





Shachaf Pereg  
Education to Norms

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Introduction

Dyslexia is a difficulty in reading effectively when a link between the shape of a letter and its sound is established and assembled into words. Therefore, in dyslexia, there is a mismatch in the ability to link visual forms of letters or punctuation marks to the sound they represent in spoken language.



When I was in kindergarten, the teacher was angry with me for not holding the pencil properly whenever I drew and frustrated with my lack of obedience in trying to acquire the correct hold. As if there was only one such way. I was confronted with instructions that opposed the way that came naturally to me, and to which resistance felt impossible. A feeling of separation began to accompany me.

When I was in elementary school and started to learn how to write, I had to practice writing the alphabet. Later, I realized I was writing letters in the opposite direction. While the letters always looked as they should and the mistake was as such invisible, still the teacher would reinstruct me whenever she would pass by and notice it. The presence of her gaze caused me to adapt.

At the same time, I felt that I wanted to preserve my own ways; to not be forced to do the same as others and become cloned. This was the way I saw the other students, sitting and writing like robots in a student factory as they repeat the teacher's hand movements. It produces nothing but functioning and obedient students.

When I was in elementary school, learning disabilities were not yet acknowledged. As a result, everyone was evaluated in the same way and therefore made to align with the educational criteria of the Ministry of Education and through this, with the norms of society. I could not align with these criteria like everyone else. Already at the end of first grade, my mother took me to be diagnosed.

As I was given one test after another, I felt like a laboratory mouse that had to run on a wheel as my indicators, standards set by society for what is considered abnormal, were being checked. Every part of me was examined. I resisted, I did not want to be there. I felt that there was a threshold that I could not reach and that I was not being understood.

With each diagnosis, I was given new gifts: catalogs and descriptions of what, according to them, I am and what I am not.

At school, these diagnoses were not understood by my teachers. For them, in bothering the normal teaching routine, I was a problem they did not know how to deal with. They did not bother to adjust their teaching methods according to my needs, and therefore, they did not acknowledge that their tests could not reflect my knowledge and abilities. I felt like I wanted to leave this educational system. This until I met Dorit Nachman, a didactic diagnostician.

I sat in her chair, I cried. I did not want to be tested again, to be reminded again that I was not enough according to society's standards, to get more new tags. We talked about my previous experiences with examinations. She was considerate and open about her examination process, and little by little we built trust. Within the educational system, she was the first to tell me that I was not incompetent, as this system had made me feel till then. From then on, a sense of competence and capability permeated me.

Yet still, the approach from the school system remained the same. At some point, I was prescribed Ritalin, which is supposed to improve the ability to concentrate. I had hoped for it to resolve the situation, but the result was the opposite. I felt my only hope was gone.

When I was in middle school, educational reforms brought the ability for adjustments to the teaching methods according to the student's needs. For the first time, I felt the educational system gave me the possibility to express fully my knowledge and abilities. To obtain the necessary adjustments, my parents took me to a neurologist. He did not ask me much, read the results of Dorit's diagnosis, and the Ritalin diagnosis, and decided to tell me a story. That for his son Ritalin did not work as well, that he decided to find his own ways of learning, and that he succeeded. That today, from being considered a failed student, he is a combat navigator in the Air Force with a degree in mathematics and physics.

Receiving the necessary adjustments, as well as the recognition that there are diverse ways of learning, was a moment of transformation. I realized that the oppressive cloning system of institutional education also contained a way to break through.



An Island of Anormality



## Robots of a Functioning Society

Citizens are educated to the culture they were born into through intergenerational systems. Individuals within society adapt to cultural elements such as language and symbols. This adaptation process, which is a part of socialization, reflects the tests that citizens must pass to remain part of society's "members' club" and take their place as functioning and obedient citizens, not to be cataloged or diagnosed as outside of the norm.

In this aspect, socialization can be compared to a cloning process—a factory that produces citizens as robots within a functioning society, trained and adapted to the accepted social norms. A citizen who falls outside the norm's limits is considered a failure within the system, a diagnosis as different or abnormal represents an error. Diagnosis might be comforting by allowing for recognition, it opens the possibility for a solution. At the same time, it does so by defining what it considers as problematic and can bring with it a labeling aspect.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* ([1975] 1995), Michel Foucault explores the role of examination as a tool of disciplinary power. Examination combines surveillance with judgment, establishing visibility over individuals and subjecting them to constant evaluation. The ritualized nature of examination reflects the subjection of individuals through power relations and their objectification through management—the individual as a "case," an examination result. The emergence of disciplinary power is evident in various institutions such as schools, psychiatric

asylums, prisons, and hospitals. These institutions exercise control through surveillance methods and a dual mechanism. Subjects undergo binary classification and labeling, such as in terms of mad/sane, dangerous/harmless, and normal/abnormal, as well as cataloging, including the determination of identity, placement, and characterization.<sup>1</sup>

Examinations generate a vast archive of documentation, further entrenching power through surveillance and record-keeping. This power of writing, essential to disciplinary mechanisms, enables the classification and identification of individuals, facilitating the normalization of behavior.<sup>2</sup> This dual mechanism of exclusion and individual control is evident in the labeling and correction of abnormal individuals to normalize behavior and maintain hierarchical power structures.<sup>3</sup>

Individuals classified as abnormal are marginalized and are subjected to individualizing disciplinary tactics, as the universal application of disciplinary controls enables the stigmatization and exclusion of the marginalized<sup>4</sup>. Foucault's analysis emphasizes the complex interplay between diagnosis, social control, and power dynamics. He clarifies how societal responses to diagnosis reflect broader mechanisms of power and surveillance, shaping individual identities and social structures alike.<sup>5</sup>

From the moment of being labeled, individuals carry those definitions as a part of their identity. This can be accompanied by feelings of shame,

<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House Inc., [1997] 1995), p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, p. 226–27.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, p. 198.

<sup>5</sup> Idem, p. 304.

separateness, and diminished value compared to others who do meet social norms. The feeling of separateness prevents individuals from being an equal part of society. However, their drawback can also be their advantage, precisely in becoming valued in a society that supposedly rejects the ones who lack the norms society demands.

## Education to Norms

When I was little, I could sit alone for hours making up games for myself. I remember going on vacation in the desert with my family. Roaming around behind the cabin we stayed in, I found several types of insects. I gathered them next to me and started playing with them. Giving them voices, I simulated conversations between one insect and another. After a few days, I met with a friend at her house. When her mother asked me about the trip, I proudly told her about the new friends I had made—the insects, and how much fun I had playing with them. She was deeply shocked and said that I should not play with insects and that it is not normal for a girl to do so. She kept asking me where my mother was and how it happened that she not only let me touch but also play with the insects, which she considered something to be disgusted with.

Years later, whenever I recall this story, I feel that the oppressive voice that calls us to stand within the ranks of the social norm does not come only from the enforcers of the social structure and its laws but also from within ourselves. By doing so individuals normalize their behavior, their being, and their thoughts, one another. This story among many was a point of orientation for me towards what is considered normal and by whom, and where I am located compared to it—an island within normality.

## The Accumulation of Tiny and Identical Units

<sup>6</sup> Jawhar Cholakkathodi and Ranjini Patterthody, *Basics of Sociology* (B.A. Course in Sociology, University of Calicut, 2019), p. 30.

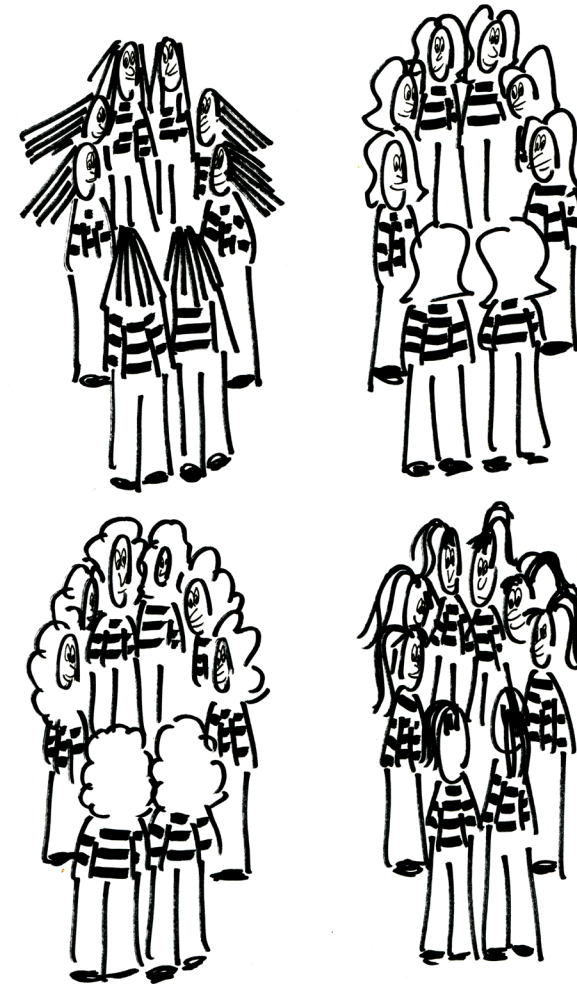
<sup>7</sup> Avi Shamida and Micah Levana, *Hermon: Nature and Landscape*, (Tel Aviv-Yafo, The United Kibbutz, the Society for the Protection of Nature, Beit Ocishkin, the Nature Reserves Authority, 1980), p. 40–43.

<sup>8</sup> Ian Stewart, *Nature's Numbers: The Unreal Reality of Mathematics*, (Tel Aviv, Hed Arzi, 1999)

Social norms encompass collective standards and anticipated conduct within a group, reflected in its social values. These norms delineate the boundaries within which individuals are expected to function, effectively defining acceptable behavior. Norms establish the rules that guide distinct behavioral patterns, shaping the behavioral dynamics of social space in contrast to private space. This social fabric, woven by culture, values, and human behavior, is then located within the interaction between norms and spaces. By establishing these guidelines, social norms play a pivotal role in upholding social cohesion and order.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this, social norms do not lead everyone to develop identical behavior. Instead, social norms lead to the formation of a social identity and define guidelines for forming an individual identity. As such, each individual shares characteristics with others while they themselves hold a personal and unique identity that is unrepeatable.

This is similar to the process of a snowflake's formation. As snowflakes descend through the atmosphere, they intertwine their branching arms, forging intricate fractal patterns reminiscent of symmetric hexagonal shapes.<sup>7</sup> As Johannes Kepler, a German astronomer, wrote at the beginning of the 17th century in the book *On the Hexagonal Snowflake*, the snowflake is as such formed through the accumulation of tiny and identical units. Kepler articulated the natural inclination of objects sharing similar dimensions and contours to assemble themselves into hexagonal configurations.<sup>8</sup>



As in the formation of a field of snow, individuality might go unseen when it is itself a fragment of a bigger collection or collective. Similarly, the formation of the collective in society, which takes place through the process of socialization, risks eliminating the distinction of an individual's uniqueness.

<sup>9</sup> Cholakkathodi and Patterthody, *Basics of Sociology*, p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, p. 85.

Socialization constitutes a pivotal journey wherein individuals undergo training to assimilate into social norms and dynamics, thereby ensuring their harmonious integration within the collective fabric. It serves as a vital process that ensures the smooth operation and ongoing existence of social structures.<sup>9</sup> Due to the process of socialization—*education to norms*—the individual is unable to oppose these structures. Those who are not interested in acting according to the accepted norms will still do so because of a fear of being punished or for personal gain. These two elements alone strengthen the stability of norms in society.

In *Basics of Sociology* (2019), socialization is described as a process that sustains itself between generations and across diverse societies. Varying approaches and methodologies are employed to cultivate and train emergent members, enabling them to nurture and express their distinct personalities.<sup>10</sup> This is however a self-contradictory statement. If there is intergenerational training that paves the path for each member of society, then the development of their personality is limited to social norms.

Furthermore, Cholakkathodi and Patterthody claim that the idea of a social structure suggests that individuals' capacity for self-determination and initiative is delimited by the social framework within which they exist, indicating that autonomy in decision-making and behavior is influenced by the interplay of social constructs and interpersonal connections. Finally, they advocate that the socialization process limits the development of a distinct personality and promotes a collective identity.<sup>11</sup>

Social norms, anchored in a group's values, delineate acceptable behavior and shape social dynamics, guiding individuals within established boundaries. While fostering cohesion, they mold collective and individual identities, akin to a snowflake's formation. Socialization assimilates individuals into norms, maintaining collective harmony. However, this may suppress uniqueness, as norms perpetuate through generations, constraining autonomy. Thus, social structures prioritize collective cohesion over individual autonomy and uniqueness.

## Internal Logic: Gestures, Games, and Social Norms

The idea of difference is created by the social mechanisms of exclusion and control of individuals by classification and labeling. What makes an individual distinct can appear in the form of an internal logic, which is different from the prevailing logic in society as a whole. Art making can be a desire that takes form in expressing an internal logic as gestures or games, of which its mechanisms might not always align with social norms. Such gestures or games could be found in the work of Boris Achour, a French contemporary artist. In Achour's work, *ACTIONS-FEW* (1993–1994), his gestures are presented as anonymous and temporary appearances in public space, made by the few changes the artist creates by reorganizing the elements within it. The work started as a series of images presented as a slide show and later a video work was added.

*ACTIONS-FEW* is intriguing in its poetic gift to the city. Achour's gestures within the everyday environment change the order of objects and operations within it. He is leaving behind traces of actions with a certain patience that invites questions, allowing them the space to activate the viewer's imagination regarding who and what has brought the work into existence. This is a maneuver performed by the artist with awareness, leaving a trail of riddles that the viewer must solve—or completely ignore. Its contradictions of the social norms of public space suggest questions about the role of public space in enforcing relations of power within society, the power that different spaces have

on shaping social patterns. Enforced power causes an illusion of incapability to the ones who are subordinate to it, an illusion that prevents change and at the same time builds up pressure within social structures.

In the work *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line (Best of Thirty-Six Attempts)* (1973), John Baldessari threw three balls at once, trying to arrange them in the air, while Carol Wixom, his wife at the time, took pictures. Baldessari was an American contemporary artist, known for using appropriated imagery. The pictures commemorate the conceptual game and the desire to create a line in the air by throwing three balls simultaneously with the sky above Los Angeles in the background. Through this exploration, he meticulously recorded the insurmountable gap between conceptualizing an artistic vision and its actualization, a process invariably influenced by the unpredictable whims of chance.<sup>12</sup> Baldessari created this work through simple gestures, beginning with a moment of playfulness and amusement.

In contemplating the intricate interplay of internal logic, social norms, and individual agency, there emerges a tapestry of ideas with at its center the exploration of difference and deviance, the mechanisms of social control, and the transformative potential of art as a vehicle for resistance and liberation.

<sup>12</sup> Princeton University Art Museum, "Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line (Best of Thirty-Six Attempts), 1973," <https://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/135589> (accessed January, 2024).

<sup>13</sup> Janet Kraynak, *Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words* (London: MIT Press, 2005), p. 15–17.

Embedded within both artworks are subtle reflections on disciplinary power. For Achour's *ACTIONS-FEW* and Baldessari's playful gestures serve as acts of defiance against normative structures, challenging the very foundations of social control. These works, with their subtle disruptions of everyday environments and playful experimentation, embody a form of resistance against the rigid categorizations imposed by disciplinary mechanisms.

In the work *Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square (Square Dance)* (1967–1968), by the American contemporary artist Bruce Nauman, he performs repeated gestures within what is presented as a practice or a dance in which he stands on a white outline of a square painted on the floor. To the sound of a metronome, he consistently taps with his toes on the corners of the square, with repetition and a uniform rhythm. The work is part of a series of film performances Nauman created in his studio, such as *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square* (1967–1968), in which the choreographic template, delineated by the taped white square, emerges prominently. Through his physical presence, Nauman draws attention to the square's confines, meticulously tracing its outlines as he performs, effectively mapping and enacting the performance simultaneously. Indeed, all of Nauman's studio films, characterized by their precise execution of the tasks specified in their titles, essentially serve as demonstrations of a prescribed set of instructions. In essence, they not only portray the human form but also articulate their choreographic blueprint: a lexicon of movement.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



In the dance of Yvonne Rainer and other dancers and choreographers associated with the Judson Dance Theater, emerging around the same time as Nauman's work, traditional theatrical and balletic movements are abandoned in favor of ordinary, everyday gestures such as walking, and lifting objects. This deliberate shift towards reductive, non-expressive dance aesthetics underscores an ethos of stripping away embellishments and focusing on elemental forms and actions.<sup>14</sup>



In all these gestures and actions, there emerges a liberation of the individual from the constraints of accepted social behavior. Simultaneously, however, there exists a compelling sense of compulsion and necessity to adhere to the clear instructions laid out. This intricate duality underscores the complexity wherein freedom intertwines with constraint, offering a nuanced exploration of human agency within structured frameworks. Thus, these works highlight the multifaceted nature of artistic expression, offering a profound examination of autonomy within prescribed instruction.

Nauman's *Square Dance* reflects the discourse on disciplinary power embedded and becomes emblematic of Foucault's examination of normalized behaviors. The artist's adherence to a set pattern of actions within the confines of a square frame parallels the ritualized nature of examinations, highlighting how individuals are subjected to surveillance and judgment in their quest for social acceptance, perpetuating a cycle of control and subjugation.

Yet, amidst these constraints, Nauman's *Square Dance*, also embodies a spirit of resistance. The work becomes a site of liberation, where individuals are invited to confront and subvert the very systems that seek to confine them. Nauman's *Square Dance* serves as a metaphor for the complex interplay between conformity and creativity, discipline, and resistance. It embodies the tension between social expectations and individual agency, offering a nuanced exploration of human autonomy within structured frameworks.

By navigating the confines of the square frame with precision and determination, Nauman invites the viewer to reflect on the ways in which power operates within society, while simultaneously offering glimpses of liberation within the confines of social constraints.

Art emerges as a potent force of resistance and transformation, as artists challenge the hegemony of social norms, offering alternative narratives that amplify marginalized voices and envision new possibilities. In this synthesis of theory and practice, art becomes a site of liberation, where difference is celebrated, and deviance is embraced. It offers a space for critical reflection and imaginative exploration, inviting viewers to question established power structures and envision alternative realities. Through their subversive gestures and transformative interventions, artists disrupt the status quo.

Games, gestures, and the use of internal logic in an artistic context allow artists to stretch the limits of social norms. Art embodies values that sanctify non-uniformity, variety, and difference, thus enabling rebellion, resistance, and criticism of social norms, the social hierarchical structure, and psychological mechanisms of supervision and surveillance. Thus, artists are allowed to be valued for their deviation from the expected and accepted forms of behavior, which could otherwise be a reason for social expulsion.

## Beetles Go Astray

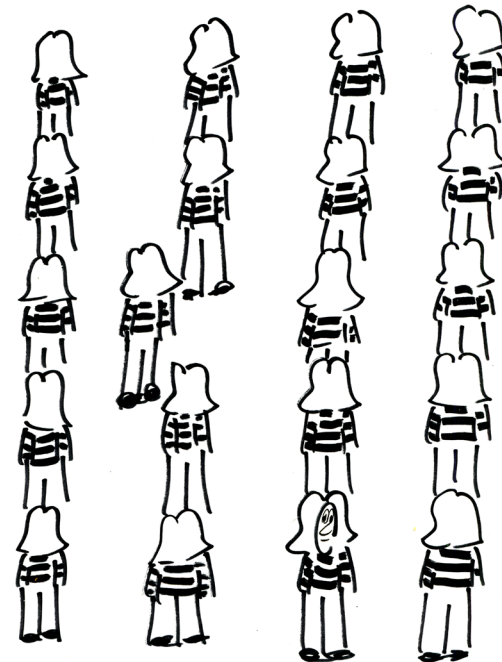
Alfred Emanuel Ferdinand Grünwald was a German writer and visual artist and is known for forming the Cologne Dada group together with Max Ernst in 1919. Grünwald used the pseudonym Johannes Theodor Baargeld with which most of his works are considered by. Observing the work *Untitled (Beetles)* (1920), from within the well-oiled social mechanism of socialization, and the way social patterns shape the individual invites possibilities for interpretations. The work depicts beetles and a grid of free-drawn line paths for beetles to travel on, toward an endpoint. At the beginning of the grid, the beetles form vertical rows, but later the grid disappears and returns in a different configuration of horizontal rows. The beetles gradually leave the borders of the grid and disappear.

This grid can be compared to a social order that is based on social norms and expected behaviors. The social structure of which the beetles are a part exerts a force on them. This force creates pressure on the parts that compose it, which does not allow for change, diversity, and brings uniformity. Although the beetles are under this power, they deviate from the paths and gradually get out of the grid's influence and disappear.

The power of education to norms, or in other words—socialization, no longer applies to the beetles and they fall out of the structure in which they existed until now. The process of socialization, by which an individual adapts to existing structures, ultimately leads to questioning

the dynamics of obedience, power, and voluntary and involuntary dropout.

The power of this process is not only physical but operates in the mental space, as it binds those who are subordinate to imaginary boundaries that do not allow for change and diversity. This power can be defined as an illusion, but once the members of society believe in it, it gains real power over them. When individuals believe in existing social structures to which they have become accustomed, they accept an oppressive force over them. As part of a shared experience within a collective, this power has a more widespread effect on those who are subordinate to it.





Acknowledging this illusion is possible through casting doubt on and ultimately dropping out of a social structure, or by forced dropout, which might be a result of cataloging or diagnosis.

Voluntary dropout is a counteraction to the established norms in society. It originates from the hierarchy of institutions within society, as it is implicitly influenced by and depends directly on them. Therefore, it does not reflect free will completely, exactly because it is derived from these definitions and institutions. Voluntary dropout often appears as a form of activist criticism towards the government in its running of society. From this arises the question of whether free will only exists within those who have experienced an involuntary dropout of society—those defined and cataloged by their innate difference, or whether this can exist also within those adopting a counter-critical stance from revelation.

The observation of Baargeld's work *Untitled (Beetles)*, within the context of socialization unveils profound interpretations. The depiction of beetles navigating a grid mirrors social norms' dictating behavior. While initially conforming, the beetles gradually break free, symbolizing resistance to social constraints. Socialization's power to enforce norms is challenged, highlighting the tension between obedience and autonomy. Dropout, whether activist or involuntary, questions the notion of free will within social structures. The artwork further reflects the psychological control inherent to institutional dynamics, transcending physical confines.



Formative Force

## Self-regulation

<sup>15</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 203.

<sup>16</sup> Idem, p. 202-3.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, ([1975] 1995), Foucault discusses the Panopticon. The Panopticon was conceived by the English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham during the 18th century and embodies a paradigm of institutional architecture designed for pervasive control. The term has since become synonymous with this architectural archetype, symbolizing the pervasive dynamics of surveillance and control within the institutional environment.

The Panopticon features a central rotunda housing an inspection house, affording the manager or staff a vantage point from which to oversee the inmates. At its core lies the principle of centralized surveillance, wherein a singular gaze can potentially observe all inmates within the institution without their awareness of being watched. Despite the physical limitation that makes simultaneous observation of all cells implausible, the uncertainty surrounding the inmates' awareness of being under the inspecting gaze induces a sense of perpetual surveillance.<sup>15</sup>

This psychological dynamic transcends physical barriers, fostering a pervasive atmosphere of control within institutions. Bentham's innovation lies not in brute force but in the subtlety of a perceived omnipresence of a gaze, rendering the traditional trappings of confinement unnecessary.<sup>16</sup> The Panopticon's design emphasizes clarity of separation and strategic placement of openings, enhancing the illusion of continuous observation.

A central tower in the structure, symbolizing the watchful eye, becomes a hub for continuous monitoring and behavioral correction. This compels inmates towards self-regulation, as they internalize the presumption of constant gaze.<sup>17</sup>

Is the observation, and the dynamics of surveillance and control not only institutional but also interpersonal? Does the psychological mechanism of the uncertainty surrounding individuals' awareness of being under the inspecting gaze evoke a sense of surveillance, forcing citizens to self-regulate, but also to apply this mechanism to the individuals around them?

Originally intended for prisons, its versatility extends across societal realms, from hospitals to schools, infusing each with the same psychological underpinning of surveillance. The Panopticon functions not only as a tool for individual discipline but also as a mechanism for social conformity. The Panopticon's design, with its emphasis on observation and control, amplifies efficiency and knowledge acquisition. It not only coerces compliance but also cultivates a collective consciousness of surveillance, reinforcing social order. Its psychological impact extends beyond self-regulation to the vigilant observation of others. Citizens, aware of the potential for surveillance, become enforcers of social norms, fostering a culture of mutual scrutiny. This sense of mutual surveillance permeates every facet of society, transforming institutions into laboratories of power.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Idem, p. 204.

<sup>18</sup> Idem, p. 204, 207.

<sup>19</sup> Idem,  
p. 212.

The Panopticon influence transcends physical confines, permeating social structures and individual behaviors alike, shaping a culture of perpetual gaze and control. The mechanism whereby individuals, under the perpetual uncertainty of being watched, internalize a sense of constant surveillance, is compelling them towards interpersonal self-regulation. This influence epitomizes a fusion of architectural design and psychological coercion.<sup>19</sup>



I Am Honest, ~~strong~~, and Uncompromising

<sup>20</sup> William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture: since 1900* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1982), p. 273.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Clement, *Brutalism: Post-War British Architecture* (Ramsbury: The Crowood Press Ltd., 2012), p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Brutalism, a term derived from the French *betón-brut*, meaning “raw concrete,” which found its roots in the architectural discourse of the mid-20th century, remains somewhat elusive in its origin.<sup>20</sup> Initially proposed by the Swedish architect Hans Asplund in 1950, it made its way to Britain, where it gained traction among a select group of emerging architects. The first recorded instance of the term appeared in Alison Smithson’s documentation of a Chelsea house design in 1952, but it wasn’t until Reyner Banham publicized *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic* in 1959 that the term solidified in the public and industry consciousness.<sup>21</sup>

Brutalism embodies an unapologetically and uncompromisingly modern approach to architecture that flourished primarily in Europe from around 1945–1975. It represents a modernist ethos characterized by bold, often monumental forms. Utilizing materials such as concrete, steel, and glass, brutalism evokes both excitement and controversy, particularly due to its unadorned, rough-cast concrete, which contributes to its reputation for evoking a stark, dystopian aesthetic.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, brutalism intersected with the critical social issue of housing in the twentieth century, particularly in Britain. In response to post-war reconstruction efforts, population growth, and evolving social and cultural needs, architects and planners grappled with the challenge of providing adequate housing.

Influenced by architects such as Le Corbusier, who envisioned housing as integral to urban development, the concept of higher-density social housing emerged as a utopian ideal.<sup>23</sup>

Le Corbusier’s *Unité d’Habitation* in Marseille, completed in 1952, exemplified this vision, serving as a benchmark for Modernist architects worldwide with its monumental scale and raw concrete finish, not only in addressing housing challenges but also in embracing the bold, uncompromising style synonymous with Brutalism.<sup>24</sup> As the Smithsons described, “Brutalism tries to face up to a mass production society and drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces which are at work.”<sup>25</sup>

Brutalist architecture reflects both the utopian aspirations and practical considerations of its time, with the aftermath of World War II and the commitment of the subsequent socialist governments to public housing providing fertile ground for experimentation. However, the emergence of monotonous housing blocks, though functional, epitomized a modern but alienating form of urban existence. The era saw the rise of “New Towns” and the construction of repetitive blocks of flats in inner cities, often built to minimal standards and perceived as emblematic of a modern yet alienating form of existence.<sup>26</sup> Brutalism doubtlessly left an indelible mark on the urban landscape and architectural discourse of the 20th century.

<sup>23</sup> Idem, p. 197.

<sup>24</sup> Idem, p. 198–9.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Swenarton, Igea Troiani and Helena Webster, *The Politics of Making* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 492.

<sup>26</sup> J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture*, p. 288, 317.

Copy, Paste

The rapid proliferation of brutalist housing projects by governments in urban areas has fostered a mass production system, reminiscent of assembling Lego blocks—constructing neighborhoods and streets that dictate specific lifestyles governed by social norms. A “copy, paste” of citizens and buildings that create streets, neighborhoods, and areas with certain lifestyles, characterized by social norms according to the place and culture. The formidable presence of brutalist buildings exerts a coercive influence over their inhabitants, shaping their behaviors and restricting diversity. The power brutalist buildings have over the citizens who live in them is a violent force that shapes the conduct of their lives. The power creates a reality that restricts diversity, as this imposition of a rigid reality leaves little room for change, fostering a sense of pressure to conform. Yet, the response to such coercive force can vary, ranging from submission to resistance.

Videos of brutalism in Eastern European towns began to appear on social media, in which citizens document their living environment. These brutalist towns, characterized by their cold, raw, and unwelcoming aesthetic—as if saying, “I am honest, strong, and uncompromising”—seem to embody an honesty and strength that borders on the oppressive. The videos are gloomy, showing dark and snowy towns, in which aliveness does not seem to be evident, underscoring the bleak and austere nature of brutalism while evoking a simultaneous allure and discomfort. There is an undeniable pull that compels to watch more of these videos, perhaps driven by a sense of connection or curiosity.

Yet, paradoxically, they also evoke an uncomfortable and unpleasant feeling while continuing to watch.

These towns seem to lack uniqueness, resembling containers filled with apartments crammed into buildings stacked on top of each other—apartment next to apartment, apartment above apartment—which creates a sense of monotony devoid of individuality. Citizens are hiding from the outside world, which seems so threatening and worn out. As citizens navigate their lives within these monotonous surroundings, they are enveloped in a sense of forced normalcy, perpetuating a cycle of conformity that erodes individuality and fosters a simulation of totalitarian ideology within urban spaces.

The monochromatic uniformity of these towns provides solid ground for the flourishing of conformism, in which a citizen adapts his behavior or opinions to the existing social norms and the accepted rules of behavior in a given circumstance, maintaining stability and preventing chaos. In this way, urban brutalism serves as an oppressive force and can thus simulate to some extent the ideology of totalitarian architecture.

The book *TOTALitarian ARTs* (2017), edited by Mark Epstein, Fulvio Orsittoand, and Andrea Righi, refers to totalitarian architecture as Margaret Farrar stresses the role of the built environment in shaping political practice, highlighting how identities are molded within specific spatial arrangements.<sup>27</sup> The French

<sup>27</sup> Mark Epstein, Fulvio Orsittoand, and Andrea Righi, *TOTALitarian ARTs: The Visual Arts, Fascism(s) and Mass Society* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), p. 35.

## Aesthetics of depression

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Idem, p. 36.

philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs argues that monuments and architectural settings are integral to social memory, shaping collective narratives and identities.<sup>28</sup> Totalitarian regimes, manipulate architecture to construct a collective national identity, legitimize political authority, and bolster their rule. Architecture thus becomes a tool for articulating narratives and shaping notions of identity within totalitarian regimes.<sup>29</sup>

Brutalism and totalitarian architecture reveal intriguing parallels in their manifestation within urban landscapes. Brutalist housing projects, depicted as imposing structures dictating social norms and restricting diversity, echo the manipulative nature of totalitarian regimes in shaping collective identities through architecture. The coercive influence exerted by brutalist buildings mirrors the use of architecture by totalitarian regimes to enforce conformity and legitimize political authority. The aesthetics of brutalist towns, devoid of individuality, symbolize the imposition of a rigid reality that erodes personal freedoms, akin to the totalitarian manipulation of architectural environments to mold national identity and maintain control. Both brutalism and totalitarian architecture provoke contemplation on the ethical implications of architectural interventions in shaping social behaviors and the enduring legacy of ideological architecture in influencing human experiences.

The central criticism of Brutalism is that it expresses an “aesthetics of depression.” Brutalism was used for the masses and was featured in the design of utilitarian, low-cost social housing estates in Eastern Europe after World War II, which suffered from a lack of maintenance and a particularly plain design style. These buildings, according to the critics, caused a negative attitude towards Brutalism, which was seen as contributing to urban ugliness and anti-social behavior.<sup>30</sup> Paradoxically, this criticism contradicts the notion that these brutalist buildings emphasize social obedience and conformity in society, a society where the individual is assured to adapt himself to the situation and behaviors of the society around him.

Conformity is sometimes a product of group communication and may result from unconscious influences, such as a prevailing state of mind, or social pressure. Brutalism is like a hidden social pressure, which puts everyone who lives around it in a kind of fog of a degraded mental condition, like the degraded state of their environment.<sup>31</sup> Brutalism becomes emblematic of a social framework where individuals are expected to conform to their environment, echoing themes of obedience and functionalism reminiscent of a dystopian reality, in which the aesthetic configuration of the environment holds the potential to function as a mechanism of oppression.

<sup>30</sup> CNN, “Brutalism, a Revival: From Cool to Crude and Back Again” <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/brutalism-this-brutal-world-modern-forms/index.html> (accessed January 2024).

<sup>31</sup> The Guardian, “Could Bad Buildings Damage Your Mental Health?” <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/sep/16/bad-buildings-damage-mental-health-research-anxiety-depression> (accessed February 2024).



<sup>32</sup> Stephanie Barron, *“Degenerate Art”: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991), p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Idem, p. 22.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, p. 45.

The term “The Architecture of Doom” was coined as the name of a film about Adolf Hitler’s obsession with what was or was not aesthetically acceptable and how he applied this vision while running Nazi Germany. Modern painting and sculpture were for Hitler an expression of mental illness and general depravity and sanctions were applied against modern art and artists who engaged with it. Modern art has been described as “degenerate art,” a term adopted by the Nazi Party in the 1920s that used their power to suppress it.

In the book *Degenerate Art* (1991), by Stephanie Barron, she describes that in 1937 the National Socialists launched the “Entartete Kunst” (Degenerate Art) exhibition in Munich, showcasing over 650 modern artworks from German public museums to condemn and ridicule what they deemed “un-German” art. This campaign against “degeneracy” extended to music, literature, and film, aiming to purify German culture.<sup>32</sup> The exhibition compared avant-garde art to the works of mentally ill artists, reinforcing its perceived degeneracy.<sup>33</sup> Adolf Ziegler, president of the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts, described it as displaying “monstrous offspring of insanity, impudence, ineptitude, and sheer degeneracy,” representing the regime’s ideological divide and suppression of modern expression.<sup>34</sup> These days, despite the irony, brutalist architecture is associated with the term “the architecture of doom,” even though it is considered modern art.

The characterization of brutalism as expressing an “aesthetics of depression” reflects the tension between an architectural vision and its social implications,

raising questions about the ethical responsibilities of architects and the enduring legacy of ideological architecture. Despite its association with modern expression, urban brutalism can be interpreted as a tool of oppression, shaping environmental visions to serve governmental agendas, and reflecting broader social divisions and suppression of modern expression.

What can be seen as the result of insufficient or unfortunate economic conditions within a city plan, prompts reconsideration of the effect of such visual material choices and arrangement of buildings on the social impacts of architectural choices and the role of aesthetics in perpetuating social norms and power dynamics. The brutalist preference for material purity over design discarded the vital domestic compartments that initiate human daily perseverance and saw them as privilege.





## Shelter

I have a vague attraction to concrete. Today in Israel, it is a standard feature in construction, as every apartment has a room that is a shelter. Where I grew up, we did not have a shelter in our apartment, but we had one in the basement of our building. I always wondered if I would make it there in time under missile fire and what it would be like to be there with all the neighbors. I always wanted to enter the shelter, for years I wondered what this room looked like under the ground, and how it was supposed to give us all cover. Over the years, we settled for a stairwell because it was also considered a protected space, standing outside the door of the apartment during the alarm, sometimes in pajamas, sometimes in a towel, sometimes still with the food in our mouth from dinner. There is something in this experience when we are all

protected under this heavy layer of concrete, that comforts me and ensures me that we will be okay. Probably since then, I trust concrete.

Just as regimes manipulate architecture to foster a sense of unity and control, the incorporation of concrete shelters in Israeli homes serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it provides tangible evidence of the nation's commitment to protecting its citizens, thereby legitimizing the authority of the government. Secondly, it fosters a collective consciousness among the population, emphasizing their shared vulnerability and the necessity of national unity in the face of external threats. Thus, even in a democratic context like Israel, architecture plays a crucial role in shaping collective consciousness and reinforcing social values.

## A Living Example

I moved to Amsterdam without too much prior knowledge about the city, the culture, and the people. It was a decision I took upon myself with everything that was included in it, knowingly or unknowingly. The environmental ensemble was a set of elements that were foreign and different from what was known and familiar to me. This is evident from the smallest phenomena to those with deep and wide meanings.

One of the most prominent things in Dutch architecture is its large windows that allow a wide view from the inside to the outside. Houses lack a traditional entrance floor, and instead, there is direct access from the street to the entrance door of the house. These architectural elements created a scenario where residents are almost constantly exposed to the gaze of passers-by.

A vitrine separating the public space from the personal space was created—a showcase of a living example of how to live within the domestic space. This setup mirrors the central concept of the Panopticon, where individuals are subjected to constant observation without necessarily knowing when they are being watched.



The window is used bidirectionally by the viewers and the tenants. The people who pass by are, on the one hand, the examining eye, and on the other hand, the perceivers of an example of expected behavior within the domestic space. The residents have an unceasing “commitment” to instill the theory of behavior within the domestic space, while they are in a state of careful examination. As if under a magnifying glass, they are on constant display.

Similar to the psychological effect of the Panopticon’s design, which induces self-regulation among its inmates, the Dutch housing design may influence residents to behave in a manner that aligns with social norms and expectations, knowing that they are potentially under scrutiny by those passing by. Those observing the behavior of residents

through the windows may internalize these observations as social norms, reinforcing a culture of expected behavior within domestic spaces.

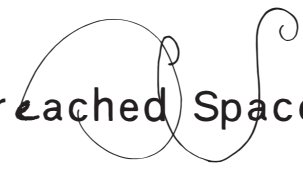
Due to this mechanism, when the viewers are on the other side of the vitrine as residents, they do not show resistance, censorship, or attempts to

protect the private space, while the passers-by become the supervisors. The notion of openness and visibility in both architectural design and social norms raises questions about the boundaries between public and private spaces, echoing this philosophical inquiry—if domestic spaces are open for observation and serve as examples for others, they challenge conventional notions of privacy and autonomy within these spaces.

The Dutch housing architecture serves as a living example of how architectural design can influence social dynamics, echoing the principles of surveillance and self-regulation discussed in the theory of the Panopticon. Through its design features and behaviors, it encourages and reflects a culture of constant observation and conformity, reminiscent of the broader social implications of the Panopticon.

Brutalism, the Panopticon, and Dutch housing design underscore the profound influence of architecture on individual and collective consciousness and offer an exploration of architecture as an oppressive force, particularly focusing on the concepts of surveillance, control, obedience, and conformity within social structures. They make it possible to witness how architectural forms extend beyond mere physical structures, becoming tools for shaping individual behavior and social norms and fostering a culture of mutual scrutiny. As such, they serve as potent reminders of the intersection between built environments and social control, highlighting the enduring legacy of architecture as an oppressive artistic force.

A Breached Space



## Physical and Mental space

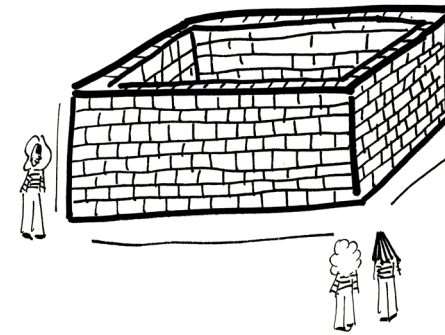
<sup>35</sup> The Collector, "Allan Kaprow and the Art of Happenings" (<https://www.thecollector.com/allan-kaprow-art-of-happenings/> accessed January 2024)

As architecture affects social dynamics, the effects of physical space on individuals cannot be separated. Correspondingly, in the artistic space, the exhibition space has direct effects exerted on the viewers. As part of the international and interdisciplinary movement Fluxus, artists, composers, designers, and poets engaged in experimental performances where the emphasis was on the artistic process and not the finished product. They created new performance events as art forms and engaged with music, poetry, visual art, architecture, design, and literature. These events included direct or indirect instructions, that had an effect in two spaces: the physical and the mental space.

Allan Kaprow was an American visual artist widely known for his use and interactions with what is now known as happenings. His work *Liquids* (1967), took place in a public space in Pasadena, California. Kaprow with the help of locals, built a rectangular structure from ice bricks that formed its walls and let the structure melt by itself. The exhibition poster presented on billboards in Pasadena invited people to join the happening with the following instructions:

*During three days, about twenty rectangular enclosures of ice blocks (measuring about 30 feet long, 10 wide and 8 high) are built throughout the city. Their walls are unbroken. They are left to melt.*<sup>35</sup>

The result of the instructions given by Kaprow in the poster of the exhibition had an impact on the physical space. The instructions were translated into actions and happenings in the public space by the residents of Pasadena and Kaprow himself.



On the other hand, the effect on the mental space can result in consequences for the viewers, while these are separate from the exhibition space itself. The work *Games & Puzzles: Inclined Plane Puzzle* (1965), by George Brecht and George Maciunas, combines an object and instructions in a black plastic box. On the lid is a label designed by Maciunas with the inscription "Games & Puzzles by George Brecht Fluxus CL." Inside the box is a ball and a card with the instructions:

*INCLINED PLANE PUZZLE  
Place ball on inclined surface.  
Observe the ball rolling uphill.*

The work operates in the mental space, by asking the viewer to watch a ball rolling up the hill. The action itself is not possible, a ball cannot roll up a hill without external help. The instructions ask the viewer to perform an action in the mental space, and not necessarily to perform the action in the physical space. In this way, the artist seeks to occupy the mental space of the viewer, and “sows” a thought in their mind.

Putting the spotlight on the mental space, in this space the viewer receives an action-oriented instruction, while the occurrence takes place in their consciousness. Does the artist have responsibility for the mental space? Do we have control or the possibility to take responsibility for our own mental space?

Kaprow's *Liquids* and Brecht's *Games & Puzzles* exemplify Fluxus's emphasis on engaging the viewer's mental space, prompting reflection and participation beyond the physical exhibition. These works not only transform the physical environment but also invite viewers to explore their own consciousness and perceptions. This emphasis on mental rather than physical engagement aimed to challenge entrenched paradigms of perception and experience.

The Wiesbadener Festspiele Neuester Musik of 1963 marked a pivotal moment challenging

the traditional notion of a score in modern art. Brecht's presentation of *Drip Music*, scorecards, and Fluxus boxes introduced a new perspective. Scores, at their core, are instructions for realizing outcomes, yet their complexity transcends this basic conception. They exist in a multifaceted space of realization and concealment, embodying layers of functionality that instigate action, sound, thought, and imagination through various modes of transmission. Reading a score involves linguistic interpretation and encompasses its sensuality, materiality, and ephemerality, shaping its impact on the world. Each score carries its own history and position, engaging the reader in a continual encounter. Fluxus event scores, with their simplicity and ambiguity, played a crucial role in redefining notation in the 20th century. They hinted at liminal spaces between score and object, event and encounter, poetic and instructive realms, profoundly influencing artistic practice.<sup>36</sup>

Movements like Fluxus have profoundly influenced social dynamics by blurring the boundaries between physical and mental spaces. Through experimental performances and interactive art forms, artists have challenged traditional notions of artistic expression, emphasizing the process over the finished product. Instructions and happenings have become integral to engaging viewers in both physical and conceptual realms.



<sup>36</sup> Akademie Schloss, “What is a Score—It’s a Flux” <https://www.akademie-solitude.de/de/studio-visits/what-is-a-score/> (accessed March 2024).



## replacing Power

<sup>37</sup> Allan Kaprow, *Seven Environments* (Milan: Fondazione Mudima, 2007), p. 113.

<sup>38</sup> Idem, p. 23.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

The status of the concept of happening in the art world represents the meeting between the environment and the viewer, who together create an event. In the work *Yard* (1961), by Allan Kaprow, he creates a situation as part of the exhibition that took place in Martha Jackson Gallery, titled *Environments Situations Spaces*. Kaprow filled the gallery yard with hundreds of tires which covered the space in random order. Five tarpaper mounds were used to cover the sculptures in the sculpture garden, appearing between the tires.<sup>37</sup> Kaprow's work is contradictory to the traditional idea that an artwork should be fixed permanently and instead offers a dynamic ever-changing artwork, that is tied to the actions of the viewer.<sup>38</sup>

The viewers were encouraged to react to the environment as they wished, to climb on the tires or throw them, creating a happening:

*Furthermore, the Environment quickly incorporated the idea of internal changes during its presentation. The conventional spectators became the participants who executed the changes. Here, also, the traditional notion of the uniquely talented artist (the genius) was suspended in favor of a tentative collectivity (the social group as artist). Art was like the weather.*<sup>39</sup>

The transformative power of art finds resonance in the varied experiments in art in the sixties that were expressed in the upheaval of social norms in two different aspects. In the democratization of art and in the use of hierarchical artistic authority.

As Claire Bishop mentions in her book, *Artificial Hells* (2012), happenings challenged social norms and encouraged freedom of expression. These experiments shattered societal inhibitions, fostering freer human relations and challenging authoritarian structures.<sup>40</sup> This liberation mirrors the liberation experienced by viewers in Kaprow's *Yard*, where their actions were encouraged, and previous social conventions dissolved. The connection between happenings and the experiments in art in the sixties underscores the transformative potential of art in catalyzing social change, echoing the dynamic interaction between art and its social context.



The avant-garde dream of turning art into life finds expression in the realization that art can transcend its traditional boundaries and become an integral part of everyday existence.<sup>41</sup> Just as Kaprow's happenings blur the boundaries between art and life, the avant-garde visionaries envisioned a collective creative experience that transcends the confines of traditional art forms. This collective experience reflects the transformative potential of artistic engagement, as viewers become active participants in shaping both the artwork and their lived experiences.

<sup>40</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 102.

<sup>41</sup> Idem, p. 103.

<sup>42</sup> Idem, p. 80.

The revolutionary fervor of these experiments underscores the belief that art has the power to inspire social and political change, blurring the lines between artistic expression and lived reality.

The concept of democratizing performance art resonates deeply with the notion of Democratic Art. This concept challenges traditional notions of artistic authority by shifting the power of aesthetic decision-making to the hands of all participants. In essence, it dismantles the conventional hierarchy between artist and viewers, leading to the disappearance of traditional artwork as viewers become active co-creators.<sup>42</sup> However, while this democratization empowers viewers, it also raises questions about the diminishing responsibility of the artist.

The loss of artistic authority amidst this democratization parallels the manipulation of power and responsibility observed within art spaces, reflecting a broader social trend toward decentralization of authority. The wish of the viewers for freedom of expression in the exhibition space is in fact highly restricted to the surroundings and conditions that are determined by Kaprow.

Once entering the space, the viewers are subject to the work while their presence in the space activates and creates the work. The viewers might assume that their actions come out of their own wishes, but eventually, the elements used by the artist lead them to a certain thought or action. Kaprow changes the social norms in the space by changing the environment,

and thus its function for those who enter it. In many cases, the work and the viewer exist on parallel planes in the exhibition space, and this is a social norm that many artworks follow. In *Yard*, the encounter between the environment and the viewer creates an event that generates the work. For Kaprow, environments should constantly change and offer a space that the viewer can physically enter. The norms change in the situations that Kaprow creates in different spaces in a way that dictates the tone. The viewers enter an event where any action or lack of action is an integral part of the happening.

In the exhibition space, the artist has power over the viewers. The viewers enter a world where the inner logic of the artist determines the norms, whether in a white cube or a public space. As soon as the viewers set foot in the exhibition space, the artist has real power over them, they can manipulate them as they please. The instructions or guidelines in the exhibition space validate the norms that the artist creates for the viewers.

The question that arises is therefore what the responsibility of the artist is in determining these norms. Once there is power, control is created, and responsibility as well. Is the artist released from responsibility for their actions because of the fluidity of action and freedom of thought in an artistic context?



## Corrupt ~~Desire~~

In the work *Rhythm 0* (1974), Serbian performance artist Marina Abramovich offered viewers the possibility to use seventy-two different objects on her, informing them that they would not be held accountable for their actions. Some of the objects that Abramovich allowed the viewers to use were: a rose, a feather, honey, a whip, olive oil, scissors, a scalpel, a gun, and a single bullet. For six hours the artist let the viewers manipulate her body without consequences.

From the conventions created by Abramovich within the space, questions arise regarding power, responsibility, and control. Where is the line drawn between using the power of the artist without the restriction of social norms followed by citizens within society? The freedom of action in the context of art, with the aim of creating an enabling space, is used forcefully by the artist through manipulation, creating the illusion that viewers have free will and are not subjected to social norms. When, in fact, they are in a space where the artist is the one who sets the rules and the script, maneuvering them like pawns.

In Abramovic's performances, the artist assumes an ambiguous role, blurring the line between participation, autonomy, and subtle manipulation to fit her predetermined narrative. By presenting her body as an object, she establishes the framework for interaction with the participants, allowing the action to unfold seemingly with minimal direction from the artist. As viewers push the limits of what is perceived

as acceptable in their violent participation, a complex narrative is created that delves into broader themes of identity, objectification, and the nature of humanity.

A comparison between Abramovic's performance *Rhythm 0* and George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* (1945), can bring a few observations on the use of power and hierarchy. Orwell's novel serves as both an allegory and a satirical commentary on the hierarchical structures governing an individual its status, rights, and social dynamics within society. Set on a farm in England, the narrative follows a cohort of animals driven by a shared vision: to transition from being controlled and inspected by the farmer to achieving freedom. However, the leaders of this rebellion—the pigs, manipulate the animals' aspirations in order to transform the social structure to their advantage. Under the guise of advocating for freedom and equality, these leaders gradually establish themselves as the new ruling authority, exploiting the animals' trust and subverting their resistance.

The disciplinary power of the farmer in the novel is compared to the hierarchical social structure in society. The accomplished rebellion of the animals against the farmer granted the pigs their power, promising liberation and equality from previous disciplinary power and social structure. The promise of the pigs can be compared to Abramovic's statement in that it offers the viewers a release from the existing social order, which involves the discipline and punishment of their actions.

In practice, the pigs serve as an alternative to the farmer, establishing a hierarchical status among the animals and their power over them. Similarly, Abramovic established a new social order, which in fact she, the artist, governed and set the rules for. Thus, in both, there is a replacement between one representation of power and another. In this way, the pigs and Abramovic corrupt the desire for freedom and equality of the animals and the viewer, and the farm becomes a metaphor for the exhibition space.



In the reality that Abramovich created, she declared an absence of consequences, yet this constructed reality faced an existential dilemma and confronted the foundations of societal order. When actions within it intersect with the broader social framework governed by social

norms, discipline, laws, and punishment, the line between autonomic artistic expression and legal accountability blurs. This interrogation delves into the essence of authority and interpretation. Here lies a landscape of fluidity and ambiguity, where the lines between artistic freedom and societal governance intersect. The norms articulated within the exhibition space confront the rigidity of legal statutes, raising uncertainties about their applicability when confronted by the concrete realities of legal consequences of violent behavior.

The symbiosis of Abramovich's performance and Orwell's *Animal Farm* unearths parallels between the manipulation of power and the dynamics of control. Just as the pigs in Orwell's allegory exploit the aspirations of the animals for freedom, Abramovich crafts a narrative that tantalizes with

<sup>43</sup> Claire Bishop, *Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity* (New York: CUNY, 2012), p. 95.

the promise of liberation from social constraints. Yet, beneath this veneer lies a subtle subversion of autonomy, wherein the artist assumes the mantle of authority, dictating the boundaries of acceptable action.

Thus, in the crucible of artistic expression and social norms, we confront the paradox of liberation and constraint. The quest for freedom, whether in the realms of art or society, necessitates a vigilant interrogation of the power structures that govern us. For in the pursuit of liberty lies the inherent tension between emancipation and ensnarement, between the illusion of autonomy and the reality of constraint. Thus, the quest for freedom not only challenges the fabric of society but also prompts a re-evaluation of the very principles upon which it stands.

As appears in Abramovich's work, *Rhythm 0*, performance art traditionally emphasized the immediacy of the artist's presence, but this immediacy has been shifted towards collective social groups rather than individual performers. In her article *Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity* (2012), Claire Bishop explores the evolving dynamics of performance art, particularly focusing on what she terms "delegated performance." Delegated performance involves artists hiring nonprofessionals or specialists to perform according to the artist's instructions, distancing the artist from direct involvement while maintaining hierarchical control.<sup>43</sup>

This form of delegated performance, while reminiscent of the transgressive nature of the performance art tradition of the late 1960s and early

1970s, diverges in significant ways. Unlike artists of that era who used their bodies as the medium, contemporary delegated performance often involves the artist utilizing other individuals who often lack agency as material, sparking ethical debates about representation and exploitation.<sup>44</sup>

Bishop discusses various examples of delegated performances, such as the works of the Spanish artist Santiago Sierra, where economic systems and the artist's detachment from performers are emphasized. Unlike earlier instances of delegated performance, characterized by a light approach through humor and irony, a significant shift occurred in 1999 with the work of Sierra. His oeuvre underwent a notable transformation, transitioning from installations executed by low-paid workers to performances that prominently featured the workers themselves, involving individuals undertaking menial or demeaning tasks for minimal compensation.<sup>45</sup>

This shift brought attention to the economic transactions underpinning Sierra's installations, culminating in charged works such as *People Paid to Remain Inside Cardboard Boxes* and *250 cm Line Tattooed on 6 Paid People* (both 1999). Nonetheless, Sierra meticulously highlights the economic systems at play in his works, using recruitment agencies to outsource performers and incorporating details of payment transactions into the artwork descriptions. By doing so he transforms economic contexts into a primary medium of expression and create a sense of alienation for viewers, confronting them with the realization of their participation in this social and economic system.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Idem, p. 90.

<sup>45</sup> Idem, p. 94.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Idem, p. 108.

<sup>48</sup> Idem, p. 109.

Bishop argues for a nuanced understanding of delegated performance, moving beyond simplistic critiques of exploitation. In redefining transgression by exploring the dual nature of the body as both objectified and embodied, these performances offer alternative forms of knowledge about capitalism's commodification of individuals and challenge conventional norms through their presentation of marginalized groups.<sup>47</sup>

The viewer confronts a double mechanism: while the power employed by institutions on the individual has become the norm, the utilization of institutional mechanisms and their employment by artists on performers is perceived as abnormal and is heavily criticized. The distinction between art and capitalism is highlighted by artists' appropriation of hierarchical power through instruction-based performances. These delegated performances present new forms of uses of power that challenge the normativity perception of viewers and the conventional notions of artistic agency. They raise complex questions about power dynamics, representation, and economic structures within the realm of contemporary art within society. Ultimately, delegated performance provokes moral inquiries, complicating representation, and ethics within the realm of contemporary art.<sup>48</sup>

A question arises from the field of contemporary and traditional performance art about hierarchical power and criticism of the interrelationship between the artist, the viewers, and the performers. Is the artist's hierarchical power over their performers and the viewer justified, if it illuminates the influences institutions and economic or social mechanisms

have on the condition of the individual, in the name of establishing realization and criticism of those exploitative dynamics? Is it possible for artists to suggest a renewed perspective for viewers on the oppressive social mechanisms that they are being used by without repeating and recreating them as part of their works?

The examination of hierarchical power dynamics within performance art reveals a complex interplay between the artist's authority and the viewer's autonomy. Artists wield significant influence in shaping social narratives through their works, often dictating norms, and guiding a viewer's interpretation. However, this authoritative imposition raises pertinent questions. What ethical responsibilities do artists bear in wielding their power over viewers' perceptions and actions within artistic spaces? How do viewers navigate between individual agency and adherence to the artist's intended narrative or norms?

The concept of democratizing art presents an alternative paradigm, wherein power shifts from the artist to the collective participants. This democratization fosters inclusivity and empowers viewers to become active co-creators of artistic experiences. Yet, this shift also poses challenges. Do artists relinquish their responsibility amidst the collective creation process, potentially diluting the artistic vision? What implications does democratic art have on the preservation of artistic authenticity and the recognition of individual artistic voices within a collective framework?

The juxtaposition of hierarchical power in delegated performance and democratizing art underscores broader social trends toward decentralization of authority. As we navigate these intersecting realms, critical questions arise. What are the social implications of shifting power dynamics within artistic spaces, and how do they reflect broader social dynamics? Can a synthesis between hierarchical power and democratic art be achieved, fostering artistic innovation while preserving individual autonomy and integrity? How do these discussions inform our understanding of societal governance, individual agency, and the pursuit of freedom within artistic and social contexts?

These questions prompt a nuanced examination of power, responsibility, and autonomy within the ever-evolving landscape of art and society. The interconnectedness between power dynamics within art spaces, the transformative potential of art in catalyzing social change, and the need for greater inclusivity and accessibility within artistic communities underscores the complex relationship between art and society and reflects the coexistence of power and autonomy.

Breaking the Clone System

My personal journey was in friction with the rigid norms of societal expectations, where the gaze of authority loomed large, dictating aspects of my existence, and relegating me to the margins. This research stemmed from an autobiographical narrative that led me to examine the complex mechanisms of society, their enforcement, and the systems underlying them. These mechanisms utilize psychological and mental dynamics and transcend physical barriers, fostering a pervasive atmosphere of control within institutions and permeating social structures and individual behavior alike. Ultimately, they shape a culture of perpetual gaze and control.

The focal point of the research was how the institutionalized surveillance gaze becomes ingrained in individuals, creating a paradoxical situation in which the very individuals who oppose the surveillance mechanism use the same mechanism to enforce it upon others. This perpetuates a constant surveillance network, wherein the individual becomes a pawn in the hands of the government. The text speaks of a wish to give the reader a platform for self-observation and self-awareness of their position—to realize a degree of autonomy under these mechanisms of power and control.

This phenomenon can be observed in institutions where enforcement is instilled and disseminated down to the smallest unit comprising it, such as schools, prisons, and hospitals. Together such institutions form an intergenerational network that sustains itself, nurturing enforcement, compliance, surveillance,

and suppression. Schools represent examination, hospitals represent diagnosis, and prisons represent punishment. Its authorities wield control through a dual mechanism: binary classification and labeling, as well as cataloging, determining identity, placement, characterization, and surveillance methods, forming marginalized groups.

Through the Foucauldian panoptic lens, the surveillance gaze permeates the constructed environment, extending beyond its physical influence toward psychological mechanisms, thereby instilling a sense of self-regulation and conformity. Architecture can serve as a constructed environment that influences the behavior of its inhabitants, dictating social norms, creating order, restricting diversity, and promoting and shaping a collective identity.

Central to this inquiry was the idea of space—both physical and psychological—as a battlefield for power struggles and resistance actions. Architecture appears as an authority propagator, shaping our interactions and perceptions profoundly. From the urban landscapes of public events to the white cubes of gallery exhibitions, the text puts doubts on the nature of freedom and autonomy within artistic spaces.


In contemplating the intricate interplay of internal logic, social norms, and individual agency, there emerges a tapestry of ideas with at its core the exploration of difference and deviance, the mechanisms of social control, and the transformative potential of art as a vehicle for resistance and liberation. Through games and

performances, artists have subverted the status quo and provided glimpses of autonomy in a world governed by hierarchy and control. Yet, even as we celebrate the emancipatory potential of art, we grapple with profound questions regarding the nature of control and responsibility. Their instructions and happenings raise questions of ethics and autonomy, suggesting to consider to what extent artists shape the perceptions of the viewer.

In the contemporary landscape of art, power dynamics, and ethical dilemmas take center stage. In evidence of the dual existence of autonomy and manipulation, artistic authority, and democratization in art, which presents complexities inherent in artistic expression, profound questions are raised about responsibility in creative practice. Even towards artistic practices that aim to resist present-day forces of oppression, we must stand guard against repression and exploitation, which are integral to the very systems we seek to dismantle.

The relevancy of these questions prompts a nuanced examination of and within the ever-evolving landscape of art and society through the emergence of new voices alongside tradition and existing structures, reflecting the complexities and ambivalence of power and autonomy as coexistent.





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**Teachers**

Ana Navas  
Becket Flannery/MWN  
Jean Bernard Koeman

**Thesis supervisor**  
Alena Alexandrova

**Illustrations**  
Hagar Cohen

**Graphic design**  
Hagar Cohen

**Proofreading**  
Tim Neutel  
Hadar Tsarfaty

**Typefaces**

<i>Aisle</i>	Hanako Emden & Elsa Baslé
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