

CREATIVE ECONOMY

A discussion on art and economics

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*Cover designed by Jesse Reed.

As we near the signing of another year long lease on our modest two-floor space at 1219 Sycamore Street, there seems no better time than the present to tackle an exhibition such as "Creative Economy." Funding has been on our brains, we hate to admit it. Financial responsibilities are calling. School loan deadlines loom for some, another year is spent without health insurance for others. Such is the case for many young artists (and millions of other Americans) across the country.

What is one to do? Any sense of hope for significant health care reform has begun to dwindle. The mechanisms that once were in place to provide some sort of Federal and State arts support are now scant, and getting more so every year it seems.

What does this mean locally? December 2009 saw Cincinnati City Council vote to eliminate all public art grant funding, cutting both small not-for-profit organization grants as well as individual artist grants.

Public arts funding seems to have gone by the wayside. In its wake many institutions of all sizes have extended a hand for more substantial support from the private sector. The art industry chugs along, business as usual. The international art market appears unphased.

This begs to ask:

What role do we play in all this? How can being an artist become a sustainable lifestyle in the future? What has been done in the past? What opportunities exist now? What is at stake? How does a capitalist framework affect the production of art? How might this production exist outside it? Is it even possible?

Yes. Maybe. We hope so. Let's talk.

Perhaps it is time to try and rethink this together.

-CS13

The Other Economy

By Nick Swartsell

We've of course all heard by now that the sky is falling, that over the past couple years catastrophe has struck. We're in a huge mess here, and things may never be the same.

Only that's not quite it. When seen at its most basic level, the current economic crisis isn't much different than any other in the past. Nor, in real terms, is the practical situation much different than it was before the bubble burst. We still have (roughly) the same amount of resources we had a few years ago—approximately the same amount of saleable stuff floating around in our economy of money and materials.

What is in crisis, then, is the shell game by which these materials are shifted around in our society. "Capital," that all-powerful, all-consuming force, is a piece of paper jammed somewhere in the world's office copier, gumming up the works. In various somewheres, a number of someones owe some other someones a lot of abstract, hypothetical capital recorded in ones and zeroes, and because of this, things have screeched to a near-halt.

It's been repeated to the point of cliché that these situations, these crises occurring on balance sheets and in data bases, affect the art world early and hard. Artists are no longer accruing and producing capital! The money is gummed up in the system! People aren't buying multi-million dollar works! The situation is described in near natural disaster terms—the art market has "dried up" like wetlands. Galleries have been "swallowed up," disappearing under the economic deluge. Arts funding is "vanishing" like endangered species. It's as if the (art) world is coming to an end because capitalism's flaws are manifesting themselves more noticeably.

It is worth noting in this recent mood of doom and gloom about the monetary economy that another, more important system has suffered in this country for a much longer time. Since the discussion these days centers often around economics, we'll use that language to describe this system. This economy, one of ideas, engagement, and collaboration, is one far more vital to art, artists, and communities at large. Its slow decline poses the real danger to the art world, and its revitalization represents the chance for renewed energy in our culture.

Many discussions have been devoted to this other economy. Early political thinkers in this country might have called it the marketplace of ideas, though this term describes something more competitive and less collaborative. Modern political thinkers like Robert Putnam would call it Civil Society—the voluntary, communal glue that invisibly bridges gaps between business, government, and private life in our society. While the conversation around these terms captures some elements of the system in question, neither quite encapsulate its entirety.

In many ways, this dynamic, unnamed economy is more powerful than the named, monetary economy because it supersedes it and exerts huge influence over it. It can inspire huge movements of resources. It can make or break leaders

and birth schools of thought. This economy is not capitalist, it's extracapitalist—able to exist within a certain economic system, but also extending beyond its bounds and not necessarily always relying upon it.

Moreover, this economy is accessible to anyone. The capital necessary to enter this economy is that of thought and of conversation, of engagement with ones neighbors and community. It's time and effort. And if these things are money, as the cliché goes, they can also be used to make much more than mere monetary capital. They can be utilized to make a sort of communal capital; a resource by which discussion is brought about, opinions and knowledge are traded, perhaps rough consensus may be reached, resources can be gathered, and action can be taken. These are the products of communal capital, and they are more powerful than anything rolling off a production line.

What role does art (or art music, or literature) play in this economy? It is one source of this capital; it can rally it, concentrate it so that a community might easily account for it and make use of it. When we converse about art, we talk about ideas, about experience, about our lives. We come away perhaps not agreeing but understanding a bit more about each other. Areas of common interest are brought to light, and potentials for common efforts are made clear. Common needs can be discussed and met.

The most interesting thing about this kind of capital is it doesn't live on a balance sheet or in a bank. Nor is it locked in the white box gallery or in the collector's home. It cannot be accrued by an individual, but exists only in the interplay of multiple human beings. It's found on the street, in letters sent and received, at parties, in the kitchen, in the bedroom. The physical art that spawns it is only packaging, a delivery method.

When you skip a Hollywood blockbuster to check out a local gallery and discuss its current exhibition with others, you're exchanging communal capital. If you were to host a performance by local musicians in your house, you'd be facilitating the exchange of communal capital. Banding together with others to create a modest independent venue for the arts or music or dance or literature is to create a place for communal capital to be developed.

Sadly, we've experienced a sort of deflation of value in regard to this sort of capital. Of course, we're told all the time that new media has made us more connected, more informed, more empowered. But much of what is made easily available to generate discussion and community is shoddily constructed, weak, and flavorless. A million people watching *Lost* or even knowing certain artists' names and slogans are unifying events, to be certain, but provide little in terms of fodder for discussion about practical issues in the world or our community.

How much can half-realized fictional characters in impossible situations or context-less wheatpaste posters re-appropriating icons and slogans of marketable rebel cool bring us together in discussion about our communities, our here and now? How much are we really connected by a surface fascination with escapism? How much are we informed by news that is designed to entertain and advertise? How much are we empowered by the art of infinite, easy distraction?

This is the real crisis of economy, one that is masked by but in some

ways has caused the frantic financial theatrics of the past few years. It is not hard to see the two inverse graphs—the fall of community involvement, civil society, and funding for the arts as legitimate public discourse—juxtaposed with the rise of a crass and unsustainable turn toward conspicuous consumption and blind consumerism.

This drive has overtaken reason. We buy houses we know are too big and too expensive. We buy SUVs we know we can't afford to fill with gasoline we know is dwindling. Why? To communicate something about ourselves, to convey self in the only manner left to us. Because there are few areas of real public conversation through which to express and assert the self, to define ourselves in the presence of others. Because creating an identity through exchanged ideas, acts within the public sphere, and a body of work is less viable and more difficult now than buying one, prefabricated, prepackaged, marketed from birth.

In short, the forces within communities which used to help set local culture, opinion, and agendas on a micro level have been replaced by one-size-fits-all marketing drives that attempt to forge consensus on a huge, all encompassing scale, often with commerce as a goal. This dynamic explains much of America's current cultural malaise—why we accept political leadership who do not represent our wishes, why we hunger for more even as we consume a hugely disproportionate amount of resources, why, even as we are increasingly surrounded with means of communication, we feel ever more isolated and lonesome.

This is not to look back toward any mythic good old days when art was more celebrated and discussed or communities were more active, or even to suggest such days ever existed. Nor is the intent to take a neo-luddite view and condemn the forces of new media, as they can prove to be useful and powerful tools for the facilitation of discussion about culture. Rather, these thoughts are simply an exploration of the benefits of art and the community it creates around it.

Of course, it would be naive to assert that art or participation in art on a local level is a cure-all to the issues currently facing our economy and culture or to the depletion of our communal capital. Rather, it is simply one element with power to bring added value back to our lives by facilitating participation in discussion with our fellow humans about things of real importance. These discussions and the communal capital they generate can have practical impact on local agendas, the allocation of personal and collective resources, and the personal choices engaged in by members of a community.

The disaster of economics unfolding around us, both at large and in the art world, is of course something to be concerned about. Its disruptive power can be seen in the lost jobs, foreclosed homes, slashed funding, and shrinking opportunities. However, while situations which seem to us well beyond our control play out on national and international levels, while the monetary economy sputters, fires, and falters again, it is important to remember our participation in that other, more basic economy all around us. Taking part in the ongoing exchange within our communities empowers in a way international economics, national media monologues and escapist entertainment cannot. This empowerment can take many forms and have many outcomes, but art especially holds the ability to

cross boundaries, to captivate and engage, to inspire us to get involved and help shape those outcomes.

Though we are told the world (art and otherwise) reported on our TV screens and internet feeds is about to burst into flames, let us not forget about the world right outside our windows, which, with a little time, support, and conversation, is waiting to burst into bloom. It is only by first nurturing this smaller but more vital economy that we might hope to make a difference in the larger one.

To Do List

By Lindsey Jones

Let's create an open community of artists in Cincinnati.

Let's go to a show / venue / performance / exhibit that is outside our comfort zone.

Let's share the conversation in our community.

Let's open new ways to present, exhibit, create, explore, and experience our work.

Let's not compromise our work just to get people in the door.

Let's get people in the door by creating.

Let's connect our community by walking a few feet outside our discipline.

Let's push each other to think/create/live/interact.

Let's start the conversation so that it can lead to action.

Let's speak honestly.

Let's offer constructive criticism.

Let's take constructive criticism.

Let's challenge this publication by creating another one.

Let's quit describing groups of artists as too pretentious or too dramatic and start saying "Hi my name is..." to other individuals.

Let's not take no for an answer.

Let's stop listing and start doing.

*Note: The hardest part has already been crossed off.

(Lindsey Jones runs Pones Inc. Laboratory of Movement, a non-profit, movement based, performance art group dedicated to creating original work that blends dance with other mediums.)

Two Visions of Local Public Funding for Cincinnati Artists and Art Organizations

By Kate Kern

What could the future look like for Cincinnati artists and arts organizations?

The financial outlook for the arts today appears grim. In spite of this, we as artists and members of arts organizations might consider how we can create opportunities from rapidly changing terrain of the way the arts are supported. Let's take a look at our recent past-

A brief history of Cincinnati public funding for the arts

I am a past recipient of the city's individual artist grant, and I have been a member of the city's Arts Allocation Committee since 2003.

The CAAC is a volunteer advisory body – with members appointed by the mayor. It was created to review applications to the city's 2 competitive arts grant programs- to individual artists and small art organizations and to advise city council on other matters relating to the arts in the city.

“Arts Allocation” refers to the policy adopted in 1983 that designated 0.14% (around \$450,000 in 2002) of the city's General Fund revenues for support of the arts. This fund supported three grant programs: the first to designated major arts and cultural organizations like the Ballet, Opera, and the Art Museum, the second and third in the form of competitive grants to individual artists working in all disciplines, and small arts organizations, from galleries like BASE and Manifest to performing groups like Know Theatre and Contemporary Dance Theater.

Sadly this was only a city “policy” not a binding “ordinance.” As policy the 0.14% was just a guideline. That “guideline” came under attack as early as 2000, when these funds were targeted by city council as items to be cut to balance the overall city budget, but eventually saved by a vocal arts community and a letter writing campaign. This struggle went on each year for the next 4 years.

But in 2005 Council managed to cut the funds by 50%, putting an end forever to the 0.14% guideline. Every year since, arts funding has lost more ground.

Funding to both large and small organizations disappeared first, leaving only a small competitive grant program for artists in 2009, costing the city a mere \$35,000 a year. As a final insult, the council agreed to Council Member Cranley's motion to bypass the established competitive review process and give \$20,000 of the \$35,000 available funds to one artist of his own choice—almost 3

times the individual grant maximum for a project which would not have qualified for funding based on established grant rules.

With considerable prodding from the CAAC and an email campaign spearheaded by the arts community, council restored the \$20,000 to the Individual Artist Grant Program in time to be allotted during the May grants review. But not without a great deal of embarrassment to council, humiliation to the artist who had been offered the grant and then as quickly stripped of it, and hours of petitioning by the arts allocation committee.

That was last spring. In December, the 2010 budgeting process struck the final blow, eliminating all remaining funds and staff person designated to run it. There is no longer a mechanism for public funding of the arts in our City.

Arts funding is dead. Long live arts funding.

If we accept the premise that it is important for the city to be a leader in support and funding of Cincinnati's arts organizations and artists, what can be learned from this history?

It is possible for our city to allocate funding to arts organizations and artists. Arts funding is a value to many voters in the City, and when citizens have spoken out, they were able to save at least some arts funding for another year. With or without a fair process, funding of arts projects and artists out of the city budget will occur. If there is no fair process, the only means for funding is through special favors and political maneuvers...

The current system for funding the arts with taxpayer dollars:

Without a process for granting public funds to artists and arts organizations, Council is free to include funding for any pet arts or arts-related projects in any future budget. In the current system, the arts are funded through political favor and back room deals.

One approach artists could take:

Some of us in the arts community might see the lack of established arts funding as being to our benefit. After all, any of us might approach council members directly for funding. While I don't advocate this approach - I wouldn't blame individuals or groups from going this route.

But the cost is high, and the result is an arts program built on political favors and the individual taste of members of city council. The results will be uneven at best. There is no means or method to build a cohesive vision or plan for the arts; no way to guarantee fair access to all artists; no review on projects by other artists and arts professionals who can recognize innovation and talent in the arts. With this system, we rely on the expertise of our elected officials to set a course for the future of the arts in Cincinnati and choose the art that our tax dollars will

fund.

Another approach artists could take:

We, as artists and members of arts organizations, might begin to see ourselves as important partners in increasing our city's economic vitality, cultural vibrancy, and overall livability.

Together we work to create and adhere to a comprehensive arts policy that clearly states a shared vision of a city where arts are an integral part of all aspects of life. We create and commit to methods that recognize innovation and talent, at the same time promoting a range of artistic expression that reflects the rich cultural diversity of our city. Together we work toward a city ordinance, a law and not just a guideline, that takes arts funding out of the political arena and makes it an entitlement that cannot be challenged---like snow removal and garbage pickup.

This second approach will take hard work, collaboration, and extreme creativity. As artists, these are our strengths. We are at a cross roads where we need to choose whether public funding for the arts in our city is important enough to work for.

(Kate Kern is a visual artist based in Cincinnati. A former recipient of funding from the City of Cincinnati's competitive grant program to individual artists, her final term as a member of the Cincinnati Arts Allocation Committee expires this September.)

Public Option For The Arts? Not In Cincinnati

By Kristin Dietsche

Last December, Cincinnati City Council voted to eliminate all funding for the arts. With the 2010 budget, not only was modest support for both individual artists and arts organizations eliminated, but the infrastructure for distributing public funding for the arts through a fair process was dismantled. Administrative staff along with the history of the process was removed, and the historic records of this program permanently archived. It's not a temporary dry spell. These 23-year-old arts funding programs, which once offered a commitment of up to \$450,000 per year to support the work of artists, are gone for good.

In the words of the former city arts program web page: "The City of Cincinnati's arts grant programs are an investment in the creative economy that helps make Cincinnati a unique and vital city with a rich cultural environment and quality of life that rival that of larger cities." As of December, this investment has ended.

To me, more disturbing than this end of City support for artists and arts organizations was the lack of public outcry or concern. There was no media coverage of the ending of the city's long-established commitment to arts; no protests among artists and arts organizations who have been understandably more focused on hanging onto larger pots of funds from private donors in a time of economic crisis.

Part of the problem seems to be the evolution of our local political process, which has become increasingly harder and more time-consuming for the average citizen to understand. City Council members run for office on two-word bullet points, like "Safer Streets" and "Tax Rollback", only to find themselves holding office in a complex bureaucracy with rules and oversight they barely understand (just watch City Council on cable channel 23 for ten minutes if you don't know what I mean). This year property owners in the City will get a tax rollback, while basic services are eliminated along with arts funding.

While citizens can speak their minds to council for 2 minutes a week and monitor the meeting of every committee and subcommittee on cable tv, the infrastructure and political game of posturing for electable sound bites make it nearly impossible for citizens to actually participate. As an arts advocate who has spent many hours at City Hall, I have discovered that frequently a "no" vote on an arts measure might actually be in the best interest of artists. While council members may characterize themselves as "supporters of the arts," they can't see that back-door handouts to a community arts center run by political allies may not be the fairest use of arts dollars for the city as a whole. It's hard enough to get arts supporters to appear at public hearings to speak in favor of arts funding, but to get them out with enough information to engage in the convoluted debates that hit the council floor is nearly impossible.

The distinction between public and private funding is becoming increasingly harder to explain to artists and average voters. However, who chooses what art is funded remains an important distinction.

Whether the funds are private or public, taxpayers foot the bill (directly or indirectly). We tend to forget that private funding comes out of our tax dollars, too. Foundations and individuals fund the arts as a tax dodge. Private individuals determine what and how the arts are funded as a way to put less money into public coffers. Corporations, foundations, and the wealthy choose the art for all of us with no regulation or oversight on how their funds are distributed or to whom. It is no surprise that wealthy private funders tend to reproduce established art that represents the majority culture. When funding comes directly from city, however, distribution can be more fair and open to all.

Just as polls show people favor a public option for health care, Cincinnati voters tend to favor public support for the arts. Recent county ballot amendments show that Cincinnatians are very willing to be taxed for cultural services that they value, and last year they voted overwhelmingly in favor of small tax increases to support our libraries and the Museum Center.

As artists, we need to pool our creativity to communicate the message that public funding of the arts is important. We need to find a way to reverse the national trend to elect leaders whose best ideas are mindless tax cuts. And we need to find a way to participate in the democratic process in a world where corporate interests fund 24-hour news, and developers, local corporations, and their lawyers seem to make the rules at city council.

It's not too late, but we need to do this while some of us still remember that public support for the arts makes our communities better, more livable, and stronger. Otherwise, the next generation of artists will assume that money for "real" art doesn't come from our government. Without our work now, the next generation of artists might think it absurd to expect a community to both value and support its artists.

(Kristin Dietsche is an alternative theater producer and founding director of the Women's Theater Initiative. She served two three-year terms on the Cincinnati Arts Allocation Committee and continues to advocate for city support for the arts. She is on the faculty at Union Institute & University.)

A SNAP SHOT OF CINCINNATI ARTS IN 2006*

-Economic Impact of Non-Profit Arts Organizations in the City of Cincinnati in 2006 = \$240 million

-Employment by Non-Profit Arts Organizations in Greater Cincinnati in 2006 = 9,675 full-time equivalent jobs

-Number of Non-Profit Arts Organizations that received City Grant funding in 2006 = 27

-City funds dedicated to Arts organizations & the arts = Just under \$450,000

The Bottom Line:

Cincinnati is eliminating arts support while other cities in the region and across the country are increasing public investment in the arts with new initiatives for funding, planning, and organization.

2 Examples:

1. Columbus has established the Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC), a non-profit local arts agency with a charge from the City and stable funding from hotel/motel taxes. Their 2006 operating budget was over \$5 million, and they offered over \$3,000,000 to support more than 70 arts organizations. See www.gcac.org
2. In Cleveland the Cuyahoga Art and Culture established a cigarette tax to offer \$15 million in grants to 68 organizations this year. See www.cacgrants.org

*Source: Cincinnati Arts Allocation Committee

The Situationists and Work

By Bill Not Bored

In "Art Versus Work," an excerpt from *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (University of California Press, 2009), which was reprinted in *Temporary Service's Art Work*, Julia Bryan-Wilson states:

"Thus the Vietnam War-era generation of leftist artists were influenced by numerous factors, including a rejection of previous forms of artistic labor within the United States. They were also aware – if unevenly – of contemporary international developments, not least the climate of radicalism of May 1968. As Guy Debord wrote about the Situationist International: 'An international association of Situationists can be seen as a union of workers in an advanced sector of culture, or more precisely as a union of all those who claim the right to a task now impeded by social conditions; hence as an attempt at an organization of professional revolutionaries in culture.' Debord drew upon Marx's conceptions of how art is itself productive, for he understood aesthetics as formative to the education of the senses – art, that is, helps create social subjects. In fact, relatively recent translations of relevant texts by Marx emphasized the psychic effects of alienated labor, self-estrangement, and negation – useful concepts to apply to the psychologically dense act of producing art. One writer in 1973 provides a summary of Marx's notions that circulated at the time: 'The similarity between art and labor lies in their shared relationship to the human essence; that is, they are both creative activities by means of which man produces objects that express him, that speak for and about him. Therefore, there is no radical opposition between art and work.'"

I have tried to ignore this paragraph, but find I cannot. In its excessive confusion, it is typical of most writing about Debord and/or the Situationists. First off, the quote from Debord comes from 1958, a year after the Situationist International (SI) was founded, not May 1968, as the context ("the climate of radicalism") might lead one to expect. The "relatively recent translations of relevant texts by Marx" (emphasis added) were published in 1971, thirteen years after Debord compared the SI to "a union of workers in an advanced sector of culture." For the Situationists, a lot had changed over the course of those years: their organization had evolved from a cultural or artistic avant-garde to a socio-political movement. Furthermore, those "recent" translations were from German into English, which wasn't among the languages that Debord spoke, and so no translations of Marx into English could have had any influence upon him. (Debord's own exposure to the little known, early, "humanistic" works by Marx came in 1960, when the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* were first published into French.) Finally, as concerns the "writer in 1973" (aka Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez): his book was published after the SI's dissolution, which came in 1972; he wasn't a situationist; and he doesn't seem to be much of a Marxist, either. I seriously doubt that Marx himself would approve Vázquez's notion that "there is no radical opposition between art and work," because the

former is a voluntary practice, engaged in with relative freedom, while the latter is obligatory and engaged in with virtual unfreedom.

But the worst thing about this paragraph is the content of the quote from Debord. Ms. Bryan-Wilson seems unaware that this "thesis" was obviously advanced in a provisional fashion -- "An international association of Situationists can be seen" (emphasis added) -- and that it was, in any case, immediately abandoned by Debord and the rest of the SI. Five years later, in 1963, the members of the SI were insisting on the revolutionary potential of workers councils, and were openly rejecting traditional unions, even or especially unions of artists; they had excluded from their organization the people who identified themselves as artists, preferring to admit critical theorists instead; and they had rejected all notions of "professionalism" (specialized roles and expertise) and "professional revolutionaries" (militants and the cult of self-sacrifice). In 1966, Debord authored a widely circulated text, "Minimum Definitions of a Revolutionary Organization," which laid out what the SI was attempting to be at that time. Neither art nor culture is mentioned in it; the emphasis is completely on "the [revolutionary] surpassing of the commodity and of wage labor." During and well after May 1968, Debord and the other situationists were almost exclusively preoccupied with promoting wildcat strikes, general assemblies and workers councils; their "art" was the manner in which these subjects were broached and developed (graffiti, wall posters, clandestine publications, and media scandals).

What, if any, is the relevance of Guy Debord and the SI to questions concerning art and work today, in 2010? To answer this question, we must recognize that, in addition to praising workers councils (the self-management of the workplace), the SI promulgated a second theme, which was in almost complete contradiction with the first. Writing in 1963, and recalling some graffiti he wrote in Paris a decade earlier, Debord located what he called the essence of the situationist project in the simple phrase: "Never work" (*Ne travaillez jamais*). Why shouldn't one work? Why should one never work? On the subjective level, one should never work because working almost always involves doing something that is dangerous, reprehensible or boring, and because the monetary rewards for doing these "dirty jobs" are almost always insufficient. This has always been the case. On the objective level, one should never work because work itself has become obsolete -- and this is a relatively new development (since the 1910s). Due to the vast accumulation of wealth over the course of the last 150 years, we have passed a threshold. There is in fact so much wealth accumulated in private hands that, if it were distributed equally, no one would need to work another day. Or rather they would only need to "work" one day a week, and yet everyone could still be properly fed, clothed and housed. Put another way: it is no longer "necessary" (if it had ever been necessary) to keep society split between those who are wealthy and need not work, and those who are poor and must work. There is now enough for absolutely everyone to lead a "life of leisure."

Today, it is quite common to hear people claim that "the times have changed." Capitalist society has supposedly changed fundamentally and irreversibly since the early 1970s: we no longer live in a society of abundance, but

in a society of scarcity. Or, rather, we have always lived in a society of scarcity and the "abundance" of the post-World War II era was merely an exception, not a glimpse of the near future. If this is true, then the programmatic declaration "Never work" is not relevant to conditions today, in 2010, when America (and the rest of the world) is supposedly experiencing the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression. There just isn't enough money around for artists, or anyone else, for that matter, to go around "never working." But these commonplaces are not new; they were in fact voiced in the 1950s and 1960s; and they are just as mistaken today as they were back then. In point of fact, there is plenty of "money" to go around; indeed, capitalist society is even wealthier than it was in 1963. To see this, one must not confuse bankrupted governments with the super-wealthy corporations and/or financial institutions that have bankrupted them. Society's increasingly vast wealth has been and remains concentrated among a small number of people who continue to monopolize its use. If there is a difference between today and the 1960s, it is the fact that the super-rich have learned a lesson from recent history: ever since the 1970s, they've worked to keep their vast and growing accumulations of wealth hidden behind a curtain of artificially maintained "insecurity" and "crisis." It is even possible for the super-rich to assert that their great wealth is a myth and that they, too, have been "hit hard."

We seem to have wandered far from the subject of art. Why should artists be the ones to lead the attack against class society and its artificially maintained divisions between those who can afford not to work and those who can't afford not to work? Why should artists get engaged in revolutionary politics and risk their necks? What about the workers? Isn't class society their problem? In any case, why should artists act differently from the workers? Haven't the workers learned to "live" within the confines of class society? Haven't they abandoned "illegal" tactics in favor of "legal" ones? If so, why shouldn't artists do the same? Why shouldn't artists form unions?

Let us recall that, when he wrote his "Never work" graffiti, Guy Debord was not drawing upon Marxism, which has been and continues to be primarily concerned with changing the organization and management of work, that is to say, with bringing about the workers' self-management of the economy. When he proclaimed "Never work," Debord was in fact drawing upon modern art (French poetry of the late 19th century, in particular), which frequently rejected the entire institution of work. Indeed, the originality of Debord and the situationist project as a whole was the attempt to introduce the art/poetry-based "Never work" theme into the contemporary workers movement and thereby reinvigorate it. We should not forget that this attempt was successful, even if its moment of success was relatively short-lived. Furthermore, the "Never work" theme lives on, precisely where it originated: in the cultural/artistic milieu (cf. Johnny Rotten gleefully announcing "I don't work" in the Sex Pistols' song "Seventeen," recorded in 1977).

If work -- that is, the requirement to earn a living through regular employment -- was no longer necessary or obligatory, artists would know what

to do with their "free" time. They would continue to do what they had always been doing: making art. But almost everyone else wouldn't know what to do. They'd be thrown back upon themselves, confronted with their lack of meaningful hobbies. How many times have you heard someone say that they wouldn't know what to do with themselves if they didn't have to work eight hours a day, five days a week, fifty weeks a year? Two or three weeks of vacation are enough for them! Some people even work overtime rather than be confronted by the emptiness of their "private lives" outside of work. Sure, they'd want to have a few extra three-day weekends now and then, but never going to work?! Wouldn't that be boring after a while? No, it wouldn't be boring or -- if you prefer -- yes, it would become boring, but that precisely would be the challenge of the thing: perpetually finding exciting new ways to "spend time." Here artists could both lead and teach through their example, that is to say, by the way they "spend" time and never feel bored.

It seems indirect, at best, for us to devise ways by which artists can obtain money, so that they can spend it on food, clothing and shelter, and thus be in a good position to produce their art works. Wouldn't it be better, more "economical," if artists got their food, clothing and shelter directly, without having recourse to money? Yes, it would -- and this isn't a pipe dream. Food can be obtained for free: a local chapter of "Food Not Bombs" can feed homeless people without having to buy any food. Why can't there be a "Food Not Bombs" chapter that is run by and for artists? Clothing can be obtained for free or cheaply. Like "unwanted" food, used clothing is discarded every day, and need only be rescued from the trash to be obtained. Shelter can also be obtained cheaply. In every major city and town in America, there are dozens, if not hundreds, abandoned buildings that can be "squatted" (occupied without paying rent). And what about artists' supplies? What about money for artist's supplies? I left these elements out for a reason: to suggest that revolutionary artists do not need additional "supplies" if they make their art directly, that is to say, in life itself, and not in artistic representations of it.

(More of Bill Brown's writings can be found at www.notbored.org)

A Precedent For A Creative Economy

A Foreword by Isaac Hand

There is a precedent for a creative economy in Cincinnati. In 1827, Cincinnati witnessed an experimental alternative economy which proved to be so successful that others began to copy it as they could not compete. Josiah Warren founded the Cincinnati Time Store on 5th and Elm Streets on a plot he bought from Nicholas Longworth. The store operated under the moral pretense that no individual has the right to profit off of another. To this end, Warren set up a microcosmic “mutualist” economy whereby goods were priced at an exceptionally low rate, only marked up to account for the cost of the time to acquire and ship the goods. The price of the goods also increased according to the duration of the interaction with the store-keeper to account for their time. Goods could also be purchased through a trade in labor, facilitated by “labor notes” which represented a quantity of hours to be exchanged. Goods ended up being drastically cheaper than the other stores nearby, such that some adopted Warren’s model. The store operated for several years until he elected to commit his passion for a utopian and egalitarian society to the reformation of a formerly socialistic settlement in Clermont County, aptly called Utopia.

Printed here is Warren’s manifesto on the Cincinnati Time Store. It is instructive to note that there was a time in America where the possibility existed for a mini-economy to exist within a larger one. One must remember that an economy is more than a model of commercial exchange: it is a belief system. To adopt an economic model is to appropriate an ontology, a whole structure of meaning and valuation. This was a time where America’s belief system was more inchoate, full of possibility and contention. One, such as Warren, could cite the Declaration of Independence as a logical antecedent to Anarchism (albeit a uniquely American individualistic Thoreau-esque variety) without a tinge of irony. We can look to Warren’s example as a precedent for a creative economy which progressively addressed issues of equality and liberty.

While the Cincinnati Time Store may seem an antiquarian curiosity rather than a blueprint for contemporary action, there are numerous examples of contemporary artists and creative folk establishing mutualist trade networks to facilitate the execution of creative endeavors. Not surprisingly, such networks have been greatly facilitated by the internet. Ourgoods.org is one such resource which connects artists to people with available goods or skills that can be traded in kind. In 2009, the art group E-flux showcased a Josiah Warren-inspired collection of labor notes created by artists such as Lawrence Weiner and Carlos Motta at the Frieze Art Fair. The group also operates a Time Store for the art community through their website (<http://www.e-flux.com/app/webroot/timebank>).

Cincinnati City Council’s decision to cut all artist’s grants was an invitation for artists to come together and think of new ways to relate to each other and the state. We have a precedent within our own history.

MANIFESTO

(A RARE & INTERESTING DOCUMENT)

By Josiah Warren

An impression has gone abroad that I am engaged in forming societies. This is a very great mistake, which I feel bound to correct.

Those who have heard or read anything from me on the subject, know that one of the principal points insisted on is, the forming of societies or any other artificial combinations is the first, greatest, and most fatal mistake every committed by legislators and by reformers. That all these combinations require surrender of the natural sovereignty of the Individual over her or his person, time, property and responsibilities, to the government of the combination. That this tends to prostrate the individual - To reduce him to a mere piece of a machine; involving others in responsibility for his acts, and being involved in responsibilities for the acts and sentiments of his associates; he lives & acts, without proper control over his own affairs, without certainty as to the results of his actions, and almost without brains that he dares to use on his own account; and consequently never realizes the great objects for which society is profess- edly formed.

Some portion, at least, of those who have attended the public meetings, know that **EQUITABLE COMMERCE** is founded on a principle exactly opposite to combination; this principle may be called that of Individuality. It leaves every one in undisturbed possession of his or her natural and proper sovereignty over its own person, time, property and responsibilities; & no one is acquired or expected to surrender any "portion" of his natural liberty by joining any society whatever; nor to become in any way responsible for the acts or sentiments of any one but himself; nor is there any arrangement by which even the whole body can exercise any government over the person, time property or responsibility of a single individual.

Combinations and all the institutions built upon them are the inventions of Man; and consequently, partake of more or less of man's shortsightedness and other imperfections; while **EQUITABLE COMMERCE** is a simple development of principles, which, although new to the public, are as old as the creation, and will be as durable.

This understanding is very natural; because, all attempts at radical reformation known to have been founded on combination; the failure of all these has destroyed confidence, and the public, not being aware of any other principle, conclude that this is another proposal of the same kind and must fail like the rest. I respect their judgment and believe with them, that every attempt to improve their social condition by the formation of societies or any artificial combination (however ingeniously devised, however purely intended or honestly conducted,) must and will defeat their own objects and disappoint all who are engaged in them.

The failure of the experiments on the community system in New Harmony during the two years trial from 1825 to 1827, sufficiently proved

this to my mind, & led to the conviction that the process of combination is not capable of working out the great objects of society; but, the opposite principle, that of Individuality and the process of DISCONNECTION, after much close and severe investigation were found to possess or to lead to all the redeeming and regenerating powers necessary for the complete solution of the great social problem. - Indeed they appeared to promise too much to believe, too much hope; so much, that the discoverer (if we must call him so) dare not communicate his thoughts to his intimate acquaintances for fear of being accounted insane. His only course, therefore, was to prove everything in PRACTICE previously to bringing it before the public.

A whole new course of investigations and experiments were then commenced; the first of which was the "Time Store" in Cincinnati which was opened in May, 1827. This was conducted three years, when it was wound up for the purpose of carrying the principles into all the commerce of life; and the interval between that time and the present has been employed (as far as private circumstances would permit) either in further developments or in preparation for them. The principles have been applied to the management and education of children, which go to show the radical mistake and the great cause of defeat on [the] important subject.

The principles have also been applied to the purchase and sale of land & almost all other kinds of property, and to the interchange of almost all kinds of labor including that of merchants, lawyers, physicians, teachers, the conductor of a boarding house, etc., through every step of which, the sovereignty of the individual was strictly preserved and invariably respected. No legislation of any description assumed control over the individual in any case whatsoever; and such was the complete individuality of action that hundreds dealt at the Time Store without understanding much of its principles or its objects; but they perceived that it was their interest to do so, thus demonstrating that the business of the community can be brought into this condition by a natural and irresistible process; without combination, without organization, without laws, without government, without surrender of any "portion" of the natural liberty of the individual; demonstrating also that reformation need not wait till the world becomes learned: but the practical operation constitutes a process of re-education which no one can estimate without experience, and which the learned are most backward in acquiring.

Such, too has been the complete individuality of action throughout all the experiments that although hundreds have taken some part in them, they are in no way distinguished as a sect, a party or a society; the public in general do not and will not know them; expecting so far as each individual chooses to identify himself or herself with these principles.

Public influence is the real government of the world. Printing makes this governing power; therefore, among the preparations for the general introduction of these subjects are a simplification of printing and printing apparatus which brings this mighty power to the fireside and within the capacities of almost any one of either sex who may choose to use it; thus is this and every other

subject of real reformation rendered independent of the common press whose conductors are generally too much absorbed or too much interested in things as they are, too much under public influence or too superficial in their habits of thinking to do this subject justice in its commencement.

The experiments and preparations are now concluded, and the results are on record or in the possession of living witnesses, and now are becoming the groundwork of practical operations in this neighborhood. Those who wish to become acquainted with the subject can obtain the particulars at the public meetings or by reading the *EQUITABLE COMMERCE GAZETTE* which is to be published for this purpose; but the following are some of the most prominent features of *EQUITABLE COMMERCE*.

It goes to establish a just and permanent principle of trade which puts an end to all serious fluctuations in prices and consequently, to all the insecurity and ruin which these fluctuations produce; and to build up those who are already ruined. It tends to put a stop to all kinds of speculation.

It has a sound a rational circulating medium, a real and definite representative of wealth. It is based exclusively on labor as the only legitimate capital. This circulating medium has a natural tendency to lessen by degrees the value and the use of money, and finally to render it powerless; and consequently to sweep away all the crushing masses of fraud, iniquity, cruelty, corruption and imposition that are built upon it.

The circulating medium being issued only by those who labor, they would suddenly become invested with all the wealth and power; and those who did not labor, be they ever so rich now, would as suddenly become poor and powerless. It opens the way to employment for those who want it, by a simple arrangement which has a natural tendency to keep the supply in rational proportion to the demand.

It solves the great and difficult problem of machinery against labor. On this principle, in proportion as machinery throws workmen out of employment, it works for them; and the way is always open to a new employment, as equitable commerce abolishes profit on mystery, disregards the customary apprenticeships and brings all kinds of knowledge within the reach of those who want it. The necessity of every one paying in his own labor for what he consumes, affords the only legitimate and effectual check to excessive luxury, which has so often ruined individuals, states and empires; and which has now brought almost universal bankruptcy upon us.

Equitable commerce furnishes no offices to be filled by the ambitious and aspiring, no possible chance for the elevation of some over the persons or property of others; there is, therefore, no temptation here for such persons; and they will not be found among the first to adopt *EQUITABLE COMMERCE*. It appeals, first, to the most oppressed, the humble, the down-trodden, & will first be adopted by them and by those who have no wish to live upon others, and by those whether among the rich or poor whose superior moral or intellectual properties enable them to appreciate some of the unspeakable blessings that would result from such a state of human existence.

These are some of the most prominent features of EQUITABLE COMMERCE; and will be perceived that they are precisely the features which a great, redeeming revolution ought to possess: but they are so extraordinary, so out of the common course and current of things that they will be denounced by some as visionary and impracticable. I am prepared for all this, and I am also prepared to prove that all the most important applications of the principles HAVE BEEN made; and have proved themselves sound beyond all successful contradictions; and to show that upon these principles, it is perfectly practicable for almost any person to begin at once to enjoy some of the advantages herein set forth; and by degrees to emancipate himself or herself from the crushing iniquity and suffering of (what is called) civilized society; and this without joining any society or in any other way surrendering any "portion" of his or her natural and "inalienable" sovereignty over their person, time or property, and without becoming in any way responsible for the acts or sentiments of others who may be transacting business on these principles.

It has now become a very common sentiment, that there is some deep and radical wrong somewhere, and that legislators have proved themselves incapable of discovering, or, of remedying it.

With all due deference to judgments, I have undertaken to point out what seems to constitute this wrong and its natural, legitimate and efficient remedies; and shall continue to do so wherever and whenever the subject receives that attention and respect to which its unspeakable importance appears to entitle it; and it is hoped that some, who are capable of correct reasoning will undertake to investigate, and, (if, they can find a motive,) to oppose Equitable Commerce; and thereby discover and expose the utter imbecility - the surprising weakness of any opposition that can be brought against it. Opposition, in order to be noticed must be confined to this subject, and its natural tendencies: DISCONNECTED with all others, and all merely personal considerations.

I decline all noisy, wordy, confused, and personal controversies. This subject is presented for calm study and honest enquiry; and, after having placed it (as I intend to do) fairly before the public, shall leave it to be estimated by each individual according to the particular measure of understanding, and shall offer no violence to his individuality by any attempt to refrain, or to urge him beyond it.

J.W.
New Harmony, Indiana
November 27, 1841

To Whom It May Concern:

I suspect that ART may be part of the problem. If it is between ART and life, then choose life.

ART objects become commodities on entry into discourse. One set of signs is exchanged for another through various culture industry mechanisms. This exchange of signs masks the tastes and interests of the dominant class. Thus an assault against the dominant class would be as important for art as any critique of illusionism. This critique is best informed by Leftist and anti-capitalist theorists in correlation with popular movements.

Such things have happened with varying success. And may occur again. But, promoting autonomy and intentional community after the rise and fall of Statist Socialism has become an entirely different thing. What does art after such a change look like? Can I conceive of a non capitalist art?

Yes.

Replace the idea of viewer with a single person or small group. Only craft for people you could know. Why would you do otherwise, there is no market? Discourse would evaporate into dialog. The dialog would expand as these persons felt the need to share it. The size and growth of conversation would be closer in proportion to those closest to the art. It would grow according to their desires.

I believe these things already occur. Culture predates capitalism. People already organize events and their creative activities. A conversation would occur during and after a collective and creative activity. Objects would be the medium for events, not their goals. Art's success would be a result of participation and continuation.

This is not new. This is not grand enough to replace the spectacle of culture today. But, I believe now more than ever. The world of the future will not look different but feel better.

-Arthur Brum

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CS13 is an artist run gallery and performance space located at 1219 Sycamore Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

For more information on CS13 and past publications, please visit: www.CS13Gallery.com

This booklet was published in conjunction with CS13's March 2010 exhibition entitled "Creative Economy." One of the fundamental goals of this exhibition was to facilitate an ongoing conversation about art and economics, focusing particularly on three topics: Prospects for creative sustainability in Cincinnati and nationally, art and its relationship to capital, and personal narratives about day to day economic realities and how they've affected creative endeavors.

This discussion was in part inspired by ART WORK, a free newspaper that was released earlier this year by the Chicago collective Temporary Services. (temporaryservices.org) (artandwork.us)

The exhibition was made up of the following four events:

1. "Creative Economy" began with an open-invitation discussion of the publication ART WORK.
2. "Critical Run: Art Work," an organized discussion and run, was held in "an effort to restore a sense of urgency to public debate." Topics from ART WORK were discussed on a 2 mile jog that looped around the gallery. *Taken from (emergencyrooms.org/criticalrun)
3. On March 14th CS13 held a grass roots grant dinner inspired by the Chicago research collective Incubate. (incubate-chicago.org) A potluck style dinner was provided by the gallery at a cost of \$10 a head. In the weeks prior to the dinner 29 project proposals in need of funding were submitted to the gallery. Everyone in attendance voted on which project received the grant. A \$730 grant, the total profit of the dinner, was given that evening to the winning proposal.
4. In order to foster further investigation and discussion of these topics at a local level, on March 19th "Creative Economy" closed with a lecture night and publication release held at the gallery featuring speakers Kristin Dietsche, Steve Kemple and Andy Marko.

Many thanks to all who attended, discussed and engaged.

