and the material condition of the art object within conceptual art, institutional critique, and internet art should be reconsidered.

By means of a practice-led artistic research methodology and based on the above context, the artist-researcher initiated a research process focused on how the distribution of art can enable us to rethink the traditional status of the art object. Integrating theory and practice led to an approach to art practice where distribution is integral to the doing and making of art. In my proposal, dispersal – or spreading the art object over multiple platforms, some of which lies beyond the exhibition event – is seen as an act of self-determination by the artist and a means to create objects with an ambiguous ontology or material condition. This proposal is developed and tested in several situations inside and outside the gallery, online, and as tools applied to text. From my research emerged a new practice I call a dispersal practice, and the dispersed object becomes a project that consists of multiple entities that are located on, or circulate through, different platforms. Some entities might appear in different forms at different times. My research finds that the functioning of the dispersed object within the artworld raises permanent questions about the status of the art object in terms of its materiality and status as art. My research finds also that the dispersed art object needs to be seen as both process and object. The dispersed object can be authorised by the artist to have the following characteristics: distributed, unlocated, circulating and ambiguous, a hybrid object structured through modularity. It becomes exposed and performed through a succession of events in different configurations. These are the temporary conditions of the dispersed art object. The research concludes with a project in collaboration with the John Hansard Gallery that demonstrates the dispersed object.

Keywords: art object, dispersion, dispersal practice, distribution, institutionalisation, status of the art object, conceptual art, institutional critique, digital, internet, process, materiality, hybrid, ambiguous object, digital object, symbiosis, archive, aggregation.

Contents

List of figures

Copyrights

The following figures have a different copyright notice:

Figure 1-3   Michael Asher (1977) Skulptur, hand-out.
Figure 1-4   Michael Asher (1977) Skulptur, installation photograph.

Figure 1-5   Huyghe (1999) AnnLee, original image for No Ghost Just a Shell.
Figure 1-6   Joe Scanlan (2002) Do It Yourself Dead on Arrival (AnnLee) / DIY (Annlee).
Figure 1-7   Pierre Huyghe (2001) One Million Kingdoms; Pierre Huyghe & Philippe Parreno (2003) Travelling Pod, robot.
Figure 1-8   M/M (PARIS) (2000) Wallpaper poster 1.1; Joe Scanlan (2002) DIY or How To Kill Yourself Anywhere in the World for Under $399.

Figure 1-11   Joseph Kosuth 1945, Glass (one and three), 1965. Exhibition installation photograph: A choice from the collection Visser, 2000. Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo.
Figure 1-12   Joseph Kosuth 1945, Glass (one and three), 1965. Exhibition installation photograph: Inside Installations II, 2007. Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo.

Figure 1-15 Screen shot from In Free Fall on Youtube, Steyerl 2010. © Picture This 2010
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Figure 6-3 Of Fig Untitled No In To Title I Portrait With Series Concetto Self Joy. Photograph: Jane Birkin. Permission to reproduce the above figure has been granted by Jane Birkin

Figure 6-7 UGLyD as 'Special Project'. Screen shot of the web page :"Special Projects – Walter van Rijn | Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion (2014-ongoing)." John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, http://www.hansardgallery.org.uk/exhibition-listing/special-projects/.
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I, Walter van Rijn

declare that the thesis entitled

Rethinking the Status of the Art Object Through Distribution

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
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van Rijn, Walter. "Symbiotext." http://www.symbiotext.net/.

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Acknowledgements

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.[1]

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Manuscripts don't burn (рукописи не горят)²
Мæнюсскріптс дон*т бюрн (rukopisi nie goriat)
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Escape is the oldest story of freedom, and it is among the simplest. [3]

Can works be made which are not "of art"? –[4]

(...) [W]e constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified. [5]

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1   Article 19 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948. http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a19

2   Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Penguin, 1966-67). 287.

3   Andrew Curtis Culp, "Escape" (Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2013), 1.

4   Text on one of Duchamp's notes in "à l'Infinitif" (The White Box) 1967. Marcel Duchamp, *A L'infinitif, in the infinitive. A Typotranslation by Richard Hamilton and Ecke Bonk of Marcel Duchamp's White Box.*, trans. Richard Hamilton, Ecke Bonk, and Jackie Matisse (Northend Chapter: the typosophic society, 1999). 1.

5   Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1972; repr., Twenty-fifth printing, 1991). 159.

>>> research process >>>

documentation & feed-back between research process, textual and visual aspects.

Vol.1 textual

Intro & §1 Context

§2 Research Practice & Method

§3-4-5 Develop & Test Dispersed Objects

§6 Conclusion & Demonstrate Dispersed Object

Vol.2 visual

§1 Sym 4 Gallery

§2 Sym 5 Gallery & Online

§3 Hybrid Text

§4 TITLE(date)

§5 UGLyD

exposition (viva)

Figure A / Outline of the dissertation. The practice-led dissertation consists of two volumes and an exposition of the various projects. In this volume the focus lies on a textual presentation, while in volume 2 the focus lies on a visual presentation of the research process. The exposition is the making public of the research and the dispersed object.

Reader's Guide Volume 1

The thesis is structured and formatted in such a way that there are several ways to navigate through the many projects and instances of the dispersed objects. Volume one consists of the textual presentation of the research process, while volume two consists of the visual documentation. See figure A.

I choose to present the visual documentation in a separate but equal volume to the text for two reasons. First, by separating the thesis in two volumes I apply a dispersal tactic. Presenting instances alongside each other, enables the reader to use both at the same time and facilitates a scripted and an unscripted traversing and linking between the textual and visual material of the thesis. Second, from a research point of view, both visual and textual domains are seen as equal, interwoven and developed throughout the research process. The visual material is usually incorporated within the textual framework of the thesis to demonstrate the integration of theory and practice. But from my point of view, each of the domains contains a mixture of both theory and practice. By creating separate volumes, I want to highlight the space between the textual and visual, and the movement between them. In many ways, the movement between separate entities is what this research uncovers, and throughout I will use different ways to link text and visual entities.

Although I speak of a division between the textual and visual, such duality should be seen as a shorthand for a more complex situation. Following my practice-led research methodology, the art and research practice engages in both doing and thinking, and it is located within situations or projects aimed at specific questions. The textual presentation of the research process follows a linear narrative and sequence of: context, research question and methodology, testing and development of dispersed objects, and concludes with a project that demonstrates the dispersed object. However, in contrast to the linear narrative of the text, the theory and projects have been developed parallel to each other throughout the whole research process.

Volume 2 presents the visual documentation, annotated and linked to a project log. The project log lists the many activities during which I created multiple entities and over time this list became a means to analyse and rethink the way entities are linked, categorised and ordered.

Throughout the thesis I use several ways to link and cross-reference:

[4.4.1.01]   Refers to an entry in the project log.

§1.3   Cross-reference to Chapter 1, section 3, in this volume.

Vol.2 Fig.1-8/11   Cross-reference to Volume 2, Figures 1-8 to 1-11.

www.symbiotext.net: a website (URL) or underlined text linked to an online site. It follows that as websites are constantly changing I have used, where possible, "permanent links". The online material these links refer to is not part of the thesis, but adds additional information.

Introduction

Recent discussions in Frieze[1], ICA[2] and Rhizome[3] identified art that responds to current cultural production, with terms such as 'post internet' and 'art after the internet.' Karen Archey, who organised the panel discussion Post-Net Aesthetics at the ICA and co-curated the exhibition Art Post-Internet, said in the exhibition pamphlet that:

> Post-internet refers not to a time 'after' the internet, but rather to an internet state of mind — to think in the fashion of the network. In the context of artistic practice, the category of the post-internet describes an art object created with a consciousness of the networks within which it exists, from conception and production to dissemination and reception. As such, much of the work presented here employs the visual rhetoric of advertising, graphic design, stock imagery, corporate branding, visual merchandising, and commercial software tools.[4]

Although the term 'post internet' is a controversial neologism, it does indicate a field of art practices from digital/internet artists[5] that developed artwork in such a way that it often includes not only the digital, but also the making of real-life objects or events. Such art works can be seen distributed online *and* exhibited within galleries, bringing into focus ambiguity regarding the condition of the art object. The uncertain materiality of the art object is questioned through is-

1   Frieze et al., "Beginnings + Ends," *Frieze Magazine*, no. 159 (2013); Pablo Larios, "Iconoclash," *Frieze Magazine*, no. 161 (2014).

2   Institute of Contemporary Arts and Rhizome, "Post-Net Aesthetics Conference," *Net Aesthetics Panels*(2013), http://new.livestream.com/icalondon/events/2464307.

3   Michael Connor, "What's Postinternet Got to Do with Net Art?," *Rhizome Journal*(2013), http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/nov/1/postinternet/; Karen Archey, "Post-Internet Curating, Denver Style: An Interview with Carson Chan," *Rhizome Journal*(2013), http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/jul/9/archey-chan-interview/; Ceci Moss, "Expanded Internet Art and the Informational Milieu," *Rhizome Journal*(2013), http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/dec/19/expanded-internet-art-and-informational-milieu/#_ednref8.

4   Karen Archey and Robin Peckham, "Art Post-Internet 2014.3.1 – 2014.5.11," *UCCA Exhibition Pamphlet*(2013), http://ucca.org.cn/en/exhibition/art-post-internet/.

5   With this term I refer to a broad spectrum of artists whose work is or was often called New Media Art, Net.art, Digital Art, Cybernetic Art to name just a few. As each of these terms has its own history and followers, which I do not need to go into here, a broad term will suffice for my introduction..

sues such as remixing and authorship, originality and documentation, circulation and ownership, digital interface and objecthood. Some of the notable artists are: Kari Altmann,[6] LuckyPDF,[7] Ubermorgen,[8] and Aram Bartholl.[9]

One of the critical themes within post-internet discourse is distribution. Not only in the sense of product distribution but also in the sense that the object of art itself is distributed; one might say it circulates through a network. In the words of Seth Price: "The problem is that situating the work at a singular point in space and time turns it, a priori, into a monument. What if it is instead dispersed and reproduced, its value approaching zero as its accessibility rises?"[10]

My art practice resonates with the combined online and gallery based practice and "an internet state of mind,"[11] although I have arrived at it via a different trajectory. My work developed from conceptual, institutional critique and installation practices, which became increasingly digital and software based. I will go into more detail about these two trajectories later on (§1.5), but it seems to me that both trajectories are crossing the same field of practice. I call this field a hybrid practice because it combines online and gallery based ways of working, and it creates objects that cross boundaries of known categories.

My journey towards a hybrid practice was motivated by a desire to expand on an art practice from within conceptual art and institutional critique. The practice I refer to rethinks or reworks the object of art through its negation. My research is not looking backwards but forwards by placing the rethinking of the object within today's context of a network culture. My strategy is to negate the (singular) art object by taking advantage of the possibilities a networked society and digital technologies provide, creating what I call a dispersed object. I propose to develop a dispersal practice that incorporates distribution into the art making process from the very beginning of a project (see §1.1).

In this thesis, I make a distinction between distribution and dispersion.[12] Both refer to making art public or its circulation but the term dispersion refers to a making public by the artist as an act of self-determination. Dispersion could be understood as constitutive within the art concept and art making, rather then a consecutive process that happens after the art production. The artist sees dissemination as integral to the work, a spreading of the art object over multiple entities, which can all be different, and which might include parallel platforms, technologies, and formats. The artist's dispersal practice entails engaging differently within an environment or within multiple environments, such as galleries, publications, digital technologies, internet platforms, language and information, so that the artwork finds what ever form it needs to exist (or subsist, resist, desist, co-exist, persist, etc.). In other words, my proposition is to create art

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6   http://karialtmann.com/
7   http://www.luckypdf.com/
8   http://www.ubermorgen.com
9   http://datenform.de
10   Seth Price, *Dispersion*, 2002. Artist's Book, self published online http://www.distributedhistory.com/.
11   After Carson Chan: "[P]ost-internet is an internet state of mind. I guess we can characterize it as being dispersed, referential and bringing new attention to materiality through its very negation of it." Archey, "Post-Internet Curating, Denver Style: An Interview with Carson Chan".
12   See also glossary.

objects that are not of (or in) one place, time, medium or author anymore. I consider the dispersed object an intervention, or an interference, because institutional processes by which art objects are shown, experienced, sold, categorised, or archived are still largely based on discrete, unique objects, and I will explicate this in Chapter 1.

This research is also located within the field of internet based art, which is largely exhibited within its own territory, i.e., through online websites, galleries and depositories. Lindsay Howard introduces her online-only exhibition at Art Micro-Patronage with: "Over twenty years have passed since net art first appeared on the screen, and we still don't have an established system for buying and selling it. The greatest developments in the field aren't coming from institutions, curators, or dealers, but from artists who are experimenting with payment and distribution models in ways that are at once creative and practical."[13] After so many net artist's initiatives[14] the on/offline divide has also, only recently, been challenged by conventional galleries through the first auction of digital art,[15] and a handful of commercial galleries,[16] which aim to create a bridge between computer based and physical art objects.[17] Vito Campanelli opens his book *Web Aesthetics* with a call for more openness and more input from people "outside the Web" to widen the dialogue from different perspectives.[18] My proposition and research might do just that: to add another voice to the online-offline dialogue.

My proposition is that through developing an art practice that incorporates distribution I am participating in reconsidering the status of the art object and art making itself. This thesis describes my practice-led research project, its in-situ experiments and reflections focused on the research question: how can the distribution of art enable us to rethink the traditional status of the art object, and to what new approach to the making of art might it lead? My proposition is to use dispersal to negate the traditional notion of singularity of an art object. What if the instance of art has neither a clear identity nor can be experienced as a whole, but instead is an entity that is

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13 Lindsay Howard, "Essay," *C.R.E.A.M. exhibition*(2012), http://artmicropatronage.org/exhibition/C.R.E.A.M-Lindsay-Howard.

14 To name just a few examples: ibid.; etoyCORPORATION <http://etoy.com>; Gif Market by Kim Asendorf & Ole Fach <http://gifmarket.net>. From a wider perspective there is an increase of alternative payment or online exchange models, such as crowdfunding. See for instance the conference Moneylab http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/moneylab/

15 Phillips, "Paddles On! Auction & Exhibitoin New York 5-12 October 2013," Phillips de Pury & Company, http://www.phillips.com/auctions/auction/PD010213.

16 For example: Transfer Gallery <http://transfergallery.com>; Klaus Gallery <http://www.klausgallery.net/ebooks>; Postmasters Gallery all from New York; also the Carroll/Fletcher Gallery London <http://www.carroll-fletcher.com> and The composing Rooms London/Berlin <http://www.thecomposingrooms.com>; Xpo Gallery Paris <www.xpogallery.com>

17 The commercial aspect of the art object is here only used to show a difference between art as physical object and digital object. I have excluded the commercial aspect of the art object from this research to be able to focus my research on the material condition of the art object. For the art object as commodity see for example:

Hans Abbing, *Why Are Artists Poor? The Exceptional Economy of the Arts* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002); Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Isabelle Graw, *High Price: Art between the Market and Celebrity Culture* (Berlin and New York: Sternberg Press, 2010); Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).

18 Vito Campanelli, *Web Aesthetics: How Digital Media Affect Culture and Society* (Rotterdam: Institute of Network Cultures & NAi Publishers, 2010). 47.

dispersed by the artist over different territories? The *status of the art object* is one of the key terms and I relate to it in two ways: firstly, status refers to the material condition of the object; and secondly, it refers to the classification of the object as *art* by the institution of art (see glossary *status*, and §1.1).

In chapter one I place my art and research practice, and its particular concerns about negation and the status of the art object, in an art theory and historic context. It shows why it is pertinent to investigate the status of the art object in relation to the institution of art and its distribution. The narrative of this chapter uses a relevant text from art historian Buchloh as springboard. Buchloh's essay "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions"[19] describes the negation and restoration of the traditional art object in the time of conceptual art and institutional critique, and I extend it to a current time when net art is breaking through into the gallery. Furthermore, this chapter discusses theory about the dispersed object in relation to digital objects from which insights are gained about how a dispersed object might be structured. As the research engages simultaneously art theory and practice, the theory in this chapter developed alongside my artist's practice and benefited from its practical insights. If the reader prefers a more detailed description of the research methodology before reading about the context, I suggest to start with chapter two.

Chapter two deals with my methodology within practice-led research and lays out a map of the journey this research project has been through, developing its questions and methodologies. It is followed by a section on ontology, which develops the research question to the level of questions to be asked of the objects created in the test situations. This chapter also contains an additional section giving further detail about the concept of symbiosis, which influenced my thoughts on developing art objects with a different distribution.

Chapters three to five detail the different projects that aim to develop the dispersed object in different situations and test the status of the art object by asking questions concerning its ontology. Each project ends with a reflection that highlights insights and points to be taken forward into the next project. The last project in chapter six demonstrates the dispersed object and forms the concluding work of my research. Chapter seven considers the whole research project and surmises how the research question is answered through the development of the artist's practice.

19   Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October*, no. 55 (1990).

&1 Research Context

1.1 Attack on the status of the art object

In the following section, I advance two discourses that provide a framework to support my research. The first discourse places the attack on the status of the art object in a historic context. The essay "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions" from Benjamin Buchloh[1] is taken as a point of reference because it clearly sets out relevant issues around the negation of the art object from an established art historian[2] point of view. Buchloh described in his essay a continuation of the artist's strategy of assaulting the status of the art object between art practices that became known as conceptual art and institutional critique. In addition, Buchloh noted a cultural tendency of circularity and institutionalisation. For example, the short duration of successful attacks on the traditional (material) status of the art object, and the absorption by institutions of artist's practices which challenged the power of those institutions to define conventions of art. Hence, Buchloh's essay provided also a starting point for my second discourse about the institutional context (which in general refers to the conditions of visual art production, consumption and distribution) and a focus on the *status* of the art object within a framework of relationships.

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1   Ibid. Hereafter shortend to "Conceptual Art 1962-1969."An earlier version of this essay was published in Claude Gintz et al., *L'art Conceptuel, Une Perspective* (Paris, France: ARC Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1989).

2   Benjamin H. D. Buchloh is currently Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Modern Art at Harvard University and is co-editor of the academic journal October. He has written extensively about paradigmatic shifts in the twentieth century American and European art. His essays are anthologised in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2003); and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Formalism and Historicity: Models and Methods in Twentieth-Century Art* (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

1.1.1 Historical context

In "Conceptual Art 1962-1969" Benjamin Buchloh aimed to historicise conceptual art practices between '62 and '69, to address what he calls "the currency of the historical object (...) from the vantage point of the late 1980s: the dialectic that links Conceptual Art, as the most rigorous elimination of visuality and traditional definitions of representation, to this decade of rather violent restoration of traditional artistic forms and procedures of production."[3] In doing so, he investigated how Conceptual Art can be understood as an "assault on the status of [the art] object" in terms of "its visuality, its commodity status, and its form of distribution."[4] The pertinent conclusions drawn by Buchloh are that the achievements of this assault are the "transformation of audiences and distribution" and the "abolition of object status and commodity form." He also claims that the practice of Marcel Broodthaers reveals that these achievements "would most of all only be short-lived, almost immediately giving way to the return of the ghostlike re-apparitions of (prematurely?) displaced painterly and sculptural paradigms of the past."[5]

The development of attacking the materiality of the art object within 20th Century art can, in general terms, be traced back to early avant-garde challenges to the formal 19th Century academicism. Artists such as Courbet and Monet not only challenged the visual and formal aspects of painting, but also the role of artists, for instance by organising their own exhibitions.[6] Duchamp's work is another important point of reference concerning critique of visuality and materiality of the art object, because of his use of language as a material and exploration of institutional validation through the art object as 'readymade.'[7] Different authors traced the use of language within the artwork back to cubist collages and Mallarmé.[8] Buchloh notes that at that time a link was established between "the emerging structuralist analysis of language and the formalist examination of representation."[9] In other words, every aspect of the object of art became equally important and became available for further questioning and experimentation.

In the 1960s and 70s, often referred to as a time when the questioning of the status of the art object was a primary concern,[10] art, politics and philosophy became enmeshed in structuralism,

3   Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," 107.

4   Ibid.

5   Ibid., 143.

6   Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1987).

7   See George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic, an Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 1974); Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. M. Shaw (Manchester University Press, 1984). 51-52; Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," 119.

8   See for example Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism, and the Invention of Collage* (Yale University Press, 1992); Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964-1976* (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010). xviii and xxx., and for a narrative linking words in art in the 1960s to music compositions and the spoken word see L. Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010). 4.

9   Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," 107.

10   Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 19 (1964); Harold Rosenberg, *The Anxious*

phenomenology, poststructuralism and deconstruction, which, amongst other things, ultimately questioned the philosophical framework underlying our (Western) culture and in political terms questioned, importantly, the rise of the culture industry. This context can be seen reflected in the political and philosophical engagements of artists in the 1960s who "question[ed] how and by whom a work of art could be made, where a work of art can exist and even whether it needs to exist as a physical object at all,"[11] and thus challenging the traditional status of the art object. These artists can be said to have applied a structural analysis of the artwork in context (for example the architectural, material, institutional, and historical framework in which an artwork is made or perceived) so that the autonomy and self-referentiality of the traditional unique material art object could be negated and become a contingent art object.[12] It led many artists to produce work in forms or materials that conventionally were considered supplemental to the art object proper, such as, work in the form of statements, reproductions, references to other artist's work, the body of the artist, the environment of the object, and Buchloh identified in his essay "Conceptual Art 1962-1969" language or "the work as analytic proposition," as the "most consequential assault on the status of that object."

In the forward of *Art After Conceptual Art* Alexander Alberro suggests that conceptualism opened up not only the art object but also the art world and allowed it to engage with a wider public in every sense.[13] When the institution itself became the object of art, conceptual strategies of negation and critique expanded from a focus on the framework that controls how an art object is read to a much wider framework of the conditions of art in the art world, or the cultural industry, which are "shown to be not natural facts but socially and historically constituted, and thus changeable, realities."[14] Artists practicing what became known as institutional critique have addressed many different types of institutions, from language it self to social relations and norms, to instituted organisations and their underlying (often tacit) ways of control. In §1.4 I will expand on institutional critique and different positions artists have taken regarding the institution. Pertinent for my thesis is that in institutional critique the distribution of the art object becomes not only part of the discourse in art but it also becomes used as part of the art object, for instance in the work *Skulptur* by Michael Asher (see §1.2.1).

It is possible to discern examples of art practices that incorporate distribution, by looking

Object: Art Today and Its Audience (Horizon Press, 1966); Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood [Artforum, June 1967]," in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (London: Studio Vista, 1973); Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October*, no. 8 (1979); Ann Goldstein, A. Rorimer, and Museum Of Contemporary Art, *Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965-1975* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art [MOCA], 1995).

11   Christian Rattemeyer, "'Op Losse Schroeven' and 'When Attitudes Become Form' 1969," in *Exhibiting the New Art: 'Op Losse Schroeven' and 'When Attitudes Become Form' 1969* (London: Afterall, 2010), 14.

12   For a detailed description of this process in relation to Michael Asher's work see Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*: 1-39. For different aspects of contingency see Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2005).

13   Alexander Alberro and Sabeth Buchmann, *Art after Conceptual Art* (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2006). 14.

14   Ibid., 15.

back to the historical avant-garde from the perspective of dispersion, although they were not recognised as such at that time, for instance in *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* by Marinetti in 1909. It was published on the front page of the Parisian Le Figaro, deploying for the first time mass media to disperse the foundation statement of an art movement.[15] Subsequently it was published as a pamphlet in various formats, as a recent exhibition shows,[16] and an English translation was displayed in 1912 as part of an exhibition at the Sackville Gallery in London.[17] As a result, it is possible to conclude that the Manifesto, in just three years, became distributed inside and outside the gallery system, internationally. The Manifesto text became not only a newspaper article, but also a document and one could suggest an art object itself. The use of distribution systems as art or as an intentional part of the process of art was brought only into play as a strategy in the 1960s, when Fluxus aimed to distribute their art outside the gallery system. Associated with Fluxus for instance is the 'correspondence art' initiated by Ray Johnson[18] who used the postal system to generate and disperse art through the non-gallery system. Johnson also initiated The New York Correspondance School as a way to develop a growing network and platform to participate in artists' networks and social networks.[19] The following citation about Fluxus shows how extensive the alternative distribution had become.

> The [...] possibly most important, aspect of the development of the Fluxus newspaper was that it was a way of both advertising Fluxus works and performances and developing an alternative market for Fluxus works outside the normal cultural frames. Part of both the challenge of, and to Fluxus, was a questioning of the modes of cultural production and distribution. The aim of Fluxus throughout the mid- and later 1960s was not only to publish the interesting things being done but also to create new systems for their distribution. Most Fluxus works [...] were initially distributed through alternative distribution mechanisms. In the mid-1960s a number of different Fluxshops were set up in the US, France and the Netherlands. In addition to these shops, which had only limited success, several Flux Mailorder Warehouses in the US and Europe were created that were directly aimed at establishing a new means for distributing works and publications without those works themselves seeming to become profound, exclusive or valuable as a commodity.[20]

In addition to the alternative distribution of the work, the Fluxus publications themselves

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15   Hal Foster et al., eds., *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 90-97. In 1919 Marinetti tried to become a member of parlement for the Italian Fascist Party. Without succes but it alined the ideology of Futurism with a right wing party. This meant that the historical avant-garde was split in terms of political alliances and ideologies concerning the function of art in society.

16   Avantgarde Museum, "Standstill, Activist Art Exhibition from the Marinko Sudac Collection Aboard Marshall Tito's Ship "Seagull" 04.06-18.06.2011. Rijeka, Croatia.,"(2011), http://www.avantgarde-museum.com/en/projects/standstill/artists/1900-1909/4335-Futuristicki-manifesti-Futurist-manifesto#id-4335.

17   Charles Harrison and Paul J. Wood, eds., *Art in Theory 1900 - 2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2003), 146.

18   Elizabeth B. Heuer, "Going Postal: Surrealism and the Discourses of Mail Art" (Florida State University, 2008). Heuer shows in her dissertation that some surrealist artists, for instance Max Ernst and Georges Hugnet, could be seen as early practitioners of mail art.

19   Craig Saper, "Fluxus as a Laboratory," in *The Fluxus Reader*, ed. K. Friedman (Chichester: Academy Editions, Wiley, 1998), 146.

20   Owen Smith, "Developing a Fluxable Forum: Early Performance and Publishing," in *The Fluxus Reader*, ed. K. Friedman (Chichester: Academy Editions, Wiley, 1998), 17-18.

consisted of a collection of material. Owen describes the Fluxus Year Box 2 as "contain[ing] a diversity of materials, most of which - such as the Fluxfilms and viewer and the individual artists' boxes by Brecht, Ken Friedman and others - are not traditional printed materials."[21] Owen Smith insists that these "Fluxus works [...] should all be seen, not as art works or even multiples, but in their intended context [,] as publications, albeit quite different from what is traditionally thought of as a publication."[22] In other words, through their alternative distribution and aggregation of non-traditional printed materials, the Fluxus works draw out a rethinking of the art object. The statement of Smith is also puzzling and contradictory: we cannot see the Fluxus works in their intended (one might say original) context, and Fluxus itself recontextualises objects and events. The Fluxus 'nonmovement' followed the Dada movement in the sense that they reframed life as art and visa versa.[23] However, the escape from art as a special object category – one that is set aside from life as 'extra-ordinary' within galleries and museums – could be considered neutralised as soon as the museums started to accept and collect anti-art (see glossary) from Dada and Fluxus artists. McEvilley[24] argued that the initial aim of Dada to reject, abolish or negate the object of art, or art itself, did not lead to a discontinuation of the art world's existing state of affairs. Instead, it extended it with a new concept 'anti-art'. The integration of anti-art into the world they sought to escape from, "the world of bourgeois sickness,"[25] meant that this narrative became institutionalised within the artworld without actually taking place, or only as a temporary event that can be seen in a utopian context.[26] One of the side effects of institutionalisation is the conversion of documentation into art objects, as was the case with the newspaper, which contains *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* by Marinetti. Galleries today are still involved in this process, as they tend to exhibit documentation and ephemera from historic art exhibitions, which sometimes took place outside the galleries, alongside the actual objects that were used or made for these events. Curators might also place alongside historic ephemera instances of art that are considered related in some way.[27]

Another view, besides a utopian reading, of the dialogue between art and anti-art could be found in Adorno's work, where he noted that this dialogue was one of the vital ingredients of art. Adorno saw negation as a positive and creative force. "If all art is the secularization of transcendence, it participates in the dialectic of enlightenment. Art has confronted this dialectic with the aesthetic conception of antiart; indeed, without this element art is no longer thinkable. This

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21   Ibid., 18.
22   Ibid.
23   Allen Bukoff and FLUXUS Midwest, "Fluxus Portal," http://www.fluxus.org/. A Fluxus website portal shows a graphic with three ways to approach Fluxus. As art history, as art and as creative force. The 'creative force' approach recontextualises art not recognised by art history as Fluxus, and life as 'unexplored territory' for Fluxus.
24   Thomas McEvilley, *The Triumph of Anti-Art: Conceptual and Performance Art in the Formation of Post-Modernism* (Kingston, NY: McPherson & Co, 2005).
25   "Purge the world of bourgeois sickness, 'intellectual', professional and commercialized culture, PURGE the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art, mathematical art, (...) promote NON ART REALITY to be fully grasped by all peoples (...)." Georges Maciunas, *Fluxus Manifesto,* 1963.
26   I will come back to the institutionalising force of the artworld in §1.2
27   See for instance the exhibition: Fluxus at MoMA New York, 02.10.2009–23.08.2010. http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1033; and Nam June Paik at Tate Liverpool Dec.2010

implies nothing less than art must go beyond its own concept in order to remain faithful to that concept."**28** How "art must go beyond its own concept," is then a critical question with the art and antiart dialogue.

In the case of Conceptual Art, Buchloh characterises the renewal that the art-antiart dialogue introduces as "the proposal [...] to replace the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone (the work as analytic proposition)."**29** Furthermore, Buchloh sees negation and replacement as an ongoing process. He links, for instance, the modernist repudiation of the figurative to conceptual art's negation of all visuality.

> Just as the readymade had negated not only figurative representation, authenticity, and authorship while introducing repetition and the series (i.e., The law of industrial production) to replace the studio aesthetic of the handcrafted original, Conceptual Art came to displace even that image of the mass-produced object and its aestheticized forms in Pop Art, replacing an aesthetic of industrial production and consumption with an aesthetic of administrative and legal organization and institutional validation.**30**

Besides seeing it as an ongoing process, Buchloh perceives the process of negation as part of a cyclic process with a reinstatement of the paradigms of the past. Buchloh writes that:

> [T]he Enlightenment-triumph of Conceptual Art – its transformation of audiences and distribution, its abolition of object status and commodity form – would most of all only be shortlived, almost immediately giving way to the return of the ghostlike reapparitions of (prematurely?) displaced painterly and sculptural paradigms of the past. So that the specular regime, which Conceptual Art claimed to have upset, would soon be reinstated with renewed vigor. Which is of course what happened.**31**

If we consider Buchloh's statement concerning the cyclic nature of the attack on the status of the traditional art object in terms of the artist's engagement with materiality, I might raise the question, how to rethink the status of the object of spatial and perceptual experience in today's context of contemporary art. This means rethinking a characteristic or a gesture that differentiates the current situation from the 1960s and 1970s.**32** I suggest an artist's practice that integrates distribution in the art making process is one such gesture because such a practice enables the artist to take part in new approaches of making art, such as "an internet state of mind"**33** (see

28   Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno, Rolf Tiedemann, and Robert Hullot-Kentor, trans. R. Hullot-Kentor, Reprint 1997 ed. (London and New York: Athlone Press and Continuum, 2002). 29.

29   Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," 107.

30   Ibid., 119.

31   Ibid., 143.

32   See for instance Verwoert, who suggests that the avant-garde gestures are able to take on meaning in a historical and transhistorical context at the same time. "On the one hand historical reality manifests itself so clearly in gestures because they belong to the inventory of means of expression available at a certain point in time. (...) On the other hand, the significance of a gesture is always also absolutely contemporary in the transhistorical sense, for we only understand the gesture if we allow it to have an impact upon us in the moment we perceive it. If it engages us in an exchange in that moment." Jan Verwoert, "Gestures Towards a New Life: The Avant Garde as Historical Provocation," in *Utopias*, ed. R. Noble (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2009), 103.

33   After Carson Chan: "[P]ost-internet is an internet state of mind. I guess we can characterize it as being dispersed, referential and bringing new attention to materiality through its very negation of it." Archey, "Post-

Introduction).

I suggest a practice that takes part in and reflects on both a traditional gallery based and digital/online based practices. Consequently, I will investigate both contexts in relation to what I am going to call a dispersed object in sections §1.2 to §1.6. The terms gallery based and digital based practices refer to different institutional frameworks in which the artist works, also called the institutional context, which I will introduce below.

1.1.2 Institutional context

The institutional context refers to the conditions of visual art production, consumption and distribution. This context is relevant because my proposition to rethink the status of the art object through distribution uses the notion of institution as a point of reference, i.e., the artist develops the dispersed object in relation to the institution and its networks. In my thesis I will use the term *(art) institution* in the sense of an organisation and its established practice, often symbolised by its architecture. It is a centre of power. It is not to be confused with the term *the institution of art*, which refers to the art world including all artists, institutions, artworks, etc., (See Glossary).**34** Connected with the term institutional context is the term *status of the art* object and it is mentioned several times in Buchloh's essay. He referred to it in the sense of "[the object's] visuality, its commodity status, and its form of distribution." Buchloh also referred to it in relation to the object's condition of belonging to the class of 'art objects.'**35** *Status* can refer to the condition of the object – e.g., material, commodity or sign – and to the classification or validation of an object as belonging to the class of 'art.' As a consequence, the word 'status' implies two things. First, it implies the existence of a *framework* that does the evaluation, validation, and contextualisation, that is, an institutional framework that provides a platform for discourse, and mediates between all who are involved in art. Second, it implies a variation of possibilities, a *variation of different conditions* of the art object. Who determines these conditions and its boundaries is constantly tested through contemporary art practice against the institutional conventions. In short, the status of the art object is constantly contested between artists and institutions.

In my research, I propose to (con)test the status of the art object through the dispersed object. It is predicated on the acknowledgement that access, visibility, materiality, and distribution of the art object is inscribed by the institution of language, by institutions of art, and by the artist. I will discuss institutions and the institutional consolidation of the art object in §1.4, but for the discussion here I will highlight interconnections between contesting the status of the art

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Internet Curating, Denver Style: An Interview with Carson Chan".

34   There are different types of art institutions, reflecting the different functions and positions within the art world. For instance the Arts Councils are developing and investing in art from the top, while small artist's run galleries develop and invest in art from the bottom, so to speak. In the UK one could find educational galleries, galleries supported by the Arts Council, independent galleries, commercial or private galleries, etc. I will expand on this aspect in §1.4 Institutional Context.

35   Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," 107 and 26.

object, critique on the institution of art and the distribution of art.

Peter Bürger placed the attack on the institution of art at the heart of his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.[36] Bürger wrote that: "the attack on the institution of art is the condition for the possible realization of a utopia in which art and life are united."[37] However, art institutions or galleries often describe their function as bringing art and society together.[38] These two sentences lay bare the fault line in art discourse between two constantly changing domains of art and society. The separation between art and society, or the issue of autonomy, is central in the discourse around the social functioning of art. This discourse has become reactivated through socially engaged art.[39]

Having taken the position that it is the artist's practice through acts of self-determination to negotiate the relationships between and within a constellation of society, institution, beholder, and art object, the question is how to negotiate, or contest the determination (by institution and beholder) of the condition of art. Realising that the distribution of art is an area where the artist, the institution and public can all operate and challenge each other, I decided to narrow down the question of conditioning the object of art to the aspect of distribution. Proposing a dispersed object, that is, the artist initially determines the condition of the object and its distribution as part of his practice, means that the work is already in a process of distribution before an art institution decides to make it part of their program. The key point for my research is that if we take into account the possibilities for distribution by the artist and institution in a digital culture, distribution could be seen as material, a tool, or a conscious part of the artist's practice.

If the primary frame of the dispersed object is intervening in the distribution by institutions, then art practices that became known as institutional critique (IC) provide an extensive discourse within which I can place my practice. IC artists opposed the way institutions framed and mediated the selection, display and experience of art. Artists sought to make transparent the ideological power of the institutions, ingrained within the ways of doing and thinking in the artworld. These artists reflect on their own role and on the function of the artwork within the institutional context. I position my art and research within the context of institutional critique and I extend it to net art because this genre became in many ways the successor of IC. In it, many

36   Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.

37   Peter Bürger, Bettina Brandt, and Daniel Purdy, "Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde: An Attempt to Answer Certain Critics of Theory of the Avant-Garde," *New Literary History* 41, no. 4 (2010), https://muse.jhu.edu/.

38   For example: the mission statement from the Arts Council is "Great art and culture for everyone. We work hard to achieve this by championing, developing and investing in arts and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives." Arts Council England, "Our Mission and Strategic Framework," Arts Council England, http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/mission/.

From a curatorial perspective there are many different narratives. See Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, eds., *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); The curator as "middleman": Paul O'Neill, ed. *Curating Subjects* (London: Open Editions, 2007). Educational discourse: Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, eds., *Curating and the Educational Turn* (London: Open Editions, De Appel, 2010).

39   For example Grant. H. Kester, "Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework for Littoral Art," *Variant* no. 9 (2000); Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110(2004). Bürger, Brandt, and Purdy, "Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde: An Attempt to Answer Certain Critics of Theory of the Avant-Garde". Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*. Lisa Siraganian, *Modernism's Other Work: The Art Object's Political Life* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2011).

of the same issues are at stake, (and I will investigate these in §1.5 and §1.6) for example, the contested boundaries of a digital object, the object's circulation and the stabilisation of the object through institutional practices.

The discussion in this chapter starts to uncover that the critical terms 'status' (of the art object) and 'distribution/dispersion' can be affected by both art institutions and artist, see Figure 1-1. In the following section, I will explore the proposed dispersed art object within this framework of relationships.

To guide the reader through the most important aspects of the research context I will use Figure 1-1 as a map. Section §1.2 starts with two examples of dispersed objects of art to explore the initial characteristics of the dispersed object. Subsequently I will consider differences between traditional objects of art and the dispersed object. §1.3 Investigates the relationship between distribution or dispersion and the status of the art object. §1.4 Consists of a discussion of institutional critique as a point of reference for how artists position their practice in relation to an institution, i.e., the artist works inside or outside the institution, or develops different tactics in relation to the institution and its networks. §1.5 and §1.6 Extends this discussion to the field of net art and digital objects.
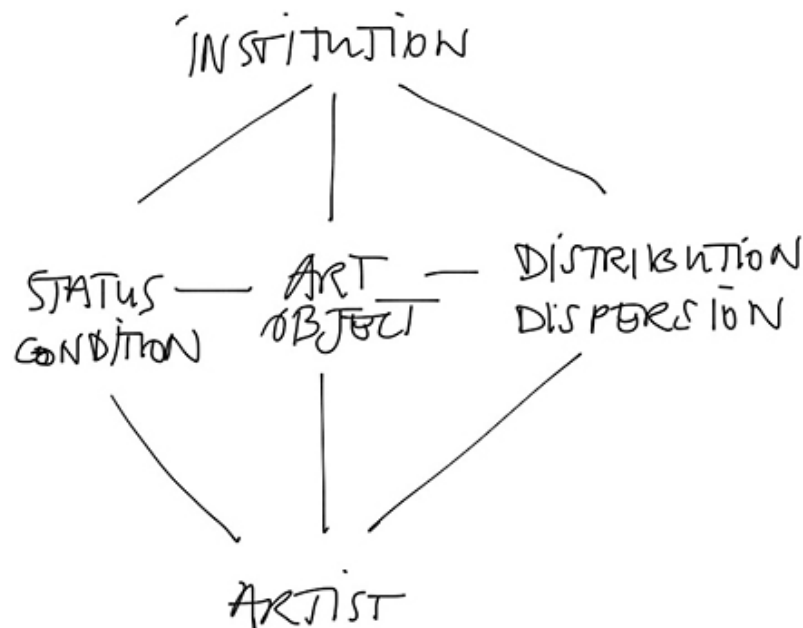
Figure 1-1 / Framework of relationships. The art object, its status and distribution, influenced by institution and artist.

1.2 The Dispersed Object of Art

In the Introduction I propose that the dispersed object is created when the artist sees dissemination as integral to the work. I propose to spread the art object over multiple entities, which can all be different, and which might include parallel platforms, technologies, and formats. The artist's dispersal practice entails engaging differently within an environment or within multiple environments, because dispersion/distribution has become an artist's material and tool.

To explore the basis for my ideas about the dispersed object and dispersal practice I will consider first two examples that have influenced my thinking. These two examples, which I call retrospectively dispersed objects of art, have been chosen to draw out some of the basic characteristics of a dispersed object. They also point to different tactics the artist might use. I continue with exploring differences between the dispersed object and traditional objects of art. I conclude with the issue that negating the art object does not mean a negation of the function of the art object.
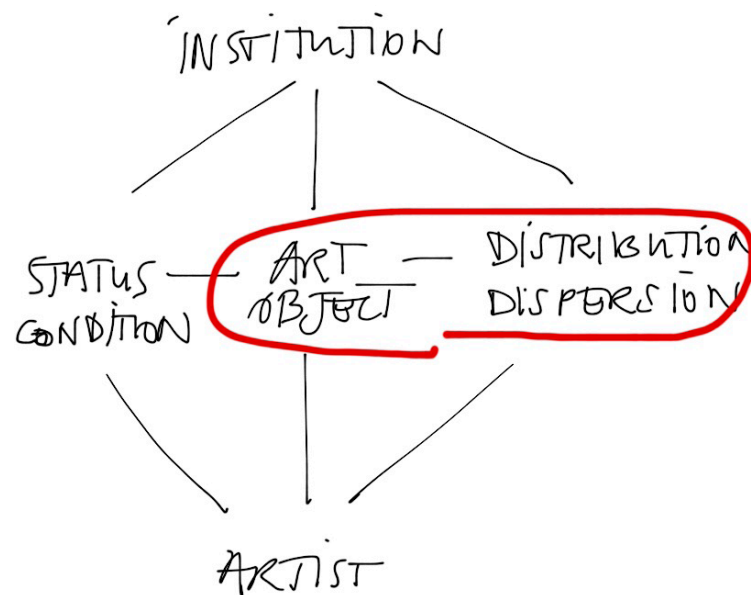
Figure 1-2 / Framework of relationships. The dispersed art object in relation to the traditional art object.

1.2.1 Skulptur by Michael Asher

Asher's *Skulptur* consisted of placing an ordinary caravan in the streets of Münster and relocating it weekly. It also consisted of printed handouts at the front desk of the museum alerting visitors to the existence of this project and its location. There was no sign at the location of the sculpture itself. The installation took place within the context of the first *Skulptur Projekte Münster* exhibition in West Germany.[40] *Skulptur* was "intended to function as a negation of contemporary public sculpture."[41] The installation is an example of a strategy characterised by working within an art institution, while the sculptural object is situated in the public domain without a visible link to the institutional context. Asher wrote that he intended this object to have "a double referent"– to the context of exhibition and to the world of ordinary objects – and that "[b]oth contexts were potentially experienced by the viewer in real time and space parallel to the exhibition framework."[42] The caravans receive a double status, that of art object and that of ordinary object. Part of the work, the handout, is only located at the museum. Consequently, Asher creates two types of viewers. The first type is the general public, who are outside the framework of the exhibition because they have not seen the note at the museum and for whom the caravan is a caravan. The second type of spectator is someone who has visited the exhibition at the museum, or who knows about Asher's work at the exhibition. They might consider the caravan as an art object and a caravan. Significant for my research is that Asher disperses the work between museum foyer and public space, in the form of a printed handout and in the form of a caravan. From my point of view, the moving of the caravan (the art object) to different locations is an enactment by the artist of the negation of the object through its dispersal over time and location. In the artist's statement Asher says: "The transit from one position to the other is also part of the installation."[43] For me the stationary location of the 'hand-out' is just as significant.[44] Asher's installation was re-installed in Münster in 1987, 1997, and 2007 using the same and sometimes different locations. A re-enactment that contrasted the continuation of the exhibition format (sculpture in the public domain) against the changing nature of the exhibition context (the city of Münster).[45]

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40   Skulptur Projekte Münster is an international sculpture exhibition, which invites artists to create new work in the city of Münster. It takes place every ten years and is previously hosted in 1977, 1987,1997, and 2007. "[S] culture projects will examine the interdependence between the arts, the city, and the public." Skulptur Projekte Münster, Skulptur Projekte Münster (Website), (Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe (LWL)-Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, 2007), http://www.skulptur-projekte.de/aktuell/?lang=en ; http://www.lwl.org/skulptur-projekte-download/muenster/77/asher/index.htm.
41   Michael Asher, *Writings 1973-1983 on Works 1969-1979*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983). 164-73.
42   Ibid.
43   Skulptur Projekte Münster, *Skulptur Projekte Münster (Website)*.
44   The institution consolidates the idea that the caravan is the art object in its online archive by showing only images of the caravan in various locations. There is no image of the 'hand-out'. Ibid.
45   The archive shows installation photographs of the same caravan on the same sites in 1977, 1987 and 1997. Ibid.

Skulptur
Ausstellung in Münster 1977
3. Juli bis 13. November

Projektbereich

Michael Asher
1943 in Los Angeles geboren
lebt in Venice, Kalifornien

„Installation Münster"
Standort:
19 verschiedene Plätze in und um Münster
Durchführung:
Dauer der Ausstellung

Vorhaben in Münster

Es handelt sich hierbei um das Aufstellen eines
Caravans in und um Münster für die Dauer dieser
Ausstellung, die sich über 19 Wochen erstreckt.
Der Caravan (annähernd 4 m lang) wird jeden
Montag in der Nähe von Gebäuden oder Grünan-
lagen neu plaziert, wobei insgesamt 19 verschie-
dene Standorte gewählt werden. Der Hinweis auf
den Standort des Caravans und die Zeit, während
er dort zu finden ist, ist im Foyer des Museums zu
erhalten.

Parkposition der dritten Woche 18. bis 25. Juli
Alter Steinweg - Parkplatz der Fa. Hill

Figure 1-3 / top / Michael Asher, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster, Germany, "Skulptur", July 3-November 13, 1977. One of a set of four exhibition handouts available at the front desk of the museum for each of the nineteen weeks of the exhibition. ©1977 Asher, The Press of NSCAD.

Figure 1-4 / bottom / Michael Asher, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster, Germany, "Skulptur", July 3-November 13, 1977. Installation photograph. Situation week 12. No reference was given on location. ©1977 Asher, The Press of NSCAD, Photograph: Rudolf Wakonigg.
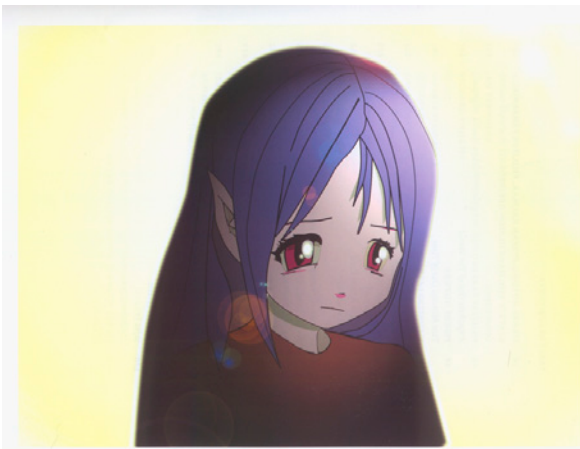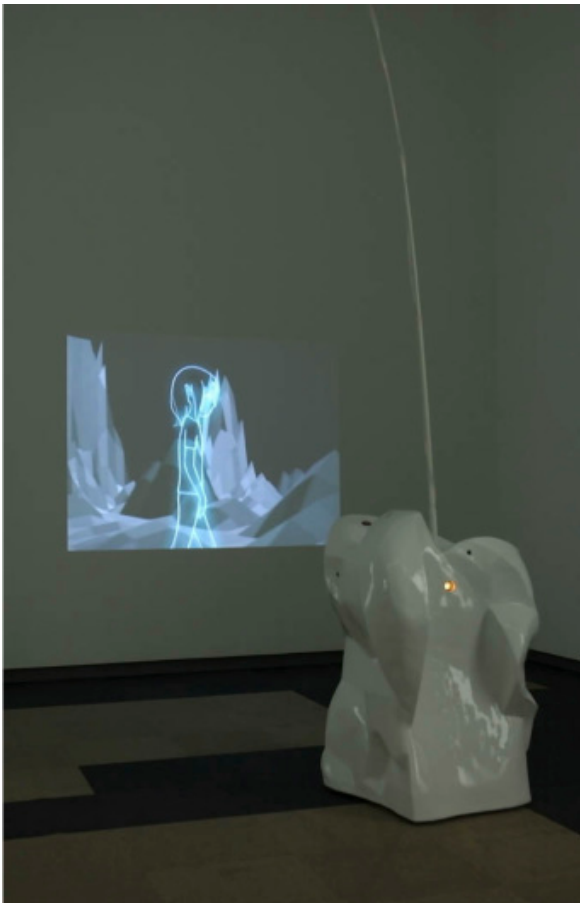
Figure 1-5 / top left / Pierre Huyghe (2001) One Million Kingdoms. Video-installation, PAL, colour, sound, duration: 6'45''. Pierre Huyghe & Philippe Parreno (2003) Travelling Pod, robot. ©2003 Van Abbemuseum, No Ghost Just a Shell : The AnnLee Project, Photograph: Peter Cox.

Figure 1-6 / top right / M/M (PARIS) (2000) Wallpaper poster 1.1 Silk screen on paper; Joe Scanlan (1989) Nesting Bookcase. [not part of No Ghost]; Joe Scanlan (2002) DIY or How To Kill Yourself Anywhere in the World for Under $399. Book, offset on paper. ©2003 Van Abbemuseum, No Ghost Just a Shell : The AnnLee Project, Photograph: Peter Cox.

Figure 1-7 / bottom left / Huyghe (1999) AnnLee, original image for No Ghost Just a Shell. ©2003 Van Abbemuseum, No Ghost Just a Shell : The AnnLee Project, Photograph: Peter Cox.

Figure 1-8 / bottom right / Joe Scanlan (2002) Do It Yourself Dead on Arrival (AnnLee) / Do It Yourself (Annlee). IKEA parts: melamine, chipboard, plastic wire, cotton, polyester, metal; DIY book: offset, ink on paper. ©2003 Van Abbemuseum, No Ghost Just a Shell : The AnnLee Project, Photograph: Peter Cox.

1.2.2 No Ghost Just a Shell by Huyghe & Parreno

No Ghost Just a Shell (1999-2003) by Huyghe and Parreno[46] is significant for my research because it shows a collaborative strategy of creating a dispersed object in the form of a project. Huyghe and Parreno bought a Manga character 'Annlee' and commissioned 18 different artists to appropriate 'her' as a 'shell' for a variety of different manifestations or as the medium for those manifestations. Annlee as a singular sign or visual tool is inscribed in every work. As such it facilitates us to unite and disperse not only heterogenous objects, created by different artists, but also the contradictory readings Annlee instigated. "Annlee is an event", says Huyghe, "emerging at the intersection of these different utterances, of the different times and places of these exhibitions."[47]

This project, when seen as one 'object' of art, exemplifies dispersion as an essential part of the artistic process, because the dispersal processes affect aesthetic production and the encounter with art through its multiple exhibitions. The *No Ghost Just a Shell* project functions on multiple 'platforms': as a singular entity (as an exhibition, Annlee as sign), and as a complex collection of work from different artists, within different contexts and exhibitions. The project developed as it was exhibited in different museums: in Zurich, Cambridge, San Francisco, and finally at the Van Abbe Museum Eindhoven, who bought the exhibited work. The project includes animations, videos, paintings, posters, books, neon works, toys and sculptures.

The whole project conceived as a work of art in process was in the end curtailed through manipulating its distribution. In its endgame Huyghe and Parreno organised the creation of The AnnLee company (l'Association Annlee), securing that AnnLee would own her own copy rights to ensure that the image of AnnLee never reappears within the original format, i.e., no continuation of the original project. This meant that the project solidified and the only variations left open are by selection, representation and display.[48] **When the totality of the project as exhibition became part of the Van Abbe Museum collection (in 2003) it started a new life as museum exhibit**: displayed temporary throughout the museum, in all media and locations, with collaboration of the artists. Sometimes it is on loan to other museums (TATE modern for instance). In this way the project reverted back to institutional conventions. It looks like Huyghe and Parreno moved from a dispersal tactic to consolidation. The important point is the notion that these positions are not excluding each other and that artists might change their approach within a project.

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46   Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno, **No Ghost Just a Shell. Un film d'imaginaire** (Koln: Walther Konig, 2003);Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN), "Inside Installations, Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art," The project Inside Installations. Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art was a three-year research project (2004 - 2007) into the care and administration of an art form that is challenging prevailing views of conservation. It was funded by the European Commission, Culture 2000, http://www.inside-installations.org/project/index.php. No Ghost Just a Shell is extensively documented as a case study in the research project Inside Installations.

47   Daniel Buren and Pierre Huyghe, "Conversation Between Daniel Buren & Pierre Huyghe," in **Pierre Huyghe** (Milano: Skipa, 2001), 376.

48   Despite the legal framework images of AnnLee occasionally reappear. See §5.2.
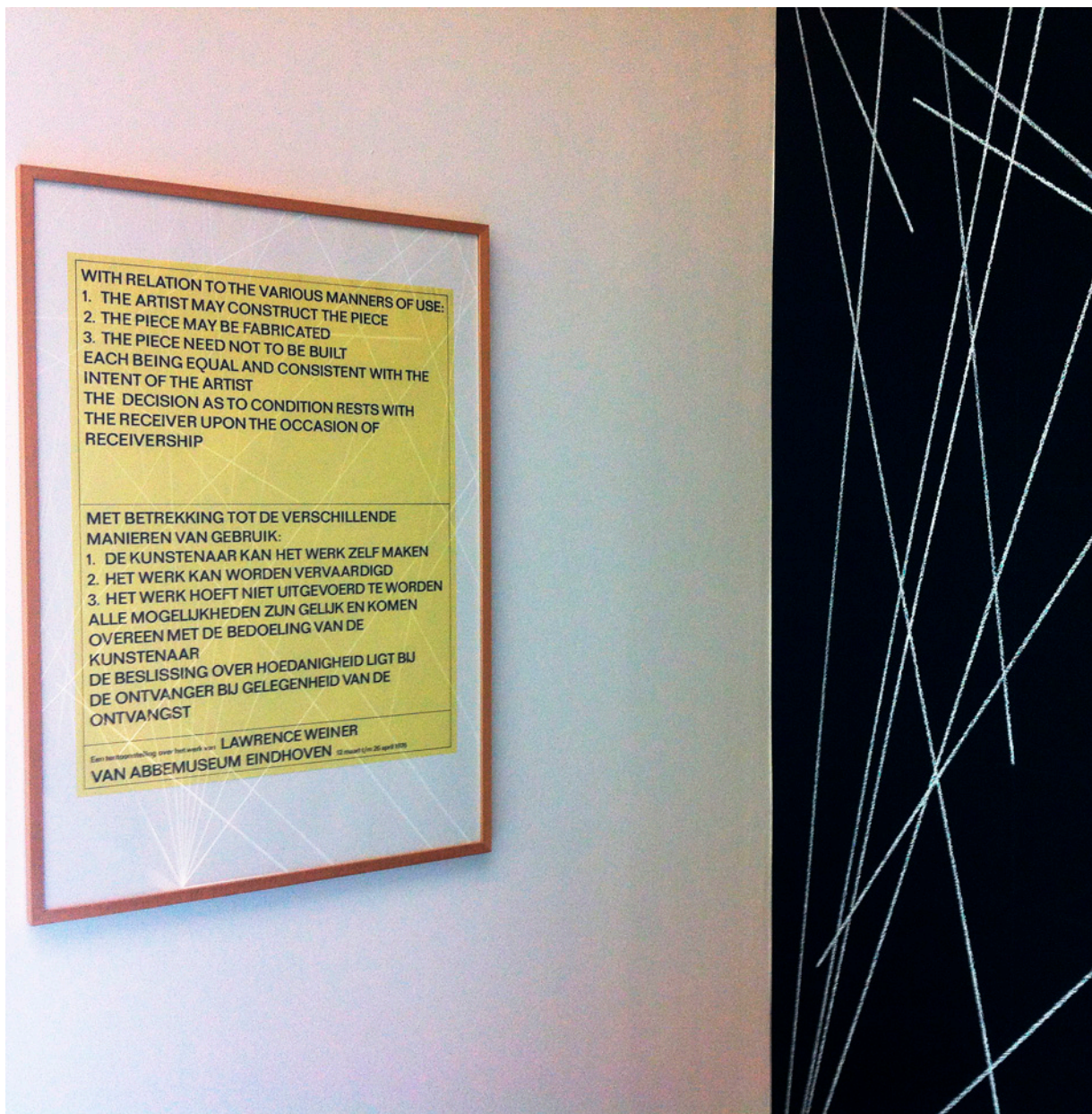
Figure 1-9 / Lawrence Weiner, 1976, With Relation To The Various Manners Of Use, Affiche VAM, 75 × 60 cm, for exhibition Lawrence Weiner, Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 12-03-1976 / 26-04-1976. (1911-169-V3). Photograph: Walter van Rijn 2014

1.2.3 The Dispersed Object and the Traditional Object of Art

The examples above show the art object as a complex layered entity, or multiple entities. It shows an 'object' that is not in one place any more, and not bound by one frame or viewpoint anymore. However, we can still refer to the art object as one thing, for example through its title and date. To explore the key qualities of the dispersed object I looked at how it might differ from traditional objects of art. Traditional art objects can also be understood as extending beyond their material frame and as a complex layered entity. For example the work of art: as material object, as sign referring to a multitude of fields, as documentation or proof of an event, as commodity, as meta-data, etc.

In "Art and Objecthood" Fried wrote about minimalist art (which Fried calls literal art) from the position of modernist art (which I consider to be traditional art): "The risk, even the possibility, of seeing works of art as *nothing more* than objects did not exist. That this possibility began to present itself around 1960 was largely the result of developments within modernist painting."[49] If so, the proposition of negating the object was already interfering with the traditional status of the art object. Friend's observation also reminds us that we are looking back on the traditional object with a contemporary notion of the art object. If one considers the traditional art object as an exemplary art object, the traditional art object forms a point of reference for contemporary art and theory. Hal Foster theorises the nature of, what he calls, 'innovative art' as looking backwards and forwards at the same time. Foster "insists that specific genealogies of innovative art and theory exist over time, and [he] traces these genealogies through signal transformations. Crucial here is the relation between turns in critical models and returns of historical practices (...): how does a reconnection with a past practice support a disconnection from a present practice and/or a development of a new one?"[50]

We can apply the notion of artworks looking simultaneously backwards and forwards to look more closely at the distinction between a conventional art object and an innovative art object. Some artists evoke the conventional art object as point of reference by describing precisely how their art differs from the established art, or what aspects of established art are considered to be constraints and need to be 'liberated'. For example, Lawrence Weiner who created in 1968 a work called "Statement of intent"[51] It consists of four sentences, as a work of art, declaring the artists

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49   Fried, "Art and Objecthood [Artforum, June 1967]," 136.

50   Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (London and London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1996). p.x.

51   Lawrence Weiner, Statement of Intent, 1968. First published in January 5–31, 1969, exh. cat. New York: Seth Siegelaub, 69, unpaginated., Seth Siegelaub. For an interview with Weiner about the work see Willoughby Sharp, "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam. Interview by Willoughby Sharp," in *Having Been Said: Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968-2003*, ed. G. Fietzek and G. Stemmrich (Ostfieldern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 1972). Statement of Intent is a key work in Weiner's oeuvre. See Ann Goldstein, "If It Looks Like a Duck and It Walks Like a Duck, It Is Probably a Duck," in *Lawrence Weiner: As Far as the Eye Can See*, ed. Donna M. De Salvo and Ann Goldstein (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 104-10. See also Donna M. De Salvo, "As Far as the Eye Can See," in *Lawrence Weiner: As Far as the Eye Can See*, ed. Donna M. De Salvo and Ann Goldstein (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 65.

intentions concerning authorship, production and materiality of the art object, and the interaction with "the receiver." Figure 1-9 above, shows one of the many incarnations and adaptations of Weiner's work "Statement of intent," with the following text or a variation of it: "With relation to the various manners of use: 1. The artist may construct the piece; 2. The piece may be fabricated; 3. The piece need not be built. Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist. The decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership." If I reverse the Statement of Intent and reinstate the 'constraints', I end up with a description of a traditional/ideal art object:

> 1. The artist creates the master piece (indicating authorship and authenticity);
> 2. The piece is hand made (indicating the artist's labour at a specific time, resulting in a unique object);
> 3. The piece needs to be manifested physically (the material thing is the object to be shown, moved, sold).

Weiner's proposition that language is sculpture, and that what the audience is seeing is art and not a description of art, was first presented as artist book *Statements* (1968) and later it was installed in different variations in exhibitions in Amsterdam, Bern, and New York.[52] Weiner's concept that the linguistic statement is the artwork, and the subsequent physical manifestation is a secondary example of the work is a reversal of the usual status of a representation (a text describing the work) that is created after an art object. However, point three "needs to be manifested physically" does not necessarily mean that it is made public and/or exhibited. In order to restore the critical moment of culmination, when the traditional artwork is unveiled, I add a fourth point to our description of a traditional art object:

> 4. The piece needs to be exhibited. (indicating the object of art is made public in a context defined by a gallery or intermediary).
> Each is not equal (ideally all of the above is present) and consistent with the intent of the artist.
> The decision as to condition rests with the artist not with the receiver.

The last point of Weiner's "Statement of Intend": "The decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership," acknowledges the role of the receiver, or beholder, to determine the condition of the art object. I reversed Weiner's statement to "The decision as to condition rests with the artist not with the receiver." By doing so I restore the role of the artist as 'genius' whose actions and decisions concerning the condition of the artwork are final, and all is contained within the art object.

Having reversed Weiner's statement, my version represents five potential characteristics to be negated or renegotiated through the dispersed object. For my research it is significant that the

52   ———, "As Far as the Eye Can See," 70.

condition or status of the artwork is affected by Weiner's withdrawal as artist. He chooses not to define a condition for his work.[53] In addition, it is significant that the traditional moment of culmination, when all the artist's work comes together and is unveiled, is also the moment when it becomes distributed. Distributed in the sense of the exhibited work becomes public, available, received, or saleable.

1.2.4 Negating the Art Object, Not the Function of the Art Object

Examining Weiner's work from a distribution point of view, he considers art not to exist until it has been "seeded"[54] or inserted into life, acting upon people. To support this concept he quotes Wittgenstein: "An idea has only meaning in the stream of life."[55] A 'presentation' means for Weiner inserting into a context, but he does not allow context to define the work.[56] For example, according to Donna De Salva, Weiner considers his artist book *Statements* (1968) to be an exhibition with 24 works. After publication, many of these works have also been installed in museums[57], and later presented in many different formats[58]. Weiner articulates his ideas in drawings and notebooks, which forms the basis for his published and exhibited work. He often produces his work as an installation, book, print or multiple, to reach a wider public, to let it filter into culture by different means.[59] Comparing the installation photographs of his exhibitions in galleries with his printed work, I was struck by the similarity between the two. From an aesthetic perspective Weiner seemed to be able to use any surface and context to disperse his work, be it an indoor gallery wall, a printed publication, architectural surfaces outside, man-hole covers, etc. Considering Wiener's work we can see that the institutional conventions of art objecthood are challenged by the way he changed relationships between artwork, documentation and site. Through his reversal of text (as original) and object (as a presentation), and by using any context as a potential surface or carrier of his work, Weiner disperses his work widely.

Weiner's Statement and my reversal of it show that relations might be changed, but the main elements remain. It is possible from the above to summarise the main elements or actors involved in the conventional exhibition event: spectator, site (gallery, institution), art object and artist. The four elements of the exhibition event can be understood as actors, and as acted upon by forces, which are pulling it in different directions. On the one hand, we might have the

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53   Although he does condition the work when it becomes materialised.

54   De Salvo, "As Far as the Eye Can See," 59.

55   G. Fietzek and G. Stemmrich, eds., *Having Been Said: Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968-2003* (Ostfieldern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004), 336.

56   Ibid., 298.

57   De Salvo, "As Far as the Eye Can See," 70.

58   "Close to one thousand of Weiner's specific and general works have been presented in public since 1968, and the vehicles of their existence have included posters, books, announcement cards, editions and multiples, public commissions, works on paper, films, videos, cartoons, and spoken, printed, and hand-painted language." Goldstein, "If It Looks Like a Duck and It Walks Like a Duck, It Is Probably a Duck," 131.

59   Ibid., 130-31.

stabilising forces of the institution of art. As one of its effects, we might count a return to, or absorption into, what Buchloh calls "displaced painterly and sculptural paradigms of the past." On the other hand, we might see artists creating work, which for instance interferes, attacks, negates, or pushes boundaries. Taken all together it creates a fluent or dynamic situation where all four actors or elements are constantly changing. From this perspective, it means that the four actors are functions that can be filled in or activated by many different entities. Or to put it differently, no matter what is negated, the negated element is still in position as a function and can be (temporarily) changed or replaced by something else. For example, in an exhibition documents are used to refer to the conceptual work or the "immaterial object."[60] The artist might withdraw authorship from a work or withdraw its aesthetic values.[61] The gallery as site or the exhibition visitor might be negated by locating the art in the public domain, thus declaring there is no difference between life and art.[62]

I am highlighting the concept of functions here, because throughout the research I understand the art object as a function, i.e., a position that can be taken in principle by anything the artist (or what functions as the artist) puts forward. Considering the four main elements of an exhibition event as functions, means each function can be taken up or 'filled in' by different entities.[63] More positively stated, the artist could potentially redefine, or work with, all four functions and their relationships, and that insight led me to propose a dispersal practice. It is a practice that aims to reconsider the art object in terms of its distribution, by changing (some of) the relationships between the four functions within the exhibition event. For instance by proposing that the artist integrates dispersion, inside or outside the exhibition framework, as supposed to seeing dispersion as the domain of the art institution. A position I started to investigate in practice in my first research project Symbiote 4 at the Winchester Gallery. See chapter three.

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60   John Cage, 4'33" (1952) can be seen as an early example. See Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art*.

61   See the examples of Donald Judd and Robert Morris, 1963, Statement of Esthetic Withdrawal. Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*: 1.

62   See Dada and Fluxus in §1.1

63   How the contingent object of art has transformed institutional conventions see Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*. My point is that all four elements (object, artist, site and viewer) are actors or functions and that what functions as these actors is contingent.

1.3 Distribution and Status of an Art Object
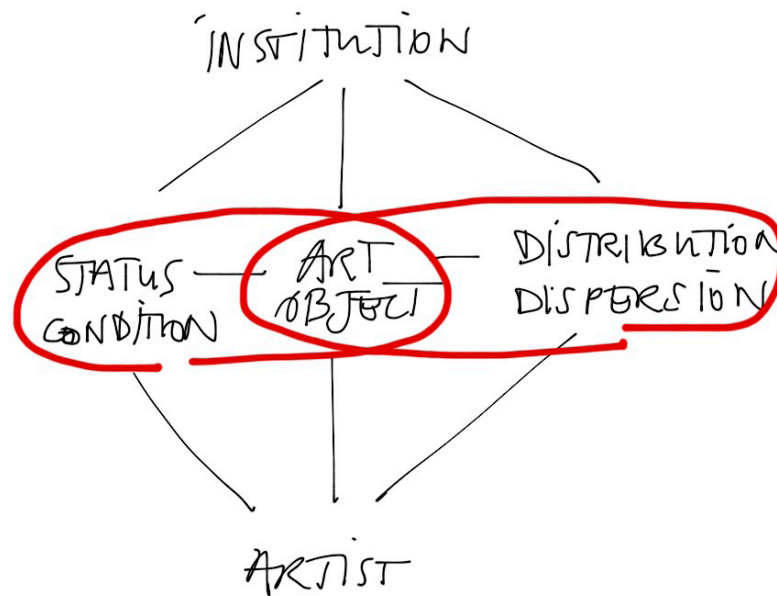
Figure 1-10 / Relationship between Distribution/Dispersion and the Status of an Art Object

If we consider the art object to be an entity that is dispersed over multiple platforms, what does that mean for the status of the art object? The relationship between the status of an object (in terms of it belonging to art, and in terms of its materiality) and its distribution could be illustrated with the work *Glass (one and three)* from Kosuth. In this example the status and the distribution of the art object are determined by both artist and institution resulting in a conflict of interest between artist and institution.

In a public argument between Joseph Kosuth and Benjamin Buchloh, which followed the publication of Buchloh's essay "Conceptual Art 1962-1969", Kosuth accused Buchloh of "a wholesale falsification of a history [of conceptual art]."[64] One of the main points of contention is related to the dating of Kosuth's *Proto-Investigations* as 1965. Summarising the two positions: Kosuth dated the the works as 1965 – 1966 after the date of conception, and only later fabricated them when he had the funds or prospect of exhibition. As they were conceptual works, they "existed only in notes or drawings", and Kosuth dates them accordingly.[65] Buchloh, on the other hand, claimed that Kosuth couldn't show any documentation that the works existed at that time to support his dating of the work. Because of the unverifiable dating Buchloh said that "non of the work dated by Kosuth to 1965 or 1966 can ... actually be documented as 1965 or 1966 or dated with any credibility."[66] The dating was crucial for two reasons. Dating a conceptual work 1965-66

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64   Joseph Kosuth and Seth Siegelaub, "Joseph Kosuth and Seth Siegelaub Reply to Benjamin Buchloh on Conceptual Art," *October*, no. 57 (1991): 152.

65   Ibid., 153.

66   Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969" 122 fn18.
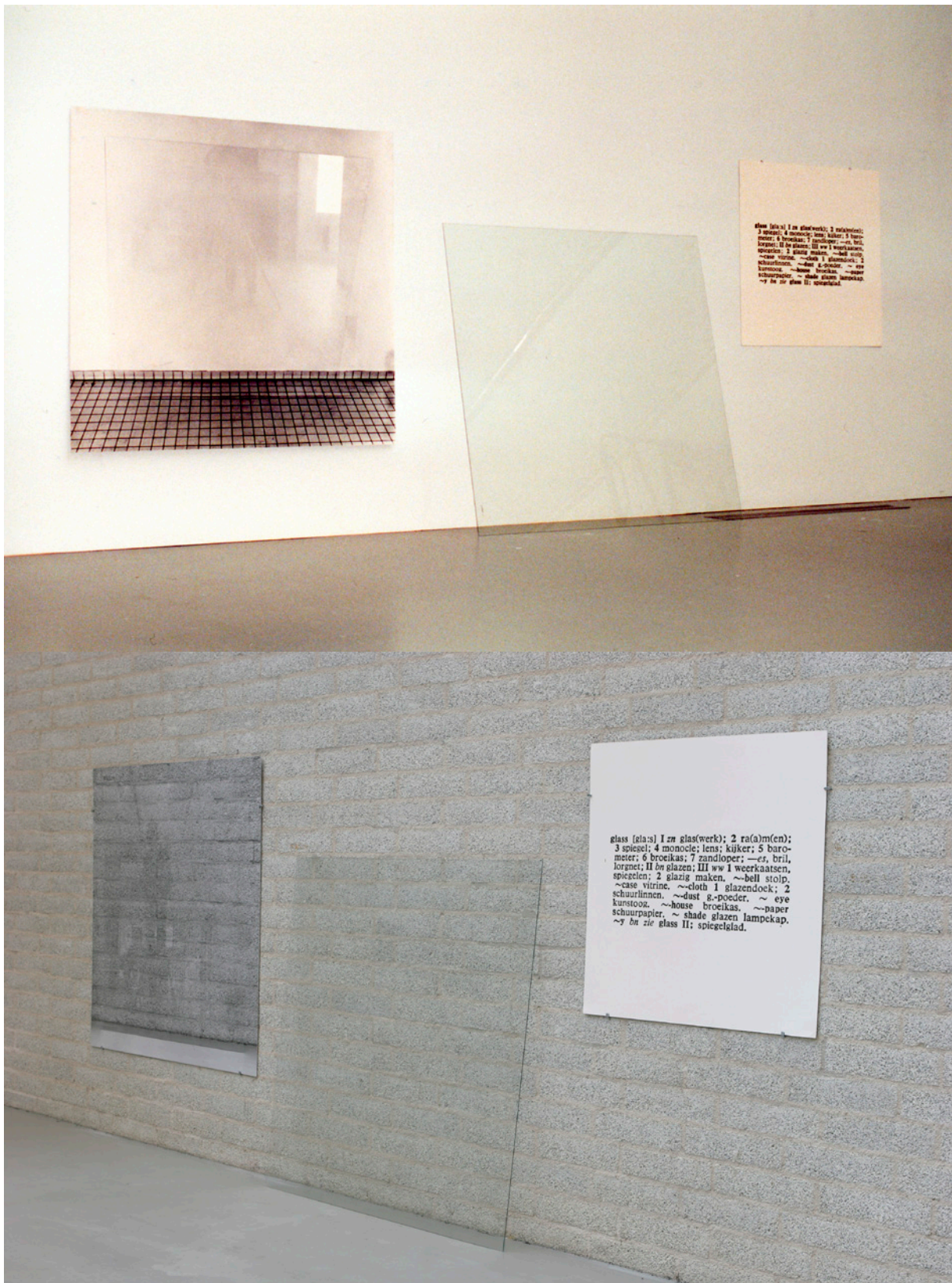
Figure 1-11 / above / Joseph Kosuth 1945, Glass (one and three), 1965. © Collection Kröller-Müller-Museum, formerly in the Visser collection, purchased with support from the Mondriaan Foundation. Installation photograph: A choice from the collection Visser, 2000, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo. This exhibition uses the photograph of the glass installed at the collector's apartment when it was realised in 1977 after Geertjan Visser acquired the installation (First version of the photograph).

Figure 1-12 / below / Joseph Kosuth 1945, Glass (one and three), 1965. © Collection Kröller-Müller-Museum, formerly in the Visser collection, purchased with support from the Mondriaan Foundation. Installation photograph: Inside Installations II, 2007 Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo. This exhibition version uses a new photograph of the glass installed insitu (Third version of the photograph).

meant it could be considered as one of the earliest conceptual works, hence much was at stake concerning the art historic position, and commercial value of the work. More importantly for this research, the ontological ambiguity of a conceptual work created problems for the dating procedures within the institution of art which were based on verifiable authenticity of a specific object. The question of dating became related to what was considered to be the work. My proposition is that this issue is also related to the distribution of the work. Kosuth proposed that the entity of art is contained in the idea,[67] and the subsequent realisations should be considered to be "the work's form of presentation,"[68] creating a division or a shift between different aspects of the artwork. In Kosuth's words:

> I liked that the work itself was something other than simply what you saw. By changing the location, the object, the photograph and still having it remain the same work was very interesting. It meant you could have an artwork which was that idea of an artwork, and its *formal components weren't important*. I felt I had found a way to make art without formal components being confused for an expressionist composition. [My italic][69]

This begs the question why would the unimportant formal component of the work have the date of the conception? If the formal component was not important why would we not give it the date of its physical creation? As example we can consider one work from the *Proto-Investigations* called *Glass (one and three)*. It is exhibited as three objects: the material object, a photograph of text defining the object, and a photograph of the material object in situ (see Fig. 1-11). The work *Glass (one and three)* was dated by the museum as 1965, but if the dating of a work was not only defined by its conception/idea but also its actualisation, production and other significant events of change,[70] then a more complex history would emerge. A study by the Kröller-Müller Museum about how to conserve and maintain this particular work revealed a complex current of events,[71]

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67   "All I make are models. The actual works of art are ideas" J. Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings 1966-1990*, ed. Gabriele Guercio, Fourth ed. (MIT Press, 1993). 3. First published as "Statement" 1967.

68   "I have subtitled all of my work beginning with the first 'water' definitions, 'Art as Idea as Idea'. I always considered the photostat the work's form of presentation (or media); but I never wanted anyone to think that I was presenting the photostat as a work of art – that's why I made that separation and subtitled them as I did. [...] The idea with the photostat was that they could be thrown away and then remade – if need be – as part of an irrelevant procedure connected with the form of presentation, but not with the 'art'." "Art after Philosophy" 1969 reprinted in ibid., 30.

About Kosuth's first use of the term 'proposition' see "Context Text" Introduction to The Sixth Investigation 1969, Proposition 14 (Cologne: Gerd de Vries, 1971) quoted in Sanneke Stigter, "Case study Joseph Kosuth: Glass (one and three), 1965," *Inside Installations, Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art.*(2007), http://www.inside-installations.org/artworks/artwork.php?r_id=117.

69   Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings 1966-1990*: 50.

70   For conventions of dating an object see for instance Visual Resources Association et al., eds., *Cataloging Cultural Objects: A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and Their Images* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2006), 157.

71   The earliest document is a certificate, dated 1976, which shows the title and it dates the work as 1965. It includes a drawn diagram and instructions that this work can only be exhibited ("exist as art") in a location where the flemish language is spoken. It was realised in 1977 at the home of a collector (and only documented by the photograph as part of the work) and it was first exhibited in the Kröller-Müller Museum in May 1979. The study further revealed that there was an earlier realisation or version of the work in 1973, this time with english instead of a flemish text. The necessity of a new photograph after a new installation was mentioned by Kosuth in an interview in 1970: Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings 1966-1990*: 50. Rudi Fuchs from the

and it concluded that the work should be exhibited with a photograph of it in situ.[72] The first time it was exhibited as such was at the exhibition *Inside Installations II*, in 2007 (see Fig. 1-12).

The questions the work raises, through its title, date and actualisations challenges established practices of the art institutions. The 'certificate' or plan to which *Glass (one and three)* is fabricated, has a different date (1976) than the proposition or concept (1965). The title refers to both the idea in general (we could call *Proto-Investigations*) and this particular actualisation with the glass object. The date seems to refer to the idea in general on which the actualisation(s) is based. Kosuth seems to have created an ambiguous title and date, one that reflects the way the work operates. One can understand his insistence on dating the work 1965 because it activates the discourse the work thrives on. Following dating conventions this particular instance of the work (exhibited in *Inside Installations II*) should be dated 1976 – 2007 (date of oldest document - date of remake for current exhibition version), but then the connection to the earlier dated proposition of the artist is lost, or at least changed in a way the artist did not agree with.

Following the history of this particular work and its dating, I find that the distribution of the work in practice (through exhibitions) has become part of the work, and the museum's conservation strategy (to require new photographs of the glass plate) becomes part of the creation and realisation process as well. The exhibition history shows that there are now three instances of the photographic element. The old photographs of the glass plates are kept in storage, in case a curator wants to show the work in a 'historic version'. All this means that the artwork *Glass (one and three)*, in the context of this research, may be a candidate for what I call a dispersed object. The physical actualisation of the conceptual art has become distributed over several 'exhibition versions', relating to different locations of exhibition and the language area stipulated by the artist. However, according to Kosuth's principle the exhibited objects in are not "actual works of art," only a "form of presentation." Kosuth's principle leaves open the possibility that the concept is or becomes dispersed.[73] In the certificate or plan for Glass (one and three) he has not specified a requirement for new photographs if the work is exhibited in another location. He has only done so in general terms. In practice, as we have seen in the example from the Kröller-Müller Museum, these 'forms of presentation' have changed status: from presentation (object or photostat) to art object. As a consequence the question of what is the status of the art object, and what does the art entity consist of, is not only related to what the artist authorises, but it is also related to its distribution over time and institutional practice. In this case, the question of the status of the

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Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam was the first curator to exhibit this piece with an on-site photograph in 2002. Stigter.
72   Stigter writes in her case study resume: "The research provided enough evidence that would make up best practice in presenting 'Glass (one and three)' with a new photograph that matches the surroundings of the site where the work would be installed. [...]This new practice of managing the artwork not only challenges our understanding of what the artwork is about, but also comments on the construction of our museum practice, the very essence of what the artwork is about. This already starts with the registration of parts that immediately questions the way a documentation system for artworks is based on 'things' rather then 'ideas'." ———.
73   To which concept(s) does the date refer? There are several variations of this concept, all dated 1965 or 1966 by the artist. The work *Glass (one and three)*, and other works have been grouped together under the title *Proto-Investigations*. For example *One and Three Chairs*, *One and Five Clocks*, *One and Three Coats*, *One and Three Hammers*, *One and Three Plants*. Because there is no publicised documentation of the original concept or proposition from 1965 these works refer back to, they might all be actualisations of one single proposition.

object remains unresolved, because the artist's principles and the institutional practice disagree.

Kosuth's Glass (one and three) shows an art institution in action, including different forces and conflicts of interest. The historic current of the artwork, its proposition, actualisation and exhibition follow a pattern I have described at the beginning of this chapter: an attack on the status of the art object, a short lived negation and a return to the praxis of the past. What returns is that what fits the institutional framework and what follows the convention of exhibition. The public is presented, from my point of view, an incomplete and dispersed work. The exhibition singularises the material status of the art object at the centre of the exhibition. The contradiction is that this is exactly what the artist sanctions by determining the location and form of *presentation* of the work (which he considers not to be the art object). The above case also demonstrates that even if an art institution is aware of these processes and they are reflecting and acting on it, they are stabilising the negation of the art object performed by the artist by his insistence on dating the work after its concept from 1965.

If I relate this back to Figure 1-10 above, we see that both artist and institution determine the (ambiguous) status of the art object. Kosuth determined in 1965 that the art object has the condition of a proposition, but he created ambiguity by managing the presentation of it as if it is the art object, while saying, the presentation is not the art. The art institution determined the condition of the work, through exhibitions, curatorial decisions, research and archival practices, which means in practice that the Kröller-Müller Museum treats the form of presentation as the artwork.

1.4 Institutional Context and Critique
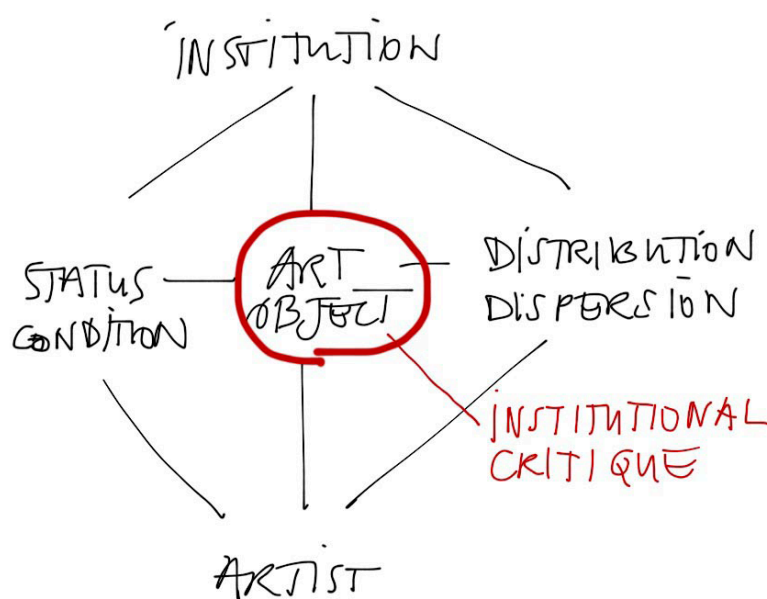
Figure 1-13 / Framework of relationships. The art object within the context of institutional critique.

In this section I will explore relevant theory and practice concerning issues of institutional conditioning of the art object and ways artists have responded to the institutionalisation of art, as a means to clarify the different critical positions artists have taken in relation to the institutions. It also serves to locate the practice I am developing as institutional critique. Institutional critique (IC) is, in the words of Alberro "an artistic practice that reflects critically on its own place within galleries and museums and on the concept and social function of art itself."[74] In this context, the practice I am developing could be seen as an artist's determination about the way an instance of art is distributed, where it is located, who can access it, and how this relates to the activities of galleries, museums and beyond. From a practical point of view, the network of spaces where art takes place, or can take place, and the distribution through this network demarcates sites and their boundaries. Some of these sites are institutions, for instance, important nodes in this network are museums and galleries who through their operations most visibly frame and validate objects as art. More temporary but very important in actively bringing (contemporary) art and public together are art events, such as biennials and art fairs. These events often show a commercial side of art together with auctions, catalogues and commercial galleries. The educational aspect of art takes place in Universities and art schools. In addition, there are organisations that steer policies and funding, e.g., Arts Councils, but also professional organisations for artists, curators, museums, collectors. Most, if not all, these places of art also operate online, and some are specifically set up as websites only. In terms of the artworld, we should add all the art professionals involved, their publications and other activities needed to keep the artworld

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74   Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, expanded ed. (Berkely: University of California Press, 1999). 65 Context as Content.

functioning.[75] In addition to the above, I should note that the artworld and its institutions have no clear boundary, as it is part of the wider social and cultural context, including language, in which it operates. Even a very basic description, such as this, of the institutional context shows the complexity of the term 'institution.' In order to be able to be specific I will elucidate in section §1.4.1 disputed concepts of institutions and its boundaries and define relevant terms in my thesis. I follow in §1.4.2 with the consolidation of the art object by institutions, to understand better the two forces of stabilisation and abolition or change. It is underpinned with Foucault's concepts of continuity and discontinuity within discourses. In §1.4.3, I clarify the different critical positions artists take in relation to the institutions. I will rework institutional critique practices into different artist's tactics, i.e., to practice outside the institution, inside the institution, by taking flight from the institution, institution building, and hybrid practices. This overview of different modes of practice will help me at a later stage to select sites for my research practice. It also enables me to take a position regarding the institution and develop a dispersal practice. This section is developed and relates most closely to the work described in Chapter 3 and 4.

1.4.1 Disputed Terminology

The notion of institution is complex, and Searle remarked that to be able to state facts about institutions we need the institution of language.[76] He wrote that the "essential role of human institutions and the purpose of having institutions is not to constrain people as such but, rather, to create new sorts of power relationships."[77] From my point of view institutions constrain *and* enable, and the terminology is important to clarify in order to understand the function and boundaries involved and to be able to develop a critical practice in relation to such functions and boundaries.[78]

In art discourse, the term institution has been used in a narrow and a wide sense of the word causing confusion and slippage. In the narrow sense, *an (art) institution* refers to a centre of power symbolised by its architecture. It refers to specific organisations and their established practices. Institution in the wide sense of the word, as in *the institution of art*,[79] refers to the

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75   For a study on artworld functioning in England (although dated) see Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, "Taste Buds. How to Cultivate the Art Market. Executive Summary," ed. Janet Hadley (Arts Council England, 2004). and Louisa Buck, "Market Matters. The Dynamics of the Contemporary Art Market," (Arts Council England, 2004).

76   John R. Searle, "What Is an Institution?," in *Institutional Critique and after (Soccas Symposium Vol. II)*, ed. John C. Welchman (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2006), 25.

77   Ibid., 34.

78   Several authors comment that the debates within institutional critique are not helped by a poor definition of the terminology. Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," in *Institutional Critique and After*, ed. John C. Welchman (Zurich: JRP/ Ringier, 2006); Isabelle Graw, "Beyond Institutional Critique," in *Institutional Critique and After*, ed. John C. Welchman (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2006); Luke Skrebowski, "Systems, Contexts, Relations: An Alternative Genealogy of Conceptual Art" (PhD Thesis, Middlesex University, 2009), Ch.5. Institution as Contexts and Relations.

79   Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*: 12, 22.

artworld as a whole. As a concept, institution could be described as "any [human] system of constitutive rules [of particular relationships]."[80] The term institutionalisation refers to the process of something or somebody becoming embedded within an organisation, or visa versa, when constitutive rules become internalised within people.

Within art discourse the extent of institutionalisation is disputed.[81] In §1.1.2 Institutional Context, I have followed convention and defined *(art) institution* as an organisation and its established practice and the term *the institution of art* refers to the artworld or art system as a whole. A specific art institution as a centre of power clearly has an 'inside' or 'outside'. One could work independently from it. However, to generalise it, by stating that one works independently from (all) art institutions, becomes problematical. If the word institution is understood in the sense of referring to the whole artworld, it means that, in principle, all art is instituted and takes part in the discursive art field of art. In this sense, there is only an 'inside', there is no 'outside' and for institutional critique (IC) this creates a paradox.

The subject of IC is the institution itself (in both senses of the word). If we assume the whole artworld is instituted, then the artwork or the "acculturated"[82] practitioner and the spectator are thought of as immediately (or at a later date) assimilated into the institutional structure the artwork is aiming to expose, transform, or escape. There seems to be no way out, hence the question how critique is possible if the practice of institutional critique itself is institutionalised.[83] We could see a parallel with the problem of the "return of the paradigms of the past"[84] (see §1.1) inasmuch as in both situations the object of transformation seems to bounce back. In IC, the institution (as the object of art) is under attack, but the structure and procedures of the institution persist. Should we consider this to be a failure or a "travesty" as Buchloh suggested?

Fraser offered another way of understanding this. She stated that it is a "self-questioning (...) that defines Institutional Critique as a practice."[85] She argued that because the artworld has become institutionalised it has also created the need for a critical reflexive art practice. She believed institutional critique should be:

> Recognising that failure and its consequences, Institutional Critique turned from the increasingly bad-faith efforts of neo-avant-gardes at dismantling or escaping the institution of art and aimed instead to defend the very institution for which the institutionalization of the avant-garde's "self-criticism" had created the potential: an institution of critique. And it may be this very institutionalisation that allows Institutional Critique to judge the institution of art against the critical claims of its

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80   Searle, "What Is an Institution?," 33-34.

81   According to Searle fields such as art and science are strictly speaking not institutions, because they are not defined by a set of constitutive rules, and a number of other criteria. Ibid., 46. In contrast Foucault uses the term institution in a wide sense. See next section.

82   Adrian Piper, "Power Relations with Existing Art Institutions," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983).

83   About the relationship between critique and institution see: Hito Steyerl, "The Institution of Critique," in *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, ed. Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray (London: MayFlyBooks, 2006).

84   Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," 107.

85   Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," 134.

legitimising discourses, against its self-representation as a site of resistance and contestation, (...)[86]

It may be that at the centre of the discourse of IC is the question of the validity of the attack or critique, and the function of art in our society. For the artist and his or her practice, the question is then "Is there a way forward?"[87] Or "where do you stand?"[88] As this debate continues several avenues of thinking have been proposed. In *Instituent Practices* Gerald Raunig disagreed with Andrea Fraser's reading of the institution as all encompassing. He concludes that:

> In her account, all possible forms of institutional critique are ultimately limited to a critique of the 'institution of art' (Bürger, 1984) and its sub-institutions." (...) Whereas for Foucault the critical attitude appears simultaneously as 'partner' and as 'adversary' of the arts of governing, the second part of this specific ambivalence vanishes in Fraser's account, yielding to a discursive self-limitation that barely permits reflection on one's own enclosure. Against all the evidence that art – and not only critical art – over the whole twentieth century produced effects that went beyond the restricted field of art, she plays a worn-out record: art is and remains autonomous, its function limited to its own field. "With each attempt to evade the limits of institutional determination, to embrace an outside, we expand our frame and bring more of the world into it. But we never escape it. [Fraser, 2009: 131][89]

Invoking Foucault and other authors Raunig proposed the concept of instituent practices as a way forward: a critical practice that "does not oppose the institution, but it does flee from institutionalization and structuralization."[90] With artists establishing their own institutions we have gone full circle from working within, to escape, to creating your own institution (I will describe different artist's positions regarding art institutions in §1.4.3). Underlying all these positions, if I may generalise, is the notion that institutions consolidate a system, while IC artists seek to change a system. Foucault's work is relevant in this context, because he reworks the oppositional notion of stabilisation and change, as we will see in the next section.

1.4.2 Consolidation Of The Art Object By Institutions

In this section, I turn to Michael Foucault's work to consider relationships between institutions, artists and objects in terms of power and knowledge. It is hard to do justice, in the limited

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86   Ibid.

87   Chto Delat, "Chto Delat? What Is to Be Done? In Dialogue [Reader]," in **What Is to be Done? ...The Urgent Need to Struggle" at ICA, London (09.09.2010-24.10.2010)** (London: Chto Delat, 2010).

88   Helmut Draxler, "Where Do You Stand, Colleague?," **TEXTE ZUR KUNST**, no. 81 [Art criticism and social critique, symposium on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the journal] (2010), http://www.textezurkunst.de/81/where-do-you-stand-colleague/.

89   Gerald Raunig, "Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming," in **Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique**, ed. Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray (London: MayFlyBooks, 2009), 6.

90   Instituent practice means for Rauning: "In terms of their new concept of resistance, the aim is to thwart a dialectical idea of power and resistance: a positive form of dropping out, a flight that is simultaneously an 'instituent practice'. Instead of presupposing conditions of domination as an immutable horizon and yet fighting against them, this flight changes the conditions under which the presupposition takes place." Ibid

Instituent: (French) establishing.

space available here, to the influence his philosophies[91] has (had) not only for artists connected to the genre of institutional critique but also for my own practice. In relation to my own practice,[92] Foucault's work was instrumental for my understanding of the ongoing construction of, and power relations between, all actors involved within the artworld or within particular situations. In a lecture 'Fearless Speech'[93] Foucault addresses what he calls: "the problem of truth-telling as an activity: (…) who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relations to power (…)." He relates the 'truth-telling activity' to both institution and the individual. In terms of 'activity' or dynamic Foucault poses that there is no ideal configuration, but that it is worthwhile to reveal what is at stake. In his own words: "The problemalization is an 'answer' to a concrete situation which is real."[94] Another point I would like to make is that Foucault's work allowed me to move away from the notion of the artwork as object or product and come to an understanding of my art-research practice and its outcomes as process.[95]

Some of the aspects pertinent to institutional consolidation, Foucault revealed, are connections between the order of things, the language used and the operation of power and critique. In relation to institutional critique these ideas are recognisable in the art practice of, for example, Broodthears who in his work *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXe Siècle* (1968)assumed the role of Museum Director, and created a fictive museum and bureaucracy to be able to level critique at the institutionalisation of art.[96]

The mechanisms of power by which institutions control individuals and their knowledge is, according to Foucault, ingrained within the institution[97] or applied implicitly through discourse.[98] In *Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault played the concepts of continuity and discontinuity against each other, and he listed a number of notions that create a false sense of continuity: tradition, influence, development and evolution, and a period 'spirit.'[99] Through the use of these notions "unities of discourse"[100] become stabilised. They become seen from an institutional

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91   By using a plural I would like to indicate that Foucault developed his ideas over many years. See one of his own comments on this in Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). 16. It is also pertinent to note that his work developed at the same time as the early Conceptual Art and Institutional Critique in the 1960s and 1970s.

92   Practicing from the position outlined here means that my research is positioned within the paradigm of constructivism, because my research takes place within, and is led by, my own practice. See §2.2 Research Methodology.

93   Michel Foucault and Joseph Pearson, *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001). 169-71.

94   Ibid., 172.

95   This point became clear to me after reading Estelle Barrett, "Foucault's 'What Is an Author': Towards a Critical Discourse of Practice a Research," *Working Papers in Art and Design* 4(2006), http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/papers/wpades/vol4/ebfull.html.

96   Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964-1976*: 114-25.

97   Foucault uses the term Institution in a wide sense, as "the institution of Medicine." See Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*: 46.

98   Foucault defines the term discourse as: "the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation" [such as art discourse] ibid., 120-21. Discourse brings into play a whole 'set-up' of "customs, words, bodies of knowledge, norms, laws, and institutions." Paul Veyne, *Foucault: His Thought, His Character* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010). 10.

99   Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*: 23.

100   Foucault describes a very wide range of entities, which become stabilised. They range from objects,

viewpoint as singular, as units, continuous, coherent and stable. Of tradition as a false continuity, Foucault says that "it allows a reduction of the difference proper to every beginning, in order to pursue without discontinuity the endless search for the origin; tradition enables us to isolate the new against a back-ground of permanence, and to transfer its merit to originality, to genius, to the decisions proper to individuals."[101] From Foucault's point of view the stabilising force of institutions is exerted by all who take part in the discourse and through all of its practice. Foucault gives as example of a stabilised object a book and an oeuvre. At the same time he notes that these objects are not contained but refer to other books, texts and other stabilised objects. "[The book's] unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse."[102]

Applying the concept of consolidation and the 'suspension of units'[103] to my field of research, we can think of traditional art objects as being consolidated and consolidating by being part of the art discourse. Or, putting it differently, artists *and* the art institutions alike exert a stabilising force on *the institution of art*. Linking back to §1.1, we can consider the narrative of 'negation' and 'returns' and the "the currency of the historical object"[104] as results of institutional consolidation and the "suspension" of consolidation. Linking back to §1.2.3, where I described my analysis of what I call the exhibition event, we can consider the functions of artist, artwork, site and spectator as consolidated unities. Consolidated by all involved. Today's situation is that the distribution of the art object is *not necessarily* defined by the galleries and museums, but in the overall scheme of the artworld, the galleries and museums are still the centre of power, determining the distribution of art.[105]

Considering Foucault's concepts of continuity and discontinuity together as process or a fluctuation within a discourse, unlocked for me the possibility that the artist's practice of incorporating distribution (or the dispersal practice I aim to develop and test) could result not only in a spread out over place but also over time as discourse continues. The dispersed object could take part in both suspending institutionalisation *and* perpetuating it. As a consequence, a wide range of possible positions became available. Positions I could take in relation to all the stabilised entities, such as the institution, artist, artwork, site and spectator. Following on from these considerations I am going to describe a range of positions IC artists have taken in relation to the institution, to be able to situate my art and research practice in relevant situations.

enunciative modalities, and concepts, to strategies. Ibid., Ch.2. Applied to my research that would range from art work to artworld.

101 Ibid., 23.

102 Ibid., 26.

103 Ibid., 27-29.

104 Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," 107.

105 Brandon Taylor, *Art for the Nation. Exhibitions and the London Public 1747-2001* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, "Taste Buds. How to Cultivate the Art Market. Executive Summary," 6. and Hans van Maanen, *How to Study Art Worlds. On the Societal Functioning of Aesthetic Values* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009). This work shows the artworld as a system in which the distribution plays a major role.

1.4.3 Different Artist's Positions Regarding the Institution

To understand better artist's positions and practices regarding the institution, I have explored recent anthologies and other literature related to the art genre institutional critique (IC). Different authors divide IC into different phases based on generations or themes and the genealogy of different artist's practices regarding the institution.[106] Of particular relevance for this research is that, in general, current practices are pointing towards a new phase that can be characterised as an escape from the institution, or artists creating institutions. This new phase and renewed interest in institutional critique have led to a number of exhibitions, books and conferences.[107]

The main current debate focuses on relevance and social function of IC, and on artists' strategies currently deployed within IC. The key issue that emerged is expressed by Welchman as "the critical potential of art (and institutions), and whether – and if so, how – [it] can stimulate social or political change."[108] The issue of whether or not critique is still possible if the practice of institutional critique itself is institutionalised also receives ample attention. If there is no independent art practice 'outside' the institution of art (anymore), and the 'artworld' is now equated with the 'art market'[109] where private galleries have become powerful global institutions and biennials have expanded to become powerful brands, where do IC artists position themselves? Related to the issue of institutionalisation is the question of the art object in institutional critique. Within the practice of IC, the institution itself becomes the subject of the artist, and is turned into something that functions as "the art object." The art object might then make explicit its own institutionalisation.

If we could describe a general strategy of IC, we might say that the artists' aim is to resist the institutional determination of the conditions of art and to re-articulate the conditions from the artist's point of view. The conditions of art I interpret here in the widest sense of the word:

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106   In *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* Alberro structured the development of art practices associated with institutional critique into four thematic sections: Framing, Institution of Art, Institutionalising, and Exit Strategies. Alberro noted in the preface that the themes were more or less chronologically ordered, so one might assume they overlapped each other and they should not be considered as subsequent 'generations'. Alberro also noted that publishing an anthology was institutionalising an art practice that critiques this process. I would like to add that artists might have changed and developed their work, so the practice of one artist cannot be reduced to one theme or generation.

107   Nina Möntmann, *Art and its Institutions: Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations* (London: Black Dog, 2006); Vanessa Joan Müller and Nicolaus Schafhausen, eds., *Under Construction, Perspectives On Institutional Practice* (Köln: Walther König, 2006); John C. Welchman, ed. *Institutional Critique and After* (SoCCAS Symposium Vol. II) (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2006); Will Bradley and Charles Esche, eds., *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader* (London: Tate Publishing, 2007); Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge, Mass., London: MIT Press, 2009); Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray, eds., *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique* (London: MayFlyBooks, 2009); Simon Sheikh, "Our Instituent Practices Should Escape the Established Modes of Institutionalization" (paper presented at the Conference Open Institutions, Institutional Imagination and Cultural Public Sphere, Zagreb, Croatia, January 20-23 2011).

108   Welchman, *Institutional Critique and After (SoCCAS Symposium Vol. II)*, 12.

109   Graw, *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*. Graw argues that art and the market are impossible to separate, while at the same time they repel each other.

as production, mediation, exhibition, distribution and archival of art. Alberro calls it a "critical interpretive strategy" which means:

> [T]hat if one problematized and critically assessed the soundness of the claims advanced (often tacitly) by art institutions, then one would be in a better position to instantiate a nonrepressive art context. That gesture of negation, of negating the established conventions of art, was modernist at its core. It posited that the aesthetic exists in the critical exchange, in the debate, within the context of the artworld. It was also dialectical: its aim was to intervene critically in the standing order of things, with an expectation that these interventions would produce actual change in the relations of power and lead to genuine reconciliation.[110]

Within the overall strategy of negating the established conventions of art and reflecting critically on its own position in relation to the artworld, where do artists position themselves? To answer that question I have investigated the main ways in which artists have related to the institution of art, based on Alberro's thematic sections, but reworked into five tactical modes of art practices: to practice outside the institution, inside the institution, by taking flight from the institution, institution building, and hybrid practices. For each practice I name artists as examples, but this does not mean that all of their work can be located in one practice.

1. Outside The Institution

Artists practicing IC from this position work independently from the institution. They are interpreting the institution from the outside in, so to speak. Generally speaking IC practices from the 1960s and 70s which were based on an economic and political discourse about the questionable ways of how the apparently neutral museums ideologically framed art. They aimed to bring "awareness aesthetically as much as politically"[111] from a position outside (or independent from) the main institutional organisations, of the social order and power relationships enshrined by the museums, and galleries. Artists who worked from this position often created work that, once accepted by the institution, was easily absorbed within the institutional framework without the need for a change within those organisations.

Critique on the absorption by the institution led to a generation of artists who sought to gain more control over the conditions of art production and consumption by creating work that could be shown outside or independently from the institution. For example, Martha Rosler's appeal for widening the institution of art and the integration of art and life.[112] Like Rosler, Adrian Piper makes a plea for artists to change the institutional context, by becoming aware of institutionalisation and take more control over the "cultural interpretation" of their art.[113] Piper writes that "one

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110   Alexander Alberro, "Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass., London: MIT Press, 2009), 3.

111   Hans Haacke, "Provisional Remarks," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, Mass., London: MIT Press, 1971), 128.

112   Martha Rosler, "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass., London: MIT Press, 1979).

113   Piper, "Power Relations With Existing Art Institutions."

necessary condition of effective political reform of any social institution is a clear understanding of how that institution functions, and of one's own role in perpetuating it."[114]

Once artists became aware of their own role perpetuating institutionalisation their reaction can be traced along the following routes. Firstly, artists conceptualised their work as independently as possible from the institution and place their political identity above institutional validation of their work as art. Some artists in the late 1980s and early 1990s aimed to develop a "counter or alternative public sphere"[115], which led to a strategy of art that used accessible and non-elitist forms of communication, representation and distribution (for instance language, graphic design, fliers, billboards, newspaper advertisements, and videotapes). This became a precursor to what I will describe below under point 3: A Practice Of Taking Flight From The Institution.

Another possibility is to conceptualise the artworld as totally institutionalised, i.e., as artist we are by definition part of the artworld and we cannot practice outside of it (see point 2 below).

2. Inside The Institution

This category groups together artists who are aware of the process of institutionalisation, their own role in it, and chose to work within the institution, often in the form of interventions in the working practices of the institution. In effect, they consider (intentionally or not) the whole artworld as institutionalised. Andrea Fraser for instance said that: "Institutional Critique has *always* been institutionalised. It could only have emerged within and, like all art, can only function *within* the institution of art."[116] As a consequence, the question is how representation could be constructed to transcend the systems of power in general. Or the question is how to transcend the discrimination and oppression towards gender, race, and class within the artworld. At the heart of this question is a "moral contradiction"[117] between using the governing forms of the institution of art, (its ideology and values, ways of exhibiting, validation and status) which also means to communicate the ideology, while, at the same time, the artist aims to dismantle or to transform it from within. Besides Andrea Fraser, other examples of this practice can be found in work by Louise Lawler,[118] the Guerrilla Girls,[119] and Fred Wilson.[120]

3. Taking Flight From The Institution

Practices that could be described as those art projects that are critical of institutional critique. These practices reject the critique delivered by the historic forms of IC because they appear to be locked inside the structure of the institution of art. These artists (Bureau d'etudes,[121]

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114   Ibid., 272.
115   Alberro, "Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique," 12.
116   Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," 131.
117   Alberro, "Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique," 12.
118   Louise Lawler, Twice Untitled and Other Pictures (Looking Back), ed. Helen Molesworth (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
119   http://guerrillagirls.com/
120   Fred Wilson, A Critical Reader (London: Ridinghouse, 2011).
121   Bureau d'études, "Resymbolizing Machines: Art after Öyvind Fahlström," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology*

Wochenklausur[122]) challenge the wholesale institutionalisation and commercialisation of art. These artists often work in international collectives and autonomous groups, which develop "tactical media strategies"[123] as a way to intervene in social situations that are located outside the artworld. Some of the "Instituent practices" as envisioned by Raunig go beyond the institutionalised artworld and seek to change the conditions or context in which art is made and shown.[124]

> In terms of their new concept of resistance, the aim is to thwart a dialectical idea of power and resistance: a positive form of dropping out, a flight that is simultaneously an 'instituent practice'. Instead of presupposing conditions of domination as an immutable horizon and yet fighting against them, this flight changes the conditions under which the presupposition takes place.[125]

Raunig describes as example Park Fiction in Hamburg (1995-99) a "wild collective desire production" (alternative city planning) that grew into a tactic of appropriation and multiplication of the instituting events to interfere with the "authoritarian mode of instituting."[126] This mode of practice coincides with a shift towards participatory and socially engaged art practices, which take place outside the artworld, in the sense that they are often not validated as art by institutions. Instead of being labelled avant-garde (which in this context means an *inclusion* in the artworld), some art critics label these collaborative practices as community art, politically correct art or activist art. According to Kester, it is done with the intention to exclude these forms of cultural production from the validated, institutionalised art.[127] From my point of view, the exclusion from the institution of art is a consequence of the practice 'Taking Flight From The Institution.' Paradoxically these art practices are as much part of the artworld as the art practices mentioned in the previous two points.

Besides participatory and socially engaged art practices, the use of digital media and the internet provided an additional tool and "Art Platform" for critique and distribution.[128] Initially the internet was seen as an alternative space outside the institution. Coupled with instantaneous

of Artists' Writings, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2004).

122   Wochenklausur, "From the Object to the Concrete Intervention," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

123   See Tactical Media Network manifest David Garcia and Geert Lovink, "The Abc of Tactical Media," The Waag, the Society for Old and New Media, http://project.waag.org/tmn/frabc.html. For an overview of tactical media see Gregg Bordowitz, "Tactics inside and Out," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings,* ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2004).

124   [T]he concept of 'instituent practices' marks the site of a productive tension between a new articulation of critique and the attempt to arrive at a notion of 'instituting' after traditional understandings of institutions have begun to break down and mutate. (...) But while fleeing, 'instituent practice' searches for a weapon. Introducing monsters into existing institutions, it gives birth to new forms of institutions, monster institutions." Raunig and Ray, *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, xvii.

125   Raunig, "Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming."

126   ———, "Instituent Practices, No. 2: Institutional Critique, Constituent Power, and the Persistence of Instituting," 184. For a more extensive description of Park Fiction see Grant. H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011). 199-210.

127   See ———, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*: 31-32. who refers to Bourriaud and Clair Bishop.

128   For a reflection on online cooperation and strategies in 2004 see Geert Lovink and Trebor Scholz, eds., *The Art of Free Cooperation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2007). For Art Platform see Olga Goriunova, *Art Platforms and Cultural Production on the Internet* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

duplication, mixing and circulation a new form of online dispersion was explored by net artists, who considered their practice as independent from the institution of art. I will expand on digital media and net art in §1.5 where I will argue that net art shows signs of a return to the gallery based artworld and some artists are now reacting to the institutionalisation of digital cultural production.

4. Institution Building

"Institution builders"[129] are characterised by self-organisation and self-determination in a field between art and politics. Institution builders, such as Anton Vidokle et al., establish artist-run institutions, but their work often refers to, or takes place, within high profile (art) institutions. In contrast to the mode of practice described in point 3, this practice is generally accepted and validated as art. Vidokle, artist and founding director of e-flux, established an educational institution called *unitednationsplaza*.[130] He describes his artwork as creating enabling conditions:

> An artist can aspire to a certain sovereignty, which today implies that in addition to producing art, one also has to produce the conditions that enable such production, its channels of circulation. Sometimes the production of these conditions can become so critical to the production of work that it assumes the shape of the work itself.[131]

Whereas *unitednationsplaza* was an independent institution, not hosted by an existing art institution, a project called *Night School* (2008-09) was commissioned and hosted by the New Museum NY. According to Farzin, *Night School* is a school-as-exhibition, an "artistic-institutional hybrid."[132] A combination of a school which "promises a space to think about new forms of subjectivity" and an exhibition "which offers a chance to embody those subject positions."[133] In this hybrid situation, Vidokle still maintained that his project was independent of the museum. Although it was hosted by the museum and he interacted with them, he "does not completely rely on the museum for audience or funding, so that the work can also exist and circulate on its own, framed by itself."[134] He could do so because he used his other commercially successful projects (the e-flux journal and the e-flux announcements) for promotion and funding.

5. Hybrid practices?

Thinking through IC art practices and rework it to four tactical modes enabled me to clarify my position regarding the institution, and to propose a direction in which I wanted to develop the dispersed object, that is, in the direction of a hybrid practice. By adding this category and naming it a hybrid practice, I acknowledge the impossibility of defining and categorising art

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129   Maria Lind, "Delemmas of love, humor, and critique: notes on the work of Anton Vidokle.," in *Anton Vidokle: Produce, Distribute, Discuss, Repeat*, ed. Anton Vidokle and Brian Sholis (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009), 28. Lind also makes a link between Raunig's 'instituent practices' and 'initiators of new entities' such as Anton Vidokle.
130   See http://www.e-flux.com/projects/
131   Anton Vidokle, "Art Without Artists?," *e-flux Journal*, no. 16 (2010), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/136.
132   Media Farzin, "An Open History of the Exhibition-as-School," in *Anton Vidokle: Produce, Distribute, Discuss, Repeat*, ed. Anton Vidokle and Brian Sholis (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009), 41.
133   Ibid.
134   Ibid., 42. Quoting Anton Vidokle, "Opening Remarks," *Night School at the New Museum* (2008), www.newmuseum.org/.../nightschool/Anton_Vidokle_Night_School...pdf.

practices in detail. I want to open up a space for any practice not covered above and practices that fall in between or go beyond this type of categorisation. In addition to allowing space for other practices this mode of art practice highlights a state of mind where hybridity and changing one's own conventions is seen as a positive.

I started from a position of being aware of my own role in perpetuating institutionalisation (see practice 2 above), for instance, by working with installations, modes of display and archiving within galleries. However, I have also chosen to practice through acts of self-determination to renegotiate the relationships between and within a constellation of institution, beholder, and art object (see §1.1.2). By proposing to create dispersed objects of art that involves distribution by the artist I might not only create a multitude of objects I might also multiply or copy some of the distribution functions of the art institution. By dispersing the object over multiple sites, I speculated that the art object as a whole would not be available to the institution, nor to the spectator. I thought of creating an artwork that does not function 'properly,' creating an interference with the distribution and the exhibition event (both institutional functions), for instance, by organising a different circulation of the object. In addition, dispersed objects or hybrid objects might evade institutional classification. In other words, my initial ideas did not fit in the different modes of practice described above, except for some kind of hybrid between them. Hybridity became a very important characteristic of both my practice and of the dispersed object itself. Always changing, but questioning boundaries with the institution as point of reference. Because the institution is both reference point and boundary, or facilitating and consolidating, I will develop and test the dispersed object in relation to art institutions.

In addition to the physical gallery as institution, my work also takes place within a digital and online-based context. This was initiated mainly by my way of working with objects. They are not static, but transform and circulate between digital and tactile or physical materiality. In the following section I will continue with the theme of institutional critique within net art context to highlight specific issues from the context that influenced my thinking and development of the dispersed object.

1.5 Net Art Context
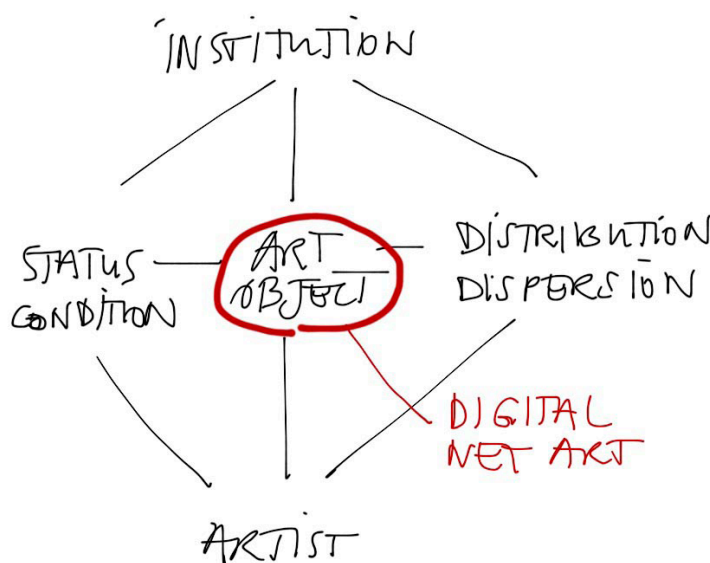
Figure 1-14 / Context of network and internet based art practices

It is possible to draw parallels between the development of net art (network and internet based art practices[135]) and institutional critique. Above (see 3.Taking Flight From The Institution), I noted that early internet based art practice positioned itself initially 'outside' the traditional structures of the artworld. This position became untenable when net art and digital[136] cultural production in general became mainstream and institutionalised. As a consequence, the position of the net artist could not be taken for granted anymore, and it led to internet artists taking up different positions regarding the institution or gallery again. Positions that are not unlike those exercised by IC artists. I do not wish to set up a duality between traditional art distributed through galleries and art that is based on internet cultures, if anything my work highlights the interconnectedness of the 'real' and the 'virtual'. What I am proposing is that the art object in both realms, gallery based art and internet based art, is subject to institutionalising and stabilising forces, as well as to creative forces who want to escape or resist and determine the condition of the art object as well as the dispersion of it. It is relevant for my research because I am going to create dispersed art objects that circulate through both gallery and internet based contexts.

In the next two sections, I will look at two relevant positions developed in net art in relation to art institutions and dispersion. These positions are: online art platforms, and art practices combining online and gallery contexts. In the last section §1.5.3 I propose to push further the practice of 'merged online and gallery platforms' and I ask what if we rethink merged platforms as hybridising practices or going beyond a territory? This section is developed and relates most closely to the work described in Chapter 4 and 5.

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135 I use the term net art in a wide sense of all art practices which reflect on network culture, internet and its users (See §1.5.1).

136 The term digital see Glossary and §1.6.1.

1.5.1 Creating an Institution or Platform as Artwork on the Internet

For a few of these [net] artists, working with the Net was a way to operate around the institutions of the art distribution system. For German-American artist Wolfgang Staehle, founding the art-mailbox The Thing in New York in the early nineties was an act of practical "institutional critique," as he now recalls. "I thought it was absurd to criticize the art distribution institutions within those same institutions. That's like simply rearranging the furniture. I didn't think anything would come of it. That's why I tried to really do something outside these institutions. I think one of the reasons The Thing worked was that the traditional art distribution network truly didn't notice it at all. There was also the thrill of being able to feel like a small conspiratorial band." For other artists as well, the Net is itself a distribution channel through which one can present work without the long march through the museums and galleries. [137]

The above quote is from the beginning of net.art (written with a dot) which refers to art which used the internet specifically as its material, site and means of distribution, or "net-specific"[138] as Baumgärtel called it. According to Josephine Bosma 'net.art' became infamous because critics focused mainly on its "subversive or anti-institutional attitude."[139] An attitude which could be related to the notion that the digital era was the new paradigm, a break from the conventional analogue based culture and technology.[140] The term net art (without a dot) is later in origin and refers to a much wider cultural production, but still includes a critical and independent attitude. According to Bosma[141] the net art context is not defined exclusively by technology, nor is it made exclusively to be shown on the internet or medium specific. From my perspective net art is relevant when it is exploring and questioning art distribution networks, social and technological, within the wider cultural sphere. The net art context is itself a network and created many new 'entanglements' and platforms as art object facilitating other artwork and its distribution. This happened initially by a small group of artists independently from the galleries and art institutions.

A relevant example of a net artist's strategy to 'work from within' is Olga Goriunova. Just as in the IC context, a number of artists use a strategy of working from the inside, or embedded if you like, with the intention to reflect on and make visible the context they work in, and determine their own production and distribution. In the process of doing so they often develop new ways

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137 Tilman Baumgärtel, "The Materiality Test. net.art: A Complete Break With Tradition? Nope. Tilman Baumgaertel Connects the Dots.," *Rewired* (1997), http://archive.today/8IdaX.

138 Ibid.

139 Josephine Bosma, *Nettitudes. Let's Talk Net Art* (Rotterdam: Institute of Network Cultures & NAi Publishers, 2011). 126.

140 "I will call 'monoculture' anything before the advent of the Internet[...] I will call 'Internet' what has corrupted monoculture, tended towards its demise." Alan Sondheim, "The Uselessness of Monoculture," *Dispersive Anatomies, Leonardo Electronic Almanac* 16, no. 4-5 (2008), http://www.leoalmanac.org/leonardo-electronic-almanac-volume-16-no-4-5-april-may-2008/.

141 Net art is "art based in or on Internet cultures. [...] [But] net art's basis in Internet cultures means that a physical (hard-wired or wireless) connection to the Internet is not necessary in individual net artworks. [...] The 'net' in net art is both a social and a technological reference [...]." Bosma, *Nettitudes. Let's Talk Net Art*: 24.

of working. So while IC artists might work from within the museum, net art artists might work within digital communication networks. Olga Goriunova coined the term "art platform": a net art practice in the form of a collaborative organisational structure that enables other artists to create and publish their work online. In the quote below Goriunova described the art platform as a "self-organized institution" and its modular structure[142] in relation to other networks or websites.

> An art platform is a network platform that produces art, here understood broadly as a process of creative living with networks. A 'classical' art platform differentiates itself from other networks and sites by a number of the relations it establishes and by those that emerge from within it. As a self-organized institution, an art platform is flexible; it is informed and codeveloped by users and the aesthetic work that it propels. An art platform can also take the form of a crossroads at the intersection of several systems or actors of different scales and as such may be a momentary expression of creative power. Therefore, in practical terms, an art platform can be a stand-alone website that, together with other actors, forms an ecology of aesthetic production, but it might also take place as a subsection of a large platform, or even as a space between a corporate service, artists' work, hacking, collaborative engagement, and a moment of aesthetic fecundity. [143]

The art platform as a self-organised institution will have to organise its own procedures to select, curate and display the artworks it facilitates. Guriunova describes the issues involved very well with the example of *Runme.org*, a "software art repository" set up as a "collaborative open project."[144] The taxonomy the organisers developed for the categorisation of software art reflected their philosophy to on the one hand organise and facilitate and on the other hand "to preserve the irregularities and chaos of the area: all in all, while making art, to go beyond the known confines of art. It was decided that *Runme.org* should start off with a large number of 'categories' that would be diverse, contradictory, and funny to work as creeping roots that would let the plant grow stronger."[145] Guriunova describes this process as a "strategy of collective declaration that was foundational to the movement [of software art]."[146] The ongoing process of gathering, filtering, categorising and featuring work can be seen as the work or the art platform in action. It is a way to aggregate and disperse work which at the same time mediates it by establishing procedures that are kept open for change.

I describe Goriunova's art platform as a form of practice that works from within online contexts. In her book she makes clear that art platforms are not about the end product and the structures within which they are embedded, but about the way art emerges or actualises through the doing of it. It is about the maker, user or artist who's autocreativity and self-determination actualises culture, as it happens online or with software, transcending boundaries of its own ecology.[147] If we follow this line of thought, we might go beyond the context of digital and online

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142   See § 1.6.1 where modularity is described as one of the attributes of digital objects.

143   Goriunova, *Art Platforms and Cultural Production on the Internet*: 2.

144   Amy Alexander et al., *Runme.org*, 2003-ongoing. Runme.org is a software art repository, launched in January 2003. It is an open, moderated database to which people are welcome to submit projects they consider to be interesting examples of software art. , Runme.org.

145   Goriunova, *Art Platforms and Cultural Production on the Internet*: 76-77.

146   Ibid., 78.

147   Ibid., Ch.3

environments and combine the online with a gallery based practice.

1.5.2 Merged Online and Gallery Platforms

The notion of heterogeneity, cross-platform or transcending boundaries between online and offline gallery environments has been identified by different terms,[148] such as 'telematics,'[149] 'post-digital,'[150] 'new-aesthetic'[151] and 'post-internet.'[152] However, we might think of the online and offline artworld as merged or hyper-connected and expect net art to be accepted and absorbed within the institutions, but still today only few high profile art institutions have specific digital art and online based art programs.[153] Lovink, for instance, described the relationship between high profile art institutions and net art as a precarious one.[154] What has changed, after a hyper convergence of media,[155] ubiquity of smart phones and tablets, coupled with faster and greater accessibility of the internet, and changes of use and structure of the Web itself (think of Web 2.0, where certain social network sites and search engines became dominant hubs within the World Wide Web [156]) is that the artworld and its institutions are digitalising with the effect that institutions now operate across online and offline platforms, including their distribution and publication activities. According to Sanches the interconnection of the seasonal cycles of exhibitions and the production cycles of art critics and print media have dramatically changed. He suggested that after 2011 with the iphone and blogs, writing, publishing and reading has entered a very different situation with far reaching consequences:

> [A] consequence of this process is that consensus can now be built much faster, in a matter of hours rather than months or years. Yet this increased speed also disables the judgmental element of consensus in favor of collective attention. What had been a process of legitimation, attributable to

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148   All these terms are just as problematic as the term new media if taken literally. They are used with and without a hyphen and their meaning has often changed over time.

149   Roy Ascott and Edward A. Shanken, *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness*, pbk. ed. (Berkeley, Calif. ; London: University of California Press, 2007).

150   Kim Cascone, "The Aesthetics of Failure: 'Post-Digital' Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music," *Computer Music Journal* 24, no. 4 (2000).

151   James Bridle, "The New Aesthetic," http://new-aesthetic.tumblr.com/about.

152   Gene McHugh, *Post Internet: Notes on the Internet and Art 12.29.09 > 09.05.10* (Brescia: LINK Editions, 2011).

153   The New Museum in New York is a good example. It houses Rhizome.org and it commissions and shows new net art on their website as an integral part of its program which also includes physical exhibitions. <http://www.newmuseum.org>. In the UK, Tate approached net art as a 'project' called Intermedia Art which ran for 3 years ending December 2010. Another example is Serpentine Online. The leading space in London for net art is a small gallery Furtherfield.org with online and gallery based projects and exhibitions. <http://www.furtherfield.org>

154   See Lovink for a discussion of 'New Media Art' and its precarious position within institutions. G. Lovink, *Zero Comments: Blogging and Critical Internet Culture* (Routledge, 2008). 39-81.

155   Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

156   For an overview of these developments see for instance A. Briggs and P. Burke, *Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Wiley, 2010).

particular institutions or critical bodies, now becomes a process of simple visibility, attributable to the media apparatus itself, largely outside the channels of print media and cumbersome zeitgeist-encapsulating exhibitions. How these media phenomena might relate to mutations in more traditional distribution structures, such as the emergence of an almost continuous succession of art fairs and the subdivision of monthly exhibitions into microdurations through performance and events programming, remains unclear. But as the 2012 Whitney Biennial demonstrated, the function of the biennial format has clearly become more [...] more a retrospective than a preview. Art is no longer discovered in biennials and fairs and magazines, but on the phone.[157]

As a consequence the determination of which art (that is art in general) is legitimised, validated and shown is not only an institutional process anymore, but also based on visibility through exposure within media and internet culture.[158] An exposure which relies on artists' and users' online interaction and the distributed nature of digital objects. Exponents of new aesthetics and post internet art, for instance, rely heavily on aggregating websites such as tumblr and vimeo (see Introduction). On the other side art collectors use the internet to inform themselves and are beginning to buy art online.[159]

In view of the above we could say that the art institutions are embracing the digital age, but not necessarily net art. However, some internet based art is gaining wider acceptance within the artworld and galleries. I refer here to artists developing a new way of working, which go beyond perceived barriers between online-digital and conventional institutions, and which I have described in the introduction as 'post-internet art.'[160] These internet based artists reflected on their own situation outside or independent of the conventional institutions and became critical of perceived divisions within the artworld. Their practice moved to the direction of overcoming, negating or hybridising those opposing contexts.[161] Following my narrative of negations and returns this is a double negation because their practice is a return to the gallery and physical object making, while taking on board the journey they have made through net art. These cross-platform ways of working have led to many new terms, which reflect a rethinking of the art object in relation to networked culture. Ceci Moss described these in a recent article "Expanded

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157   Michael Sanchez, "2011: Art and Transmission," *Artforum* 51, no. 10 (2013).

158   See also Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*.
"[C]reative dark matter [...] makes up the bulk of the artistic activity produced in our post-industrial society. However, this type of dark matter is invisible primarily to those who lay claim to the management and interpretation of culture—the critics, art historians, collectors, dealers, museums, curators, and arts administrators. It includes makeshift, amateur, informal, unofficial, autonomous, activist, non-institutional, self-organized practices—all work made and circulated in the shadows of the formal artworld, some of which might be said to emulate cultural dark matter by rejecting artworld demands of visibility, and much of which has no choice but to be invisible." Ibid., 1.

159   A recent survey of art collectors bears this out. 'Collecting in the Digital Age' showed that internet platforms and online auctions account already as a place of purchase for 34% of the surveyed art collectors, and most collectors (95%) inform themselves about the artworks online. "Primarily, they employ [the internet] for researching specific art objects and for the initial approach before a purchase." On the other hand, most collected art is still wall based (collecting paintings 89% and works on paper 63% of respondents) and the gallery was still the place to buy art from (73%). INFAS. "Collecting in the Digital Age : International Collectors Survey by AXA Art." Cologne: AXA ART Versicherung AG, 2014.

160   I use the term post-internet art here in a general sense.

161   Connor.

Internet Art and the Informational Milieu," and added one of her own:

> Post internet, post media, post media aesthetics, radicant art, dispersion, formatting, meme art, circulationism—all recent terms to describe networked art that does not use the internet as its sole platform, but instead as a crucial nexus around which to research, transmit, assemble, and present data, online and offline. I think all of the writers advancing these terms share a sense that since the rise of mainstream internet culture and social media, art is more fluid, elastic, and dispersed. [...] I'd like to introduce another word to the list—expanded. Drawing from the definition of expansion as "the action or process of spreading out or unfolding; the state of being spread out or unfolded," I consider "expansion" not as an outward movement from a fixed entity, but rather, in light of data's dispersed nature, a continual becoming. Expanded internet art is not viewed as hermetic, but instead as a continuously multiple element that exists within a distributed, networked system.[162]

Moss links art that is dispersed and expanded to "a continual becoming," just as Guriunova did with the term art platforms (see previous section), and this is a characteristic I started to recognise in my own dispersal practice. Another aspect of the term 'expanded internet art' I want to push further. Moss's article makes it clear that she still considers net art as the home-base: it is still the centre. So what struck me going through the literature is that in IC and net art artists talk about their practice as located somewhere and moving in relation to the institution. In other words a narrative is created with a home base, a field of practice, and a trajectory. This way of locating and categorising might be one of the ways in which the institution constructs and stabilises a notion of art which I described earlier as traditional (see §1.2.3). My criticism on the use of terms such as expanded art, or post-internet or post-media is that they denote a stabilising narrative by staking out a territory. From my point of view the territory is a merged online and offline ecology. I am interested in finding a way to rethink the status of the art object through a dispersal practice which is about circulation not territories. It might be described as transcending boundaries, but it is following its own rationale, no matter where it goes.

1.5.3 Proposing Art Beyond Territory?

Aggregating the above we can say that despite the paradigm change of the digital age the 'escape' of artists from conventional galleries to internet based art has in the end not led to an escape from institutionalisation. Both the internet and art institutions institutionalise and stabilise art practices and art objects no matter if they are digital or non-digital. Linking it back to Buchloh's essay and developments in IC, we can say internet based art follows in its own way a cycle of negation or attack strategies followed by a return to institutions. I do find that the art practice I call above 'merged online and gallery platforms' describes my own practice quite well. Pushing this practice further, I wondered what if we rethink the cross-platform territory and hybridising practices as going beyond territory? If we follow this line of thought it might mean rethinking the narrative of working inside and outside a particular field, and develop a way of

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162   Moss. Quoted without original references.

working based on a particular quality of dispersed objects: circulation. This means the artist creates objects that can be distributed between online and offline worlds, and the artist need to be able to work within any position, or beyond territory.

To investigate the background of the typical construction of the narrative 'inside and outside a particular field' I looked at one of the influential essays by Walter Benjamin "The Author as Producer,"[163] in which he saw the role of the author/artist as engineer,[164] or as an 'operative,'[165] someone who intervened within a real life situation in order to transform it. Benjamin addressed the question of the author's strategy in relation to autonomy, or how did political awareness in a work of art become a tool for change? The practice of "working from within" or "Umfunctionierung"[166] not only "destroys the conventional separation between genres, between writer and poet, scholar and popularizer, but (...) it questions even the separation between author and reader."[167] The author/artist has to "rethink the notions of literary forms or genres if we are to find forms appropriate to the literary energy of our time."[168] The methodology of the 'committed' artist, described by Benjamin, had a clear trajectory in mind: towards a revolution-ary transformation of society. A utopianism that resonated with, but was also different from institutional critique. The former presented an ideal, while the latter held up a mirror. Benjamin also pointed out the difficulties of changing a system of production and publication from within, because the established institutions adapt to change "without ever seriously putting into question its own continued existence or that of the class which owns it."[169]

The issue of institutionalisation, which Benjamin aptly anticipated, happened to net art, institutional critique and other art genres that attacked the status of the art object. So if we take on the one hand institutionalisation and on the other hand artist's strategies as both pushing against the art object, how would that work with hybrid digital and non-digital objects, which do not belong anywhere? Hybrid objects in a hybrid field where there is no hard distinction between digital and tactile, and between online and offline. Places through which the art objects and practices freely float, with no home base, no exit? Only becoming and committing itself to a situation temporarily; disappearing temporarily, only to spring up somewhere else committing itself to possibly a different set of values?

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163 Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Understanding Brecht* (London and New York: Verso, 1998).

164 Ibid., 102. See also Geoff Cox and Joasia Krysa, eds., *Engineering Culture: On 'the Author as (Digital) Producer'*, Data Browser (New York: Autonomedia, 2005).

165 After Sergey Tretiakov, author of Sergei Tretiakov, "The Biography of the Object," ["Biografiia veshchi," in Literatura fakta, ed. Nikolai Chuzhak (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1929), pp. 66–70.] *October*, no. 118 (2006).

166 "working from within" was coined by Brecht as "Umfunctionierung" [reworking]. Benjamin quotes him as saying "The publication of the Versuche, marks a point at which certain works are not so much intended to represent individual experiences (i.e. to have the character of finished works) as they are aimed at using (transforming) certain existing institutes and institutions." Together with other examples, taken from Soviet and German contexts at that time, Benjamin shows that by giving the public the tools to intervene in the production process, by allowing interruptions, montage, by seeing the work as a laboratory instead of a finished work of art, artists are to "expose the present" instead of creating illusions. "Umfunctionierung" translated as 'functional transformation', or a reworking of existing functions Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," 93.

167 Ibid., 90.

168 Ibid., 89.

169 Ibid., 94.

What then might function as a common starting point for my own practice with IC and net art, is that the artist makes no distinction between online and offline contexts as both are considered institutionalised. As we have seen, the already negated object of art in conceptual art, institutional critique and net art keeps returning. To acknowledge and work with this process I propose a dispersed object, which is not so much an absence of 'the object' than an absence of stability, unity and place. A practice not focused on an end product, but on an ongoing actualisation, mutation and circulation and as a consequence, the artist could be working beyond the confines of a medium or specific context. Consciously or not the artist's practice works against the stabilising factors of the institutions (be it in mortar or cybernetic).

Above I have described processes of institutional consolidation of art objects (§1.4.2). If we consider the world wide web as another context that institutionalises and stabilises objects then I have to consider how the materiality of digital objects operates in this environment. In the next chapter §1.6, I will focus on the materiality of the digital object to understand the characteristics of digital objects and how its boundaries are maintained. This is going to support the development of the dispersed objects as entities, which might be moving through both worlds, analogue and digital.

1.6   Digital object

In the previous sections I have identified the direction in which I wanted to develop the dispersed object in order to rethink the status of the art object. I propose a dispersed object, which is not so much an absence of 'the object' than an absence of stability, unity and place, a continual becoming through circulation. Figure 1-16 shows the art object as being influenced by both artist and institution. In case of a dispersed object that circulates online we could say that the World Wide Web is the institution, and within this context the condition of the object needs to be constantly renegotiated. To support the development of the dispersed object, I am going to explore how the object is stabilised in the digital and online domain.

In section §1.6.1 I will engage with the materiality of digital objects to understand its ambiguous nature and its distributedness. The modularity of digital objects leads me to consider it as a way to structure the many different components or entities of the dispersed object. In the second section §1.6.2 I will explore practices that explore and extend the fluidity of digital objects by using the attributes of digital objects positively. Examples of these practices are remix, aggregation, and circulation. This section is developed and relates most closely to the work described in chapter five and six.

1.6.1 Digital and Physical Objects

The word digital is often used in the sense of the opposite of physical, but that is strictly speaking not the case. According to Galloway: "Digital means the digits: the fingers and toes. And since most of us have a discrete number of fingers and toes, the digital has come to mean, by extension, *any mode of representation* rooted in *individually separate and distinct units.*"[My emphasis].[170] We might say that a digital object refers to an entity that exists as or is represented by individually separate and distinct units. See also §6.1 section 'Telling the Archive'. The term digital object in art has an ambiguity about it, because it might infer that the art object is made on a computer or that it is not a physical tangible object. We need to acknowledge that digital objects have also a physical materiality and don't equate necessarily with terms such as electronic or computer based.[171]

A digital artifact qua object [172] refers to entities which can be in constant flux, in different

170   Alexander R. Galloway, "Something About the Digital [A catalog essay written in 2011 for the exhibition "Chaos as Usual," curated by Hanne Mugaas at the Bergen Kunsthall in Norway.]," cultureandcommunication.org, http://cultureandcommunication.org/galloway/something-about-the-digital#more-385.

171   For a discussion of the term digital see: Florian Cramer, "What is 'Post-Digital'?," *A Peer-Reviewed Journal About (APRJA)* 3, no. 1 (2014), http://www.aprja.net/?p=1318.

172   To disambiguate a physical tactile object from a digital object the term digital artifact qua object is often used [Kallinikos], or digital object [as in doi: Digital Object Identifier]. Sometimes the terms dispersed object or digital media is used in specific contexts. However here I will use the term digital object alongside and interchangeable with the term digital artifact qua object.

places at the same time or at different levels of detail. For instance a digital text file, or video file appears on our desktop as one item, but in reality it is an aggregation of data and software, and it might be located in different blocks on a hard drive, or on different computers, in different variations and copies depending on time. On a smaller level individual pixels and glyphs are also digital objects which are combined through software in the background to produce a picture on screen. In other words the digital object has an interface, an onscreen mediation that looks like a stable physical object, for the purpose of human interaction, while actually the object is something different. Seeing the ambiguous status of digital objects a number of authors aimed to disambiguate the state of affairs.

There are a number of attributes which distinguish digital objects from physical objects. According to Kallinikos et al.[173] a digital artifact qua object is editable, interactive, reprogrammable, and distributable. Further more they say that these attributes "stem from the nature of digitality and are further supported by the modularity and granularity of the ecosystems in which digital objects are embedded. (Yoo et al. 2010)."[174] I will explore the key attribute distributedness in more detail, in order to support my practical work. First I shall sum up the three other attributes because distributedness is shown to be the result of the other attributes (after Kallinikos et al.).

First editability: the numerical nature of the material means it could in principle always be changed, modified, updated, and copied, down into minute detail. The object's numerical nature means that in principle these changes can be any mathematical procedure. Second interactivity: the objects are not isolated but designed with human interaction in mind. The objects are packaged with an interface, so that humans are able to interact with it, which creates a layered object. The object reacts in a specific way to human action. The human interaction is to explore and use the object, not necessarily to edit it. Third openness, reprogrammability or interoperability: digital objects could be accessed and changed by other digital objects, usually software. For instance a video file could be found, read, or opened via other programmes, aggregated automatically in search lists, aggregated and edited in new combinations with video editing software, etc. Fourth distributedness: as a result of interactivity (human) and interoperability (by other digital objects), digital objects are often an aggregation and (re)combination of other digital objects, which are most probably not located in one place. They could be distributed within one computer and/or within a network of computers. Thus, digital objects are borderless and transient. "In comparison to packed and single media like books, they lack inherent borders that bound them as obvious entities. [...] [T]hese borders have to be maintained technologically. Furthermore, distributedness makes possible various combinations out of a larger ecology of items, procedures, and programs, a condition that renders digital objects fluid and crucially transfigurable."[175]

173   Jannis Kallinikos, Aleksi Aaltonen, and Attila Marton, "The Ambivalent Ontology of Digital Artifacts," *MIS Quarterly: Management Information Systems* 37, no. 2 (2013).
174   Ibid., 360.
175   Ibid.

From my point of view the above attributes mean that the digital artifact qua object is not stable, as form and as content, unless humans set the boundaries. Institutions for instance might want to stabilise a digital artifact for archival or commercial reasons. Setting boundaries or what Kallinikos calls 'maintaining borders technologically' happens by restricting some or all of the above attributes, making it less editable, interactive, reprogrammable, and distributable. For instance a PDF file can be made to be read-only, or print once, an mp3 sound file could be made so it can't be copied, etc. 'Maintaining borders' also means that access or permissions are given to certain users who are allowed in and are able to use the digital object in its unadulterated state. In addition to this, there is always a way to hack into the code and edit the file. The consequence of, and reason for restricting the attributes is that it makes the digital object less 'digital', that is, more like a physical tactile object.

The fluid and transfigurable characteristics are further pronounced by the modular architecture of the digital objects and the wider structure in which they are embedded. The main structural attribute of digital objects is its modularity. Manovich calls it the "fractal structure of new media," [176] meaning the structure is the same no matter what scale one looks at. On each scale digital objects are organised as a collection of relatively independent, self-sufficient entities or modules, which in turn can be aggregated into larger scale artifacts, and so on, while each module keeps its own identity. A website for instance might contain many images and text files, including a PDF file. The PDF file itself is independent, and structured as an assembly of text or pictures as data, different font files, instructions for lay out, printing and access, etc. The individual fonts are in turn also assemblies of multiple files, one for each character, etc. One of the consequences of a modular structure is that it allows modules to be switched, changed, deleted without the whole becoming meaningless. It also allows objects to be wrapped up within software, or behind several layers of interfaces, which parcels out access depending on the competence of the user. As Manovich notes, the notion of interaction and the user need to be qualified. Usually only programmers access the underlying algorithmic files and are able to change the unique properties of digital media. Other users only interact with it through various application software. Manovich concludes that: "'digital media' does not have any unique properties by itself. What used to be 'properties of a medium' are now operations and affordances defined by software."[177] The attributes and modular structure of digital objects afford certain usage, depending on the context in which the objects operate or circulate, which in practice has led to cultural practices, such as remixing, aggregation, distribution, tagging and data mining. Another consequence is that qualities linked to physical objects such as sole-authorship and originality are not the default position anymore. They are replaced by co-authorship, open source and multiple versions, unless, as we have seen above, certain attributes are restricted.

As a result of the attributes discussed above, the development of dispersed objects in the form of hybrid digital and non-digital objects needs to take into account that the object itself is

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176   Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Leonardo (Cambridge, Mass., London: MIT Press, 2001). 51-52.
177   Lev Manovich, "Software," in *Depletion Design: A Glossary of Network Ecologies*, ed. Carolin Wiedemann, Ned Rossiter, and Soenke Zehle (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2012), 143.

unstable within an unstable context. The object and context are unstable, because the dispersed object is potentially going to circulate online and offline (that is, going beyond a territory) and circulate and hybridise between different conditions of materiality, be it digital or analogue, virtual or tactile. The question for the artist (who is going to determine the condition of the dispersed art object) is then how is the art object stabilised?

In the context of this research it is significant that the dispersed object has an ambiguous ontology similar to the digital object. For this research project, I choose to focus on and to enhance the distributedness of the object, now with the knowledge that there is always an ambiguity at work. In a digital context, an ambiguity or contradiction between its technical numerical condition of 'transfigurability' which means it is not like a stable physical object, and its functional condition of 'being presented and used as if it is a stable (physical) object'. This last point means that if users, owners and artists think of the digital object as a physical (art) object, they might like to have the same control over it, i.e., they might confine it within borders to control access, preserve it to a certain 'original' state. In other words, the status of the digital object becomes consolidated through traditions build on the physical object.

From an artist's perspective modularity or a fractal structure is a promising way to conceptualise a structure for dispersed objects, because the link between the different elements is not based on one thing that is split apart, but on semi-independent modules which are created over time and add or combine with each other. Some modules will exist inside another: some will exist alongside something else. Modularity is not confined to digital artifacts. In nature it exists, for instance, in the form of symbiosis, where different organisms live semi-independently from each other, and are able to create different relationships to each other. I will come back to symbiosis in §2.4. I have explored a modular way to structure the different entities of my project in practice in project *TITLE(date)* by creating work in the form of software, tools and ways of working which allow different combinations to be created as and when it is needed, see §5.2.

1.6.2 Stabilising Unstable Circulating Objects

As we have seen above Kallinikos asserted that: "[B]orders [of digital objects] have to be maintained technologically" to which I would like to add that the digital objects have to be maintained institutionally, because it appears that to maintain the digital artifacts as objects relies on a wide range of technological and social agreements. Seeing it from this perspective one can say that digital objects are designed to be incomplete.[178] They are embedded in, and formed by a network of associations including human interaction, through which they perform, and through which they are constantly modified or 'updated' in order to function in a ever changing culture. As Garud et al. suggested, incompleteness is another factor that goes against institutional

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178   Raghu Garud, Sanjay Jain, and Philipp Tuertscher, "Incomplete by Design and Designing for Incompleteness," *Organization Studies* 29, no. 3 (2008).

practices which rely on stable documents and objects.

> [R]ather than pose a threat, incompleteness acts as a trigger for action. Even as actors try to complete what has been left incomplete, they generate new problems as well as new possibilities that continually drive the design. In this way, incompleteness is both a cause and consequence of the dynamics of organizing in contemporary environments.[179]

The maintaining borders of digital objects comes very much to the fore if we consider the process of digital objects' commodification.[180] When an artist wants to sell a digital artwork, instead of publishing it online, it needs to be unique and singular enough to distinguish it from freely accessible online versions. Special measures have to be taken to create a commodified digital object, because it goes against its digital nature which is transitory, borderless and distributed, i.e., a digital object is in essence not a finished object and not exchangeable in a discrete transaction. Some of the solutions arrived at are in the same vein as the tried and tested limited edition and copyrights, which originate respectively from artists and publishers reacting to the effects of the printing press.[181] The limited edition version for digital objects is achieved by marking in some way a particular instance of the work. See for instance Rafaël Rozendaal, who created abstract dynamic visual work in the form of websites.[182] They exist as code, and perform each time when someone views a particular internet site. They can be sold as a unique piece, because each website has a unique 'address.'[183] A variant of this scheme are digital works which are a documentation of its online/onscreen performance.[184] Screen shots, photographs, videos etc which captures the work in a particular time and place. For instance, work by Jon Rafman who created videos and photographs of his explorations of google's street view or computer gaming.[185] A variant that goes further in the direction of 3D objects occurs when the artwork for sale might be an installation of the apparatus, a particular hardware and software combination that performs the work. For instance, work by Carlo Zanni which is based around the interface between net art and the art market. *Altarboy Cyrille*, 2003 is a commodified net artwork that is produced as an object. The owner of the piece can decide to plug it in and connect it to the internet.[186] Zanni considers the decision about the condition of the artwork lies with the buyer: "[T]he traditional concept of property could be transformed in something about

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179   Ibid., 352.

180   See Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge University Press, 1988). It could be argued that everything an artist makes is by definition a commodity, i.e. made to be sold, to earn a living. However the majority of artists do not make a living from their art. Their objects (by choice or not) are not in the process of exchange. Hence no transaction, no commodity.

181   For a history of copyrights law see Lawrence Lessig, "Free culture : the nature and future of creativity," (2005): 85-94.

182   http://www.newrafael.com/websites

183   Rozendaal created a contract that specifies that the owner "make[s] sure the work remains intact as long as possible". See http://www.artwebsitesalescontract.com/

184   I choose not to expand my research into the field of performance and performativity in order to keep my research focused.

185   http://thecomposingrooms.com/2012/#j-rafman ; and http://9-eyes.com/

186   http://zanni.org/wp/index.php/portfolio/altarboy-cyrille/

MAINTENANCE. The collector as a Maintainer."[187] These words reflect the concept that the distributedness of digital objects has as consequence that the status of the work cannot be taken for granted and needs to be negotiated between artist and collector. As a result the actions of a collector becomes part of the work.

Internet based work often creates multiple editions which brings up the question of how different versions relate to each other, and it problematises originality.[188] Instead of thinking about creating (limited) editions for digital objects, we could also modify the copyrights procedure for digital objects. These are all different ways in which the makers of the object limit access or limit the ability to create a copy to a number of persons (or computers). We could also implement the opposite tactic of removing (parts of) the copyrights limitation, i.e., we could replace 'copyrights reserved' with a creative commons licence, copy left or other open access licence. Again there are many variations of this scheme, from different forms of participation and giving the public open access to (software) tools,[189] art platforms,[190] internet surfing,[191] to simply removing copyrights or giving access to files to download.[192] By appropriating tools designed to control distribution, for example branding and watermarking digital photographs, artists are able to subvert the control mechanism. See, for example, Harm van den Dorpel's project *Watch the Throne*.[193]

Summarising the above, we have seen that the ambiguous ontology of digital objects gives artists/designers/users options of how to use the uncertainty and ambivalence around digital objects. Options on one side of the spectrum lead to "maintaining borders" aimed at restricting fluidity. Options on the other side of the spectrum lead to practices that explore and extend the fluidity of digital objects by using the attributes of digital objects positively. These practices are identified by terms, such as remix,[194] aggregation[195] and mutation or 'circulationism' (after Hito

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187   http://zanni.org/wp/index.php/portfolio/economics/

188   Zanni considers some of his work as being both a unique piece and an edition. "Artworks based on a certain media that, since its inception is unconcerned with the difference between original and copy, should be sold like books, music and films." Paul Waelder, "An Interview With Carlo Zanni : On Pay-per-view Net-Art," *ETC media*, no. 95 (2012).

189   See for instance Open Source Software: http://sourceforge.net/. See also GNU: "The idea of the Free Software Movement is that computer users deserve the freedom to form a community. You should have the freedom to help yourself, by changing the source code to do whatever you need to do. And the freedom to help your neighbor, by redistributing copies of programs to other people. Also the freedom to help build your community, by publishing improved versions so that other people can use them." https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-software-intro.html

190   After Olga Goriunova. See Goriunova, *Art Platforms and Cultural Production on the Internet*.

191   http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/public-access-me

192   Aram Bartholl dead drops (2012) : http://deaddrops.com/

193   By remaking the throne from the HBO series "The Iron Throne" and dispersing images from its exhibition performance with his own watermark, van den Dorpel created an even more ambiguous object. An object between film prop and art object, official branded photographs and installation documentation. See https://www.facebook.com/grouphab.it

194   Campanelli, *Web Aesthetics: How Digital Media Affect Culture and Society*.

195   For a discussion of the term aggregate to describe contemporary art see David Joselit, "On Aggregators," *October*, no. 146 (2013): 10-12. In an attempt to lay out a "historical template through which to see contemporary art" Joselit finds that "The postmodern 'dialect' developed from Conceptual art during the late '70s and '80s

Steyerl).

A remix practice appropriates other (art) objects and combines it in a new way. It creates in effect hybrids. Aggregation could be seen as the opposite of distribution and is linked to dynamic archiving. This practice uses searches, selection and appropriation of other (art) objects and creates new collections or lists. Aggregation is the major activity of the large websites, such as search engines and social media websites. Circulation practices explore the flow or life cycle of entities. I will say more about circulation because this practice reflects not only on the object but also on its context and the mutation or movement over a longer period of time.

Circulation and Mutation

As images and objects move around, from one context to another, from one platform or file format to another, or between internet and 'real life,' there are consequences. Following objects over time, as they circulate, a "biography of the object" can be constructed[196] within a 'flow,' a 'culture of circulation' or an 'entanglement' (Thomas 1991), suggesting that the mapped objects have a "continuing existence and transformation in use. We would also stress that there is no simple beginning or end point in a culture of circulation, but rather a dynamic of forces."[197] Within that entanglement not only objects mutate but also our perception, our use and interaction or participation with them. Lash speaks of a 'thingification of media.'[198] The digital and the internet come out of the screen into real life and visa versa.

> It may be that the peculiar holding power of the open system of objects — the global culture industry — described here is its ability to draw the subject into a constantly transmuting flow, an intensely dynamic (and dynamically intense) relationship between map and territory. In the provocation to play, the objects of the global culture industry tantalize our capacity to deal with wholes and parts, continuity and discontinuity, synchrony and succession (Gell 1998). They extend and disrupt the space and time in which we move. They are the media of flow, a culture of circulation in which we are entangled, sometimes snared.[199]

An artist closely identified with circulation is Hito Steyerl, who reflects on the entanglement of objects and subjects, in online and offline contexts. She introduced the term 'circulationism' as "[it] is not about the art of making an image, but of postproducing, launching, and accelerating it. It is about the public relations of images across social networks, about advertisement and alienation, and about being as suavely vacuous as possible."[200] Some of Steyerl videos explore the

was couched in the rhetoric of advertising rather than bureaucracy (think of Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer as opposed to Hans Haacke and Lawrence Weiner), and it tended to appropriate existing commercial language rather than simulate bureaucratic or social-scientific languages. [...] The most pervasive 'global' dialects of the present moment, however, proceed from a different syntactic model: that of the aggregator."

196   See S. Lash and C. Lury, *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things* (Polity, 2007). and an early conception in Tretiakov, "The Biography of the Object."

197   Lash and Lury, *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things*: 163.

198   "[W]hen movies become computer games; when brands become brand environments, taking over airport terminal space and restructuring department stores, road billboards and city centres; when cartoon characters become collectibles and costumes [...]" Ibid., 8.

199   Ibid., 152.

200   Hito Steyerl, "Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?," *e-flux Journal*, no. 49 (2013), http://www.e-flux.com/
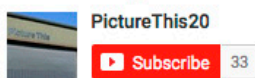
Figure 1-15 / Screenshot from "In Free Fall" in Steyerl, Hito. *Hito Steyerl discusses In Free Fall.* Commissioned and produced by Picture This in partnership with Collective, Edinburgh, Chisenhale Gallery, London. Exhibited at Picture This Atelier October, 2010. Video (Online Version) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shszTJ98NZo.

multiple trajectories of images and objects across media, with its on-going mutations, complex links, narratives, for example *In Free Fall*, 2010 and *Liquidity Inc.* 2014. She also uses a literal and comic translation of her themes into visual imagery, for instance subjects dressed up as square headed bytes and overlaying her video with an ongoing rendering of water-liquid images. The entanglement I spoke of above, between images and subjects, between maker and viewer, is not taken for granted but actively exploited by Steyerl.

> Crucially, circulationism, if reinvented, could also be about short-circuiting existing networks, circumventing and bypassing corporate friendship and hardware monopolies. It could become the art of recoding or rewiring the system by exposing state scopophilia, capital compliance, and wholesale surveillance."[201]

In her essays she places her work in a political context, not to represent political issues but as she says: "from a much more interesting perspective: the politics of the field of art as a place of work. Simply look at what it does – not what it shows."[202]

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journal.

201   Ibid.

202   Hito Steyerl and Franco Berardi, *The Wretched of the Screen*, e-flux Journal (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012). 93.

My thesis started with the proposition that through developing an art practice that incorporates distribution I might participate in reconsidering the status of the art object and art making itself. In this chapter I have identified within the so called genres of conceptual art, institutional critique (IC) and net art relevant art theory and practice. It forms the historical and institutional context for my research, concerning the interrelation between the distribution of art and art practice, institutions, and the status of the art object. I have also set out what I mean by the dispersed object of art, and I considered how distribution might negate the traditional status of the art object, and how it is connected to IC. Based on a number of sources within IC and net art I have synthesised five different strategies regarding critical positions towards the institution of art. Based on these strategies I have identified three situations in which I am going to develop and test the dispersed art object: 1) within a gallery context; 2) within a gallery and online context; and 3) independent from gallery or online context, or an exit strategy. In the next chapter, I will set out my research methodology, research question and process in detail.

§2 Artistic Research Practice: Research Question and Methodology

My research employs what can be called artistic research methodology. This means that the research question and methodology are based on the premise that the role of artist and researcher are combined, and that the research takes place within the artist's practice. It is a practice-led research.[1] The quote below from Borgdorff, synthesises art practices and definitions of research from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and highlights a number of key points of an artistic research practice.

> Art practice qualifies as research if its purpose is to expand our knowledge and understanding by conducting an original investigation in and through art objects and creative processes. Art research begins by addressing questions that are pertinent in the research context and in the artworld. Researchers employ experimental and hermeneutic methods that reveal and articulate the tacit knowledge that is situated and embodied in specific artworks and artistic processes. Research processes and outcomes are documented and disseminated in an appropriate manner to the research community and the wider public.[2]

I make the point here of restating that art practice can qualify as research, because I am aware of the ongoing arguments, especially in a European context, about this issue.[3]

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1   "In established fields of research, making is generally regarded as consequent to thinking — at least in theory… [I]n the field of practice-led research, praxis has a more essential role: making is conceived to be the driving force behind the research and in certain modes of practice also the creator of ideas." Mäkelä and Routarinne quoted in Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in Visual Arts* (London: SAGE Publications, 2010). 78.

2   Borgdorff. H (2006) 'The debate in research in the arts. Sensuous knowledge: Focus on artistic research and development' 23, quoted in ibid., 79.

3   Ian Biggs, "Hybrid Texts and Academic Authority: The Wager in Creative Practice Research," in *Thinking through Art: Reflections on Art as Research*, ed. Katy Macleod and Lin Holdridge (London: Routlege, 2006); Henk Borgdorff, "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research," in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, ed. Michael

This chapter provides a map of my research project, with signposts pointing backwards and forwards. It starts with the research question and the process of sharpening it during my research process. It is followed by section §2.2 dealing with the research methodology that aims to clarify my approach to artistic practice-led research. §2.3 deals with my approach to ontology and its relation to the research question and methodology, and this chapter ends with §2.4 explicating the background of a particular strategy, namely symbiosis, I developed to engage differently with the site or context in which I work.

2.1   Research Question

My research question evolved during my art practice and its contextualisation, and below I will give an account of the process to identify the key issues for my research question. In the course of this process the initial wide cast question concerning artworks as networks, becomes more focused first on distribution, then on dispersion. As a result, I develop a dispersal practice in several different situations, ending with a dispersal practice that creates its own situation.

During my masters degree I started to investigate through my art installations interconnections between concepts, their materialisations, representations, public display and contextualisation. I was creating situations that posed the question what is the art object, and where might it be located? I started to investigate the notion of an expanded art object, or an art object that was not only located in a gallery but also beyond it, an art object in the form of a network.

My doctoral research started with the question: *how can we rethink the art object as networks?* The difficulty with the notion of networks is that it is very broad and I needed to find a way to narrow it down to an aspect that I could address through my art practice. The term 'network' also associates very strongly with the internet and net art, but I did not want to investigate the aesthetics that was exclusively located in those fields, because I found the physicality of an object and different forms of contextualisation important aspects of my art practice (see Introduction p.2). On the other hand, I wanted to be able to use and take into consideration the potential of the internet and other digital platforms to expand a work of art outside the exhibition event.

I was struck by some artists who seemed to create instances of art that are separate, but they can also be understood as part of one work or project. For instance, Liam Gillick published in 2002 a book called *Literally No Place*, to "coincide with his exhibition THE WOOD WAY at Whitechapel Art Gallery, London."[4] Earlier, in 1995 Liam Gillick published *Erasmus Is Late*, which can be read independently from the installations, and events he created around the

Biggs and Henrik Karlsson (London: Routledge, 2011); Mick Wilson and Schelte van Ruiten, eds., *Share: Handbook for Artistic Research Education* (Amsterdam, Dublin, Gothenburg: European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), SHARE Step-Change for Higher Arts Research and Education, 2013), Ch.1B. The Development of the Third-Cycle Debate.

4   Liam Gillick, *Literally No Place: Communes, Bars and Greenrooms* (London: Book Works, 2002). colophon page.

same time. On his website Gillick clarifies the relation between the artworks and the book, as aspects that are in dialogue with each other: the artwork as "provisional solution."[5] As a result of reviewing other contemporary artist's work (see §1.2), and reflection on my 'tryout' exhibitions,[6] my research started to become more focused on the distributedness of art objects at multiple platforms. I started to develop a way of working that takes distribution as an essential part of the art making, not something that comes afterwards. Hence, the key term in the research question was narrowed down from networks to distribution.

The research question became: *How can the distribution of art enable us to rethink the traditional status of the art object, and to what new approach to the making of art might it lead?*

During the project *Symbiote 4* (see §3) several aspects of distribution where considered through literature review and in practice: distribution as a strategy of negating the art object, and distribution as an act of self-reliance by the artist, or as a way to relate and engage differently with a particular site. The negation of the art object is summarised by Buchloh (see Research Context §1.1) as an "assault on the status of [the art] object" in terms of "its visuality, its commodity status, and its form of distribution."[7] My research question became focused on rethinking the status of the art object in terms of its 'form of distribution', and I choose not to focus on the art object as commodity because that would widen my research field too much (see fn. 22, p. 17).

I also considered the notion of distribution as an act of self-reliance by the artist. As some of the main functions of art institutions are to consolidate and distribute art, the self-distribution has the potential to disrupt these institutional processes, which brings the art practice I am trying to develop in the field of institutional critique (see Research Context §1.1.2). Further consideration of institutional critique led me to structure the research by developing my practice repeatedly but each time in a different situation (see Research Context §1.4). A physical gallery defined the first situation. The second situation was defined by a combination of gallery and online sites. And in the third situation, I aimed to go beyond the previous sites. In the next section §2.2, I will discuss the different sites in relation to the research process.

As a result of the above research process, I started to develop the concept of a 'dispersed object' and 'dispersal practice,' which combines the strategy of negating the art object through dispersal over multiple sites and the strategy of self-reliance or interference with institutional processes. In addition, during the project *Symbiote 4* my exploration of distribution as a way to relate and engage differently with a particular institution or site led me to use ideas borrowed from symbiosis as a way to devise unconventional ways to disperse objects (see below §2.4). For

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5   Liam Gillick, "Erasmus and Ibuka! Realisations 1994 to 1996," http://www.liamgillick.info/home/work/mcnamara-erasmus-whatif/erasmus-and-ibuka. "The book (…) functions as an extended commentary on the idea of parallel histories. Various artworks have been produced in relation to the specific ideas contained within the text. Each piece works as a provisional solution towards understanding the book's function as a condensed central core of ideas rather than original research material or commentary."

6   I created three exhibition events, which I have omitted from the thesis for the sake of conciseness. Event 1: A participatory drawing event, drawing following a protocol creating networks; Event 2: Making Public, an exhibition that explored the notion that exhibiting also creates a public. Event 3: Participation in the exhibition ART BIN by Michael Landy, to explore the notion of negating the art object by destruction.

7   Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969." p.107.

instance, the gallery visitor might become involved in dispersing the work through the gallery. It opens up the issue of performativity, but I choose not to expand my research into the field of performance in order to keep it focused.

As the project became increasingly distributed questions arose about the materiality and location of the art object, and how the artist conceptualises the different aspects of the artwork or the project. Below in §2.3 I consider this question from an ontological perspective, which led me to create a list of questions concerning what the artist sanctions as the art object in each different situation. This list of questions was then used as a point of reference in each of the test situations.

Having narrowed down my research question, in the following section §2.2 I will consider my research methodology and the role of the test situations within the whole research process.

2.2   Research Methodology

This section describes the research methodology and it highlights particular pertinent issues for my research. In the second part, I discus the structure of my research process.

Approaches to Methodology

Research in the visual arts is generally qualitative research,[8] based on, or primarily led by the artist's own practice. My perspective as artist-researcher that my practice is socially and historically constructed and reconstructed by human agency and social action informs my approach.[9] It is further informed by "thinking through art" to paraphrase Macleod and Holdridge who borrowed it from Frayling,[10] and in my case the aim is to rethink the art object through integration of my own practice and research methods. It is not uncommon to adopt a 'bricolage' approach.[11] Initially, I chose the validated method of 'action research' because of two reasons. Firstly, this method is appropriate for research that questions aspects of one's own practice and aims to improve it and to gain new understanding through an enquiry involving repetition of doing and reflection. Secondly, 'action research' integrates adaptations of method if that is

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8   "Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible. (..) They turn the world into a series of representations, (..). At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world." Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Third ed. (Sage Publications, 2005). 3.
9   Adapted from Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, "Participatory Action Research," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London; New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), 576. Concerning the constructivist research paradigm see Egon. G. Guba, The Paradigm Dialog (Sage Publications, 1990). 17-27.
10   Katy Macleod and Lin Holdridge, eds., *Thinking through Art: Reflections on Art as Research*, Innovations in Art and Design (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4; Christopher Frayling, "Research in Art and Design," *Royal College of Art Research Papers* 1, no. 1 (1993-94).
11   Denzin and Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*: 3-8. Denzin discusses the researcher as 'Bricoleur', borrowing from different disciplines and working with many different materials.

motivated by changes in the research situation.[12] As I will explain below, I adapted the method of first defining a situation and then developing and creating new work within that situation, to the method of developing new work and then to follow the work into various situations. I describe this as two different phases of my research process (see page 65-68).

Many sources argue that the critical investigations conducted within the artist's practice are not bound by what happens in the closed studio (anymore), but can take into account information and ideas from different disciplines, cultural contexts and environments.[13] My personal situation is that I do not work from a studio anymore, but I work either on a computer or on site, wherever that may be. As a result, my practice and work process is spread out from the beginning and it can be hard to point to a physical product of my work. A key question for research methodology is what distinguishes artwork or art practice from research, because not all artwork is or leads to research and visa versa.

The answer to that question lies in the integration of art practice and theory, whereby both are in dialogue and the critical point is that the art practice is "an engaged practice, which in each context is imbued with the necessary qualities and substance to make it what it is (...) A practice with a defined direction, but with an open-ended, undetermined procedural trajectory. A practice that is particular, content-driven, self-critical, self-reflective and contextualized."[14] In a recent publication artistic research (AR) in general is summarised as "artistic research = artistic process (acts inside the practice) + arguing for a point of view (contextual, interpretive, conceptual, narrative work)."[15]

This work takes place within a context of the artworld and academia. Hence it is theorised, grounded, and made transparent to facilitate not only self-critique and reflection, but also to propose an argument in the form of a thesis, accessible for review and discourse within an academic context. It is fair to say, that theorising does also happen within art practices that are not academic research. The main point here is that art and research are integrated within a practice, accommodating both the art public and academic public. This means that the outcome of the research needs to conform to both art and academic contexts. In order to fulfil all the requirements the artist-researcher has a number of roles related to the context in which the artist-researcher works. I will summarise three roles [16]: a professional, academic and social role.

1) A professional role to develop the practitioners' own artistic way of working and conceptual thinking. It is a professional role that is developed within the context of the artist's practice. It is engaging with the art objects, processes and contexts through which the artist makes

12   Kemmis and McTaggart, "Participatory Action Research," 563; Carole Gray and Julian Malins, *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). 101.

13   Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in Visual Arts*: 189-91; Gray and Malins, *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*: 95-97;

14   Mika Hannula, "Catch Me If You Can: Chances and Challenges of Artistic Research," *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods* 2, no. 2 Spring (2009), http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/hannula1.html

15   Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta, and Tere Vadén, *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the Public* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014). 15.

16   After ibid., xi and 69-83. Depending on the artist's practice other roles can be taken up, for instance the artist-researcher as curator, critic, event organiser, spectator/user etc.

choices, creates, self reflects and takes a position.

2) An academic role, which is to contribute to academia and propose an argument in the form of a thesis. It is engaging with the bodies of knowledge and discourses the art field has developed. It works mainly through text and image or other types of documents and performances.

3) A social role is to make the work public and communicate with a wider audience. For instance, exhibitions or any other way the work is meant to become public.

If I link these roles to my proposition of a dispersal practice in which the dissemination is an integral part of the artist's work, it is clear that they are intertwined, and have a bearing on the research methodology, and the way my artwork is created and dispersed. For instance, if the artist chooses to self-publish as the only way to disperse a particular artwork, it will have consequences for the professional and academic role. The work might not receive professional recognition from the artworld, and it might not receive academic recognition because self-publishing usually sidesteps institutional procedures of independent peer-reviewing and validation. In this respect, it is interesting to see the work done by the Society for Artistic Research (SAR) who has created two parallel platforms: an open online database where artists can publish their research, and a peer-reviewed journal (JAR) where some of these projects are published.[17] Thus, to clarify the artistic research methodology I need to highlight an important link between the subject of the research project (the distributed object of art) and the ways in which it is or is not made public: within institutions and galleries; academically; and as self-published (on different platforms such as prints, PDF and website).

The intertwining of roles has also consequences for methodology in terms of switching perspective between insider and outsider. Important models for the author engaging in a process of systemic self-reflection are Schön's concepts of "reflection in action" and the "reflective practitioner."[18] The reflective practitioner combines tacit knowledge and reflection on tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge of our everyday activities or "knowing-in-action" is used in conjunction with reflection that verbalises and makes the implicit judgments and skilful performances explicit. Schön calls this process "reflection-in-action." The outsider position comes into play with contextualisation of the practitioner's work in a larger frame on more than one level. According to Hannula et al. "the role and the self-evident authority of the outsider's position is no longer in itself relevant. Criteria for the acts of the practice stem from the practice itself in connection to its histories and present articulations."[19] On another level, the research practice has to be embedded within a well-known historical and theoretical framework to be able to claim that the research does "expand our knowledge and understanding." The historical and theoretical framework also underlies the particular situation in which this research or the testing takes place. "As contextual, the research happens on a site and in a situation that never is a priori but is always in great need of being articulated, formed, discussed, maintained and renewed. It is made, not

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17   See website http://www.jar-online.net
18   Donald A Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 2005 ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1983). 49-69.
19   Hannula, Suoranta, and Vadén, *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the Public*: 4.

found. It is in a process, not static."[20]

My initial research methodology was based on Action Research. However, after reflection on the first set of projects I modified the research method to what is called Artistic Research. As a consequence, I distinguish three phases of research, which I will describe below. First phase Action Research, second phase Artistic Research and third phase research dissemination. See figure 2-1 Diagram of art and research process.
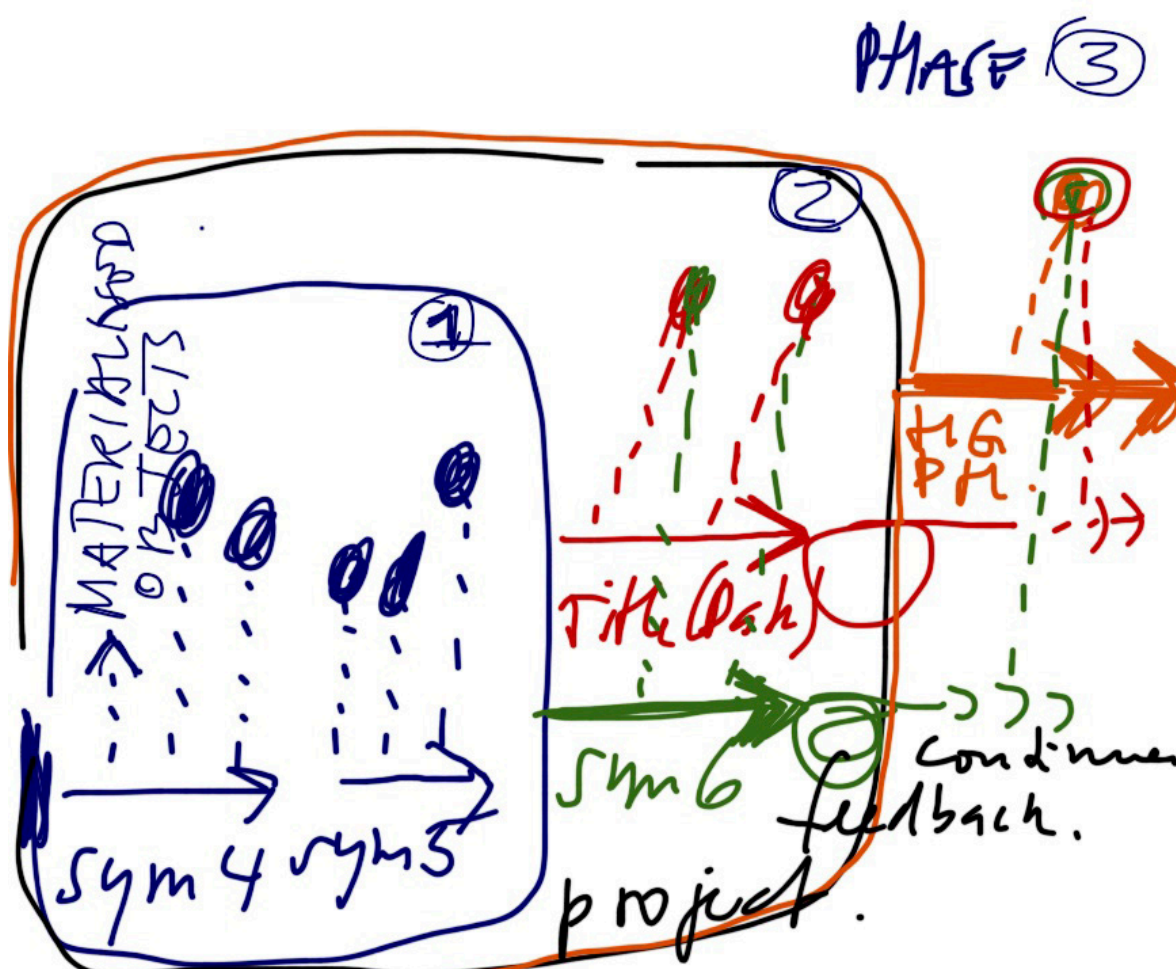
Figure 2-1 / Diagram of art and research process

Phase one Action Research: Project Symbiote 4, Project Symbiote 5, reflection.
Phase two Artistic Research: Project Symbiote 6, Project Title(date), reflection and conclusion.
Phase three research dissemination and conclusions: demonstrating the dispersed object: Project UGLyD

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20   Ibid., 5.

Phase 1. Action Research

As we have seen in Chapter 1, there is a historical and theoretical framework that points toward situations in which to develop and test dispersed objects. Artists working in one of the critical traditions have often positioned themselves in relation to the institution of art. By working within, outside, or aiming for exit strategies artists found ways to contextualise their work and develop new fronts and new approaches to making art. See §1.3 and §1.5. These three positions, vis-à-vis the institution of art, provided a good structure within which I could consider art distribution and develop a dispersal practice and the historical and theoretical framework indicated three sites within which to test the dispersed object: a) within a gallery context; b) within a gallery and online context; and c) independent from gallery or online context, an exit strategy.

In terms of Action Research methodology, the repetition of developing and testing propositions in several different situations follows a characteristic sequence that is often described in Action Research as a spiral of self-reflective cycles, that is, action, reflection and feedback.

In this phase of my research two situations were created to develop and test the dispersed object. The first situation, to develop and test the dispersed object within a gallery context, consisted of an exhibition at the Winchester Gallery. It led to the creation of a dispersed object in the form of a project called Symbiote 4 at The Winchester Gallery. See Chapter 3.

The second situation, to develop and test the dispersed object within a combined gallery and online context, started with participating in an artist-led group exhibition at the Rag Factory London. Simultaneously I created digital work disseminated online. The dispersed object in the form of a project is titled Symbiote 5 at the Rag Factory. See Chapter 4.

Changing research methodology after reflection.

At this point in the research process, I reflected on the work Symbiote 5 in order to set up the next project. It affected not only ideas about the object of investigation, it also caused me to rethink the research methodology and develop a more open structure that could allow me to follow where the artwork was taking me. The artwork was taking me in a direction where the object is not situated in a pre-defined context.

While reflecting on Symbiote 4 and Symbiote 5 and investigating consequences of choosing a particular strategy of dispersal I realised that the strategy I developed is largely based on a close observation of situations and relationships. Through observation it became possible to spot an opportunity, take a chance, and rely on trial and error for success. As a result, the dispersal practice was exploring a certain situation to exploit its potential for circulation, wherever it goes. Each site could then bring different opportunities and challenges. What struck me was that my way of distributing art (loosely based on symbiosis, see §2.4) is in a way blind to the site, be it gallery or online context. What can be done and what can be shown was more dependent on openness and accessibility. Sites (galleries and digital) give or allow certain access, depending on institutional policies and material (digital) boundaries. Also sites are not static, they develop and change their boundaries. As a consequence, dispersal practice probes boundaries wherever it is

located. In other words, the type of site became less of an issue. What became more important was the position the artist takes to what the entity is, what role it has, which relations it probes. Dispersion negates the singular art object by creating too much, at too many places, possibly by too many creators. On a relational level it becomes an issue of control. Is the artist giving or losing control over the art object and its production-distribution process? As I will show in the chapters discussing the work, the strategy of dispersal allowed me to let go of control and develop a practice that is neither focused on an end product, nor a final aesthetic resolution.

This brings us to another critical point that influenced the further development of the research methodology, namely the digital as material. While investigating digital objects as part of an exit strategy, I started to see other possibilities than working within a particular context. In §1.5 I noted that: "[w]hat then might function as a common starting point for my own practice with IC and net art, or a hybrid practice, is the artist as producer who interrupts the conventional production and publishing process from any position. The notion I am trying to develop is that dispersed art might not necessarily be located within a territory, but it might be or become anywhere."

Through investigating exit strategies, both in relation to the institution of art and digital context, and by reflecting on the first two projects, I came to the conclusion that language as material and site in combination with a practice that works with physical and digital objects could enable my work to develop irrespective of territories such as institutions and online worlds.

Phase 2. Artistic Research

The implication of the above for the research methodology was that I developed a new strand of work with a different procedure. Instead of developing work to test the research question one after the other, I started to develop new work more or less alongside each other, and these works where set up to influence each other or use elements from each other.[21] In addition, instead of creating work for a certain site connected to exhibition events, I started now to develop work that will disperse wherever it finds the opportunity. This change is reflected in the naming of the projects: the name does not include the site anymore.

The projects are documented as Symbiote 6 and TITLE(date) (Both are described in Chapter 5). Because the two projects developed in the same period and not isolated from each other, and the projects where not focused on an exhibition event, the methodology became a succession of smaller steps, switching between making and reflecting.

At the same time, because there was now quite a lot of work to review and reconsider, the role as artist-researcher became also involved in archiving and shaping the research project as a whole. To support the archiving and categorisation of the created entities I changed from listing my work in a 'list of works' to creating a 'project log' that records the events of the artistic research process (see Vol.2 §6 Project Logs).

During my research process I developed dispersed objects and a dispersal practice through

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21   I will call these elements 'modules' because they establish a modular structure of the projects. See §1.6

distribution strategies. Initially the proposed dispersed object was tested within prescribed situations, that is the gallery and online. In the second phase, the proposed dispersed object was tested as something that might appear anywhere, or as something that circulates. The reflection on Symbiote 6 and TITLE(date) led to conclusions about the proposed dispersed object (see §5.3), conceptualising the art object as a combination of process and temporary actualisation. The conclusions are not understood as definite answers, but as outcomes leading to new work described in the next phase of the research. The project, described in phase 3, is seen as a proposition to expose and demonstrate the dispersed object.

Phase 3. Research Dissemination

The last phase consists of developing a dispersed object with the aim to expose and demonstrate dispersal practice and the dispersed object. The dispersed object created in this part of the research is documented as "Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion" (see Chapter 6). It is based on conclusions (see §5.3) and it aggregates the elements that worked best from the dispersed objects created in the previous phases.

The question of how to expose and demonstrate dispersal practice is inevitably linked to the question how to communicate the knowledge gained from my practice-led research. As practice and theory are interwoven, the rethinking process of the status of the art object has not only led to multiple (art)objects, which come in and out of actualisation, but also to multiple forms of documentation and representation in this thesis.

1) The dispersed object in the form of a project is the prime material for the research. If possible, the entities that have become materialised in the course of the project are gathered up again. They will be present at the viva and end show. Not in their usual exhibition condition, but as objects in the process of dispersal.

2) Photographic and video documentation. A selection is printed in Volume 2 and/or is published on the website.

3) Project log. The project log gives a complete record of activities, materialisations, objects and where these are published or archived. It is printed in Volume 2 to supplement the photographic documentation. The project logs have become a tool for the artist-researcher: to create his own archive, to rethink what a particular dispersed object consists of, and how a project or entity is structured or categorised. Instead of the usual 'list of works', which accompanies a particular exhibition, the project log reflects the processual nature of a dispersal practice and the modular nature of the objects by linking the objects to a trajectory of becoming, i.e. where they came from and where they are going.

4) Website. As online platform it disperses the research project to a wider public. It is structured as a blog which facilitates interaction by giving the viewer the possibility to combine works and articles by category and tags, creating different collections or groupings. It also shows the work in different contexts by linking to other websites. The website exemplifies the author's commitment to open access by allowing many works to be downloaded and licensing the website content under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International

5) Written part of the thesis. A narrative tying together strands of art history, theory, methodology and practice. Contextualising, theorising, explicating questions, choices, propositions made, it weaves together the above elements to make explicit and communicate the research primarily for academia and fellow artists.

2.3   Ontology

One of the key issues concerning the rethinking of the art object I propose, is the fact that I distribute or spread the art object beyond the exhibition event or space where we can engage with the work. Consequently, our experience of the object as a whole, as a singular entity, becomes negated. What we can experience is that what is (temporarily) actualised, there and then. In each project the question arises, what kind of entity is functioning as the art object, and how are the different aspects of the dispersed object related? How could one conceptualise and understand the different aspects of a dispersed object as it progresses over time?

This process I interpret to be a question of ontology and as such, it has values linked to the tradition of Western metaphysics with its traditional classification based on the separation between object and subject, the discrete (art) object and authorship.[22] It is a system of values that is sustained and instrumentalised by the institution of art. With each new project the artist-researcher creates a proposition, what if the status or condition of the art object is different? Different in a way that it does not fit in the traditional categories of (art) objects. The search for an answer to the question what sort of entity is this or that, reveals the underlying commitments and assumptions against which the newly created object might push, and might lead to new insights to what it is that stretches or goes beyond traditional categories.

One such assumption is reflected in a shift of terms, from art object to art project. During my art practice I started to conceptualise the art object as a 'project' because much of what is functioning as the art object is not literally an object, but a combination of the artist at work, what is made and distributed. Critically, the word project, as does the word object, fails to convey and clarify the entity of the dispersed object. As Boris Groys suggests, the term *project* has an administrative background and started to become used as 'art project' in the 1960s and 70s with the emergence of minimalist and conceptualist art, whereby "[t]he documentation of the virtual and real steps necessary to realise the project becomes the main object of artistic interest."[23] Hence, the discrete art object is replaced by the documentation of the art project, and the artist has become a "project developer."[24] Groys also writes, "[A]rt documentation is by definition

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22   See for example Peter Lamarque, "Work and Object," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 102, no. 1 (2002).: "Works, then, are objects (or types) brought into existence by the activities of artists (or humans generally). They are constituted by material substances or types (usually word- or sound sequence-types) yet are not identical with those constituting materials."

23   Boris Groys, "The Mimesis of Thinking," in *Open Systems, Rethinking Art C.1970*, ed. Donna De Salvo (London: Tate, 2005), 61.

24   Ibid., 62.

not art. It merely refers to art," and he goes on to say that through the project the art object is negated: "art is no longer present and immediate here, but rather absent and merely conceived." I agree that the status of the object has changed, but in today's context, the dichotomy between art documentation and art object does not hold anymore. Photographic documentation for instance can be re-evaluated and be considered art, or what to do with art documentation or data that becomes appropriated, remixed and presented as art? Other examples are paintings, the traditional art object, of monitor screens recording a particular screen event.

Concerning the term *project* Gratton and Sheringham go a step further and add to the documentation the concept of 'self-implication' and 'lure' or 'device', so that the artists disseminate the work themselves and it is often "a device designed not to achieve a particular end, but to allow something unforeseen to happen."[25] This conceptualisation fits well with the dispersed object, and in this sense I have used the word project. However, it is not specific enough to clarify the ontology of the dispersed object. At the start of the research, I have conceptualised the dispersed object as a project with multiple materialisations on multiple platforms. The ontological implication is that this work will fall in between traditional categories, and it might contain a bit of everything. It does not fall under the category of 'multiple instances' where each instance is seen as being the same, e.g., copies, prints, multiples, nor does it fall under notated work that lead to performances or instances of the work. In addition it is not conceived as consisting of a set of parts, which might indicate a totality that is divided or broken up. Nor is it serial art that follows a specific protocol that ends after completion, creating a number of instances. It is also not an installation where the viewer can walk from one object to the other, and experience the space and order between the objects within a certain location. In a recent article about ontological innovation in art Thomasson asserted that "[i]n cases of ontologically novel forms of art, it seems that the essential and inessential features, and survival conditions for the work, often have to be explicitly stipulated."[26] Thomasson referred to Sherri Irvin who argued "if we wish to be true to the nature of many contemporary artworks, we must appeal to information related to the artist's intention at relevant points during the works' production."[27] Irvin further proposed that the artist's sanction is defined by:

> the artist's publicly accessible actions and communications, the contexts in which they were delivered, and the conventions operative in those contexts to determine what the artist has sanctioned. The

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25   The full quote of their definition of an art project is: "The 'work' made available to the reader/viewer is then very often an account of the conduct of the project or experiment, the record or trace of its success or failure, its consistency with or deviation from its initial premises. As often as not, such projects and experiments involve 'self-implication', pulling oneself in the frame or on the line: the writer/artist is physically, intellectually, existentially implicated in the execution and dissemination of the work. The outcome of the project, its final product (if any) may be less important than the procedures that enable it to get underway. The project is frequently a lure, a device designed not to achieve a particular end, but to allow something unforeseen to happen." J. Gratton and M. Sheringham, *The Art of the Project: Projects and Experiments in Modern French Culture* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005). 1.
26   Amie L. Thomasson, "Ontological Innovation in Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68, no. 2 (2010).
27   Sherri Irvin, "The Artist's Sanction in Contemporary Art," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63, no. 4 Fall 2005 (2005): 315.

artist's sanction may serve to fix the boundaries of his or her work, to determine whether a particular feature is relevant to the work's interpretation, to establish in what genre the work belongs, and, in some cases, to determine whether it, qua artwork, has a particular feature or not. [28]

An example used by Thomasson of the application of the artist's sanction is the online archive of digital art ArtBase by Rhizome[29] (http://rhizome.org). To be included within the ArtBase artists fill in a form with the artwork's details and questions about what they see as the essential features of the work of art and how it should be preserved. What the artist authorises is one thing, but what is possible or desirable is another. The difficulties of preserving digital art are well known,[30] but the question that does not receive much attention is why should art that is digital or contains non-stable temporary entities be preserved? Is not the point of creating something 'digital' that it is not a physical, or better tactile, object? The difficulty of preserving or archiving these entities could be taken as a consequence of this choice. It is also possible to see actions to secure the non-stable temporary entities as a result of the institution aiming to stabilise the traditional status of the art object. From the above I arrived at a set of questions, which I need to ask to establish the artist's ontology for the dispersed object of art. That is, to test the status of the work I first need to ask the question what kind of object have I created? The questions are based on the idea of the artist's sanction but instead of using as source the publicly accessible actions and communications, I will use my own documentation.

1. What belongs to the project as the dispersed art object?

2. How is the dispersed object (the project) functioning/supposed to function?

3. Where is the artwork located? What is its duration?

4. Which specific contextual aspects/interactions are essential? Idem for non-exhibited aspects.

5. What is displayed/made public? What are the conditions of exhibition/making it public?

6. What is documented/archived? What is original?

7. If or how is the dispersed art object preserved? Under what conditions does it survive? What is acceptable change? What is the copyright licence?

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28   Ibid., 315-16. Irvin adds that "Under the right conditions, the artist has a degree of special authority over these matters: through his or her actions and communications in particular contexts, the artist can stipulate certain aspects of the nature of the work. In short, through his or her sanction the artist can endow the work with certain features, just as he or she endows it with certain features by manipulating the physical materials that will ultimately be displayed to the viewer. As we shall see, however, accepting that the artist's sanction can fix features of the work does not oblige us to accept the idea that the artist fixes the correct interpretation of the work."

29   Rhizome.org is a non-profit organisation based in the New Museum, New York. "The Rhizome ArtBase was founded in 1999, as an online archive of digital art containing over 2,500 art works, acting as the bedrock of our leading digital preservation program." Rhizome.org, "Rhizome About.," Rhizome.org, http://rhizome.org/about/.

30   See P. Laurenson, "Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations," *Tate Papers*, no. Autumn (2006), www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/06autumn/laurenson.html., Ben Fino-Radin, *Digital Preservation Practices and the Rhizome Artbase*, (New York: The New Museum, 2011), http://media.rhizome.org/artbase/documents/Digital-Preservation-Practices-and-the-Rhizome-ArtBase.pdf; Francis T. Marchese, "Conserving Digital Art for Deep Time," *Leonardo* 44, no. 4 (2011); Lisa Adang, *Untitled Project: A Cross-Disciplinary Investigation of Jodi's Untitled Game*, (Rhizome, 2013), http://media.rhizome.org/artbase/documents/Untitled-Project:-A-Cross-Disciplinary-Investigation-of-JODI%E2%80%99s-Untitled-Game_1.pdf.

Notes:

1. The artist might identify differences between the art object and individual instances by its title and date.

2. Intention and functioning of the project in practice.

3. Multiple platforms such as exhibition, website, printed media, archive, but also events, work, object(s).

4. Essential interaction with site, audience, systems, technologies, practice, access, other artwork. Manner of self-containment/contextuality.

5. Not all works might be public, in that case it is listed as 'not published'. Add where it might be located.

6. Dispersion and archiving are two sides of the same coin. Of all the locations, which one or what is used to refer to the project? A title and or one image?

7. The artist might not want the artwork to be preserved. It might not be possible to preserve the project in its original state, but some of its materialisations might be. In the end, it is a question of who manages the boundaries of the art object if not the artist?

Before I start describing the first project of the research, it is necessary to explicate the concept of symbiosis which functions throughout the research as inspiration for building new relationships between my art practice and the situation in which it takes place. During my research, I have developed ways of distributing art objects that are on the one hand integral to the art object, and on the other hand exploit distributing opportunities that the environment offers.

2.4   Symbiosis Concept

To create, develop and distribute artworks I used a strategy inspired by the concept of biological symbiosis (see glossary). Symbiosis in the context of my research is any association between different entities; with the implication that the entities are interacting long-term, but that the relationship need not be advantageous to all the participants. Symbiosis applied to art means seeing the relationships, between an art practice and the situation in which it takes place, as an ecology. Within symbiosis each entity is seen as an actor, potentially interacting with any of the other actors or entities, such as other objects, artworks, visitors, users, gallery, site, its history, curator, artists, the wider public, etc. What an other object or actor is, is very widely interpreted, cutting across different layers and categories, such as human and non-human. As a consequence, one can conceptualise and build unusual relationships between entities from different categories. For instance by creating (art)objects, inside other objects that need human interaction in order to function. In the context of my research 'to function' is interpreted as to become dispersed, circulated, to persist. Symbiosis also means understanding the situation the artist-researcher works in, the testing site, acts as habitat and as host for the project as guest,

where it spreads and multiplies by co-existence and interactions.[31]

The symbiote concept was conceived while working on the first project: a group exhibition for the WSA Graduate Conference 2011 (Symbiote 4 at the Winchester Gallery, see §3). Initially I came to use the symbiosis concept to create artwork that sat alongside an existing exhibition for a particular gallery. I inserted my self so to speak within the gallery system and created my own version of a gallery archive, which in turn led to multiple works. The general concept proved to be quite adaptable, so symbiosis became then the main concept through which I shaped the strategy of dispersal.

The significance of symbiosis in relation to traditional objects lies in the way that symbiosis challenges the concept of individuality and systems of classification.[32] I will leave the controversy this issue creates within biology aside, however, some aspects of it is carried over to different disciplines as the symbiotic concept has been extended to fields outside the strict biological. Given that symbiosis resonates with alternative concepts of creation, individuation, and becoming, and leads to a transgression of boundaries and hybridisation, it is used within poststructuralist philosophy where it led to a rethink of traditional systems of classification, entities and the way they are related.[33] Furthermore, the concept also appears in media ecology and media archaeology,[34] and architecture.[35]

The question then is how have I used the concept of symbiosis as a strategy within my art practice. The co-existence of different entities within a certain art ecology or context coupled

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31   I am not suggesting that a dispersed object is an animate entity. Historic philosophical thought grouped around the notion of 'vital materialism' can be found in Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010). See also Anselm Franke, "Animism," *e-flux journal*, no. 36 (2012), http://www.e-flux.com/issues/36-july-2012/.

32   Symbiosis challenges three core concepts within biology: evolution is based on generations of genetic modification; organisms mainly interact in competition; and species or organisms as static and isolated entities. See Lynn Margulis and René Fester, *Symbiosis as a Source of Evolutionary Innovation: Speciation and Morphogenesis* (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); and Richard A. Watson and Jordan B. Pollack, "How Symbiosis Can Guide Evolution," *Proceedings of the 5th European Conference on Advances in Artificial Life* (ECAL 1999) (1999). It is challenged for instance within microbiology with evidence of extensive horizontal gene transfer between different taxa, leading to a rethink of systems of classification. See Jan Sapp, *The New Foundations of Evolution: On the Tree of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). 317.

33   See for instance Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Laurence R. Schehr (Baltimore, MA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). ch.4 and 10. A selection of recent articles about how symbiosis has been deployed as an alternative world view can be found in Janneke Adema and Pete Woodbridge, eds., *Symbiosis. Ecologies, Assemblages and Evolution, Living Books About Life* (Michigan: Open Humanities Press, 2011).

34   Jussi Parikka, *Digital Contagions: A Media Archaeology of Computer Viruses*, ed. Steve Jones, Digital Formations (New York: Peter Lang, 2007). Parikka shows in ch.3 many interconnections between biological and technological models of evolution, symbiosis and interaction. Also the concept of symbiosis played a role in the development of cybernetic life or the relationships between computer viruses, the networked computers and human behaviour.

35   An example of the application of symbiosis within architecture comes from the architect Kisho Kurokawa, who designed the new wing of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. He theorises a philosophy and an "intercultural architecture" based on a symbiotic co-existence of different technologies, different cultures. "Intercultural architecture is a hybrid architecture, in which elements of different cultures exist in symbiosis, an architecture that exists in symbiosis with the environment through the symbiosis of tradition and the most advanced technology." Kisho Kurokawa, *The Philosophy of Symbiosis* (London: Academy Editions, 1994). 25.

with their movement offers the opportunity for exploring and exploiting the behaviour and abilities of all the actors/entities involved. In other words, I developed the artwork as being in a symbiotic relationship with potentially other artworks or with the gallery, or with visitors. I not only created hybrids along the way, but also changed relationships between actors. The artwork or project as guest is evolving together with the host for mutual benefit or to the detriment of one (a parasitic relation) with the result that the hybrid artwork gets embedded, formed, used, read, handled, documented, archived, multiplied or distributed. All different ways in which the project 'lives on'. Below I will give a few examples of tactics the art project explores to move the project along, to extend it, to develop it, to create more instances.

First tactic is to bring into play the actors who move between artworks. This can be achieved by enlisting (overtly or not) spectator or user participation as part of a symbiotic relation, for instance by employing the spectator as host, to move and disperse an instance of art by making something the spectator/visitor can take with them. In an online context the movement between artworks would mean browsing a website, leading to downloading, using or creating a new link, making new personal collections on different platforms like mobile phones and tablets. Another type of actor who can be said to "move between artworks" are the art professionals, who reflect on the artworks, document, archive, compare, classify, order, value, narrate, etc.

Second tactic is to bring into play the movement of artworks. From a symbiotic perspective an art institution could be seen as engaging in 'cultivating' or changing the environment for object distribution to maximise benefit or exchange (however that is formulated). Institutions (or artists acting as institutions) move art to what they perceive to be the right place, to the right exhibition, to the right collection, to the right public,[36] or facilitate this by organising events and exhibitions. I have shown in §1.2 this is a core function of the art institution, and many artists have embedded themselves within this system by doing it themselves, with artist-led galleries and organisations, in effect becoming an art institution or performing the art institution.

Third tactic is to bring into play the hybridisation between different entities. If we see symbiosis as a co-habitation where two different entities generate a third, which becomes a hybrid of the two, then there is a crossing of boundaries with no regard to the distinction between entities (human and non-human). This brings us back to the concept of a heterogene-ous ecology, a network, where all actors potentially can interact and evolve. If they are open or free to interact, and if the interaction is persistent, both entities change, and potentially unknown entities can be formed. I understand this as a description of a dispersal practice.

After setting out symbiosis as a strategy to generate dispersed art objects, and several ways the artist can exploit opportunities within different contexts, the chapters three, four and five describe the new work produced during the research process in order to develop and distribute art objects and test the proposed dispersed objects. The test situations are:

a) Within a gallery and its institutional network – developed in chapter 3.

b) Within a gallery and online networks – developed on chapter 4.

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36 "Our mission at the Arts Council is Great art and culture for everyone." Arts Council England, "Our Mission and Strategic Framework".

c) In a situation not defined in advance by a certain site – developed in chapter 5.

The reader might revisit Figure A, page xvi, "Outline of the dissertation" for an overview of the structure of the thesis, because the visual documentation and the project log of the artworks described in the next chapters is placed in Volume two.
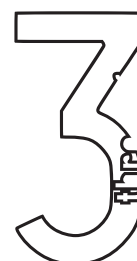
§3 Symbiote 4 at The Winchester Gallery

This project was presented as "An exhibition alongside other exhibitions"[1] and shown in 2011 and 2013. This work displays the exhibition events that took place at the Winchester Gallery but within a different temporal and spacial sequence. It re-uses historic installation photographs from which all art objects appear to have been eaten away. The pictures are presented as a gallery guide to the current exhibition. All pictures in this project are based on photographs of actual exhibitions at this gallery. Archive images courtesy of the Winchester Gallery.

See Volume 2 §1 for visual documentation, and Volume 2 §6 for a complete list of entities, actions and materialisations in the form a Project Log.

Figure 3-1 / left / Symbiote 4. The Winchester Gallery, A Guide (2011-ongoing). Image 2 of 16 [4.2.2.02] Digital print, 420x592mm, double sided.

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1   van Rijn, "Symbiotext," http://www.symbiotext.net/.

3.1 Symbiote 4 at The Winchester Gallery (2011-ongoing)

Aim of the Project

• To create and develop a dispersed object of art within a gallery context.

• To test the status of the art object by asking what kind of entity have I created, and how is the dispersed object of art (supposed) to function?

Constraints of the Winchester Gallery as test site

The test site and situation "within a gallery context" is in this project formed by the Winchester Gallery and the exhibitions that take place within it. The Winchester Gallery is not a commercial gallery nor is it an Arts Council funded gallery. It is part of the Winchester School of Art (WSA) University of Southampton, and as an educational facility it provides a gallery and institutional context which supports research. It is an environment with a flexibility that allows exploration and interventions, sometimes on very short notice, which I might be unable to accomplish elsewhere. Hence, the site is not understood as a given but subject to change as well. The gallery is an ideal site to test what would happen in a situation when the gallery and its institutional connections form the boundary of the site. The freedom to engage with the site became a reality through my participation with a group exhibition for the WSA Graduate Conference 2011. This exhibition was self-curated by the participating artists, aimed at providing a platform for postgraduate research students, coinciding with presentations at the conference.

Figure 3-2 / The Winchester Gallery, street view.

The Project Symbiote 4 at the Winchester Gallery

The development of a dispersed object in this project has to be seen, not only in the context of the site, but also in where I was with my artist's practice at the time. As this was the first project, I still had to develop a way of working to further a practical and theoretical knowledge of dispersal (see Context §1.1 and 1.2). At this time, besides exploring distribution within the institutional context, I also investigated the concept of symbiosis as a way to see contextual relationships and dispersal differently (see §2.4). As a result, my initial focus on the exhibition as the main event of dispersion expanded. I became aware that I could use the exhibition process and history to disperse work differently within the wider gallery context, the gallery as art institution. I choose to work with installation photographs because they give a sense of the exhibition history and I saw the dispersed object as an addition and circulation of it. John Gillett (a former director of the gallery) collected on my request around one hundred installation photographs from exhibitions between 2006 and 2011 to which I added my own installation photographs, and this collection became for the purpose of this research a gallery archive and the material to work with (see Vol.2 fig.1-1).

Figure 3-3 / Symbiote 4. The Winchester Gallery, A Guide (2011-ongoing). Digital print, 420x592mm, double sided. Installation photograph [4.7.1.14]. Exhibition of practice-based research by Postgraduate Research students at WSA 2013

I developed the dispersed object in the format of a gallery guide, because it potentially pushes against the conventional art object in several ways. Within the gallery it can be carried around and is viewed *alongside* other work in the exhibition event (see Vol.2 fig.1-8/11). Secondly, it is something that is able to circulate within the gallery's wider institutional network,

that is, the library and specifically the Artists' Books Collection at Winchester School of Art Library and the Institutional Research Repository ePrints Soton (see Vol.2 fig.1-18/19). Thirdly, a printed gallery guide is usually not part of an exhibition, but lists the up and coming exhibition program and thus it covers a longer duration than an individual exhibition. In this case, it actually reflects back by showing previous exhibitions. Forth point, the format of a gallery guide pushes against the division between art and not-art or its representation. The appropriated photographs where altered by erasing, or attempting to erase, all art objects from them. The erasure and altering of the photographs was done by using Photoshop[2], a non-lens based production of the picture, which transformed the documentary installation photograph (not-art) to a 'computer-facilitated'[3] picture, an instance of the artist's work (see Vol.2 fig.1-12/13). The erasure of the art objects is not only a literal play on conceptual art's 'negation of the object,' but also a play on access and copyrights of photographs. Art objects and the documentation of these objects are not just there, they are subject to a "regime of visibility,"[4] laying out conditions of the possible and by which rules we may access and experience them. I wanted to make a connection between a negation of the object by the artist and the regime of visibility by the institution.

Aesthetically the gallery guide is made to look functional, institutional, commercially printed (see Vol.2 fig.1-4/5). After opening the folded A5 size booklet, it will become clear that it does not conform to a normal gallery guide. Its format and content are not very user friendly, that is, it is not clear how to read it. The failure of the gallery guide to function 'as usual' is intended to stop the visitor from taking it for granted. By allowing failure, the artist asserts himself within the institutional context.

I made 50 prints to be able to create a stack of printed material or fill the magazine shelves. For display at the exhibition I used a clear acrylic literature holder to fit in with what can be considered gallery furniture. During the development of this project I also produced work in other formats, not shown at the gallery exhibition. I created a photo book to test a change of format, layering and sequence of pictures. The photo book is not printed and published because I found it at the time too clear, not confusing enough, and too expensive to produce. My investigations in deleting art objects from photographs and layering images, led to a sequence of abstract flat 2d images. I used these to create a slideshow for my presentation at the accompanying conference (see Vol.2 fig.1-14/17).

The next section is a reflection on this project and it starts with questions concerning the ontology of the art object, as described in §2.3, and then focuses on a rethinking of the status of the art object.

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2   The erasure is basically a colour selection and delete, creating 'holes' in the photographs, which I used to show the underlying image or layer. The layering of the pictures is intended to refer to the passing of time and creating a frame within a frame effect. Framing the present artwork within this exhibition, and within the exhibition history of the gallery.

3   Michele White, *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship* (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006). 147.

4   Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill, 2007 ed. (London: Continuum, 2004).

3.2 Reflection on Symbiote 4

Questions to test the status of the dispersed object: what kind of object have I created within the gallery context? The questions are answered according to the artist, defining what the artist sanctions as the art object and specifying what the project consists of.

1. What belongs to the artwork? The dispersed object, or project, consists of: the artist working within the gallery context, creating an archive of digital installation photographs, the gallery guide, its exhibition, artist's talk and archival of work. See the project log for a full list (Vol.2, §6). Each production and exhibition is an instance of the project as 'the artwork'.

2. How is the dispersed object (the project) functioning/supposed to function? The project appropriates this particular gallery's installation photographs of previous exhibitions. It adds to and changes these documents to create a virtual archive, or the artist's version of an exhibition history. It is made accessible as altered installation photographs in the form of a printed gallery guide which is used and exhibited alongside other exhibitions. After physical exhibition and presentation my version of exhibition history (the gallery guide) becomes a document within a (potential) gallery archive. This project is set up to be circulatory and repeatable. It becomes a symbiote or ingrained within the gallery's network, based around the physical exhibition space with its temporary exhibitions. In addition, the WSA library with its artist's books collection acts here as a depository of the printed instance of the work, and the ePrints repository acts as the digital, online archive.

3. Where is the artwork located (space and time)? The project circulates between artist's studio, gallery exhibition and library archives (the institutional network of the Winchester Gallery/ WSA/ University of Southampton). The material instantiations of the project are placed outside the exhibition sequence of events that happen within the context of the gallery. The project is ongoing in the sense of a potential recreation and re-staging of the work alongside other exhibitions.

4. Which specific contextual aspects/interactions are essential?
The Symbiote 4 project is site-specific: intended to disperse within this particular gallery/ institution. A collaboration between gallery and artist to select specific archive material (installations photographs). The artist's interaction with archive material, adding and changing records, generating a virtual archive. The content, in this case the installation photographs, are only of this gallery. The exhibiting of this project happens alongside another exhibition at The Winchester Gallery. The work can be re-installed. Ideally a new updated guide is produced which includes recent installation photographs.

For the sake of brevity I have omitted the other questions: 5. What is displayed/made public? What are the conditions of exhibition/making it public?; 6. What is documented and archived?; and 7. If or how is the project preserved? Under what conditions does it survive? What is acceptable change? What is the copyright licence? For the full set of questions see Appendix A.

Conclusions from this project

The development and creation of the dispersed object in a gallery context led to a thinking otherwise concerning the status of the art object. First of all it led to a developing dispersal practice, inspired by symbiosis, which demanded a reassessment of the relationships between artist, art object, gallery and exhibition event. Every relationship, actor and object is now thought off as a potential space to co-habit or way to hybridise and disperse. Secondly, the institutional convention of neutrality, materialised as the white box gallery, is seen as cover for a complex ecology that goes through cycles of collection, exposing and distribution. The dispersed object is now considered as something that takes part in *that* circulation. This approach became translated into entities that are embedded and circulate within the boundaries that define the context, and during its circulation, it can occupy different statuses (see question 2). The status of the art object is not only dynamic in terms of physicality (a physical object and a digital object) but also in terms of process, because the art object consists also of a procedure to incorporate new material and create new editions.

The procedural aspect of Symbiote 4 was developed while working on the next project Symbiote 5 at the Rag Factory London. The reflection and findings in this section where written down after and together with a reflection on Symbiote 5. At this stage I started to get an inkling of the interwoveness of projects, and that they remain open to change and development after the exhibition event itself. In other words, initially I saw the project Symbiote 4 as being focused on one exhibition event and the documentation and archiving of that event.[5] After reflection that changed to a view where the project Symbiote 4 is (1) not exclusively focused on the exhibition event, and (2) it is still site specific to the Winchester Gallery but could be further developed, re-exhibited, re-archived etc. The position, I developed during this project, that the artwork sits alongside other artworks and has a different, longer maybe, temporality led me to investigate Derrida's notion of supplementarity. I will come back to Derrida in §4.2 Reflection Symbiote 5, because it deals with both projects.

During the exhibition in 2011, it became quite clear that I had pushed the 'non-functioning' side of the guide too far. I observed many viewers struggling to make a connection between the images and what is present in the gallery. It led me to create a simpler format of a set of postcards for the project Symbiote 5, and I started to recognise the 'non-functioning' as a particular feature in my art. When a new opportunity to exhibit in the same gallery arose in 2013, I created a

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5   As a consequence I published images of Symbiote 4 also online, but only *after* finishing the first exhibition. Strictly speaking the online publishing of the work (purely as my own documentation) was outside the context I set out, therefore I do not include it in the list of instantiations I created. Now that I developed my notion of the project Symbiote 4, and changed its duration the online publication creates an anomaly.

second edition (50 copies) to test the ongoing nature of my project by re-exhibiting this work. The front page was changed, with the use of my own font SymlogiDIN (see §5.1), and it was motivated by creating some sort of gallery branding, by the use of the same font as window display or advertising the exhibition. The photographs of the work 'in action' are also from this exhibition (see Vol.2 §1). Further experiments with the two dimensional (2d) images led me to laser cut the images out of paper to see what would happen if I physically removed the art objects from the historic installation photographs.

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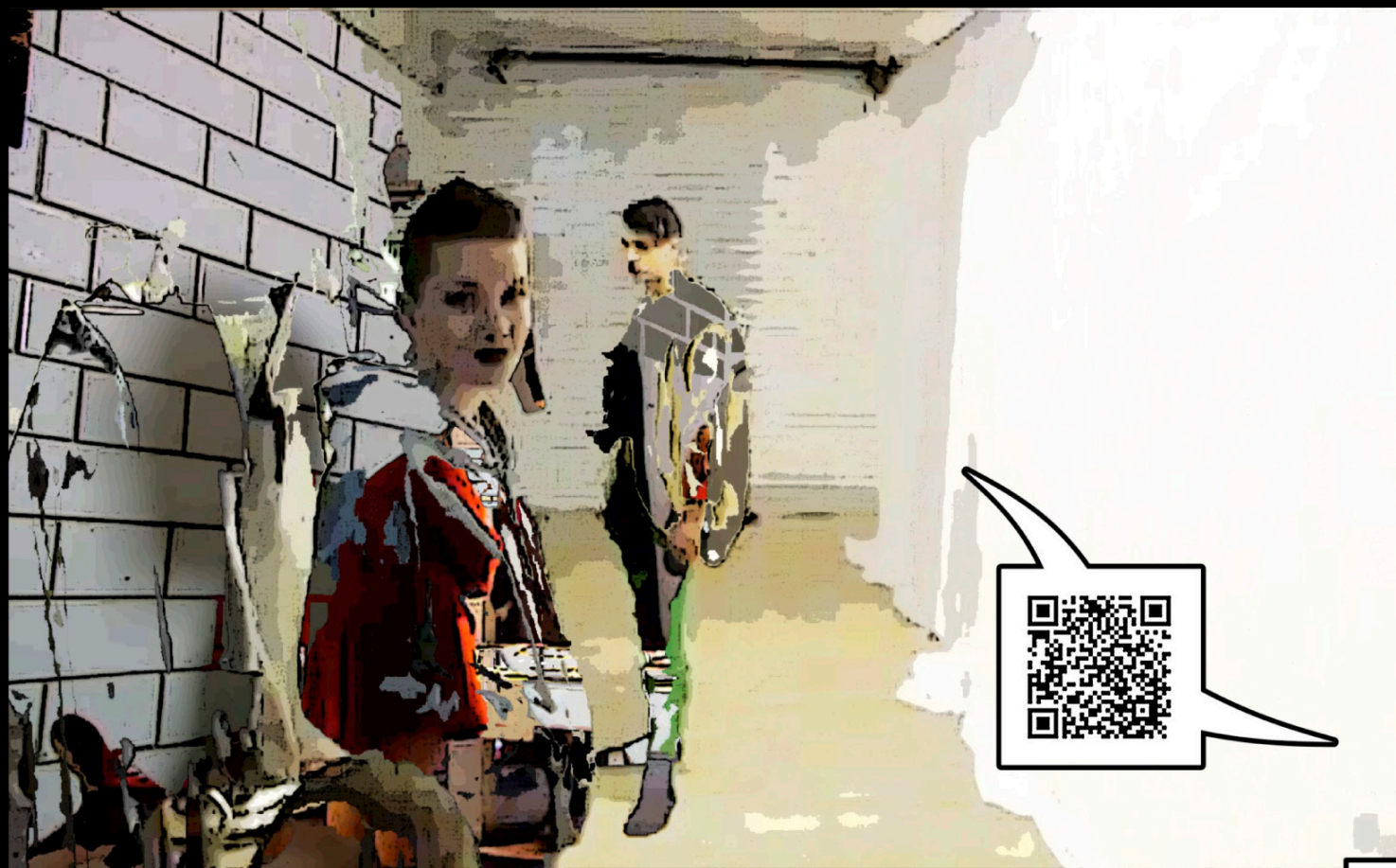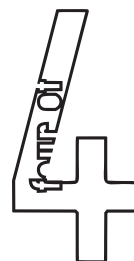
§4 Symbiote 5 at the Rag Factory and Online

"A Rag Factory gallery guide on-site and online. It appropriates, modifies, inhabits, and re-disperses the art shown at this gallery. It uses archival material found on YouTube and Flickr and materialises different artist's archives alongside existing exhibitions across various media: postcards, video, ebook. First exhibited online and alongside the exhibition 'Feint'. 6-10 July 2011 at The Rag Factory, 16 Heneage Street London."[1]

See Volume 2 §2 for visual documentation, and Volume 2 §6 for a complete list of entities, actions and materialisations in the form a Project Log.

Figure 4-1 / left / The Rag Factory Gallery, a guide in 8 printed postcards. Card 4 and 5. Digital print, A6 double sided print, colour and b/w.

1   van Rijn, "Symbiotext". http://www.symbiotext.net/category/symbiote5/

4.1 Symbiote 5 at The Rag Factory and Online (2011-ongoing)

Aim of the Project

• To create and develop a dispersed object of art within a situation defined by the gallery and online context.

• To test the status of the art object by asking what kind of entity have I created, and how is the dispersed object of art (supposed) to function?

Constraints of the Rag Factory Gallery and online sites

The "gallery and online context" in this project is formed by the Rag Factory, the world wide web, and the events that are made possible through it. This wider context creates such a potent mix that it is save to say that the combination of an online and onsite context represents a situation most artists will encounter today.

Figure 4-2 / Rag Factory 16 Heneage Street, Whitechapel, London. Entrance and street view.

The Rag Factory in Whitechapel London is a commercial studio and gallery space for hire. It is focused on providing the creative industries with low cost spaces for exhibitions, rehearsals, performances and other events and as such it has a fringe profile.[2] The Rag Factory is not a dedicated art gallery, and it has no formal archive. However, what acts as the archive for the gallery is a collection of videos that are filmed and uploaded on the internet by artists and users of the gallery. The fact that the Rag Factory uses the internet as archive meant that the gallery

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2   The Rag Factory, "Information About the Rag Factory - Affordable Rehearsal Space in Central London," http://www.ragfactory.org.uk/about/.

had already a long-term online presence, which fits with the aim of the research project to site it within the intersection of onsite and online contexts. As a result, the Rag Factory provides a very particular gallery context with a short exhibition duration, and because my focus was on the interconnections between the online and onsite context, I choose this site and exhibition event to develop and test a dispersal practice. By creating my own website I also developed part of the test site, and it allowed a sustained online engagement beyond the temporary exhibition *Feint*.

The project Symbiote 5 was initiated by the opportunity to take part in a group exhibition *Feint*, which took place from 6-10 July 2011. It was organised and curated by the artists, and included work from Charlotte Knox-Williams, Ella Clocksin, Stephen Davies, Ben Jenkins, Marius von Brasch, Yonat Nitzan-Green, Yvonne Jones, Kathy Oldridge and Hazel Boundy, David Podger and Walter van Rijn (see Vol.2 fig.2-2/4).

The Project Symbiote 5

With the previous project just finished (so I thought), I started this new project with the decision of re-applying the strategy of dispersal through symbiosis, a strategy I developed during Symbiote 4. It worked very well in the gallery context and I wanted to see if I could expand this strategy into the online context. This meant a practice of embedding within a situation to generate the dispersed object by creating something that is placed: a) alongside events that happen within the context of a gallery, b) alongside online events, and c) it circulates between these two.

For exhibition in the gallery, I developed a gallery guide in the form of printed postcards (see Vol.2 fig.2-5/15). The principle is the same as in the previous project, and for that reason I will focus on where the project Symbiote 5 differs from the previous project. The main challenge developing it was how to embed my practice, and how to take part in and develop the con-nections between the events at the actual gallery and online sites, both of which are subject to very rapid change. There are two procedures I would like to highlight, because they reflect on solutions created to deal with the high dynamic character of online sites and the linking of objects with online content. I say procedures because they involve both human behaviour and technology. The first one is based on internet search engines, and the second one is the use of Quick Response codes (QR code)[3], which allows mobile phone users to go from printed matter to an online site (see Vol.2 fig.2-16/17).

Any internet search with the terms 'Rag Factory London' returns a search result that creates in effect a dynamic archive,[4] which contains different sets of data depending on many factors, for example the exact search terms or visual search, time and date, personalised results, specific

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3   Quick Response code. The patent rights on QR codes are owned by the inventor Denso Wave, but they are not applied, i.e., anyone can use it freely as long as the standards for QR Codes in JIS or ISO are followed. See: http://www.qrcode.com/en/index.html

4   To prevent confusion between different archives I will use the term 'classic archive' for the file-orientated archive practices that index and conserve actual objects. See Glossary.
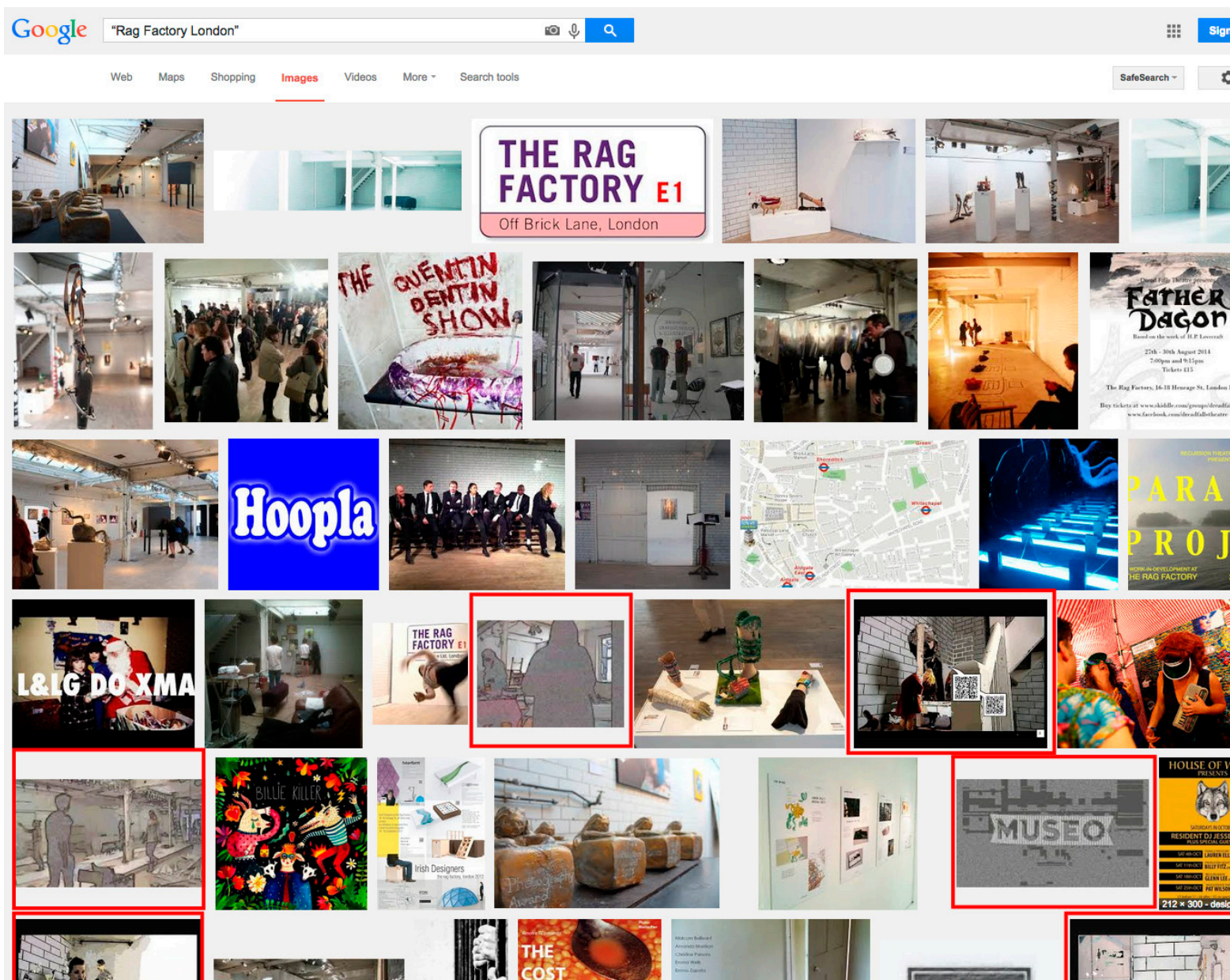
Figure 4-3 / Screenshot Google Image search 'Rag Factory London', page 1, accessed 16-11-2014. Images with a red border link to Symbiote 5 project.

search engine's algorithm, scope of the search, tags attached to the online files (see fig 4-3).[5] Internet search engines create a certain visibility of digital(ised) artwork by aggregating what is available online in a list of search results. Obviously, the top ranking results create a greater 'click-through' rate comparable to higher 'foot-fall' through gallery's doors. For the purpose of this research it is not important what rank my work receives, as I am not concerned with the quantity of 'traffic'. What is important is that the work is able to circulate, i.e., that links are established, and access is given.

The above image (Fig. 4-3) is an example of how a search engine aggregates instances of Symbiote 5 in the form of pictures which link to the source websites. The so-called aggregation and social websites mediate between the viewers/users and the artwork uploaded to websites, in the same way as a gallery mediates artwork. These big hubs pull in as much data as is possible, in order to datafy it and sell it as a service. Through datafication[6] they create value out of the user's labour and online behaviour, for example by analysing it and selling it for marketing purposes, not to mention the logs of online behaviour can be screened by security services.[7] What to do if we want to evade the intermediaries and create direct links between objects and websites? This is where the second procedure comes in. Quick Response or QR codes simply provide a way to create a shortcut, which bypasses the internet search engines. It creates a direct link between an object and online files such as websites, document files, images, maps, search results etc. Another reason to use them is that the QR links can be seen as additional connections to the mental connections viewers make when seeing pictures or objects. However, it has some downsides from my perspective: it relies on the use of an app and smart phones,[8] and the QR code itself easily dominates if it is placed in a small image. At the time of development in 2011 the QR codes where still relative new. It is mainly used to provide additional product informa-

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5   During the conference Society of the Query #1, a number of speakers presented research showing how search engines results are 'customised' depending on users' profile, location and search strategy. Michael Stevenson's presentation 'Google art expose' showed several artists creating software that re-use or exploit search engines results, often questioning authorship of the resulting mixture of images and texts from different sources. Institute of Network Cultures, *Inhoudelijke En Financiële Verantwoording Society of the Query*, (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2010), http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/query/about-2/about-society-of-the-query-1/.

6   Jose van Dijck, "Datafication, Dataism and Dataveillance: Big Data between Scientific Paradigm and Ideology," *Surveillance and Society* 12, no. 2 (2014), http://library.queensu.ca/ojs/index.php/surveillance-and-society/issue/view/Big%20Data.

7   It is clear that the internet has become a closely monitored space. We know the meta-data is stored and analysed, and following the publication of material by Snowden we get an idea of the range of data and how it is acquired. See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24844427 and L. Harding, *The Snowden Files: The inside Story of the World's Most Wanted Man* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014). Geert Lovink, "Hermes on the Hudson: Notes on Media Theory after Snowden," *e-flux journal* 54(2014), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/hermes-on-the-hudson-notes-on-media-theory-after-snowden/.

8   The user needs to download an app if it is not there already, and scan the QR code with their mobile phone. I experimented with several apps and ended up using QRafter. See http://www.symbiotext.net/info/qr-codes/

tion and links to online sales.[9] Because of its aesthetics, it is usually placed on the outside edge or bottom of the image or product packaging.[10] Using the two procedures of internet search and QR codes I developed a number of entities, which contain and facilitate a set of eight pictures to embed itself within, and circulate between gallery exhibition, artist's website, and aggregatio-websites such as Vimeo, Issuu, and search engines. In short the entities are:

- Website www.symbiotext.net as platform to publish and archive of all the author's work.
- A gallery archive in the form of a multiscreen video.
- A printed gallery guide in the form of eight postcards, which incorporates QR codes to allow the gallery visitors a direct link to the videos and other websites. It is available in the exhibition.
- Based on the postcards I produced an ebook and PDF with additional links.

(For images of these entities, see Vol.2 fig.2-19/27)

The following network of sites, links and actions creates the embedding and circulation I had in mind. The artist appropriates online videos of previous exhibitions and other events at Rag Factory gallery, and generates a virtual archive, or the artist's version of an exhibition history. The author's videos are altered, post-produced works, and they are published online (vimeo), creating entities that might be aggregated into the searches by the online public, i.e., become part of dynamic online archive. Eight stills from the archival videos form the basis for eight digital pictures. These are presented in two ways. As printed postcards and within an ebook gallery guide. The printed postcards are part of the exhibition Feint and allow the visitors to become aware of and access previous events that took place at the same gallery. At the same time, a postcard is a way of sending a message to a friend: "I've been there." The printed postcards contain a map of the gallery that locates the events within the gallery, and they contain QR codes which link back to images on the internet, source videos, or sometimes an irrelevant link. The ebook that is published on www.symbiotext.net, and as PDF on the Issuu website serves the same function as the postcards: as gallery guide it gives access to exhibition events, and to sequences of images.

Besides the circulating entities, part of the artwork is an online platform that facilitates circulation and presence. The author's website www.symbiotext.net functions as platform and

9   Already in 2012 some marketing surveys suggest that QR codes have not broken through to the wider public. It might be too early to conclude that as a technology it has failed or that it still has potential. See for instance Young-Hwan Choi et al., "Converting Image to a Gateway to an Information Portal for Digital Signage," *Multimedia Tools & Applications* 71, no. 1 (2014)., and Selcuk Ertekin and Lou E Pelton, "An Exploratory Study of Consumer Attitudes Towards Qr Code Reader Applications," in *Ideas in Marketing: Finding the New and Polishing the Old,* ed. Krzysztof Kubacki, *Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science* (Springer International Publishing, 2015).

10   A more sophisticated option today is LayAR. It does away with the ugly QR code and it turns the image or photograph itself in a link to a so called augmented reality layer. (See https://www.layar.com/). Downside of this method is that the links and the user are much more managed and user data is gathered. It does not facilitate the user to go outside the bubble created by the "augmented reality." The closed system and gathering of user data is one of the main reasons for its application within advertising, but contra my aim to disperse freely.

archive for all artwork produced in the course of this research. The website gathers all entities in order to document them and to manage its dispersal again.[11] It is the site where the artist acts and performs to make artwork accessible, public, distributed, in the form of data. The dual function of the website as a hub that gathers and disperses reflects a situation that within the digital online world there is no separation between transmission media and storage media.[12] This means that artwork 'posted' or published online *becomes* immediately part of the online *operations* of distribution and storage. So, if we take together the action of the artist and the cybernetic then the artist performs and the digital artwork becomes performed and dispersed. With the Symbiote 5 project I place the artwork in this situation, connected to a gallery situation, and reflect on the status of the art object.

4.2   Reflection on Symbiote 5

Questions to test the status of the artwork: what kind of object have I created within the gallery and online context? The questions are answered according to the artist, defining what the artist sanctions as the art object and specifying what the project consists of. A full set of questions is placed in Appendix A. Here I focus on the questions 1, 3 and 4, because they detail the main points that differ from the traditional status of the art object.

1. What belongs to the artwork?

The dispersed object, or project, consists of: the artist working within the gallery online and onsite context, the digital and printed work, its exhibition and online publication, and archival of work. In detail: The creation of a virtual database of eight event videos and its visualisation on video; Eight digital pictures and embedded links; The Rag Factory gallery guide as printed postcards and ebook; The website www.symbiotext.net and online accounts on other websites, which need continuous updating.

3. Where is the artwork located? What is its duration?

It is located on multiple platforms, but not on all at the same time due to a circulation, see question 4. The duration of the project is determined by the online availability of the digital entities.

4. Which specific contextual aspects/interactions are essential?

The project performs or circulates within the Rag Factory's event history and its ongoing

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11   During the gallery exhibition the symbiotext website had to be working, in order to create a simultaneous exhibition, on site and online. The work was posted online before the gallery exhibition. I also uploaded images from the project Symbiote 4 on this site, to give gallery visitors an idea of my project's history. As a result Symbiote 4 became also published online, but only in the form of documentation.

12   Wolfgang Ernst and Jussi Parikka, *Digital Memory and the Archive* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012)., 100.

circulation online.

Digital-internet context: Search engines and its technologies are now essential tools to take part in and sustain the circulation of images. Work in the form of videos, PDFs or images need to be uploaded to websites and made accessible to search engines to make it work. The users who do the internet searches perform a dynamic archiving, follow links, download, read, and possibly print entities of the work. It is not that they complete the work but they activate a potential of circulation and materialisation between digital and printed forms or between archived and visualised on screen states. For instance the viewer can decide to download the guide to a tablet and make it part of their ebook collection. Alternatively one can view it in PDF form on a website such as Issuu and print a copy. In this case, the viewer decides the format and quality of the printed copy, not the artist. The printing via the Issuu website is an example of materialisations that are not defined by the artist, but by giving open access to the work these unforeseen developments add to the dispersed nature of the work.

Dispersal during exhibition: Eight postcards (50 printed copies each) displayed to be taken by the visitors and viewed while in the gallery. The public has the option to take a copy. Each postcard refers to a particular event and place within the gallery. Together they make up a small sample of an exhibition history.

Dispersal during and after exhibition: performed through internet search engines by users searching for the terms "Rag Factory London."

Symbiote 5 as a dispersed object
Following from the above statements about the kind of object I have created, in a combined gallery and online context, I can conclude that in this test the status of the art object has become conditional on a wider variation of contexts and interaction, and that the status of the object has become even more dynamic compared to the previous project. The art object is spread out over and circulates between platforms, with more actors (such as interaction by online users), and varies between temporary digital web pages and printed material. As a result, relationships between the actors have shifted. For instance, what I consider as an archive is in this context not only created by the gallery, but also by the artist and significantly by internet users doing an online search. Here the viewer does an online search that creates a temporary listing and possible access, modification and circulation of the work. Hence, the boundaries of the work become more diffuse or problematic and the artist looses potentially control over the work.

Another consequence of a work that is dispersed over gallery and online platforms is that the viewer will only come across certain entities, and they can only experience certain elements of the work, but never a whole or complete 'work,' even if it might look like one in the form of a printed object or catalogue. This meant I had to rethink the art objects I was creating in terms of (in)completeness and how I might structure the relationships between individual entities and the art project as a whole. I turned to Derrida's theory of deconstruction and notion of supplemen-

tarity13 to deconstruct and rethink how the many different entities I have created are ordered (by an institution and by myself), and how a different order or categorisation might function. Working through the notion of supplementarity I started to see all the different entities as equal, unordered with no beginning, no end, no centre and no outside, that is, the work is not complete anymore. I (re)considered all the different entities of the dispersed object as original *and* copy, or as centre *and* circumference.[14] Following these reconsiderations I changed, for instance, my view on the video work. I call it now an "artist's archive," to denote that it is a combination of source material and new work created. In other words, the notion of the archive is duplicated from only a collection of 'originals' on which my artwork is based, to become also my artwork, my conception of an archive with my order.[15] In the next project, called TITLE(date), I have explored the artist's archive further (see §5.2).

After working through my research project from a deconstructive point of view, I turned it around and I started to see Derrida's work from the perspective of distribution. From my perspective, many of Derrida's practices seem to lead to a multiplication of the object or a negation of singularity. Let me give a few examples. Through 'writing under erasure' a word within a text acquires a double referent: the word and the negated word become both operational. 'Dissemination' might be an act of creation and/or destruction and a scattering. The 'supplement' points to an incompleteness of the original, and creates additions and ambiguity. Furthermore, G. C. Spivak notes in her "Translators Foreword" that in *Of Grammatology* Derrida's terms, "form a chain where each may be substituted for the other, but not exactly (...)." Terms, such as "trace, differance, reserve, supplement, dissemination, hymen, greffe, pharmakon, parergon and so on"[16] are not strictly defined by Derrida, but left open to do their work within the text.[17] In other words, Derrida does not want his terms to become solidified within his own text. In effect the writing procedures of Derrida as well as what he wrote opened up new avenues for me, which I explored further in my next projects. For instance, a reconsideration of writing structures from traces to metaphysics, or from small scale to large scale can be found in my project with fonts and

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13   Supplement in the 'ordinary' sense of the word (addition) and in the 'extraordinary' sense (repetitive replacement, strangeness, ambiguity, "the supplement of origin", crazy logic). See Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003). 54 referring to Derrida's Speech and Phenomena p.87.

14   Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* trans. A.R. Bass (London and New York: Routledge, 1978). In "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" Derrida uses the word supplement while investigating the concept of 'totalization' or completeness in Levi-Strauss's work.
"[The]movement of the freeplay, permitted by the lack, the absence of a center or origin, is the movement of supplementarity. One cannot determine the center, the sign which supplements it, which takes its place in its absence because this sign adds itself, occurs in addition, over and above, comes as a supplement. The movement of signification adds something, which results in the fact that there is always more, but this addition is a floating one because it comes to perform a vicarious function, to supplement a lack on the part of the signified."

15   About the notion of the archive see Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995). Derrida starts with the Greek 'arkhe' which refers to the origin and the place where official documents where kept. Documents of the law, i.e., order. Derrida also notes that: "The archivization produces as much as it records the event." (p.17) For me this means the archive is at once a source and a product.

16   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in *Of Grammatology* (Baltomore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), lxx.

17   Ibid., lxxi.

substitutions of letters and words. This work is described in the next chapter 5.

On another level, freeing myself from an order based on cause and effect allowed me to reverse the relationship between site and art object. I came to the conclusion that the development of the dispersed object should not start within a specific context. The object might become more or less dynamic, depending on the range of contexts it circulates through, but the dispersal practice seems to be able to adapt to a certain context and follow the same tactics. I began to consider that the project as the dispersed object had become more like a context itself: a site or a space where symbiosis or mutual exchange takes place, especially when the dispersal practice follows a speculative and hybridising tactic, and one which leaves the work open for others to modify. The project (the dispersed object) itself had become a site that facilitated multiple different and changeable entities with a dynamic status.

Another aspect that has come to the fore in this project is the relationships between the artist's practice and the other actors on site. For instance, the project Symbiote 5 includes the development of a website: a work in its own right, creating a platform for and expanding its own archiving and circulation.[18] The author's website not only forms a facilitating platform for work to be self published, it also allows a fluid and interactive re-categorisation of the work through tags and changes in text and images by others who access the website. In addition the website also emphasises questions about the interrelationships. I became aware that an important part of a dispersal practice is the aggregation of entities into forms that might function as databases or archives. At this stage in the research, I just started to work consciously with dispersal *and* aggregation, and I needed to develop a better understanding and practice of it, to work out what the consequences are for the structure of the dispersed art object.

Summarising the above I needed to take the following issue forward in the development of the next project. Instead of a focus on site, or working within a particular situation, I needed to *start from within the dispersal practice itself*, and look at which different relationships the dispersal practice and the dispersed object could promote. It is a more speculative outlook and as a consequence, I developed the research methodology to take advantage of this insight.

4.3 A developing methodology

I approached the projects Symbiote 4 and 5 with a methodology to develop and test the dispersed object within predetermined sites, that is, the gallery and online sites. As we have seen above through practice and by developing theory I realised that predetermined sites define possible circulation and variation of material status of the art object, but to test the status of the art object by developing art practices such as hybridity[19] and going beyond territory[20] I needed to develop my research methodology as well.

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18   See also Olga Goriunova and her exploration of what she termed art platforms. §1.5 and Goriunova, *Art Platforms and Cultural Production on the Internet.*

19   See hybrid practices in §1.4.3

20   See § 1.5.3 Proposing art beyond territory.

One of the problems of predetermined locations, and linking it with the notion of an 'extension' or 'widening' of the site from gallery to also online sites, is that it imports with it a tacit ordering of sites. The tacit ordering of gallery first and online second becomes manifest in the order of the projects done by the artist/researcher (First Symbiote 4 at Winchester Gallery and then Symbiote 5 at the Rag Factory and online) and subsequently it becomes a narrative of development. Even within the project Symbiote 5, I started to work from activities at the gallery and then work outwards.

A rethinking of the project through the concept of 'supplementarity' (after Derrida) made me realise I have to account for the tacit ordering of spaces or sites. In doing so I realised that all the visual content within Symbiote 4 and 5 refers back to events within the galleries, but that the source material (digital photographs or video), the artist's work of processing the images, aggregating and dispersal, and the circulating entities have all the digital and online world as their prime site. The order gallery first and online second is reversed. Switching between these two poles and being aware of it can be seen as a typical result of deconstruction. In addition it might lead to a third way, a hybrid situation, which brings us to the net art context.

 After placing the dispersed object in a net art context (see§1.5), I went further and I came to see the location of entities, or the aspect of site, as a dynamic changeable environment my work needs to go through and accommodate. Trying to deal with these questions led me to review the relation between artwork and site, and the relation between the role of the artist/researcher and the spectator or the public. From this new perspective, the project as a whole (the dispersed object) is not defined by or confined to a particular site: the dispersed object only temporarily adapts to the site. We could say it is going through it. If the work needs to be able to deal with many different sites, then the role of the artist needs to evolve and to be able to engage with many different publics, users, viewers, participants (see also §2.2 Methodology). Looking back it is one of the crucial moments within my research where a tacit understanding I gained from my work becomes articulated, and it led to a new direction of work within my practice. As a result, I also developed my methodology to follow where the practice was leading me, and I started to work from within the dispersed object. So, after two projects I came to the conclusion that the initial research structure of creating situations based on sites in relation to the gallery has done its work. I needed to open this structure up in order to find a way to develop new work that is not predetermined by a context or site. I suggested to start somewhere speculatively and allow an engagement with sites and contexts to evolve by making the most of opportunities as they appear.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

SymLogiDIN Thing, 139 pt.

5
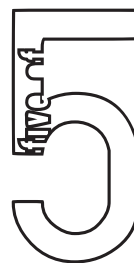
§5 Symbiote 6 Hybrid Text & Project TITLE(date)

This chapter discusses two projects building on the insights from the previous projects. The methodology is based on not situating the project in advance, but starts from within the dispersal practice itself. The two projects were developed simultaneously and start with a description of project Symbiote 6 Hybrid Text. As will become clear in the following text, through Symbiote 6 I created work in the form of software to be used by others as a tool, which meant that I had no way of knowing how it would function and evolve after releasing it. I started the project TITLE(date) to be able to apply the software tools myself in many different situations, to develop my practice and test the dispersed object. This chapter ends with a reflection on the projects and an conceptualisation of the art object as both a process and snapshot.

See Volume 2 §3 and §4 for visual documentation and Volume 2 §6 Project Log for a complete list of entities, actions and materialisations

Figure 5-1 / left / SymLogiDIN font. Sample page of the 'Thing' style. [6.1.1.03.]

5.1 Symbiote 6 Hybrid Text (2012-ongoing)

Aim of the Project

• To create and develop a dispersed object of art starting from within the practice, not situated in advance.

• The testing of the status of the art object is addressed through Project TITLE(date) see §5.2

Developing a new dispersed object from within the practice

While working on digital entities, such as websites and PDFs, and continuing exploring digital artifacts I became aware of a similarity between the structure of digital artifacts and language or text. Both are granular, with individual building blocks in the form of letters and bytes . Both have also a modular structure, or changeable modules containing other modules building up complex structures (see §1.6.1 and glossary). Combining this insight with notions of distribution already investigated I saw an opportunity to insert my art on the most basic level, within the individual letters of a font, and let the object disperse within a general field of text or language through application of the font software.

I choose to work with fonts or typeface for a few reasons. In an analogue world, the act of writing is materialised by creating letters, words, texts by hand on a medium, such as paper. With the appearance of the typewriter and later the computer the direct link between writing and visualising has been substituted by a complex system of hardware and software, based on digital data processing.[1] This system is designed to work in the background and to operate ideally unnoticed in order to give the user the sensation (or illusion) of the directness of writing through its immediacy. The system in place is actually complex and multi-layered and provides many inter-spatial niches for a symbiotic dispersed artwork to do its work. For instance, within a PDF document fonts can be embedded so that by dispersal of the document the font is automatically dispersed as well. What also appealed to me was that digital texts can be easily multiplied, changed, substituted and (re-)distributed online and as printed matter, which was just the right environment for my experiments. The niche I had in mind was the possibility to create a hybrid entity between a source text and my own text contained within the font design. It sounds more complicated than it is, see Vol.2 for examples of the font and its application in texts. In the next section, I will explicate this work in more detail.

On the point of constraints, designing fonts and creating software was a complete new venture for me, requiring a lot of time and a steep learning curve. But following on from the research of the previous projects I was ready to go into a new direction and develop a set of new skills, and being new to this field helped me to approach fonts in an unconventional way. Another limitation of placing my work within font software and its circulation is that its dispersion and

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1   Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

persistence depends on the availability and use of that particular font software. If for instance the TrueType font standard would become obsolete, my artwork would end as well, unless I could migrate my work to another software standard. This is a particular constraint that applies to any software-based art, and is of particular concern to sites that maintain archives of digital artwork.[2]

The Project Symbiote 6

For this project I created a font family named SymLogiDIN[3] with three fonts: -Air, -Thing and -Voice (See Vol.2, Fig.3-1/3). These fonts are published online with an Open Font Licence. Characteristic for this font is the embedding of words within individual characters of the capitals, so using this font means one imports my text, my words within the source text.

How does it work? The smallest unit of a written text is the letter and it's graphic representation, which is called a glyph or character. With digitalisation the 'A' has become data and the design of all the software involved in processing the typed input follows the convention that typing 'A' begets an 'A' and means 'A'. What if a typed 'A' generates a multiple, an 'A plus B,' a visual symbol that hybridises a letter and a word?[4] I designed the SymLogiDIN font in such a way that when one types for instance capital A, within the graphic representation of the letter A, the words "it lives inside"appears. By using this font to visualise a text, a hybrid is created between the original text and the words that I have embedded within the glyphs. Depending on how it is read, the hybrid words differ. For instance, "A Mind" (see fig. 5-2 below) could be read as "It lives inside A local maybe Mind," or it could be read as "A Mind it lives inside local maybe," or as "it lives inside A Mind local maybe."

To read the added or supplemented[5] words, the text needs to be printed quite large (in these examples the sizes are 64, 36 and 12 pts). On the other hand when the print is smaller, the

Figure 5-2 / Text "A Mind" in SymLogiDIN-Thing font.

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2   For a current reflection on these issues see: Michael Connor, "After Vvork: How (and Why) We Archived a Contemporary Art Blog," *Rhizome Journal*(2015), http://rhizome.org/editorial/2015/feb/9/archiving-vvork/.

3   The name SymLogiDIN relates to the names of the two fonts I have appropriated and mixed: OSP-Logisoso and OSP-DIN, details are given in the text below.

4   I consider this as an interference with the institution of language. See §1.4.2.

5   The new layer of text can be seen as a supplement (after Derrida, 1977). It adds an extra voice to the text. That it is my voice is left unstated to leave any interpretation open. With this in mind the letter substitution procedure is called 'WhoIsShe'.

added words become unreadable or just an irregularity in the shape of the glyph and eventually just disappear (See Vol.2, Fig.3-3). The invisibility or the hiding within is part of the symbiotic, embeddedness of the artwork. The font itself is also a hybrid. It is an amalgamation and adaptation of two existing fonts which have an Open Font Licence: OSP-Logisoso and OSP-DIN. One reason for me to use fonts from the OSP Foundry is that they devised their fonts from other fonts. The Logisoso font (Design by Gabio Mathieu) is based on the traffic signs for Logistics center Delhaize Zellik (Brussels North), while the OSP-DIN font is based on redrawing original DIN lettering[6]. The DIN font, which I used for the added words, has a strong personal connotation. In the past I used stencils with DIN fonts for technical lettering on architectural drawings, drawn in ink by hand. So by adapting the DIN font as my voice, I hide the personal underneath a veneer of institutional standardisation. At the same time, I am continuing to use the DIN font to 'annotate,' in this case other peoples' writing.

An important aspect of using a font to 'deliver' my work within another text is that the source text file is not changed. The font and the text itself remain two independent modules which are combined in a PDF file for instance. This means that both the source text and the hybridised text remain independent. Besides a multiplication, the use of the SymLogiDIN font also creates a difference between the digital and physical condition of the work. The hybrid text only appears through the act of visualisation and reading (on screen, in print), because the additional words are only embedded within the visual, graphic design of the letter. Font software only materialises a particular graphic design for each character. It doesn't 'recognise' the words I have added as words, only the human viewer can read the added words within the letters after they are materialised. I created three styles of the font, called Voice, Thing and Air. (See Vol. 2, §3).[7]

As we have seen above by using the font SymLogiDIN a hybridisation between letters and words takes place. The hybridisation creates a new layer of text, the meaning of which is uncertain and subject to chance. To investigate the effects and possibilities of writing hybrid texts I needed to be able to read out the hybrid texts created by a font. It would also help me with the question, which letters to substitute and with which words. Although there are letter substitution options in some software packages, non are able to accomplish what I needed it to do. This led me to create a new letter substitution procedure. The letter substitution program WhoIsShe (created by the author, assisted by Phil Cole, see Vol.2, Fig.3-9) is software designed to substitute certain letters in a source text for certain words. The procedure is half manual half automated and not developed to a state where it can be published. The change of parameters (the letters to be substituted, the substituted words and level of substitution) needs to be done manually, by rewriting parts of the code. The level of substitution can be changed by allowing feedback loops

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6   DIN Deutsches Institut für Normung (German Institute of Standardisation). For a history of the DIN round as technical lettering see Albert-Jan Pool, FF DIN Round – digital block letters, (FSI Fontshop International, 2010), issuu.com/fontfont/docs/ff_din_round.

7   They can be used in the same way as regular, bold and outline. In addition the SymLogiDIN-Thing version is designed with laser cutting in mind. With laser cutting the internal shapes of a character is lost and becomes a void. See the letters A and d in Fig.5-2. I decided to keep the voids as a visual reminder of the influence of laser technology on the design.

(the substituted words can again be substituted), or by adding more letters to be substituted. The output or hybrid text can be, compared with the source text, changed from small subtle details to a thing beyond recognition.

The character substitution software is something I might be able to develop for publication at a later stage. The development is constrained by the time I have available but it is the font that drives this project. Ideally the project develops more fonts, with different sets of words within the glyphs so that the user gets some choice over the substituted text. The fonts are published online at openfontlibrary.org with an Open Font License[8] (See Vol.2, Fig.3-5). The Open Font Library, as the name suggests, allows anyone to browse, select and download fonts. Using this as a site to publish the work, and the fact that the work is a tool for others to use, means the author looses control over how and where the work as tool is applied (See Vol.2, Fig.3-6/8). On the positive side it creates opportunities for unexpected applications. One such application is the use of the font by the mobile phone app Phonto. Users can take a picture, select a font (including SymLogiDIN), write text over the picture and upload it to social media sites (See Vol.2, Fig.3-6).

Reflecting on this stage of the project I conclude that the dispersed object I developed functions as a tool, and by publishing these with a creative common license *anyone* using the font (and substitution procedure in principle) embeds and disperses the artist's work within other textual works. When the tools are used, producing material on screen, printed, read or spoken, the project (the dispersed work) 'performs' or operates and becomes materialised.

The decision to include the visualisations of the font by other users (in addition to the author's) within the work has some contradictory consequences. The work acts as a means for others to create their work, which the artist considers to be a hybrid. Not only between two texts but also between multiple works from different artists. Because the artist has licensed the font with an Open Font License the hybrid text should get two copyright notices: one for the font and one for the text itself. However, the font includes text as well (the added words within glyphs) which has an unknown status. It is only through its insertion within other text that this project becomes materialised. In other words, it is only the user who decides on the condition of the materialised work. Another consequence is that the artist has no way of knowing who and where the font is used, unless he is credited. This makes it very difficult to test the dispersed object through this project at this stage. Therefore the author will apply the tools created in this project himself, which is described in the next section Project TITLE(date).

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8   See http://scripts.sil.org/OFL

Et in Arcadia Ego (1637) Anthraquinone-1-Diazonium Damien Hirst, What Won't Money! (1625) Adriaen Pieter Young Man with a Book (18 son Heade, The Fifth Foo Martin Schongauwer, The Body (2011) Yvonne Jones, It portance that We Repeat O Reminder to Future Gene Depths of Our Stupidity Tatars, I decided not to s Dünyay kurtarmamaya kar Mircea Cantor, Harrier (201

5.2   TITLE(date) (2012-ongoing)

Aim of the Project

• To apply the software tools from Symbiote 6 across a broad spectrum of sites and projects, initiated by the artist or others, to be able to develop different approaches and strategies of dispersal practices. This project investigates different ways of aggregating and dispersing the work, and it further develops modularity as a way to structure the different entities of the project.

• To test the status of the artwork by asking how is the dispersed object of art (supposed) to function, and what kind of object have I created?

Artwork titles

In this project the author applies the font SymLogiDIN and letter substitution tool himself, to embed within other situations and create hybrid work. Besides the font, other modules[9] where created by aggregating artwork titles into what I call artist's archives of titles. This allowed me to use, remix, disperse and materialise in multiple ways (See Vol.2, Fig.4-1/2). My reasons to work with titles of art as material are manyfold. First of all, the copyrights for an artwork usually do not include the title of the work (there are some exceptions, but I can leave that aside), so one can refer to an artwork by name without copyright infringement.[10] Secondly, one can also consider a title as a supplement[11] to the artwork, or it can be seen as part of the artwork. It is not only a textual reference to an artwork, it is also an element that plays a role in the work's appreciation; additionally a title might signal the status of an object as art.[12] As soon as an artwork circulates within the artworld it acquires a title. Usually a title is given by the artist, if not by viewers, collectors, website designers or as a last resort by an archivist.[13] Thirdly, a collection of titles can be seen as a narrative and as a list, which has implications for the choices to be made regarding ordering, categorising, referencing. Fourthly, a collection of artwork is made by someone, somewhere. A construction that says as much about the maker of this collection, as

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9   See glossary.

10   See UK Copyright Service, "Fact Sheet P-18: Rules Dealing With Names, Titles and Phrases," Copyright Witness, http://www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/p18_copyright_names.; United States Copyright Office, "Circular 40. Copyright Registration for Pictorial, Graphic, and Sculptural Works," (Washington: U.S. Copyright Office, 2013).;

11   To give something a title and a signature are all ways to singularise and authenticate an entity. See J. Derrida and Gerhard Richter, *Copy, Archive, Signature: A Conversation on Photography*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford University Press, 2010). 24.

12   Photographs are an interesting example of a grey area. They usually do not have a title but a caption and gain a title when they are considered 'art'.

13   For an example of naming conventions see: Visual Resources Association et al., *Cataloging Cultural Objects: A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and Their Images*. My own rules for dealing with titles in the databases I created: 'Untitled' is still a title given by the artist. The title 'No Title' is given by the archivist who logs the work into a database. Short for 'no title given'. In addition, contra to usual capitalisation I capitalise all words in the title. Website posts in the form of photographs are titled under the influence of search engine optimasation (SEO). If a photograph has a unique title it will appear higher in a search return.

it says about the context and institutional structures that under pin it. The institutional naming (and dating) conventions are the result of what the institution values, for instance, the importance of authenticity[14] and consistency because a collection of titles becomes metadata, on which the administration and management relies.

Taken all together a title might be only a few words but from my perspective there is great potential in a title because there is so much scope for aggregation and dispersion, ambiguity and hybridity. I developed the TITLE(date) project by engaging in different approaches of dispersal practices, that is, through self-curation, by participation or in collaboration with other art projects. See Vol.2, §6 Project Logs for a complete list.

The procedure I created and followed in this project

Starting with a gathering of material, there where several ways in which I collected art titles. Through: a) online search and appropriation of titles from institutional archives, exhibitions, or literature; b) an open call online to create a list by (online) participation; c) approaching private collectors; and d) responding to opportunities or open calls for collaboration or participation in other projects.[15] (See Vol.2, Fig.4-1/23)

The gathering of titles led to creating several artist's archives of titles, called TITLE(date). Subsequently the individual works TITLE(date) have been post-produced by applying either the font SymLogiDIN or the letter substitution tool. Some of these works have again been aggregated and materialised in the form of books, prints, audio or other manifestations. The elements I have used as modules are: the font SymLogiDIN [6.1.1.03], the substitution program Whoisshe [6.2.1], the various TITLE(date) texts, and the procedure of aggregating and dispersing titles. The last module is the procedure itself which can be adapted and recombined as is needed. It creates a recursive structure of modules within modules. Recursive[16] in the sense of self-referencing procedures which lead to layering, repetition, loops, and potentially an infinite range of expressions. I will give two examples which demonstrate this very well. The first one is the book TITLE(date) [7.2.3] and the second example is an audio guide I made for the Annlee @ NIMk project at the Nederlands Media Art Institute [7.3.2].

The book TITLE(date)

I will start with the book as an object because this is the form in which it appears to the viewer. I will describe the elements it contains, working my way to its smallest elements, the individual characters (See Vol.2, Fig.4-4/9). There are two books [*TITLE(date)001-005* and *TITLE(date)006-009*], which are made in the same way but with different content. Each book contains a number of TITLE(date) texts, each referencing a different art collection. Each title, date and artist refers to a particular artwork in the collection. Each title is printed with the font SymLogiDIN visualising hybrid character-words creating a hybrid sentence that refers to both

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14   See the discussion between Buchloh and Kosuth I refer to in §1.1
15   See §1.4.3 and §1.5.3 for a discussion of artist's positions in relation to institutions.
16   See glossary.

the 'source' artwork and to the dispersed object itself. The books are produced in a bound hardback format. At a later stage the bound format of the books became 'disbound' by separating individual page spreads. I reworked the page spreads by enlarging and laser cutting and they were exhibited as framed works on paper [7.2.6] (See Vol.2, Fig.4-10/13).

The book is made public to a wide audience, from the general public, anyone online, to a gallery and an academic audience. The books are self-published in hardback book format via the Print-On-Demand publisher Lulu. Anyone can order and will receive the same printed copies in hardback format. The book *TITLE(date)001-005* is also made available as a free download in PDF format from multiple websites. The receiver can then decide in which format they prefer to engage with it: to create a print-out, or read via a tablet, or on-screen etc. In addition, visitors can also read it or download it from within the website or app Issuu, and decide to order a print with a choice of different formats. For the academic audience I have deposited the book in PDF format in the ePrints database and a hard copy is available in the Library of WSA. The work is also exhibited by the author on several occasions and shown in a conference.

Annlee @ NIMk project

In contrast to the book TITLE(date), I applied my practice here within the structure of another exhibition. I participated with the Annlee @ NIMk project that formed part of the exhibition 'Yes, We Are Open'[17] at the Nederlands Media Art Institute (NIMK) (See Vol.2, fig.4-15/18) [7.3.2]. The Annlee@ NIMk project was about reopening or resurrecting Annlee, the main character in *No Ghost Just a Shell (Un film d'imaginaire)* created by Huyghe and Parreno (1999-2003); see §1.2.2 where I describe *No Ghost Just a Shell* as an example of a dispersed art object that became closed off and solidified. With the ending of the organisation and gallery NIMK in mind I thought of my project TITLE(date) as a way to reflect on the opening and closure of artworks and galleries. The list of works in TITLE(date) can be seen as a guide to the exhibition or art collection, as well as, an exhibition history of a particular gallery.

The opportunity to participate with this project was interesting because the online participation was to be exhibited within the gallery so I could develop my project TITLE(date) as part of both online and gallery exhibition. Embedding TITLE(date) as part of the Annlee @ NIMk project creates not only a recursion between my project and the context provided by NIMK but also between my project and Annlee or *No Ghost Just a Shell*.

For the Annlee @ NIMk project I used my font and letter substitution program to create an audio gallery guide and a set of posters that visualise three art projects or art collections: *No Ghost Just a Shell* by Huyghe and Parreno; *Annlee @ NIMk project*; and my own work *TITLE(date)003 Text SymAnnlee Mutates in Private*. These works where posted online (a site provided by the gallery) and screened within the gallery. Subsequently, I published them online at various sites, see the project log in Volume 2 §6 for details.

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17   The exhibition was about 'openness in art.' A sardonic title because it was to be the last exhibition at the NIMK, which closed on 01-01-2013, due to austerity 'savings' by the Dutch government. See http://nimk.nl/eng/exhibitions/

5.3 Reflection on Word/Letter Hybrid & TITLE(date)

5.3.1   Questions To Test The Status Of The Artwork

What kind of object have I created through the project TITLE(date)? (answered according to the artist, defining what the artist sanctions as the art object and specifying what the project consists of.) A full set of questions are placed in Appendix A. Here I focus on four questions, (question 1, 2, 4 and 7 from my set of questions) because they detail the main points that differ from the traditional status of the art object.

1. What belongs to the dispersed object?
I consider the dispersed object to be the project, as process and the entities created. The artist creating/working with the modules: substitution procedure Whoisshe, the font SymLogiDIN, artwork title collections (so called artist's archives), dispersing instantiations in a variety of forms, the TITLE(date) archive. Because the procedures and fonts are tools, which can be modified by anyone, the boundaries of the dispersed object are vague. The Project Log (See §6.4) is an attempt to list all of the author's work, but what is made by others cannot always be traced. In addition, the ongoing nature of the project means this list will never be complete.

2. How is the dispersed object (the project) functioning/supposed to function?
The project TITLE(date) is set up as a dispersal practice using artwork titles as material. The project TITLE(date) applies semi-independent modules created through the previous project Word/Letter Hybrid, and creates also new modules. These semi-independent modules are seen as tools which can be (re)combined and applied by anyone, but in this particular project it is applied through the author's practice. The project modules' function is to aggregate artwork titles, generate, and disperse hybrid texts, either through the SymLogiDIN font or through the substitution procedure Whoisshe. Each time these hybrid texts are made audible or visible the project receives a new instance to be experienced by people at a certain location and time.

4. Which specific contextual aspects/interactions are essential?
The fonts are in TrueType format and depend on the use of this software. The font and artist's archives or TITLE(date) collections are published online with open access to allow free public interaction by downloading and further use and modification of the modules. The condition of the work after the actual materialisation depends on the user. The actual dispersion takes place either by the artist or others.

7. If or how is the project preserved? Under what conditions does it survive? What is accept-

able change within this project? What is the copyright licence?

The project is preserved as software in digital condition, through its operations and circulation of the different modules (such as the font and the artist's title collections) and its subsequent use by others. It survives as long as the modules are archived and can be made available (online), and as long as the software formats (TrueType and PDF) are usable. Over time the project might break down into separate modules and some individual entities might survive (books, sound files, work on paper, font, etc). The survival of the project does not depend on survival of actualisations or entities created by the modules.

Acceptable changes are new additions or modifications of the modules (see question 2). Copyright licences: The font has an Open Font License: Which means anyone is free to share (copy and redistribute) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon) the work, provided the artist is attributed, the use is non-commercial and it is distributed with the same copyright licence.[18]

5.3.2   TITLE(date) As A Dispersed Object

In this experiment, I developed an art object in the form of the project TITLE(date) that includes art practice and all what becomes materialised in the process. As the text above makes clear, it is an ambiguous entity, which I can only describe tentatively from multiple points of view.

Summarising the key points, I have shown that the dispersed object TITLE(date) moves through the space of writing as a dynamic, temporal, and operational entity. Dynamic and temporal because it consists of a number of modules that are unfinished by design and in a state of becoming, they can be recombined and they can be embedded in many different contexts (see the term incompleteness in §1.6.2). Operational because the dispersed object is a process that produces and disperses instances. The operational dispersed object is a combination of aggregation and dispersion, for instance through collection and datafication of meta-data from existing artworks (title, date, artist), transforming it into a multitude of hybrid texts, and dispersing it widely in multiple formats. It occupies different statuses while it is transformed from one entity to the other (for instance: from a software file online to being downloaded into a font archive on a personal computer, used into a digital file created by the artist, to a printed work, to a photographed and digitalised file posted and archived again online). The actualised objects (digital and physical) are seen as temporary presentations of the dispersed object that emerge in this circulation and dispersion.

Constructing the dispersed object as an art practice which generates modules leads not only to an entity that is ontologically difficult to place, but also to ambiguity when an encounter

18   Creative Commons.org, "Creative Commons — Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported — CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.," http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/.

between art institution and the dispersed object takes place. On the one hand, the dispersal practice is independent and generates a recursive structure of modules within modules. On the other hand, the materialised entities and the data used, shows a recursion between host and guest, or between the art institution and the artwork, which seems to reflect a site-specific nature. For instance, when the work uses artwork titles from the same exhibition [see 7.3.2 Annlee @ NIMk project]. An other encounter between art institution and the dispersed object that demonstrates a problematic ontology happens when archiving is attempted. I tried to archive the work within the Artbase at www.rhizome.org because this organisation is particularly active in research on the preservation of digital and internet based artwork.**19** The Artbase has a two-tier system. In the first instance, artists can upload the meta-data of a work in the form of an image, text and links to websites or software. The second tier consists of a selection of work that Artbase aims to preserve by fully hosting the work on a rhizome site. The problem I encountered was that the archive is set up to singularise the work under one title, image, description, website, program, etc. There is no option to submit a project as artwork that consists of multiple entities. This situation reflects a commonality between conventional galleries and digital-internet galleries: the archives are usually object or medium based with the result that processes are dealt with as if it is an object. As long as art processes can be captured and documented on a medium the archive is set up to deal with (video, sound), the art object will find its way in the archive. The difficulty of archiving processes is compounded by technology that is quickly becoming obsolete, and organisations like Rhizome are actively researching solutions. The quote below comes from a case study into the preservation of *Untitled Game* by Jodi through an emulation strategy.

> In terms of mediated art, it is imperative to understand the specific affordances [49] of a medium when interpreting the content it encodes. This requires close technical study along with the conceit that any aspect of the machine, the medium or the code can be artistically purposed: as a tool for production, as a means for display, as a mode of distribution, as storage space, as an artistic medium, as a conceptual platform, as an actor in performance, etc. Some of these modes fall under Jon Ippolito's characterization of artistic "misuse" of technology, [50] while others fit technical conventions, yet these parameters aren't enough to define the "boundaries" of an artwork in a mediated/networked context—the only way to do this is by understanding the functionality and intent behind an artwork, as well as the grey area in-between where the artist communes with the tools in a subjective, sometimes emotional way.

> Art in a networked context admittedly complicates the task of establishing the boundaries of a work, however. This complication is important because it forces art historians and conservators to ac-

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19   The archived work: TITLE(date)001-005 http://rhizome.org/portfolios/artwork/57906/. See article about archiving a blog as artwork. http://rhizome.org/editorial/2015/feb/9/archiving-vvork/
From 01-11-2015 the ArtBase archive cannot be updated by users anymore. "Our current digital preservation research focuses on developing new tools to allow communities to create their own archives, and preserve their own works more easily. This will not only ensure more works are preserved, but open up new narratives." Rhizome. email, 22 June 2015.

knowledge that this demarcation may only be a function of our own practices, not necessarily the artist's.[20]

The emulation strategy basically allows the original programme, blog, and digital work to run within a new context. It re-stages or re-installs the work in such a way that it can operate again. Another older strategy is based on stills or screen snapshots in combination with the meta-data of the work, which does not preserve the work, but only shows an image of it. An example of archiving websites by taking snapshots that preserve some functionality is the Wayback Machine.[21] In this case, the snapshots are of the website's html, and if the original links in the web pages remain active the archived webpage retains some if its usability.[22] Seeing the difficulties of archiving digital objects made me rethink the digital objects as ideal for distribution. Digital objects might be ideal to disperse, copy and modify independently, but for their persistence they are relying on the availability of the software and hardware to keep the work functioning, 'performing', and usable as intended. Realising how short the lifespan is of computer software and hardware means that art objects in a digital condition might be easy to disperse but over a very short lifespan.

5.3.3 The Art Object As Both Process And Snapshot

The many contradictions within the work, such as singular and multiple objects, independence and site-specificity, or autonomy and embeddedness leads me again to question the status of the art object as one thing but dispersed. It would be so much easier to give in to the consolidating structures of the institutions of art, and split the project up into individual artworks, which will fit into known categories, and are therefore easy to communicate and archive. However, not doing so is the research, and it leads me to explicate the choices made and advance my understanding of the dispersed art object I developed. The observations about ambiguity and contradictions point out that there is some pressure to take a position regarding multiple viewpoints to the art object created. There is a long-term and a short-term view, or better, seeing the object as a process and as a snapshot. In other words, we have a process in the form of an artist's practice where the ongoing dispersion is seen as analogue or continuous variation. A short-term view of the process is created by making a cross section at a particular time and place, a snapshot consisting of temporary actualisations. (see Fig. 5-4) I would say that we need both points of view to describe and understand the dispersed object. I take the position of not making a choice between the two view points. If I take the position that the core of the project is the process, or the discrete units of the actualised dispersed object, then a division and a ranking is made

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20   Adang. 38.
21   See https://archive.org/
22   For a discussion about the preservation of digital objects and the Internet Archive see Jannis Kallinikos, Aleksi Aaltonen, and Attila Marton, "A Theory of Digital Objects," *First Monday* 15, no. 6 (2010), http://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3033/2564.
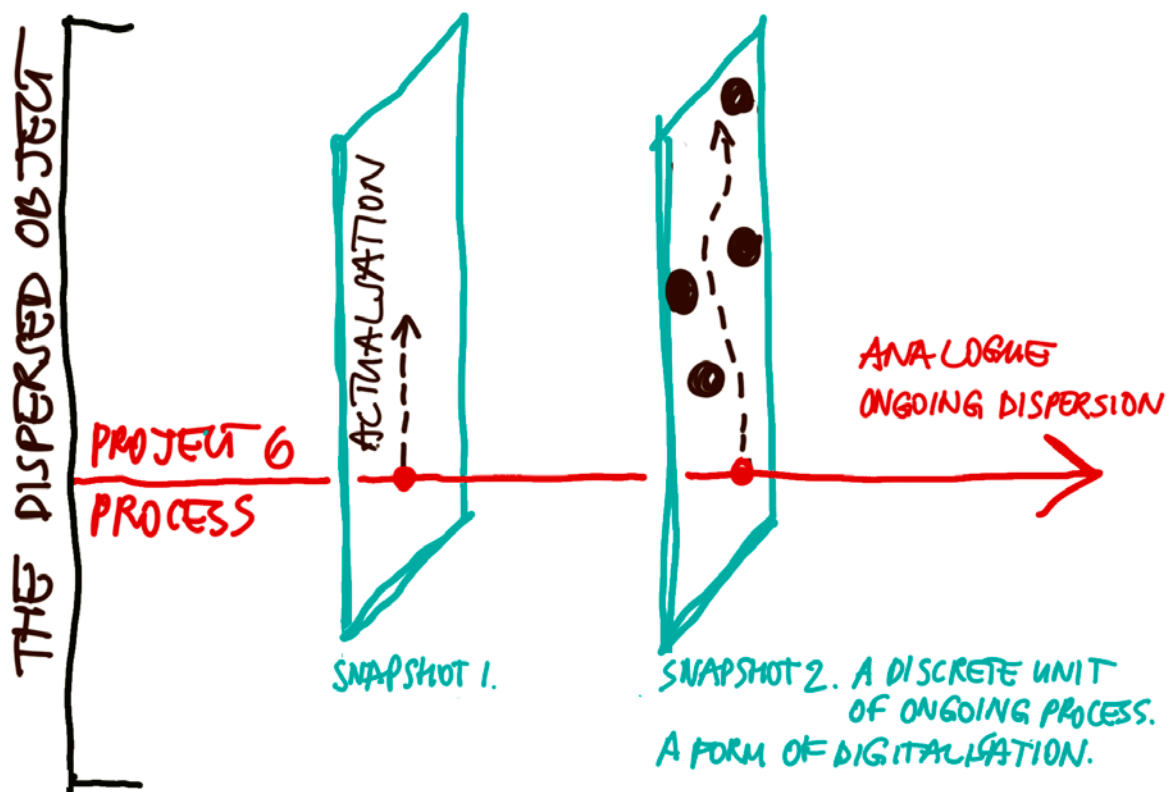
Figure 5-4 / Dispersed object as process and snapshot.

which goes against the notion of multiplicity of the dispersed object. Every process, module and instance needs to have equal value. If one becomes the most important then I think we would return to a singular entity.

Working through this experiment I have explored the question of structure and how the different entities of the project relate to each other by applying how digital objects are structured through modularity and digitality (see §1.6 Digital Object). That doesn't mean the dispersed object in the form of a project is a digital object. I find that the dispersed object is a hybrid between analogue and digital. Analogue in the sense of a continuous process, an artist's practice, embedding, generating, producing, distributing, a continuously variable entity, which is difficult to measure, or experience as it has no terminal point. What the viewer can experience, what is made public, is a snapshot, one frame from the film so to speak. The 'stills' are a particular occasion in the process, when an actualisation and object generation takes place. For example, an event, exhibition, period of work, creating and dispersing objects, postcards, gallery guide, font, an artist's archive of titles, etc. The taking of individual snapshots is a digitalisation of the process in the sense of creating divisions of the dispersed object.[23] I consider each still a discrete unit of

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23   I use the word digital here in a wider conceptual sense, as something that consists of discrete units, not necessarily bits. Galloway says about the digital as concept it is "the capacity to divide things and make distinctions between them" A.R. Galloway, *Laruelle: Against the Digital* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014). 26. See also
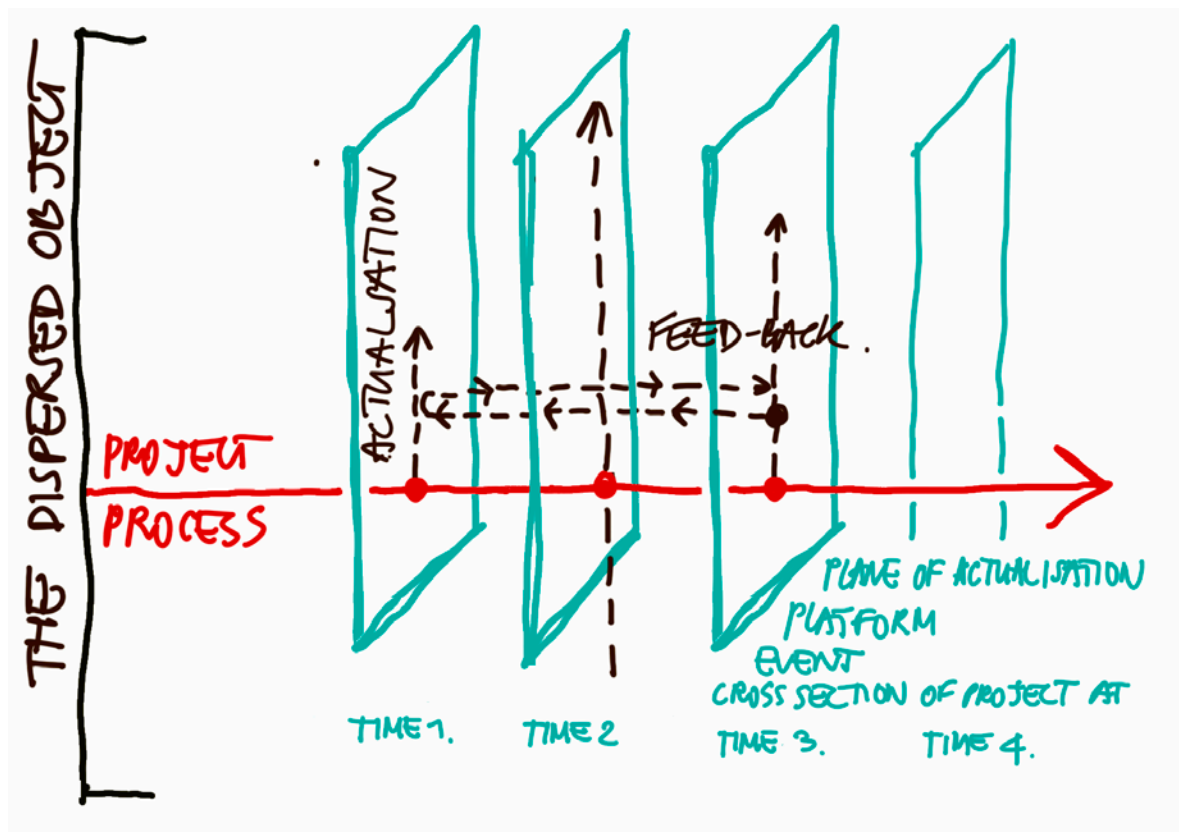
Figure 5-5 / Different actualisations of the dispersed object.

Time 1 − 4 Represents four discrete moments of the project, and different ways the work becomes actualised.

Time 1. The process of actualisation originates from within the project, e.g., the font, the substitution program, the creation of a module.

Time 2. The process of actualisation is the result of this project crossing the trajectory of another process, e.g., by someone else using the font, by actualising this project within another exhibition, a symbiosis with a certain context.

Time 3. The process of actualisation is the result of a feedback process. Looking back and aggregating elements of previous actualisations, e.g., archiving the project on the author's website.

Time 4. Unknown or no actualisation. For instance as part of the work disperses independent from the author, by other persons or programmes, or part of the work not yet actualised because it has not yet crossed the right plane of actualisation. This means at certain times the dispersed object is not being actualised and only available through previous cross sections.

the process (or the dispersed object), a temporal and spatial division. Each still can be a platform consisting of multiple individual instances which are structured through modularity, allowing further remixing and adaptations, which are forms of post-processing that create more divisions, more instances. The objects can be fed back into the artist's practice, or anyone's practice, and a hybridising with new objects contributes to the ongoing process of the work. (see Fig. 5-5 Different actualisations of the dispersed object).

Galloway, "Something About the Digital [A catalog essay written in 2011 for the exhibition "Chaos as Usual," curated by Hanne Mugaas at the Bergen Kunsthall in Norway.]". and Ernst and Parikka, *Digital Memory and the Archive*: 147-57.

Three points follow from these observations. First, the above leads to pertinent questions about the ontology of the art object and the artist's need to explicate what are the essential and inessential features or survival conditions for the work. The question is not anymore *what kind* of object is this, but *when* is the dispersed object? As the dispersed object becomes over time, changes, modifies, moves through different contexts, we can experience something of it only at a certain time. The dispersed object has become related to a certain time of creating the cross section, the time and place of a certain event, and time of access. As the Fig. 5-5 above shows, the time of the cross cut, the decision to make the cross cut, and the point of view taken through actions such as aggregation of previous actualisations all have an effect on what is actualised. The temporal divisions that condition the status of the art object need to take into account a), the temporary actualisation (that what functions as the art object at a particular time) and b), the art object as ongoing process (the project or the art object as function). The status of the dispersed object is unstable and is determined by both process and temporary actualisation.

Second, besides temporality, the dispersed object is also unstable because it is contingent on object to subject relations. If, for instance, an object becomes digitalised and published without "maintaining borders technologically,"[24] all manner of changes might happen to the digital objects by other programmes or people. In addition, some of the planes of actualisation might fall away in the future, a website could be deleted for instance, and another plane might appear outside the influence of the artist, which changes the shape of the dispersed object.

Third, insofar as the dispersed object is constituted by process and snapshot, that is not made explicit within the aesthetics of the individual objects, for instance the books, font, etc. When I presented the *TITLE(date)* book and font at a conference I felt the need to say: "this is not an end product."[25] From a researcher's point of view both aspects need to be demonstrated, and I aim to resolve this in the next project. In the following chapter I describe a final project taking on board the above reflection and conclusions.

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24   See also §1.6 and Kallinikos, Aaltonen, and Marton, "The Ambivalent Ontology of Digital Artifacts."
25   Walter van Rijn, "A Dispersal Alongside ..." in *PHD by Design conference, Navigating the Messiness of Practice-Based Research* (Goldsmiths, University of London 2014). http://www.symbiotext.net/2014/11/11/dispersal-alongside/

mable Global Luxury Dispersion Caution Once

§6 Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion

The project *Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion* (UGLyD) concludes my research and aims to demonstrate that the dispersed object is constituted by both process and object (See Vol.2 fig. 5-1). It builds on outstanding issues, listed in the previous chapter, and some of the aspects of the dispersed object that have shown to work best. The dispersed object UGLyD is based on material from institutional collections, exhibition histories and artwork titles, and it reflects on the exhibition event itself. It is going to circulate not only between the unseen archives of galleries and the visible exhibitions, but also independently online. I collaborated with two well-known galleries to collect artwork titles, to which I added the titles of all the work I generated in the course of my research.

This chapter includes recent developments concerning archival and post-internet aesthetics, issues pertinent to developing this project. It starts with a description of the project's procedure which deals with the structure, modules and the ongoing process. It is followed by a short description of several snapshots of this project each showing the dispersed object in a different actualisation of an on-going project. A comprehensive set of images is included in Volume 2, §5.

In chapter 7 I will revisit the research questions and consider how they have been addressed through my research.

Figure 6-1 / left / Tape: Caution Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion. Self Adhesive Vinyl Tape: 50mm × 66m. White vinyl printed with red text in SymLogiDIN font.

6.1 UGLyD procedure

The dispersed object, in the form of this particular project, is first of all approached from a procedural and artist's practice point of view. It entails not only aggregation and dispersion, but also a combination of embedding and escape from art institutions. The crucial point is however, that this project is ongoing, not limited by a number of procedures or modules, or by the entities produced. As an ongoing project it is the process that becomes and persists, while the actualisations are seen as temporary manifestations, similar to a sectional view of the project. I will first detail some of the genesis of this project, explaining how it developed and where it came to be actualised, which then leads to the procedures and structure of it.

The initial idea for this project was to further develop the modules I found successful and combine them with existing archival data from high profile art institutions. I aimed to collaborate with the art institutions in a way that allowed me to develop dispersed objects online and possibly on site. This project started with seeking out well-known art institutions which where open to the idea of sharing their exhibition history or artwork titles in their collection. I wrote to a number of institutions with an idea, based on my previous project TITLE(date), and two galleries reacted positively to my approach: the John Hansard Gallery in Southampton (JHG), and the Pallant House Gallery (PHG) in Chichester.

The John Hansard Gallery is one of Britain's leading public galleries of contemporary art, funded by the University of Southampton and receives annual funding from the Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation.[1] In terms of networking JHG is part of a national contemporary arts network of thirty-five cultural institutions called PlusTate, sharing collections, expertise and Tate's resources to strengthen the contemporary visual arts ecology in the UK.[2] JHG also participates with regional arts networks, such as Frame and Reference; Visual Arts South West. The Pallant House Gallery is an independent gallery (from 2013 a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee) supported by Chichester District Council and grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund.[3]

Each gallery plays quite a different role in the artworld. To create or stage exhibitions and off-site projects of contemporary art is the main mode of operation of the JHG, while the PHG mainly manages and exhibits (donated) art collections it characterises as Modern British art, incorporating national, international and contemporary art.[4] This difference of gallery role meant that with the Hansard Gallery I could engage with the titles of the exhibited artworks over a number of years. Following discussions about what data they have available, it appeared that the JHG has no digital database covering all exhibitions as part of their archive. In order to produce

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1   Gallery website: http://www.hansardgallery.org.uk
2   For information about the wider network see http://www.tate.org.uk/about/our-work/national-partnerships/plus-tate
3   Gallery website: http://pallant.org.uk
4   This is the main difference between the galleries in the context of my research. It is by no means a full description of what they do. Both galleries, for instance, have very active 'outreach' programs.

my artist's archive of artwork titles we then collaborated in producing a database of titles from the years the gallery has digital files. This led then to a database of exhibitions and artwork titles from 1 March 2003 to 17 August 2013, listing 1196 artworks. In turn I transformed the database into my artist's archive TD014HansardGallery, which is reordered and formatted as text in the SymLogiDIN font, only giving title, date and artist name. (see images Vol.2 §5)

The Pallant House appeared also not to have a digital database of the artworks they have exhibited. Instead they have a database of the donated artworks in their collection. Discussing my work and the gallery's archive the PHG gave me a list of artwork titles from five representative collections. The total list numbered some 1176 artworks that I reformatted into TD013pallant-house2013, much in the same way as the artist's archive mentioned above. Both artist's archives TD014HansardGallery and TD013pallanthouse have become a snapshot of the galleries' activities over a particular timeframe. It is the contrast between the recorded or historic and the actual day-to-day activities that most stimulated my interest me; that is, the contrast between the day-to-day activity within the galleries to create new exhibitions where visitors come to experience a new selection and the presentation of artworks and the long-term strategies and remit of both galleries. The long-term strategies leave a record in the exhibition history but this is not used or visualised by these galleries and hardly ever by artists.[5] To me it presented an opportunity to explore a gap and create something that circulates between the archive and gallery exhibition.

Telling the archive

My interpretation of archival practices as acts of aggregation and dispersion, led me to see it as a process of production. Besides producing an archive in the general sense my own version of the gallery's archive forms and visualises a particular *state* of the archive, hence the name, 'artist's archive'. I will explain below that the archive became a form I could explore to demonstrate the art object as both process and static object. I am applying the structure I worked out in the previous chapter §5.3, see fig. 5-5. It is my 'telling' of the archive, that creates a cut within the gallery's archive at a certain time, and opens it up for another view, another telling. I use the word telling here in two senses, in a way reminiscent of Ernst who, in 'Telling verses Counting,' uses it in the sense of telling a story and as counting or to be able to distinguish things.[6] In the context of media-archaeology, Ernst shows different ways in which narrative and counting can be related to "ways of processing cultural experience." His example of the medieval *Annales Sangallenses* showed a way to "render events ... as a list of entries but also nonentries, empty storage

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5   ''The overlooked field of exhibition histories'' see Tate conference Marko Daniel and Antony Hudek, "Landmark Exhibitions, Contemporary Art Shows Since 1968," *Tate Papers*, no. 12 Autumn 2009 (2009), http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/issue-12.;
Art historic perspective: Bruce Altshuler, *Salon to Biennial – Exhibitions That Made Art History 1863-1959*, vol. 1 (London: Phaidon, 2008). and B. Altshuler, *Biennials and Beyond – Exhibitions that Made Art History 1962-2002*, vol. 2 (London: Phaidon, 2013).
From the perspective of installation design: M.A. Staniszewski and Museum of Modern Art, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (MIT Press, 2001).
6   Ernst and Parikka, *Digital Memory and the Archive*: 147-57. Ernst describes the changing historical relation between telling and counting ''as reconfigurations affected by different media or even media theories'' (p.147).

spaces that provide gaps for reading, silence as statement."[7] In this way, a cultural experience (a process) becomes a sequence of events and non-events (separated by day into discrete units). Reading this list becomes then a way to reactivate, remember, re-imagine.

As described above telling the archive becomes performing the archive,[8] and I gave this form by creating software that reads the titles from the artist's archive of art titles, one after the other, and then visualises it with the SymLogiDIN font on screen. I did not want to make it in a video format because it would turn the performance into a recorded object. In software there is only an algorithm and its performance. It not only creates a public display of an archive (or exhibition history) but it also enacts a process that lies at the heart of a gallery, namely the selection or collection of artworks, creating a display, and visitors experiencing the works. The software performs this in the moment, 'reading' and 'visualising' title after title, in a similar way to that of visitors who are looking at artwork, one after the other. The art object I set out to make becomes then again recursive in the sense that it references its own situation, it being part of a particular gallery, and the event of an exhibition displaying work to be experienced by spectators. So far, I have set out the ideas I had in mind for what might happen in the gallery. To be able to create an independent online dispersion of the work I planned that each module (the font, the data of artwork titles, the visualisation program), would be published online with a creative common licence. This meant that online users could use, modify or remix the data and tools from the project.[9] The modular structure of the project means not only that each module can be used semi-independently but also in different configurations. In addition, they can be modified to each new situation. Besides the two archives from the galleries, I also intended to use the archive of the work I created for this research. This archive consists of the project logs of each project (See Vol.2 §6).

To summarise: the dispersed object, in the form of the project Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion, consists of, but is not limited to, the following modules:

a) Artist's archive of artwork titles. (Aggregation of basic data connected to a particular gallery's archive, or my own titles, reformatted) See for example Vol.2 Fig.5-6;

b) The materials and tools generating or visualising the work. (Software-hardware combination, hybrid digital and tactile objects that visualise the above archive of titles) See for example Vol.2 Fig.5-8;

c) The exposition and archival events (Independent and gallery based distribution). For example the three exposures listed below;

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7   Ibid., 149.
8   Performing can be interpreted in several ways. Literally through a life-performance such as reading, or by creating an installation where the spectator walks through the archive, experiencing it through spatial movement. Another version could be to project or visualise each title separately, sequentially, within the gallery (or online) accentuating the division of exhibition history into discrete titles, and the process or time needed by the viewer to do the reading and experience each title.
9   At a later stage I plan to create a website that only shows one screen visualising artwork titles one after the other, in an ongoing sequence. Not as a video but again generated from archival data.

d) Miscellaneous Objects. (New modules can be added to this list, for example I created for one exposure an artist's book and for another exposition a self adhesive tape). See for example Vol.2 Fig.5-11.

Each exposure of the dispersed object is a particular constellation of the above modules depending on the event. In the next sections I will briefly discuss the three exposures or snapshots to highlight the performative and that what lies in between (See Vol.2 Fig.5-1).

First exposure: Of Fig Untitled, an online dispersion and exhibition in Gallery L4, Hartley Library, UoS.

Second exposure: UGLyD, an exhibition proposition, actualised as two events at the Winchester Gallery, documented on video.

Third exposure: UGLyD, an online dispersion through the Hansard Gallery website.

I will show below that the dispersed object UGLyD is the ongoing performance of a process of dispersion, periodically exposed.

6.2   Of Fig Untitled

Figure 6-2 / top / Of Fig Untitled No In To Title I Portrait With Series Concetto Self Joy. Installation photograph, Hartley Library exhibition Feb 2014.
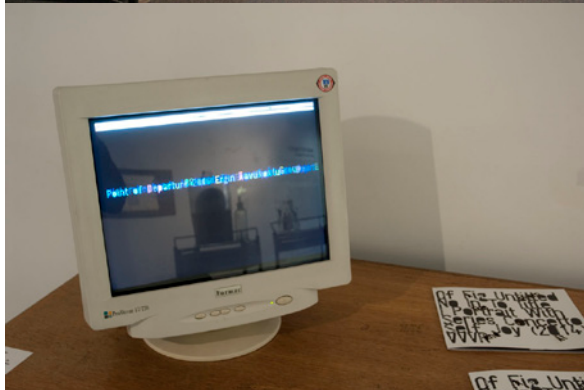
Figure 6-3 / bottom / Of Fig Untitled No In To Title I Portrait With Series Concetto Self Joy. Installation photograph, Hartley Library exhibition Feb 2014. Photograph Jane Birkin.

Of Fig Untitled ... is the first snapshot of the UGLyD project that shows the dispersed object in a particular actualisation, of a particular time and place. It was published online and exhibited under the title Of Fig Untitled No In To Title I Portrait With Series Concetto Self Joy in Gallery L4, Hartley Library, UoS, as part of the exhibition Image-Text-Object: Practices of Research from 10 Feb to 14 Mar 2014. (See Vol.2 Fig.5-2/5-15).

In first instance, the installation of the piece looks like a monitor and a few books on a desk

with chair, and echos the reading and computer desks found throughout the library. (See Fig.6-2 and 6-3). However there is no keyboard, no interaction other then reading lines of text which are displayed appearing and disappearing, scrolling through on screen. The way the animated text is displayed on a monitor looks like a video (which is usually the case), but it isn't, and unless the viewer reads the leaflet in the gallery or the end text in the book on the table, there is no way of knowing what kind of thing you are actually looking at. Of Fig Untitled is an installation that runs software, especially adapted to a legacy Apple computer, reading and displaying line by line an artist's archive of artwork titles from works exhibited in the John Hansard Gallery. Besides the monitor, there is an artist's book which is a reworking of an artwork label. The content consists only of the title in the author's font and information normally associated with a label displayed at exhibitions. The label often displays a link between an archival entry and the artwork. In my case, the book is the label, linking the work to the artist's website, his online archive, and identifies the displayed data as coming from the exhibition history of the Hansard Gallery.

Key aspect of this work is the on-going 'reading and display' of a particular exhibition history. A 'performance' that references the gallery visitors who see title after title, and a way of operating that copies the distribution actions of the gallery: their selection, collection, display and contextualisation of work. The individual modules that make it happen are published on different websites, for the purpose of archiving and ongoing dispersal. It makes the modules widely available so that if necessary this particular actualisation can be re-installed. It is these modules that persist as the work after the exhibition. Below I list these with their online publication.

• TD014HansardGallery: an artist's archive of artwork titles exhibited between 1 March 2003 and 17 August 2013 at the John Hansard Gallery; http://sourceforge.net/projects/titledate/

• msgfile-mag.pd: a Pure Data software, which generates the visualisation of this database, using a specific combination of computer and AV equipment. Computer: Apple Power Mac G4, with OS X 10.3 (2003), PureData 0.39; Monitor: Pro Nitron 17/750 colour (2001).

http://forum.pdpatchrepo.info/topic/7991/text-from-one-file-on-different-lines-in-gem

• SymLogiDIN: font software from previous project.

http://openfontlibrary.org/en/member/vvvr

• Of Fig Untitled No In To Title I Portrait With Series Concetto Self Joy: Artist's book and title of this work. http://issuu.com/waltervanrijn/docs/offiguntitled-vvvr2014

Reflecting on this actualisation as "performing the archive" within an other exhibition, the performative aspect of the installation remains encapsulated within the objects on show. The software 'runs' the algorithm invisibly but continuously in the 'background'. For the next exposure of the dispersed object I wanted to bring out more of the performative aspect of the process of the project ('performative' in the sense of operational). The project functions through being embedded within the operations of a gallery or exhibitions in general (onsite and online) and I looked for a way make the functioning explicit and reflect on the exhibition event itself.

6.3 A Proposition Exposition UGLyD

In the second snapshot of the UGLyD project, the dispersed object is shown as a collection of objects in the form of boxes that unambiguously point to the act of packing and unpacking, or aggregation, and dispersion of an archived work. During exhibition events are organised to perform the act of unpacking, to create a display and document the performance. The artist produces a statement that sanctions what is and is not determined by the artist in respect of what is made visible or accessible to the public. The gallery exhibition and performance reflects on the exhibition event itself, and in the context of my research, it demonstrates the dispersed object as both process and material object. First, I will comment on two exhibitions that made clear to me what I did and did not want to do. Subsequently I will give a short description of two actualisations of the project.

In a recent article: "Art's Post-Internet Identity Crisis"[10] Phoebe Stubbs reviews artworks and exhibitions in London (in Nov. 2014) to discuss "different positions [regarding] what it might be to be 'post-internet' or 'post-digital.'" I visited two of the mentioned exhibitions and through these encounters I crystallised my thoughts on how to 'exhibit' my research project. The first exhibition is Unoriginal Genius at Carroll/Fletcher Project Space. Stubbs commented that: "Works like Jonas Lund's Return of Investment (2014), which lives online as an advertising space that can be bought, confront art as an inconsumable product that sells itself." Other works in the show where equally appropriating, or to use a phrase from the gallery leaflet, "filtering, selecting, archiving, reframing, and combining existing content."[11] It was striking that most work was originally web-based but shown in this exhibition on a flat screen monitor hung on the wall or as a projection. The adaptation of these works to a two dimensional exhibition format literally flattened the work, and some of the web-based art that was shown on a computer had technical problems. Most interesting from my point of view where the readymades by Ripps. As part of *Exhibition Kickstarter* by Krystal South, they are exploring the change of status of the object by using online commercial sites.

> "Ryder Ripps' Realtime Readymades are artworks that 'exist as pure concepts at the point of purchase'. Sourced by the artist from eBay and mailed direct to the collector once they have been bought, they apply to objects the same rationale applied to images in most of the works on show - changing their meaning and value by means of changing their context. Purchased by Carroll / Fletcher at Exhibition Kickstarter, one of these works is on view in the exhibition."[12]

One formal aspect that I found interesting was the small carton box that was placed alongside the object. This box signalled that it had been shipped and delivered to the gallery. Within my own practice, the carton box could refer to a state of the art object. When boxed up, the art

10   Phoebe Stubbs, "Art's Post-Internet Identity Crisis," **ArtSlant New York Magazine**(2014), http://www.artslant.com/ny/articles/show/41323.

11   Carroll / Fletcher Gallery and Domenico Quaranta, "Unoriginal Genius" (London: Carroll / Fletcher Gallery, 2014).

12   Ibid.

Figure 6-4 / LuckyPDF 2015 *How To Leave London*. Installation in front of the Hayward Gallery.

object is temporary aggregated, hidden, unexposed, and or archived. The unpacking of it can be considered as performing the exposure, and enacting dispersal. This idea formed the basis for my new project, which I will describe below.

In the second exhibition MIRRORCITY at the Hayward Gallery, by curator Stephanie Rosenthal, a number of works showed something that comes close to my embedding or exhibiting alongside other artist's work. The most pertinent work in relation to my research was *How To Leave London* by LuckyPDF. In this work a camper van was placed outside the entrance of the gallery, allowing free entry inside. Inside were videos of interviews with artists. In the words of LuckyPDF, they are "interested in networks as art, the behind-the-scenes infrastructure that enables people to live and work freely." Sitting in the van, in a quite small space, created for me the viewer, I found the only moment 'within' the exhibition where the exhibition as such was questioned and where such questioning lead to a spontaneous discussion with other spectators. The contrast in using screen based work between this exhibition and the Unoriginal Genius exhibition could not be bigger. Through these exhibitions I started to think about how I could demonstrate process and the object conditions of the dispersed object within the gallery, notably by referring to the movement of objects outside and inside the gallery.

The Event: A Proposition Exposition

A Proposition Exposition UGLyD is exhibited as a delivery consignment (See Vol.2, Fig. 5-18/19). It resembles a collection of carton boxes that have just arrived at the art gallery. All boxes are labelled with content details and links to online sites where the work was originally published or archived. The work can be appreciated in its packed state or by following the online links through QR codes.

The exposition or event of the work was initiated by the invitation to art professionals, such as curators, art handlers and archivists, to create a presentation or display of artwork as they think appropriate. They receive a packing list of the boxes' contents and an artist's statement which invites them to decide what to unpack, what to show and how (See Vol.2, Fig. 5-17).

The event offered a performance of unpacking and the creation of a display but also an exposure of different instances of exposition. This was extended by repeated instances of the

Figure 6-5 / Top / First event with curators Jane Birkin (Special collections, Hartley Library UoS) and Rima Chahrour (Artist-researcher)

Figure 6-6 / Below / Second event with curators Ros Carter (Head of Exhibitions, Hansard Gallery) and Hannah Collins (Bookshop Coordinator, Hansard Gallery)

event, which collectively show what in the exposition might be considered constant and what things persist. During the event the participants decide which entities and in what condition the work should be viewed within the gallery. By doing so, they create a temporary change in condition and visibility of the dispersed objects. Having presented the work, the work is boxed up, and resealed into the box format. The *Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion* tape, is utilised to re-establish the potential for a new event, a new presentation by others. The sealing of the boxes with tape, and the breaking of the tape indicate the key moments when a change of condition has happened or is going to happen. The succession of events is recorded on video, which creates a long-term view of the dispersed object. These videos can be exhibited alongside the 'delivery consignment'.

The two events with two curators were organised at the Winchester Gallery. They were given a list of the boxed work, a statement from the artist, and the freedom to do with it whatever they liked.[13] The first event took place on 21st. January 2015 with curators Jane Birkin (Special collections, Hartley Library UoS) and Rima Chahrour (Artist-researcher). Jane and Rima created a display more or less based on the idea of an exhibition installation in progress. On 29 January 2015, Ros Carter (Head of Exhibitions, Hansard Gallery) and Hannah Collins (Bookshop Coordinator, Hansard Gallery) curated the second UGLyD event. In contrast to the first display, Ros and Hannah created an installation that was more focused on showing individual objects. A way of installing work you expect to see in an art gallery.

....

13   Ideally the artist is not present to prevent influencing the curators. However for practical reasons I was present during these two events to record and photograph work and assist with the equipment. I did make it clear I was not there in the capacity of 'the artist'.

Special Projects

Walter van Rijn I Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion (2014-ongoing)

Exhibitions

Special Projects

Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion (UGLyD) is a project that collects and disperses artwork titles from art collections or exhibitions. In collaboration with the John Hansard Gallery, Walter van Rijn has aggregated 1200 artwork titles from work exhibited in the gallery and offsite events over the decade, 2003-2013. Based on this material, van Rijn is creating an ongoing reimagining and re-materialisation of the gallery's archive in many different forms: digital, physical, hybrid objects and events.

The John Hansard Gallery's archive becomes transformed from an institutional static database located in the 'back office', into something that is open access and constantly preforms or visualises the gallery's exhibition history. This page will give an overview of the current state of this project as it evolves over time. It is anticipated that UGLyD will also gain physical form as an installation in John Hansard Gallery's city centre location, as part of Southampton's New Arts Complex, opening 2016.

UGLyD consists of what the artist calls modules which can be seen on their own or in combination with other modules and works. The project as artwork is conceived as a dynamic entity that is located between multiple sources, temporary visualisations and possible manifestations.

So far the following modules have been published:

• **TD014HansardGallery**
The artist's archive of artwork titles from work exhibited at John Hansard Gallery between 1 March 2003 and 17 August 2013. It is available online to download in the form of a PDF poster (A0 size) or CSV file here

Figure 6-7 / UGLyD as 'Special Project'. Screen shot from the web page :"Special Projects – Walter van Rijn | Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion (2014-ongoing)." John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, http://www.hansardgallery.org.uk/exhibition-listing/special-projects/.

During both events, a video was recorded which will be screened only in combination with an exposition of the work in physical form. This was done to highlight the event, and to create a contrast between being present, experiencing the installation process in whatever state it is presented, and what can be experienced through online means. The video shows the curators at work in real time and is as unprocessed as possible. Over time, a collection of videos from the events will document the different expositions created during each event. Potentially all of the content of the boxes can be experienced somewhere online. In addition, what continues to be online are also the same modules as listed above in §6.2 Of Fig Untitled.

6.4   UGLyD 'Special Projects': online at the Hansard Gallery

In the third and last snapshot of the *UGLyD* project, the dispersed object becomes a web page on the <u>John Hansard Gallery's website</u>. See Figure 6-7 for a screen shot of the web page (and Vol.2 Fig. 5-1). It is the intention of the Hansard Gallery to exhibit *Unconsumable Global Luxury Dispersion* in 2017 in the new gallery which is part of the Southampton's New Arts Complex. In anticipation of the exhibition, the gallery will show a version of this project on their website so that the dispersed object already becomes part of their distribution.

The third exposure is the result of the continued interaction between the *UGLyD* project and the Hansard Gallery, and the timing of events plays an important role. The gallery is preparing to move to a new location in the near future, and my project will form a bridge between the old and the new. Conceptually the dispersed object *UGLyD* is in this case an artist's view of the exhibition history of the gallery in the previous location at Highfield, Southampton. I was interested to see how my dispersal art practice might affect the Hansard Gallery, besides (re)organising their exhibition history data. One change became evident in the gallery's website. Usually only the next new exhibition is announced in the Exhibitions section of the website ("Current and Forthcoming"). When the exhibition is finished it becomes part of the Archives section. It became clear that the structure of the website is closely related to the working practice of the gallery and that there is no obvious section where my work could be placed. After some discussion the gallery suggested it create a new section, Special Projects, so that my contribution may fall outside the time sequence they normally operate within. In this way the distribution of the gallery and the artist's dispersion are not only supplementing each other, they also bring out a change in each other's practice. A new section to the website and a new actualisation to the project, both adding new content and a continuation of the process to our respective practices. Another aspect of this particular actualisation is that it anticipates and foregrounds an actualisation in the future; another slice of the dispersed object that might become manifest as an exhibition in the form of an installation with events in the new gallery. What I wanted to show is that through a succession of discrete actualisations we see the process of the dispersed object. The challenge remains to keep the process of dispersal open, and not closed off. In the sense of the last actualisation it is not an end product, it is not a goal achieved as there is no evolving sequence.

son pollock Painting No.1 (1965) gordon walters VII (1969) robert ry-man Work No.3,

Yellow Painting (1986) martin creed Work No. 88, A Sheet Of A4 Paper Crumpled

Figure 6-8 / Font *SymlogiDIN*, artist's archive *TITLE(date)009*, book: van Rijn, Walter. *Title(Date) 006-009*. Print on Demand ed. Raleigh, US: VVVR, 2012. 214-215.

☙7 Conclusions

Looking back at the whole of the research project, I can now revisit the research questions and consider how they have been addressed through my research. It allows me to summarise the principal contributions made to art theory and practice, and I will reflect on the doctoral project as a whole to highlight some aspects that have slipped into the background. I will finish by pointing out issues that might open up, or already have become, new avenues for further art and research projects.

7.1 Revisiting Research Questions

At the core of my research is a developing art and research practice, my own art practice. Following a practice-led methodology the development of my work plus self-reflection, contextualisation and conceptualisation steered my research into a certain direction. Initially I aimed to develop a new approach to the making of art through reconsidering art objects as networks. In the course of this process the research became focused on the distribution of art, or more precisely the distribution of art integrated within art practice. It led me to reflect on historical and contemporary institutional critique practices as well as net art and the possibilities a networked society and digital technologies provide. This process (see §2.1) led to the following research questions:

How can the distribution of art enable us to rethink the traditional status of the art object, and to what new approach to the making of art might it lead?

The concise answer to the research question is that from my research into the distribution of art a new practice emerged. I call it a dispersal art practice and the functioning of it within the artworld raises permanent questions about the status of the art object, in terms of its materiality and its

belonging to the category of art.

The research question is addressed through developing an art practice focused on creating an art object which can be summed up as too much, in too many places, over a too long period. In other words, an excessive object. For ease of reference, I call it a dispersed object created by a dispersal practice. In a dispersal practice the distribution of art is seen as integral to the conception or making of art (see Glossary and §1.2). I propose to spread the art object over multiple entities, which can all be different, and which might include parallel platforms, technologies, and formats. Dispersing the art object beyond the space and time of an exhibition event (or publication) renders the art object that is available for contemplation necessarily incomplete, because the art object cannot be experienced as a whole. It forces us to ask questions about the ontology of the art object (see §2.3), that is, what kind of entity is functioning as the art object, and how are the different aspects of the dispersed object related? How could one conceptualise and understand the different aspects of a dispersed object as it progresses over time? I developed and tested the dispersed object in three situations and in each situation questions about the ontology of the art object are asked. The test situations are: a) within a gallery and its institutional network; b) within a gallery and online networks; and c) in a situation not defined in advance by a certain site.

What is at stake behind these questions is linked in chapter one to a historical and institutional context, and to the art genres conceptual art, institutional critique and net art. Here I link the issue of distribution and the practice I am developing to the discourse of negating the status of the art object (the material condition and its condition as art). This discourse is central to the theory and practice of conceptual art and continues in institutional critique (IC). The distribution of art by artists themselves as an act of self-reliance and self-organisation comes to the fore in IC and receives further impetus through network culture and technologies actualised first in net art.

Following Buchloh (see §1.1), I consider a strategy of negation having temporary results because it is followed by a return to the displaced traditional status of the art object. We can see this process repeated in the discourse around IC and internet art. I would go as far as to suggest that this process of negation and returns is itself institutionalised within the art world. Instead of seeing institutionalisation as a negative, I suggest to see it as part of the narrative of the art object. The art object is not a thing anymore, but something that operates within a network of sites. An art object that circulates through the art world with a dynamic material status so that it can become temporary actualised. I described the dispersed object in §5.3.3 as an object that needs to be considered as both process and snapshot. It means that dispersed object enables us to rethink the traditional status of the art object by proposing that the material status of the art object is determined by both process and its temporary actualisation as it is spread out over the gallery and online networks. As a consequence, the material status of the object can be considered to be sanctioned by the artist as unstable, dynamic or ambiguous, even though some of the instances of art might become institutionally conditioned. The artist considers these stabilised forms of the dispersed object to be equally subject to temporary actualisations.

To further support my conclusions, I will identify some of the main characteristics of the dispersed object and how it challenges the traditional status of the art object.

1) The dispersed object is *distributed* . The dispersed object can be conceptualised as a *project* that as a whole functions as the art object. It consists of multiple processes and materialised entities, distributed by the artist over multiple platforms. The object of art is distributed by the artist as an act of self-organisation and self-determination and I call this a dispersal practice. If an art institution accepts the work, it becomes redistributed through institutional activities, such as exhibitions, documentation and contextualisation, archiving, collecting.

2) The dispersed object is *unlocated, circulating and ambiguous* . The dispersed object is not defined by a particular context or site but it can be embedded *and* circulate through multiple contexts or platforms. During its circulation the object can occupy different material statuses. The dispersed object as a whole can be understood as an ambiguous object with a dynamic status in the sense that it crosses many divisions, making it difficult to fit in established ontology.

3) The dispersed object can be understood as a *hybrid* object that is not defined by a particular medium or material. It may amalgamate different sources or contain physical tactile objects, digital objects, concepts, texts, sound, and video, printed copies. It may also contain the artist at work (dispersal practice), and platforms or tools that allow other people to create or disperse their work. The hybridity between digital and non-digital conditions of the dispersed object allow it to persist in different ways: temporarily and longer term as a process.

4) The relationship between the different entities of the dispersed object can be structured through the notion of *modularity*. The dispersed object consists of a number of modules that are unfinished or incomplete by design and in a state of becoming; they can be layered within each other, they can be recombined, and they can be modified to work in many different contexts. Through modularity the status of the art object stays ambiguous or dynamic, while at the same time a certain consistency is created by using the same (modified) modules.

5) The dispersed object or its modules can be *open, unstable and editable*. When the artist withdraws from maintaining (some of) the boundaries of the object, by allowing hybridisation, through publishing 'open' or accessible and editable entities, and through not creating an end product, the dispersed object becomes available for others to appropriate, generate, disintegrate, or evolve further. By allowing others to copy and adapt the work, the boundaries of the work become vague, thus opening unknown avenues for the work to persist. The dispersed object might be scattered widely to let the users find it and change it, i.e., it is not targeted to a particular group of users-spectators.

I also would like to highlight a few aspects of the dispersal art practice and the dispersed art object as a new approach to the making of art. A dispersal practice promotes an approach to the making of art that is not focused on the end product but on an evolving process, on circulation and hybridity. The approach to the making of art can be understood as speculative in the sense that it engages with sites and contexts in a way that makes the most of opportunities as they

appear. Furthermore, the dispersal art practice does not produce an end product, nor a complete overview, but it projects, 'throws forward,' a speculation allowing something unforeseen to happen (see below §7.3).

The dispersal art practice in this thesis engages with different sites or situations and their wider network, for example, different types of galleries, digital and internet platforms, archives, artwork titles, texts and fonts. It combines a network and a symbiosis state of mind with considerations about dispersing art differently throughout the macro and the micro scale of sites and objects, not unlike Derrida's deconstruction. The font SymLogiDIN I developed, for example, engages digital objects in relation to the internet and archives, as well as in relation to the particular way in which they are designed to be incomplete, reused, re-combined and modified to suit a particular situation.

The development on different scales was initiated through my art practice. I was drawn to create art objects that are hybrids, or objects that are located or circulate between physical spaces and online sites (see Introduction and §1.5 Net Art Context and §1.6 Digital Objects), because I saw the potential of creating new work in the mixing and transformations that happen when objects are moving, or moved, between sites. During the project Symbiote 6 (see §5), I combined the idea of creating an art object that circulates between physical spaces and online sites with the insight that my work creates it own situation, instead of being created for a particular situation. This new way of working gave me the opportunity to actively work with the boundaries of the art object. For instance, I left some boundaries open (by giving a work a creative commons copyright and making it downloadable), while at the same time I allowed some instances to become archived and consolidated by art institutions. The contradiction between the openness and consolidation of the art object creates ambiguities about the materiality, authorship and validation as art. It led me to conceptualise the dispersed art object as one thing distributed over time and space. An art object that is determined by both process and its temporary actualisation, and an art object that is determined by both artist and institution (see §5.3.3 The Art Object as Both Process and Snapshot).

7.2 Looking Back on the Whole Research Project

Reflecting on the doctoral project as a whole, the research process and all the work created, made me think of the beginning of this project and how amazing this journey has been with all its twists and turns. I am still surprised by the trajectory my artwork took. Having said that, at the end of my research I met, in passing as we always seem to do, Colin Harper, who was one of my tutors during the MA Art by Project course. He reminded me of one of the first participatory events he organised for us: unloading his car boot full of stuff. In the end we were asked to describe what this meant to us and for me the most important thing was the question itself: what or where is the art object? That question has become central in my work, and still is. I remember also underlining the 'meta' view of the event, the viewpoint of seeing the whole, seeing all of us

Figure 7-1 / UGLyD Box (2015). Handmade and sealed carton box containing one self adhesive vinyl tape 50mm x 66m with printed text in SymlogiDIN font..

engaging with the objects and the event as the artwork. Looking back, I consider my doctoral research as one of the consequences of these questions.

Considering the whole research project, I would like to emphasise my main original contribution to artistic practice and theory. I will start with a particular example of a dispersed object, the font SymLogiDIN, and then uncover what lies beneath it.

Font SymLogiDIN

As a result of my doctoral research I developed a dispersal art practice (see above §7.1), and in the context of project *TITLE(date)* I developed a font that uses font software for a new purpose. I appropriated font software as a tool to create new hybrid entities of art and I appropriated it as a way to disperse the art object. See §5.1 for a detailed explanation.

By applying insights from symbiosis (see below) and attributes of digital objects (after Kallinikos) I created a font that on several levels manages to operate, not only within my dispersed art object *TITLE(date)*, but also independently in any text based situation. First, I inserted words within the individual letters of the font, that is, within the visual representations of letters or glyphs. If the font is used to visualise a text a hybrid entity is created between a source text and my own text contained within the font design. Second, because my work is only embedded within the font software, the text to be visualised by the font is unaffected. Furthermore, the hybrid quality of the visualised text only becomes visible if the font is used in large sizes. Third, by using a PDF format to distribute the visualised text, my font can also be embedded and become dispersed when the PDF is shared. Forth, the font software is also published independently online from the rest of the project, and it is published with a licence that allows anyone to use it (except for commercial purposes). Taken together these points result in a project (dispersed object) with ambiguous boundaries with regard to its materiality and authorship. Further research is needed to explore the full potential of this particular font design setup.

Symbiotic Strategy

Underpinning the way my font operates within its particular ecology we need to look at the concept of symbiosis. Symbiosis in the context of my research is any association between different entities, with the implication that the entities are interacting long-term but that the relationship need not be advantageous to all the participants, see §2.4. To use concepts of symbiosis from biology in art is nothing new. However, to use ideas from symbiosis specifically to seek out ways to create and embed or distribute artwork is a strategy that approaches the artworld differently. It is an approach that allows us to see and create new associations between the actors involved within a situation. In my research project the symbiotic viewpoint is underpinned by an understanding of the exhibition event as a combination of four functions, which I will explain below.

The link between distribution and a symbiotic strategy, or creating art with a symbiotic state

of mind, is not a necessity. During my research I have come across other strategies but I have not further engaged with it because my research was not about the different strategies of distribution of art. Other options can be found for instance through participatory art or a focus on issues of commodity, luxury and commerciality.

The Exhibition Event Considered as Functions

In §1.2.4, I came to consider the exhibition event (an event where art is made public, or an event where the public can engage with art, where ever it is) as an ecology (see point above) and a constellation of four main functions or actors. These four functions could be named spectator, site, art object and artist. This insight means that each function can be taken up or 'filled in' by different entities, that is, all of these functions are contingent. It means that in the exhibition event something functions as the art object, even if is negated by the artist. Likewise any other person or even software that is generating the artwork can function as (or take the position of) the artist. Similarly, the function of spectator and site can be taken by a variety of actors. Usually the issue of contingency is focused on the art object,[1] but my point is that all four elements (spectator, site, art object and artist) are actors or functions and *that what functions as* these actors is contingent. Because we are dealing with four variables at the same time the total of possible actualisations is endless.[2] Seeing the exhibition event from this perspective allows us to see what changes and what is stable. From my perspective not only the art institutions but also all involved, for instance, artists, the public, and art professionals, are conditioning the exhibition event. More positively stated, the artist could potentially redefine, or work with, all four functions (or actors) and their relationships, and that insight led me to focus on the distribution of art.

Rethinking the art object, or one of the actors that takes part in the exhibition event and their relationships, is grounded in my research by the notion of negation or the attacks on the materiality of the art object in art history. A notion of negation that is also not permanent, but one that changes the traditional status of the art object only temporarily. The process of negation and returns brings us back to the beginning chapter of my thesis, which sets out the historic and institutional context of my research.

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1   How the contingent object of art has transformed institutional conventions see Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art.*.

2   Right at the beginning of my research project I had many discussions with Robin Hankin (at the time Uncertainty Analyst and Neutral Theorist, Laboratory for Satellite Oceanography, National Oceanography Centre, University of Southampton) about the issue of uncertainty in situations of three or more variables. I am indebted to Robin Hankin for pointing out that scientists try in their tests to end up with as few variables as possible, and in life we all try to do the same in order to make sense of the world.

7.3 Possibilities for Future Work

The implication of this research for the author's practice is a deepening and widening of my role as artist-researcher. New opportunities to apply those new found skills have already emerged during my research. As I indicated in §6.4, my collaboration with the John Hansard Gallery will be extended to create work for exhibition in their new gallery in 2017. This exhibition also provides a good opportunity to further investigate how the dispersed object operates through events.

During a recent conference *Phd by Design*,[3] I presented my research and dispersal practice in terms of critical design.4 The dispersed objects could be seen as speculative proposals challenging the conventional function of the objects involved. The objects provoke questions by not functioning conforming the form. For instance, the font, TITLE(date) books and artist's archive of titles are 'devices' to collect and disperse textual material creating new hybrids between the artist's work and work from others. The hybrids can be thought of as unforeseen outcomes, regarding not only text and language, but also regarding the ontology of the objects created. They pose the question: will the hybrid objects with uncertain functions find a (new) use(r)? A question that opens up a rich field between art and design, the digital and tactile, copyrights and openness, commercial and experiment. It is an area I can explore further by using the insights I gained about creating fonts and software to develop new dispersed objects. Computer applications spring to mind that provide a tool to hybridise text, or to hybridise image and text, based on software that is partly developed in this research. In combination with 3D printing new ambiguous objects might be developed that can be seen as the materialised states of a dispersed object.

Another implication of my research for other artist-researchers can be found in that they may take into account an approach to the making of art, within their own practice, that sees distribution of art as integral to the making of art. Through a dispersal practice, artists-researchers apply aggregation and dispersion in any way possible, create on multiple platforms, and expose it anywhere it finds ground, fertile or not. In the course of the research, I developed methods of dispersal by the artist mainly by embedding or working alongside different contexts, and by developing symbiotic relations with others. Further research into the materiality of the art object in network culture can be undertaken by developing other methods to create a dispersed object, for example, through a focus on issues of commodity, luxury and commerciality, collaboration, performance, audience participation, gaming, generative software, and speculative design.

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3   Conference Phd By Design, Navigating The Messiness Of Practice-Based Research, Department Of Design, Goldsmiths, University Of London. 6th and 7th November 2014

4   Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, "Critical Design Faq," Dunne & Raby, http://www.dunneandraby.co.uk/content/bydandr/13/0.; A. Dunne and F. Raby, *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2013). My work is an inverted form of it. The object might look like a conventional thing, but its usage is unpredictable.

✷ Glossary

List of terms and clarified usage in the context of this research. Words in italic refer to other words in the glossary.

archive, artist's –
An artistic conception of the idea of an archive. See also §1.6 Telling the Archive.

archive, classic –
A classic archive uses file-orientated archive practices that index, categorise and conserve actual objects.[1]

archive, dynamic –
A "dynamic conception of the idea of an archive."[2] Ernst also uses the terms digital – , and internet –, in contrast to a *classical archive*, i.e., they are not based on actual discrete objects, and in the literal sense of the word they are not archives. However, they function as archives by the processes they entail: saving bytes to a digital memory; organising data and retrieving data through search operations. Besides a material distinction, the main difference is a temporal and dynamic one. Saving to a writing/reading memory is constantly updated, retrieval and organising is an operation of search algorithms by a particular user at a particular time.

art institution
In the context of this research I will use the term (art) institution in the sense of an organisation and its established practice, often symbolised by its architecture. Implying governing, instituting, and a division between those who do the instituting and the instituted. Examples: the Arts Council, Tate, Royal Academy, a museum, international gallery, auction house, 'biennial' and art fair. Referring to a centre of power, this term is a more narrow definition than *institution of art*. See §1.4.1 Disputed Terminology.

1   Ernst and Parikka, *Digital Memory and the Archive*: 100-10.
2   Ibid., 83.

artworld

Coined by Danto[3] reflecting the notion of the contextual aspects of art, which might not be exhibited but influence the experience of it. Art as part of a social-economic network. From this perspective, the main function of the artworld is to define, validate, and distribute art within society. See also *institution of art* and *institutional theory of art*.

artist

A person who creates the initial concept for, and who might function as the producer of a particular *instance of art*. In a legal sense the author or creator who owns the instance of art including the initial copyrights.

convergence

"[Convergence is] a word that describes technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes in the ways media circulates within our culture. Some common ideas referenced by the term include the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, the search for new structures of media financing that fall at the interstices between old and new media, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who would go almost anywhere in search of the kind of entertainment experiences they want. Perhaps most broadly, media convergence refers to a situation in which multiple media systems coexist and where media content flows fluidly across them."[4]

dispersal practice

Art practice whereby the distribution of art is seen as integral to the conception or making of art, and leading to *dispersed objects*. The distribution is not seen as a phase that follows conception and making. It includes aggregation, selection, self-organising, archiving. The artist organises the encounter between a particular instance of art and spectators independently, differently and possibly parallel to the distributive action of an *art institution*. In the context of this research, the term dispersion is only used in relation to action by an artist, to disambiguate the action of artists and the action of art institutions (see distribution).

distribution

In the context of this research distribution is the action by *art institutions* of organising the encounter between art and spectators, the process of selecting, parcelling out art, making art accessible or public. Usually in the form of an event, such as exhibitions, performances and fairs, but might also take the form of publications, websites etc. Distribution may therefore be more critically understood as part of the process of the functioning of art, linking the production of art and the reception or experience of art. According to van Maanen distribution 'conditions' the functioning of the art world, and the realising of aesthetic values in society.[5]

desertation

1a. an abandoned work or text. Left to disperse and waste with the aim to escape the Institution (of art, of learning, of society) in order to regain some sanity; 1b. a work without content; 2.

3   Danto, "The Artworld."
4   Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*: 282.
5   Maanen, *How to Study Art Worlds. On the Societal Functioning of Aesthetic Values:* 243.

a protected area without inhabitation of any kind; 3. (Mathematics) a function without purpose.

heterogeneous network

In Actor Network Theory: "a way of suggesting that society, organisations, agents and machines are all effects generated in patterned networks of diverse (not simply human) materials."[6]

hybrid

Throughout the thesis I use the term (hybrid site, hybrid practice and hybrid object) to point out that the entity has an unusual filiation, or the entity is generated from an unusual combination of elements. A hybrid practice, for instance, combines the practices of digital and internet art with physical objects and gallery based art.

instance of art

Catch all term for 'art' created by the artist or anyone functioning as artist. 'Instance' is a neutral term signifying not necessarily a material object (see art object) or work (artwork) but something that is put forward by the artist to be made public as 'art' or the object of spatial and perceptual experience. The difficulty with defining this term lies in the fact that what is considered to belong to the category of art is subjective and contingent.

"…I've examined a range of philosophical attempts to define art. These have included Clive Bell's formalism, R.G. Collingwood's expressionism, Wittgensteinian denials of the possibility of definition, George Dickie's Institutional Theory and Jerrold Levinson's intentional-historical definitions. All of these theories are flawed to some extent. Where does that leave us? The most plausible hypothesis is that 'art' is indefinable not just at the exhibited level, but at the relational non-exhibited level, too."**[7]**

institution of art

The 'institution of art' (after Bürger)**[8]** came to encompass the 'entire field of art', a 'social universe', the 'artworld', a continuity from the art establishment to the artists and viewers. It includes all sites and people involved in production, distribution, reception and discourse of art, for example also the artists and studios, audiences, buyers and galleries, discourses in various media, the mediation of art. The institution of art implies that the whole field of art is understood as instituted, and perceived to be culturally confined, framed, or more neutrally connected, networked etc. Artworld or field of art are more neutral terms, although still ambiguous about the separation or connection from art to society. See also *art institution*.

institutional critique

"Institutional critique is an artistic practice that reflects critically on its own place within galleries and museums and on the concept and social function of art itself. Such concerns have always been a part of modern art but took on new urgency at the end of the 1960s, when—driven by the social upheaval of the time and enabled by the tools and techniques of conceptual art—in-

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6   John Law, "Notes on the Theory of the Actor Network: Ordering, Strategy and Heterogeneity," *Online Papers*(1992), http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/research/resalph.htm#lr.

7   Nigel Warburton, *The Art Question* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003). 121.

8   Peter Bürger, "On the Problem of the Autonomy of Art in Bourgeios Society," in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester and Minneapolis: Manchester University Press and University of Minnesota Press, 1974).

stitutional critique emerged as a genre." [9]

Alberro notes that despite other claims the first occurrence of the term in print is in "On Practice" by Mel Ramsden in 1975. "To dwell perennially on an institutional critique without addressing specific problems within the institutions is to generalize and sloganize. It may also have the unfortunate consequence of affirming that which you set out to criticize. It may even act as a barrier to eventually setting up a community practice (...) which does not just embody a commodity mode of existence." [10] For a different account see Fraser. [11]

Institutional Theory of Art

"Although not fully satisfying as definitions, the imitation and expression theories do provide a clue: both singled out relational properties of art as essential. As I shall try to show, the two defining characteristics of art are indeed relational properties, and one of them turns out to be exceedingly complex." [12] Dickie summarises his original definition as: "A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain institution (the artworld)." [13] Between 1960s and 1984 there where numerous revisions till Dickie published his 'new theory.' In both versions the main thesis is that art is a conferred status, and that something is a work of art because of its institutional context.

module

A building block, or relatively independent, self-sufficient entity, which in turn can be aggregated into a larger scale entity or project. For example, a letter within a font, and the font within different projects. Modules can be adapted or changed to suit the needs of the context in which it operates. See §1.6.

net art

Internet based art practices, reflecting on digital culture, networks, internet and its users.

Terms, such as new media art, digital art, computer art and internet art have become problematic, because most artists now use computers or the internet at some stage in their art making. So, it is certainly not new anymore, and 'media art' or 'digital art' has become now such a general term that many works labelled as such are not necessarily reflecting on its circulation and context. Therefore, I favour the term net art for its indication to a networked culture, which is a more relevant term here.

object, art –

That what is created by the artist or anyone functioning as artist. Not necessarily a material object, but it highlights the material qualities, its singularity as object or as a thing that has become externally manifest. See also *instance of art*, and §1.2.4 where I make a distinction between the art object as function and that what functions as the art object.

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9   Alberro and Stimson, *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, inside cover text.

10   Mel Ramsden, "On Practice," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (London and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1975), 176.

11   Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique."

12   Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic, an Institutional Analysis*: 21.

13   Ibid., 34.

object, digital –

Digital refers to "any mode of representation rooted in individually separate and distinct units."[14] A digital object refers to an entity that exists as or is represented by individually separate and distinct units. The term digital (art) object is ambiguous, because it might imply an art object that is made on a computer or it might imply something that is not a physical tangible object.

"[A] digital artifact qua object is editable, interactive, reprogrammable, and distributable." These attributes "stem from the nature of digitality and are further supported by the modularity and granularity of the ecosystems in which digital objects are embedded. (Yoo et al. 2010)"[15] see §1.6 Digital Object.

object, dispersed –

Initially conceived as an object (of art) dispersed by the artist, and dispersed over multiple platforms. The dispersed object is often referred to as a project because that what functions as the art object consists of many different instances (material and immaterial) and actions or events. The dispersed object is something that functions as (art) object. It might be (re) presented as one thing, with one title, one picture, but in the literal sense of the word it is not one object, it is a multiplicity.

During my research the term becomes linked with an ongoing process, a circulation between platforms, a dynamic entity with different conditional statuses. The dispersed object consist of modular units that enable reconfiguration on different scales and in different contexts. The term becomes conceptualised as a combination of process and snapshots of this process. Each snapshot is seen as a temporal actualisation of the dispersed object. Hence it is not a singular object that is partitioned, but an unfinished, unstable, dynamic, temporal entity with ambiguous ontology.

project

For want of a better word, the artist creates the art object in the form of a project, which consists of the artist at work and the work produced. Literally the artist throws forward 'projectiles'. Here it is synonymous with dispersed object. See §1.2

recursive, recursion

Recursion is the application of a self-referencing procedure or definition leading to repetition, loops, and infinite range of expressions. As a visual effect it is called the Droste effect when an image contains the same image, or an image from two parallel mirrors. The Fibonacci number sequence is an example from Maths.: creating an ongoing, infinite number sequence by adding a current number to a previous number. For examples see §5.2 the book *TITLE(date)*. See also Krauss.[16]

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14   Galloway, "Something About the Digital [a Catalog Essay Written in 2011 for the Exhibition "Chaos as Usual," Curated by Hanne Mugaas at the Bergen Kunsthall in Norway.]".

15   Kallinikos, Aaltonen, and Marton, "The Ambivalent Ontology of Digital Artifacts."

16   Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea. Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999).

site

The place and time of an instance of art. Including time leads to a multiple definition of site. Kwon distinguishes between site of action (where a physical intervention takes place); site of effect (where the impact might be felt, for instance on a particular discourse). The functional site "is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and discursive filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist above all). It is an informational site, a locus of overlap of text, photographs and video recordings, physical places and things (...) It is a temporal thing, a movement; a chain of meanings devoid of a particular focus."[17]

spectator

A person who contemplates or experiences the art object. Synonymous with many different terms depending on the context in which this event happens. In visual art the focus was traditionally on showing and seeing art, hence spectator, viewer, observer, onlooker, beholder. In the expanded field of art we might use audience, listener, user, participant, visitor, public.

status of the art object

1) The condition of the object, the object as object, material entity, immaterial, digital, dispersed, hybrid, singular, visual, etc. 2) The relational condition of the object as being created by an artist. 3) The classification of the object as art, the object as a sign referring to art. In this sense the object is conditioned and stabilised through a classification as art by the institution of art. Status in the sense of commodity or value is left on purpose outside the scope of the term.

See *art object* and *Institutional Theory of Art*. See text §1.1.

symbiosis

Biologist Angela Douglas defines symbiosis in its original meaning as "any association between different species, with the implication that the organisms are in persistent contact but that the relationship need not be advantageous to all the participants."18 This includes associations in the form of mutualism (all entities benefit), commensalism (it benefits one entity, it is neutral for the other), and parasitism (it benefits one but is harmful for the other).19 For my research the crucial point is the cohabitation and interaction between different species despite differences, despite being separate entities, irrespective of harm or benefit. Another crucial point is the emergence of hybrids, and an ongoing multiplication. Therefore, in this thesis, symbiosis is any association between different *entities*, with the implication that the entities are interacting long-term but that the relationship need not be advantageous to all participants. I use the words "entities" and "interaction" because I apply the concept of symbiosis outside the strict biological field.

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17   Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Local Identity* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2002). 29. Kwon refers to Meyer 2000.

18   Angela E. Douglas, *The Symbiotic Habit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). 4-5. Douglas describes the term symbiosis as coined by Anton de Bary in 1879, and the subsequent disagreement about the definition in the field of biology.

19   The term is contested for the way it defines the benefit to the organisms involved. In current biology the term symbiosis is often more narrowly defined as "an association between different species from which all participating organisms benefit." Ibid, 5-6.

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❧ Appendix A

In Chapter 3, 4 and 5 I reflect on the dispersed object created during particular projects and I use a set of questions to explicate what, according to the artist, the art object consists of, where its boundaries lie and what might persist. For a background to these questions see §2.3.

Questions referring to Symbiote 4 at The Winchester Gallery

Questions to test the status of the dispersed object: what kind of object have I created within the gallery context? The questions are answered according to the artist, defining what the artist sanctions as the art object and specifying what the project consists of.

1. What belongs to the artwork? The dispersed object, or project, consists of: the artist working within the gallery context, creating an archive of digital installation photographs, the gallery guide, its exhibition, artist's talk and archival of work. See the project log for a full list (Vol.2, §6). Each production and exhibition is an instance of the project as 'the artwork'.

2. How is the dispersed object (the project) functioning/supposed to function? The project appropriates this particular gallery's installation photographs of previous exhibitions. It adds to and changes these documents to create a virtual archive, or the artist's version of an exhibition history. It is made accessible as altered installation photographs in the form of a printed gallery guide which is used and exhibited alongside other exhibitions. After physical exhibition and presentation my version of exhibition history (the gallery guide) becomes a document within a (potential) gallery archive. This project is set up to be circulatory and repeatable. It becomes a symbiote or ingrained within the gallery's network, based around the physical exhibition space with its temporary exhibitions. In addition the WSA library with its artist's books collection acts here as a depository of the printed instance of the work, and the ePrints repository acts as the digital, online archive.

3. Where is the artwork located (space and time)? The project circulates between artist's studio, gallery exhibition and library archives (the institutional network of the Winchester Gallery/ WSA/ University of Southampton). The material instantiations of the project are placed outside the exhibition sequence of events that happen within the context of the gallery. The project is ongoing in the sense of a potential recreation and re-staging of the work alongside other exhibitions.

4. Which specific contextual aspects/interactions are essential?
The Symbiote 4 project is site-specific: intended to disperse within this particular gallery/institution. A collaboration between gallery and artist to select specific archive material (installations photographs). The artist's interaction with archive material, adding and changing records, generating a virtual archive. The content, in this case the installation photographs, are only of this gallery. The exhibiting of this project happens alongside another exhibition at The Winchester Gallery. The work can be re-installed. Ideally a new updated guide is produced which includes recent installation photographs.

5. What is displayed/made public? What are the conditions of exhibition/making it public?
Displayed/made public during exhibition: 50 printed copies of the gallery guide. The main condition of exhibition is that the printed gallery guides are shown as if they originate from the gallery and the visitors are allowed to handle them, to carry them around. The public has the option to buy or take away a guide.

6. What is documented and archived?
Artist's archive of installation photographs. The artist has archived documents of the making procedures, and photographs showing the exhibition event and visitor's interaction. (see Vol. 2). Printed gallery guide (original that was exhibited) is in the archive of WSA Library: artists' books collection. Digital copies are archived by The University of Southampton's electronic library (e-prints), and by websites http://www.symbiotext.net

7. If or how is the project preserved? Under what conditions does it survive? What is acceptable change? What is the copyright licence?

The project (the dispersed object) performs or circulates only within the gallery and associated institution. It survives 'dormant' within archives or collections and can only be re-exhibited within this particular gallery. Acceptable changes are additions to the virtual archive of installation photographs, and a subsequent remake and print of the extended new edition of the gallery guide.

If this project moves to another gallery it becomes a new project.

Copyright licence of the printed gallery guide is Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. Which means anyone is free to share (copy and redistribute) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon) the work, provided the artist is attributed, the use is non-commercial and it is distributed with the same copyright licence.[1]

....
1   Work with this license is marked with (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0), which stands for Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike. The full license is available online: Creative Commons.org, "Creative Commons — Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported — CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.".

Questions referring to Symbiote 5 at the Rag Factory and Online

Questions to test the status of the dispersed object: what kind of object have I created within this particular situation? The questions are answered according to the artist, defining what the artist sanctions as the art object and specifying what the project consists of.

1. What belongs to the artwork?
 The dispersed object, or project, consists of: the artist working within the gallery online and onsite context, the digital and printed work, its exhibition and online publication, and archival of work. In detail: The creation of a virtual database of eight event videos and its visualisation on video; Eight digital pictures and embedded links; The Rag Factory gallery guide as printed postcards and ebook; The website www.symbiotext.net and online accounts on other websites, which need continuous updating.

2. How is the dispersed object (the project) functioning/supposed to function?
During exhibition the printed postcards are the entry points to the project.
The project contains appropriated online videos of previous exhibitions and other events at Rag Factory gallery. The videos are reworked into the artist's version of an exhibition history, consisting of eight digital post-produced videos, published separately and combined in a single screen composite video. Eight stills from the video archive form the basis for 8 digital pictures. These are presented in two ways. As printed postcards and as a digital format ebook, both are gallery guides. The printed postcards are part of the exhibition Feint and allow the visitors to become aware of and access videos of previous events that took place at the same gallery. The printed postcards contain a map of the gallery which places the events, and it contains QR codes which link back to images on the internet or the source videos.
After the exhibition the material online is the only way to access the project. The ebook and PDF that is published online serves the same function as the postcards: it gives access to a chain of images and the artist's version of an exhibition history. The symbiote 5 videos are posted online at YouTube and Vimeo which allows them to be aggregated into the searches by the online public. The website www.symbiotext.net is the main website through which all is gathered and dispersed. It creates a cross-platform hub and it makes all digital entities available for searches and thus to become part of other dynamic archives.
This project is set up to be dispersed and circulate between actual events at the gallery and the events of online search and selection of material. As such it becomes a symbiote or ingrained within the gallery's operation online and onsite.

3. Where is the artwork located? What is its duration?
It is located on multiple platforms, but not on all at the same time due to a circulation, see question 4. The duration of the project is determined by the online availability of the digital entities.
Printed Rag Factory Gallery Guide (postcards): Exhibited alongside the exhibition Feint at The Rag Factory (16 Heneage Street, London E1 5LJ) from 6 to 10 July 2011. Some copies where taken from the gallery by visitors. One copy of the printed Rag Factory Gallery Guide is in the artists' books collection of WSA Library.
Digital formats: The website www.symbiotext.net itself as platform: a way to collect and document the research. As content uploaded to other websites youtube.com , vimeo.com , issue.com . In dynamic form: references might appear in online searches "Rag Factory London".
The duration of the project is determined by the online availability of the digital entities.

4. Which specific contextual aspects/interactions are essential?
The project performs or circulates within the Rag Factory's event history and its ongoing circulation

online.

Digital-internet context: Search engines and its technologies are now essential tools to take part in and sustain the circulation of images. Work in the form of videos, PDFs or images need to be uploaded to websites and made accessible to search engines to make it work. The users who do the internet searches perform a dynamic archiving, follow links, download, read, and possibly print entities of the work. It is not that they complete the work but they activate a potential of circulation and materialisation between digital and printed forms or between archived and visualised on screen states. For instance the viewer can decide to download the guide to a tablet and make it part of their ebook collection. Alternatively one can view it in PDF form on a website such as Issuu and print a copy. In this case the viewer decides the format and quality of the printed copy, not the artist. The printing via the Issuu website is an example of materialisations that are not defined by the artist, but by giving open access to the work these unforeseen developments add to the dispersed nature of the work.

Dispersal during exhibition: Eight postcards (50 printed copies each) displayed to be taken by the visitors and viewed while in the gallery. The public has the option to take a copy. Each postcard refers to a particular event and place within the gallery. Together they make up a small sample of an exhibition history.

Dispersal during and after exhibition: performed through internet search engines by users searching for the terms "Rag Factory London"

5. What is displayed/made public? What are the conditions of exhibition/making it public? Displayed within the gallery exhibition: Eight postcards (50 printed copies each). During exhibition the postcards are made available to the visitors to be used, carried around or taken away.

Simultaneously with the gallery exhibition some work is independently published online. The artist's website shows the postcards in digital format, a gallery guide in ebook and PDF format, and several videos.

6. What is documented and archived?

The artist has archived originals of the making procedures and copies. Photographs showing the exhibition event and visitor's interaction.

The printed postcards (one original set that was exhibited) are deposited in the archive of WSA Library: artists' books collection.

Digital copies are archived by The University of Southampton's electronic library (e-prints), and by websites http://www.symbiotext.net [and http://rhizome.org].

Online publishing (see question 5) achieves a dynamic archiving.

7. If or how is the project preserved? Under what conditions does it survive? What is acceptable change? What is the copyright licence?

It survives as long as what is archived is accessible online for search activities by the public. Acceptable changes are additions to the virtual archive of installation photographs, and a subsequent remake and print of the extended new edition of the gallery guide.

If this project moves to another gallery it becomes a new project.

Copyright licence of all published material including the website is Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. Which means anyone is free to share (copy and redistribute) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon) the work, provided the artist is attributed, the use is non-commercial and it is distributed with the same copyright licence.[2]

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2   Ibid.

Questions referring to TITLE(date) (2012-ongoing)

Questions to test the status of the dispersed object: what kind of object have I created through the project TITLE(date)? (answered according to the artist, defining what the artist sanctions as the art object and specifying what the project consists of).

1. What belongs to the artwork?
I consider the art work to be the project, as process and the entities created. The artist creating/working with the modules: substitution procedure Whoisshe, the font SymLogiDIN, artwork title collections (so called artist's archives), dispersing instantiations in a variety of forms, the TITLE(date) archive. Because the procedures and fonts are tools, which can be modified by anyone, the boundaries of the dispersed object are vague. The Project Log (See §6.4) is an attempt to list all of the author's work, but what is made by others cannot always be traced. In addition the ongoing nature of the project means this list will never be complete.

2. How is the dispersed object (the project) functioning/supposed to function?
The project TITLE(date) is set up as a dispersal practice using artwork titles as material. The project TITLE(date) applies semi-independent modules created through the previous project Word/Letter Hybrid, and creates also new modules. These semi-independent modules are seen as tools which can be (re)combined and applied by anyone, but in this particular project it is applied through the author's practice. The project modules' function is to aggregate artwork titles, generate, and disperse hybrid texts, either through the SymLogiDIN font or through the substitution procedure Whoisshe. Each time these hybrid texts are made audible or visible the project receives a new instance to be experienced by people at a certain location and time.

3. Where is the artwork located (space and time)?
As process the work is ongoing and the entities created are widely dispersed. What I can locate are only the known individual entities or moments within the project, but not a totality. Some instantiations can be found via online search engines (if the artist is credited, or the font named).
Starting point of this project is a sketch made March 2012 of a mixture between letters and words. The software modules and materialised items remain (also) at the artist's studio. The font software is also located online on different sites. The font becomes located within any computer that downloaded it from an online source, and it is embedded within PDF[3] files containing graphics that used the font. When activated the work becomes visible onscreen or in print, or it becomes instantiated in audio form. The various artist's archives or TITLE(date) collections are aggregated and dispersed widely, from gallery exhibitions to books, to online sites and placed in various archives. Once the tools such as the font and artist's archives are published the project is ongoing.

4. Which specific contextual aspects/interactions are essential?
The fonts are in TrueType format and depend on the use of this software standard. The font and artist's archives or TITLE(date) collections are published online with open access to allow free public interaction

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3   A Portable Document Format (PDF) file aggregates different files including content text, fonts, images, and other layout information to create a complete description of a document in order to display or print it, preserving the original layout. It is done in such a way that the described document is "independent of the application software, hardware, and operating system used to create them and of the output device on which they are to be displayed or printed." Adobe Systems Incorporated, PDF Reference Edition 6, version 1.7, (Adobe Systems Inc., 2006), http://www.adobe.com/devnet/pdf/pdf_reference_archive.html., 33.

by downloading and further use and modification of the modules. The condition of the work after the actual materialisation depends on the user. The actual dispersion takes place either by the artist or others.

5. What is displayed/made public? What are the conditions of exhibition/making it public?
The modules or tools used to create the work is made public as well as 'applied' work independently or in participation with other projects/institutions/artists. The letter substitution procedure is not made public as it is not ready. To allow essential interactions and dispersion to take place the work needs to be published on open platforms such as Print On Demand, and with a creative common copyright licence. See question 4.

6. What is documented and archived?
TITLE(date) project includes the activity of its own archiving. See Project Log [7.4: Archiving]. Not only in the conventional sense but also in the sense of posting online with the intention to make the published entities available for the internet search engines, creating a dynamic archive. In addition the artists created a dedicated online archive collecting and dispersing artwork titles.

7. If or how is the project preserved? Under what conditions does it survive? What is acceptable change within this project? What is the copyright licence?
The project is preserved as software in digital condition, through its performance and circulation of the different modules (such as the font and the artist's title collections) and its subsequent use by others. It survives as long as the modules are archived and can be made available (online), and as long as the software formats (TrueType and PDF) are usable. Over time the project might break down into separate modules and some individual entities might survive (books, sound files, work on paper, font, etc). The survival of the project does not depend on survival of actualisations or entities created by the modules.
Acceptable changes are new additions or modifications of the modules (see question 2). Copyright licences: The font has an Open Font License: Which means anyone is free to share (copy and redistribute) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon) the work, provided the artist is attributed, the use is non-commercial and it is distributed with the same copyright licence.[4]
Copyright licences: The font has an Open Font License: "The goals of the Open Font License (OFL) are to stimulate worldwide development of collaborative font projects, to support the font creation efforts of academic and linguistic communities, and to provide a free and open framework in which fonts may be shared and improved in partnership with others. The OFL allows the licensed fonts to be used, studied, modified and redistributed freely as long as they are not sold by themselves."[5] Copyright licence of all published material including the website is Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. Which means anyone is free to share (copy and redistribute) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon) the work, provided the artist is attributed, the use is non-commercial and it is distributed with the same copyright licence.[6]

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4   Creative Commons.org, "Creative Commons — Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported — CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.".
5   SIL International, "SIL Open Font License (OFL)," SIL International, http://scripts.sil.org/OFL.
6   Creative Commons.org, "Creative Commons — Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported — CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.".