

'Care as a form of Resistance'

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## abstract

The 'Maintenance Work' work of Mirielle Laderman Ukeles was used as a trajectory towards analysing issues concerning health care, socially embedded artists and employment. This paid particular focus on the UK's under threat National Health Service in an attempt to recontextualize the situation with relevant universal artist struggles. Through notions of care as a creative act connections were made between contemporaries like the feminist collective 'Precarias a la deriva' and Occupy Museums, whilst attempting to scan the potentials and problems behind self-organisation, embeddedness and work precarity through art and current social issues. It took the understanding that if Deleuze's notion of a creative act was shared among society and not just privileged within art then so too must forms of emancipation to be shared and challenged. Specifically as care towards life is presented as exhaustive under economy, a world in which this is less dependent on economy is sought.

I have become involved in exploring what I call 'the performance turn', a shift from representing lived experience as narrative to presenting lived experience as performance... in particular the demand that performance be a form of social action, revealing and displaying oppression for its impact on constraining the realisation of social good. <sup>1</sup>

Influenced by Norman Denzin's performance ethnography and approaches to interactionist sociology,<sup>2</sup> this quotation does not come from a self-identified artist, but the reflective practitioner Christopher Jones who operates primarily in nursing and health care environments. Through reflective writing, listening, spoken exchanges, presentations and role play, the activity of this physician highlights conflicts which arise in the health care system, whilst seeking hybrid working functions that bridges or embeds itself within the patient/professional dichotomy. This includes reformulating the seating arrangements of hospital staff and their hierarchical work place distinctions, to dramas that focus on interactions with cancer patients and the relevancy of extra holistic practices. Approaches that could just as well be comparable to the performed dialogical aesthetics of artists in Grant H. Kester's comprehensively framed work, *Conversation Pieces*:

A concept of empathetic insight is a necessary component of a dialogical aesthetic... Dialogical works can challenge dominant representations of a given community and create a more complex understanding<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Jones, "The Performance Turn" in *Becoming A Reflective Practitioner, Third Edition*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 288.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces Community And Communication in Modern Art*, (University of California Press, 2004),115.

Within this reflective framework of artists operating in embedded social encounters outside the art system, Kester's formulation of a history inevitably encounters the work of Mirielle Laderman Ukeles; in particular her "Touch Sanitation" (1980) performance activities with the New York Sanitation Workers.<sup>4</sup> 35 years on from this documentation and it can be argued that the embedded artist is now a common occurrence whilst "artistic language" is well incorporated into other spheres of production by those like Jones, who conventionally operate outside of art systems.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 119

<sup>5</sup> "Symposium: Work And Art, How Artists make a living", *Crate, Collaborative Research Group*, <http://www.collaborativeresearchgroup.co.uk/index.php/projects/work-and-art-symposium/>

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<sup>6</sup> Sam Curtis, "Harrods Fish Counter", 2008, <http://www.scurtis.co.uk/fsharrods2.html>

<sup>7</sup> Mya M. Mangawang, *Sophie Calle: Her(e) But Not Her(e)*, (ProQuest, 2008) 19.

<sup>8</sup> Angus Sanders-Dunnachie, 2013, <http://www.angussanders-dunnachie.co.uk/>

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<sup>9</sup>, Peter Eleey, "Context Is Half The Work", Frieze, November-December 2007, 157.

<sup>10</sup> Howard Slater, "The Art Of Governance", Variant Vol 2 Number1, 2000  
[http://www.variant.org.uk/pdfs/issue11/Howard\\_Slater.pdf](http://www.variant.org.uk/pdfs/issue11/Howard_Slater.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Arnolfini, "Ukeles manifesto", 2015, [http://www.arnolfini.org.uk/blog/manifesto-for-maintenance-art-1969/Ukeles\\_MANIFESTO.pdf](http://www.arnolfini.org.uk/blog/manifesto-for-maintenance-art-1969/Ukeles_MANIFESTO.pdf)

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<sup>12</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Cinema What is the Creative Act", in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975--1995* trans. Ames Hodges, Mike Taormina, (Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agents) 2007, 312-324.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, "Estranged Labour" in *Economic And Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, (Sytart Publishing LLC) 2012.

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<sup>14</sup> See note 11 above

<sup>15</sup> Christian Maravelias “Best In Class - Healthy employees, athletic executives and functionally disabled jobseekers” 31, no. 2, (2015): 279–287



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<sup>16</sup> "NHS: The Perfect Storm", television, *Panorama*, BBC, UK (2015)

<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power Volume 3: Essential Works of Foucault 1954 –1984* , ed. James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 2002)

<sup>18</sup> Chris Naylor, Natasha Curry, Holly Holder, Shilpa Ross Louise Marshall, Ellie Tait, "Clinical commissioning groups Supporting Improvement In General Practice?", The King's Fund: 10, 2013, [http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field\\_publication\\_file/clinical-commissioning-groups-report-ings-fund-nuffield-jul13.pdf](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field_publication_file/clinical-commissioning-groups-report-ings-fund-nuffield-jul13.pdf)

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<sup>19</sup> European Institute For Progressive Social Policies, "Adrift through the circuits of Feminized Precarious Work", *Transversal Texts*, 2004, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0704/precarias1/en>

<sup>20</sup> Ivan Chtcheglov "Formulary for a New Urbanism", *Bureau Of Public Secrets*, trans Kne Knabb. 2006, <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/Chtcheglov.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> , "Adrift through the circuits of Feminized Precarious Work" <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0704/precarias1/en>

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<sup>23</sup> Jean Luc Nancy, *'The Inoperative Community'*, ed. Peter Connor, (University of Minneapolis, 1991) 15

<sup>24</sup> Einir Burrowes, *Research into the Use of Zero Hours Contracts in Devolved Public Services. Executive Summary*, (Old Bell 3 Welsh Government Social Research) ed. Gareth Williams, Claire Miles, 2015, <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/150707-research-use-zero-hours-contracts-devolved-welsh-public-services-summary-en.pdf>

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<sup>25</sup> Alan W. Moore, *The Art Of Social Imagination After 1945: Collectivism After Modernism*, ed. Blake Stimson, Gregory Sholette (University of Minnesota Press, 2007) 92-95.

<sup>26</sup> J.J Charlesworth "Sugar Oil and Small Beer", *Art Review*, 67. 2015

<sup>27</sup> see note 26 above

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<sup>28</sup> David Gilbert, "Apple gives Greek iCloud subscribers one month of free use due to fiscal crisis", *International Business Times*, July 13, 2015

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