



THE LAST OBSERVER
Issue 6

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COVER: Installation view of

Wolfgang Tillmans', *Truth Study Center* (NY), 2010. Wood, glass, and mixed media. Courtesy the artist and Andrea Rosen Gallery, © Wolfgang Tillmans. Photo: Latitudes.

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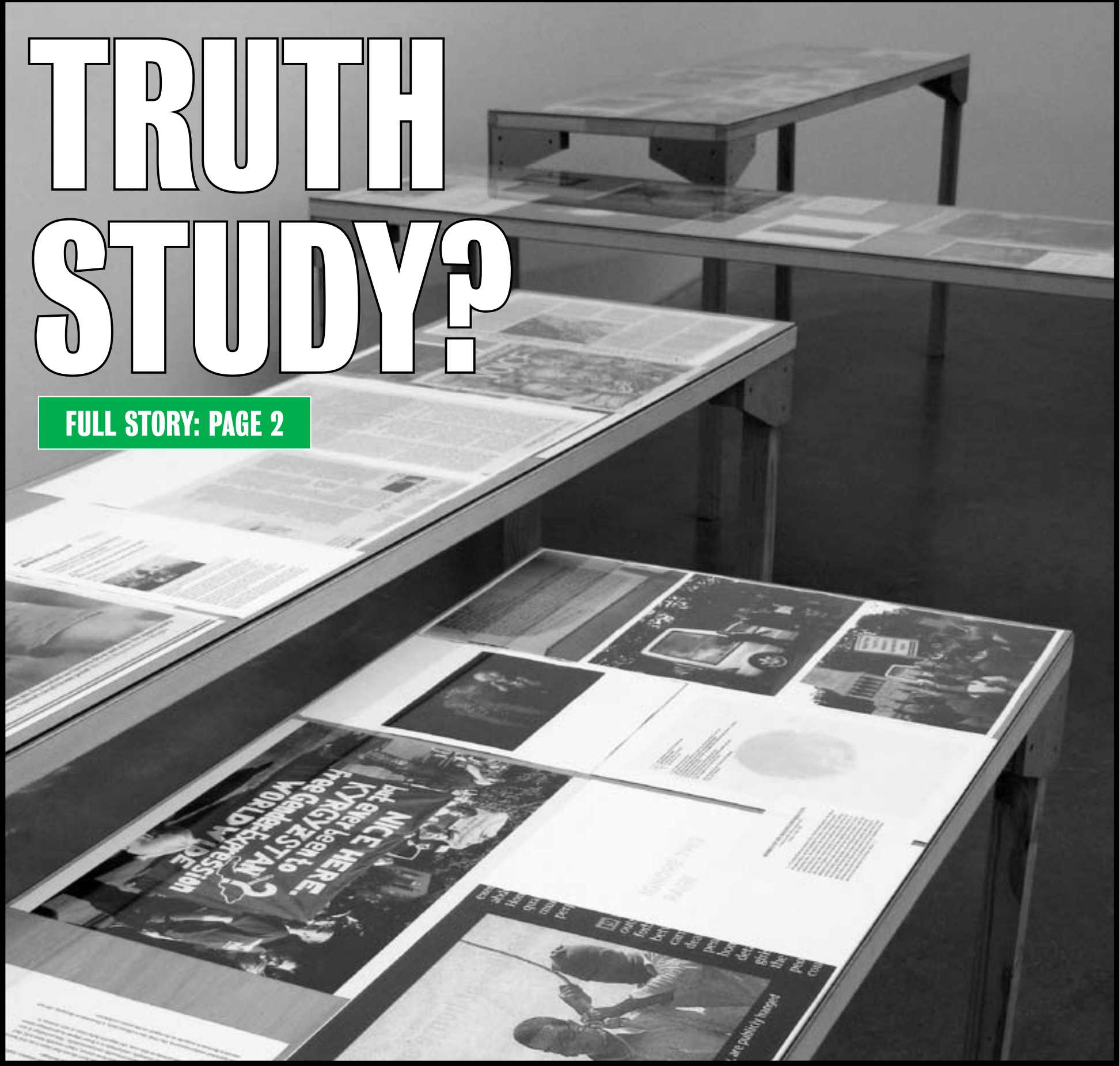
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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

In column three of the article by Adam Chadwick on page 6 of 'The Last Monitor' (issue 5), the documentary was referred to as *Film to Print*. It is, of course, titled *Fit to Print*.

THE LAST
Observer

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FULL STORY: PAGE 2

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

IS THIS TRUE

OR NOT?

Detail of *Truth Study Center* (NY), 2010. Wood, glass, and mixed media. Courtesy the artist and Andrea Rosen Gallery, © Wolfgang Tillmans. Photo: Latitudes

‘THE LAST OBSERVER’ LONDON CORRESPONDENT LORENA MUÑOZ-ALONSO MEETS WOLFGANG TILLMANS, WHOSE TABLE TOP INSTALLATION ‘TRUTH STUDY CENTER’ IS FEATURED IN ‘THE LAST NEWSPAPER’.

A door buzzer is activated on a busy street of East London on a rainy Saturday evening; I push and find myself in Between Bridges, the non-profit gallery space Wolfgang Tillmans opened in 2006 to show artists that “are overlooked in the London scene”. (The current exhibition is by Gerd Arntz, a fairly unknown German artist and activist of the Weimar era.) I climb the spiral staircase to the

studio and Tillmans welcomes me upstairs and offers me tea. He is tired but talkative, having just returned from Nottingham, where he has been installing his works for the British Art Show 7. His studio is a huge open space, full of desks and wooden tables, where newspapers and magazines pile under the neon lights. “Last year at the Venice Biennale I had four table works. And I had a whole

room table installation (Space, Food, Religion, 2010) at the Serpentine Gallery show. But having *The Last Newspaper* and the Nottingham show opening in the space of three weeks has reactivated the *Truth Study Center* project in a very significant way”, he says while pointing to the build up of world-wide printed media that towers on every surface of the studio.

Lorena Muñoz-Alonso: What is

or are the origins of your *Truth Study Center* works?

Wolfgang Tillmans: The project started in 2005 with a show in London at Maureen Paley which coincided with the publication of my third book for Taschen, also titled *Truth Study Center*. It was a contradiction, somehow, because the contents of the book had nothing to do with the tables. That first show included sixteen tables. Then,

in 2006, I had a big mid-career survey in the U.S., a show that toured between Chicago, Los Angeles and Mexico City which included a twenty-four-table installation. In 2007 I had a show at the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hannover where I showed thirty tables, which then become part of the exhibition at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. So there have been two very big installations so far. The U.S. installation was

altered from city to city; I was adding and adapting the contents depending on the context.

LM-A: So the way you can work on the tables is quite quick and reactive?

WT: Yes, pretty much. The tour was a year and a half long, and they were heady times in the American political arena, so it was interesting being able to incorporate all that to the work. There was a particular piece that was then published in *The Guardian* called ‘Ten easy steps for a fascist America’ by Naomi Wolf – a very heavy statement indeed. It was very striking and beautifully illustrated, so I made a table incorporating that on the spot. That table piece is again in *The Last Newspaper* exhibition. Americans don’t really like foreigners to criticise them. They are good at self-criticism, but the moment it’s a foreigner who does it, they can get defensive. But Wolf is American, so that couldn’t be accused of coming from European prejudices.

LM-A: How did you begin the process of incorporating the table as a new element in the vocabulary of your practice?

WT: It actually started in 1995 with a show at Portikus in Frankfurt where I used five flat cabinets to show images I had published in magazines. Also in the Turner Prize show in 2000 I used the same idea of laying out elements on a flat horizontal surface, so it was already settling within my practice then.

While I was editing the *Truth Study Center* book I came to this really obvious realisation that all my work happens on a table. A table provides a space for a loose arrangement, where things are laid out in a certain way, but can be easily rearranged. On a wall you have to pin or tape the stuff, but a table is more fluid. There is clarity and complete contingency at the same time.

LM-A: And why did you start using newspapers as raw material in your work?

WT: I had worked with found newspapers before, in the ‘Soldiers’ series (1999). I have to

confess I am a bit of a newspaper junkie and have collected them since childhood. I often think that a day’s newspaper contains the essence of the whole world. But I guess that around 2002–2004, the years post 9/11, a clearer picture of the world we live in emerged – all the insanity that surrounded us – after what had seemed like the less politically charged 1990s. I was enraged and concerned and spending a lot of time reading media and thinking about all these different claims to the truth, ‘the big truth’ which was the ultimate justification behind all that violence and those wars. I realised that all the problems that the world faces right now arise from men claiming to possess absolute truths.

LM-A: So hence the name...

WT: Of course it would be very desirable to have a completely neutral ‘Truth Study Center’, but that will never be possible. So even though it has this big title, it is not claiming to be delivering truth, but rather looking at all

these different, opposed truths. But it is not at all saying that everything is relative or subjective. I do think there are certain truths that are not negotiable, that some events and attitudes are wrong, and I am straightforward about in the work, which I think is precisely what makes it interesting. It takes a moral stand on the one hand, but on the other is always aware of its absurdity and of its extreme limitations. So it presents all these issues, like the impact of AIDS denial in Africa or the question of the existence or not of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq – the whole war came about from a single question: is this true or not?

LM-A: Are the tables fixed in their arrangements and subjects?

WT: The tables are, or can be, pieces in their own right. They do not always have to come in the same installations. But it’s the same as with a wall installation, when I think a grouping really works, I try to maintain it.

But the working process is quite flexible and not set in stone.

LM-A: So you color-photocopy all the newspaper that are on the tables, which is already a process of translation in itself...

WT: Very much so. That is the essential part of the visual composition, because we have been talking a lot about content but of course if the table works were not interesting to look at, they wouldn’t have an artistic justification. I use the color photocopy because of aesthetic reasons, but also because the color copy is amazingly permanent, as opposed to newspaper. I couldn’t use the original newspaper cause it wouldn’t look good after a year. But media-wise there are also real things, like a lottery ticket, a bus ticket, a vegetable wrapper...

LM-A: You have a very strong relationship to printed matter. You have even said: “Everything I do happens on paper”, which I think is a simple but very meaningful realisation, with a lot of implications...

WT: I have a double interest in *The Last Newspaper* show. Not only do I use newspapers and magazines as material, but also my work is heavily featured in printed media and I use media as both generator and distributor of my work.

LM-A: What are the main subjects of your tables are in *The Last Newspaper*?

WT: There is one table about soldiers and war, one about religion, another about the depiction of war, games and violence on the internet. I also have some images of airlines and the experience of flying and there is one about Americans’ attitudes to food. There are a lot of critical messages there, but you could find all of them in very mainstream publications. Information and criticality is there for everyone, which is also one of issues I want to highlight in this work.

LM-A: Is this series your outlet for political expression?

WT: There is definitely a bit of that. I use these works to make statements on subjects that I feel very strongly about but that I can’t or don’t want to tackle in my photographs. At the same time, though, the reason why I started to work with images from the very beginning was because I wanted to be involved with what was going on the world. Questions of taste or of beauty have always been politically charged for me. Do you find two men kissing disgusting or beautiful? That is a question of aesthetics but also of politics. I’ve always had this very strong awareness that every freedom that I enjoy as a gay person has been hard fought for by many people before me, and that gave me a great sense of public responsibility. I think every person counts. I might be very traditional in that sense, but I really think it does matter. □



Installation view of Wolfgang Tillmans’, *Truth Study Center* (NY), 2010. Wood, glass, and mixed media. Courtesy the artist and Andrea Rosen Gallery, © Wolfgang Tillmans. Photo: Benoit Pailley. Courtesy New Museum.

“THERE’S NOT ENOUGH RAGE THESE DAYS”

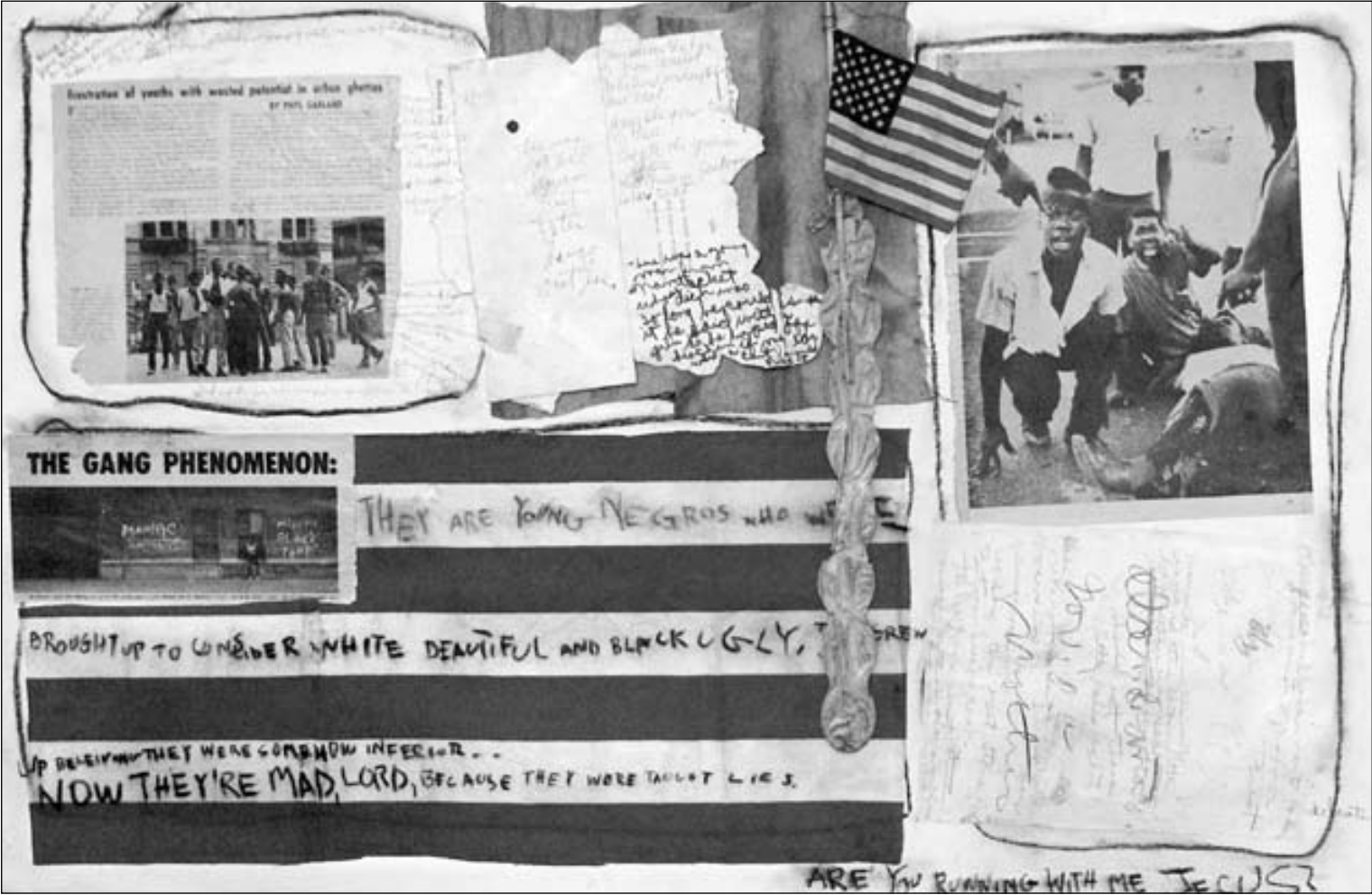
GREG BARTON AND COLLIN MUNN PAY A VISIT TO JUDITH BERNSTEIN, WHO PRESENTS ‘THE LAST NEWSPAPER’ VISITORS WITH TWO WORKS FROM 1967.

FOCUS

In two of *The Last Newspaper*’s earliest works, *L.B.J.* and *Are You Running With Me Jesus?* (both 1967), Judith Bernstein offers hyper-political collages comprised primarily of newspaper clippings, American flags, and hand-scrawled sentences. The two compositions’ Civil Rights Era discontent is channeled in a highly textural and visceral manner, where charcoal smudges merge with fabric, ephemera, and in the case of *L.B.J.*, steel wool, as a surrogate for pubic hair. Undoubtedly functioning as a release-valve for the fiercely contested politics of race, gender, and war amidst the era of their creation, in the current exhibition the mixed media works emanate the aura of pre-scient time-capsules.

Now in her late-60s, the artist is quick to draw parallels between Vietnam and the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan. “There’s not enough rage these days”, she commented during a visit to her Chinatown studio. “You see pictures that were taken during that timeframe, with Kent State and a lot of other horrific things, and they speak of their time. The works in *The Last Newspaper* don’t have much irony, the works are not subtle, in some ways they are like a punchline, but they also speak in layers to different people”. Typical examples of publications that Bernstein sourced imagery and clippings from include *The New York Times*, *Life* magazine, *Village Voice*, and the now-defunct *East Village Other*, one of the first countercultural newspapers stateside. While discussing changes in the media over the last few decades, and recent outcries of the ‘liberal media’, Bernstein adamantly states that for her “newspapers on the whole are still much much too conservative. Those political radio shows are reactionary, everybody is reinforcing their own subtext”.

Sharing a structural similarity to news headlines or political jingles, the handwritten phrases the artist employs, or ‘graffiti’ as she refers to it, vary from vitriolic and humorous to borderline



ABOVE Judith Bernstein, *Are You Running With Me Jesus?*, 1967. Mixed mediums on paper. Courtesy the artist and The Box LA Gallery. **BELOW** Judith Bernstein in her studio. Photo: Collin Munn



illegible. However, the total effect of the writings help unify disparate facets within the compositions while at the same time defacing or annotating elements. This combination of appropriated material reconstituted within the intensely personal collages rightfully garners comparisons to contemporary blogs from critics and museum-goers alike. Bernstein reflects on the process of internalizing photographic material: “Images can speak for things that are not observed correctly, they can manipulate audiences. Photography can obviously be dead-on as well as mislead. There’s an enormous amount of photography in the art world at this point and it says different things, or it doesn’t say it, or it’s neutral. It can be many things, it’s what you choose and how you edit it”.

Graduating from Yale’s male-dominated painting department in 1967, Bernstein became an early fixture of New York’s A.I.R. Gallery, the first artist-run, not-for-profit gallery dedicated to

women artists in the United States. Considered by many to be an influential proto-feminist artist, Bernstein is no stranger to censorship issues due to the overt content of her work, saying, “I’ve been involved in a lot of political groups, and the women have a lot of rage and hostility. Guys have had much more of an opportunity and permission to do work that is aggressive and hostile, but not for this woman”.

Currently enjoying a resurgence of interest in her work after not showing for many years, Bernstein continues to investigate her subject matter in an overt, confrontational fashion. Drawing on a wealth of life experiences, which are in turn translated and incorporated into metaphors, the artist in no way limits her critique to the art world. Pulling out canvasses covered in giant phalluses and masturbatory guns, she recounts a ditty from an earlier work: “Baby the fucking you get ain’t worth the fucking you take”. □

PICTURE AGENT: OUR SINGULAR PICTURE AGENCY

RENZO MARTENS, ARTIST



Photo: AFP

MEDIA HABITS: CITY AS SCHOOL STUDENTS

City-As-School was founded as an independent alternative high school in 1972 and maintains three campuses in New York. Its aim is to offer 16-21 year old students learning experiences that encompass the depth and breadth of New York City’s businesses and resources. CAS is a partner in the New Museum’s Global Classroom (G:Class). Through these partnerships, teachers and New Museum educators collaborate to use the Museum’s resources as a tool to enhance learning in the classroom and beyond. Seven CAS students responded to ‘The Last Observer’s’ questionnaire. Their names have been changed.

NEWSPAPERS

James’s response was simply “I do not read the newspaper”, while Anthony, “only read[s] the sports section”. Although

Sandra doesn’t “avidly read the news”, sometime she’ll “pick up a local newspaper and skim through ... if I’m not running late”. Angela reads “the *New York Times*, *New York Post* and *Metro* sometimes”, while Rebecca checks out the “Bronx Times (weekly) and the NY Times (weekly)”. Sherry wrote that she was “not into newspapers”, yet “I pick [one] up when I’m on my way to school whenever I see something interesting ... I look at every page, first to last”. Tara mainly reads the *New York Times*: “I read at the library or at school ... I usually turn to the pages dealing with the headlines”.

MAGAZINES

Although Rebecca and James read “no magazines”, other students mentioned *Nylon*, *National Geographic*, *Seventeen*,

This image was published in [the Dutch newspaper] *NRC Handelsblad* a few weeks ago. A black man is doing manual labor, digging with a spade, while behind him in the background another man – Asian, Chinese maybe – is overlooking his labour. He is dressed in a white jacket, wears a gold watch, sunglasses, and a brimmed hat. He carries the tokens of European colonial power, yet is visibly Asian. This picture accompanied an article explaining how the Chinese are taking control over Congo’s mineral resources. Fifteen percent is now in the hands of Chinese companies. The Chinese man, then, has a very arrogant look on his face. The African man, then, looks away – awry, embarrassed, resentful. Even if the article did not mention it, 15% for the Chinese means 85% of the industry is – in ethnic terms – owned and controlled by whites. African companies, with African non-white money backing them, play no role in Congo’s mineral exploitation.

Of course, the Chinese boss in the picture does not only see the black laborer, he also sees a photographer pointing his camera at the scene of the African working and at him in his shiny attire. The photograph is property of AFP, which has its headquarters in Paris. AFP sends out photographers around the globe, and then caters primarily to a Western audience. The picture is white owned, and white controlled. So we see an African man who is performing physical labour for a Chinese man who is taking over his economy. But we also see he’s photographed by a representative of the people that still own 85% of his country’s mineral business – who have the power to photograph him, with the consent of his onlooking boss, even if he feels angry and resentful. While the Chinese now hold 15% of the market and the questionable privilege of being presented as arrogant bosses, we can only wonder which is worse, the humiliating labor or the humiliating picture, and also where the black man’s resentment stems from.

In *The Civil Contract of Photography* Ariella Azoulay talks about a new kind of global citizenship, of which the proof is not a paper or a passport. People may be denied a nationality, land, or power, but as they are photographed and seen, they exist. They become a political reality. In this light this image really takes another turn. The worker is unhappy, but he is also put on the global visibility map by others in a way that is not flattering and over which he has no control. To me, this is a true lesson: only by inserting our own spectatorship in the equation of the photograph, we can see the reality, political or otherwise, that has informed the image.

Cosmopolitan, *Discovery*, *People*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Time*.

ONLINE

Sandra spends “lots of time on Facebook, deviantArt, and YouTube”, Angela spends “at least an hour online a day” on her laptop and iPad. Rebecca tweets while Tara (“laptop, cellphone, iPod, etc.”) blogs on Tumblr. Sherry also blogs: “I do not pay for anything and if I don’t use a computer, I use my Blackberry ... I spend a lot of time online usually for teen things like Facebook, but usually for homework I use Google”.

TELEVISION

Likes: *SportsCenter*, *Vampire Diaries*, *Jersey Shore*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *Modern Family*, *Cougar Town*, *No Ordinary Family*, *Degrassi*, *Bad Girls Club*,

One Tree Hill.

RADIO

None of the students said they listened to the radio, with the exception of Sherry: “when I’m cleaning or just in that mood”.

BOOKS

Angela is currently reading J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* and just finished reading *Love You Hate You Miss You* by Elizabeth Scott. James reads “mostly conspiracy books, the book I am currently reading now is *Angels & Demons* [Dan Brown]”. Rebecca’s recent reads include “the Harry Potter series, *Crank* [by Ellen Hopkins], and *The Cider House Rules* [John Irving]. Tara’s “all time favourite book” is *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, as well as *East Of Eden* by John Steinbeck. □

RELATIONSHIP STATUS

CURATOR AND WRITER MANUEL SEGADE – WHO OPENED HIS FACEBOOK ACCOUNT FOUR YEARS AGO AND NOW HAS 872 FRIENDS – COMMENTS ON THE PROFILE OF THE ‘CLICK SELF’.



ABOVE Photo: Ray-Franco Bouly **BELOW** The author's profile picture on Facebook



One day, when I was working at the Galician Center for Contemporary Art (Santiago de Compostela, Spain), I remember the queer activist and artist Del LaGrace Volcano telling that when s/he joined Facebook, s/he was astonished to find that there was already another fake Del LaGrace Volcano on the social network with – of course

– tons of friends. “So what did you do?”, I asked. “What could I do? I’ve added him as a friend” Del answered. Queer theories of subjectivity contain the most politically advanced propositions about contemporary instability and the precariousness of the self. But is there anything queerer than to assume that another person can manage

your public subjectivity and then incorporate that openly with one click?

Precariousness is a currently a prominent theme in sociology and political science. In our post-Fordist society social relations are continuously being articulated and reinvented through the labour system. Social networks were originally developed as communities of workers demonstrated their skills and interacted with the others in search of opportunities or to share knowledge within a particular field of interest. They were designed following a concrete protocol that allowed the users to express themselves in a narrow frame of action. But precisely because of this constricted arena, we can read easily the strategies of production of the self that are precariously constructed through such networks. That the inter-bility and the precariousness of the self. But is there anything queerer than to assume that another person can manage

intertwined spaces. The question remains if its networks were built with regard to our actual way of being, or if they are being constructed through them. Is Facebook a sophisticated media that is having subjective effects which we cannot even guess right now?

Following one of the rules of cyberspace, the user of a social network such as Facebook is a consumer and a producer at the same time. When a person posts something, everybody can react and express with a comment or a ‘like’ click. The latter is the most minimal affirmation or feedback – the simplest way of interaction one could ever imagine. What is remarkable is the way this information is distributed and the way our judgments on these inputs are strategically placed at the same level of importance. Today its easy to commit politically by adding yourself to a Facebook group. As Malcolm Gladwell recently wrote in *The New Yorker*, a social network

campaign gets so many people involved because it does not ask too much from them. It’s only a click. But is that commitment trivial? Even in terms of language the banal ‘like’ that you can assert on any action of the other, is an affective chain that goes from one to the other: the relation is public for all the rest, but is developed in a line that is adding one plus one to the other. The sociologist Eva Illouz reflects in her book *Cold Intimacies* about how emotions serve to represent the cultural definitions of our personalities – represented in particular relations but defined in cultural and social terms. If we translate that into Facebook’s immense world of micro-relations, we have a great map of the way we identify with each other.

The construction of the self in capitalism went through a rigidly specialized emotional culture and the media was always part of its deeply institutional dimension. Like any other tool of self representation, social networks are vehicles to ‘textualize’ us, to make us readable. But on Facebook a (self-defined) user competes in the construction of private relations through the public manipulation of affects. It precisely organizes a public presentation of emotional and private relations through motivation: the more you get represented the more you increase your participation with a click.

We know that the click is perverse. We know that not only our posts, but each click, is content – meaning, information – that we freely offer to others to be exploited or rented by the engine. The public failure is that the web is taking over through such market strategies. But at the same time each of our expressions is an emotional index that touches any other in a one-to-to way that comes back on ourselves. This kind of ‘click self’ might also reverse the new technological fundamentalism and open new ways of being which need to be researched as part of why, as Facebook booms, our newspapers are becoming more and more distant from the centers of the production of subjectivity. While I’m writing this, Del LaGrace is fighting with Facebook to get ‘transgender’ to appear as an option when you select your sex on your profile. In a click. □

‘OLD NEWS’ TO ME

Art historian and curator Lars Bang Larsen went to high school with Jacob Fabricius, the fellow Dane behind the non-profit free newspaper ‘Old News’, featured in ‘The Last Newspaper’.

FOCUS

For Freud, the old news is the big news. It sticks with you, indelibly, as the load that you keep pushing ahead. Sooner or later it will accumulate into symptomatic headlines with war-size typography, or – if your repressive mechanisms are more successful – stay buried on page 27, next to the mental equivalents of reports from the poultry fair.

Jacob Fabricius’s *Old News* explores the inverse economy between psychoanalysis and the mass media (the latter favoring what they sell as new news, of course). The obvious take on his project would favor a cultural analysis that looks for displacements and transferences that produces the psychic economy of ‘news’. However as one of those who knows the man before he trod his curatorial loafers, other perspectives lend themselves more urgently from the dark tabloid recesses of my mind. Sometimes you just can’t pretend to be an objective aesthetic arbiter.

When high school began, a first defeat was seeing somebody from the third year snatching away the girl that all the guys – whether straight, gay or sexually indifferent geek – were in love with. Wearing blonde sideburns, torn jeans with a very large buckle in the shape of a cow’s skull, and cowboy boots that hid a toe ring (!), Jacob ‘Fab’ Fabricius had already struck that fine balance that lets the weaker sex know that here is a guy who *understands*, yet without being soft around the edges. This feat earned him the title of ‘The Rattler’. He would look like somebody innocently chilling on a hot stone. Next thing you knew he had sunk his fangs into his victim.

A few years later he caught up with me again, thinking I was the only guy to have made it across the cultural abyss from the Jutland region and onto the art scene in the Danish capital, Copenhagen. I was nobody’s fool. However at the second or third opening I attended, who else but Fab, looking as chilled as usual in his new habitat, was holding court with the collective Superflex (in better days, the epitome of Copenhagen street cool). Working in a non-profit space, Fab put his Jutland accent to use in a highly mercantile way; a paradox he didn’t seem to mind.

By the soft consonants and slightly drawn-out vowels, you could just tell that this guy was from a part of the country where communities are still based on values like trust and humbleness, and it made you want to *buy*. “You, too, can become a great collector”, this accent seemed to say. The Rattler was back to kill.

In his capacity as a (not for) profit gallerist he offered to sell me a work. It was a small and strange, and not very inexpensive piece to be worn as a necklace, made by the artist Jakob Boeskov. It consisted of a plastic figure of, as the title describes, an *Up-and-Coming Art Critic with Suede T-Shirt and AIDS-bow* (1996). This bespectacled and politically correct aesthete was “*made* for you”, Fab told me. There seemed to be a double entendre in this message. I couldn’t crack the code and slowly, it took over my mind. Was it really made for me? Was it *about* me? *This* was how the Copenhagen scene perceived me? And if so, what if I ignored it and didn’t buy the work? What would they be saying about me, the up-and-coming art critic with a provincial music taste and a complete lack of self-irony? On the other hand if I *did* buy the work it didn’t even offer the possibility to appear like the big man (it is about 4 inches tall). In the end, it was the only way out, though. Fab’s words rang like a curse in my head: “It is *made* for you...” I slouched to the gallery and took the fucking thing off the market by paying Fab his blood money. It was a “nice surprise” that I wanted to buy it, he beamed. If there is someone who makes people “shake their money in time”, it is The Rattler. (Suede paraphrase, in case you were wondering.)

But worst of all, and this is the real psycho-semiotic clinch: whatever capability I have for communicating in The Queen’s English – the *sine qua non* for somebody coming from the linguistic and cultural island that is sweet home Denmark – I owe to Fabricius *pere*, an intense man named Carl who wears tartan trousers and used to laugh in a way that Pink Floyd has immortalized on *The Wall*. As the embodiment of English didactics he drilled irregular verbs and spilled red ink in my essays from the 3rd grade onwards. Thus every thought of mine that is communicated to the wider world, goes, on a symbolic level, through Fabricius DNA. Not even a parricide could solve this.

Some news just won’t get old. □



Installation view of ‘Old News’ on the fifth floor of the New Museum. Photo: Latitudes

NOTHING NEW ABOUT OLD NEWS

Old News is a project organized by Jacob Fabricius about information, media, and recycled, reprinted news which has to date since 2004 has incorporated eight newspaper editions as well as *Old News México*. Artists redistribute the news by clipping images, articles, and words from newspapers and creating a second-generation, nonprofit, copyright-free newsprint publication. Artist

Karl Holmqvist can be heard reading from *Old News* in the New Museum elevator – “there’s nothing new about Old News...” – and this audio is presented in its original vinyl form on the fifth floor as part of *The Last Newspaper*.

Fabricius introduced the first *Old News* with these words: “There are 4,000 holes in the road in Blackburn, Lancashire, or one twenty-sixth of a hole per person, according to a council survey. If Blackburn is typical, there are two million holes in Britain’s roads, and 300,000 in London”. This was what John Lennon read in *Daily Mail* ‘Far and Near’

column on 17 January 1967. Lennon transformed the news into the last verse of the song ‘A Day In A Life’, the last song on The Beatles’ 1967 album *Sergeant Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Reading about the 4,000 potholes in Blackburn, Lancashire, may start you thinking about the flood of information that is constantly printed and possibly read by millions of people around the globe. You may begin to think about the amount of information that is accessible to an individual. Read, unread, understood, misunderstood. □

EDITORIAL CURATORIAL

‘The Last Post’, ‘The Last Gazette’, ‘The Last Register’, ‘The Last Star-Ledger’, ‘The Last Monitor’ and now ‘The Last Observer’ have set out in part to address the role of the curator versus the role of the editor. Our Cluj-Napoca correspondent Marcel Janco takes up the story.

The assumption that the artist is the sole protagonist within the contemporary art field no longer holds true. There have always been different players in the field (the critic, the patron, the church, and so on). But today perhaps a key word to understand the game of visual art would be cohabitation, by which I mean to acknowledge that, for instance, the so-called Young British Artists (YBAs) wouldn't have been the YBAs without Charles Saatchi, Gregor Muir, Karsten Schubert, Sadie Coles and Jay Jopling, and 'Relational Art' wouldn't be what it is without Hans Ulrich Obrist, Nicolas Bourriaud and Air de Paris gallery – although I'm afraid we won't find such names treated the same way as the artists in the art history books.

Although the artist will doubtless remain the captain of the team, she or he won't be capable of pushing the rules without the presence of other players, namely gallerists, collectors, auctioneers, curators and editors. Yet before approaching the comparison between curators and editors we need to provide some details about the current state of curating.

During a conference at the New Museum early last year, architect Marco De Michelis stated that “curators are the new artists”, while during a recent dOCUMENTA (13) press conference artistic director Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev emphasized how uncomfortable she was with the term curator. Like it or not, over the last twenty years the figure of the curator has reached a hitherto unimaginable position of creative power. Following the legacy of legendary curators like Harald Szeemann or Lucy Lippard, the 1990s and 2000s have witnessed the rise of figures such as Hans Ulrich Obrist, Jens Hoffmann, Maria Lind, and Alison Gingeras, whose practices produce a kind of authorship which we cannot only associate with the mere organization of exhibitions.

In this scenario the only way to understand certain exhibitions is to approach them as multilayered works of art, as sprawling post-appropriation readymades made possible through the gathering of other art works. Exhibitions are like big 'Chinese boxes' in which the concept of artist and the concept of curator are continually shifting. *New*

York Times writer John Tagliabue similarly characterized the scandal of the Italian food corporation Parmalat as a Chinese box in which it was impossible to find where the money (i.e. = authorship) was, as it wandered between fictitious profits and complex offshore companies. In the November 2003 issue of *Artforum*, curator Catherine David stated that “many people (in this case, too, I prefer to say ‘authors’) with whom I am working no longer correspond to the economic, social, and cultural figure of the artist as it has been constituted in the modern age. And they don't worry too much about it”. Once we equalize artists and curators as authors, it becomes much easier to incorporate other figures, other authors such as gallerists, auctioneers and in this case, editors.

Authorship is at the very core of the matter at hand. I've always envisioned curating like a pharmaceutical cure for the current state of visual art. Yet there is a parallel form of treatment: a homeopathic and non-invasive one. The former analogy – to curating – implies a very direct and visible form of authorship whereas the latter analogy – to

editing – cures through manipulation (here to be understood with a positive sense) and by employing a behind-the-scenes modus operandi. Obviously, given the many exhibition catalogues that are produced, many curators are also editors. This is problematic as their main goal will always be the exhibition and what we need to have understood more widely now is that making a catalogue, or editing a magazine, although people almost never look at the colophon, is a practice that contains a kind of authorship that is upgrading the notion of authorship itself.

While so-called ‘creative curators’ are now portraying the making of an exhibition as a directly-authored practice, near to the making of a work of art in many ways, the editor will always operate in a different way which is choral and schizophrenic par excellence.

Yet unfortunately our (art) society is not yet ready to accept more indirect forms of creativity and therefore it is difficult to publicly frame the activity of editors. This frustration has perhaps forced many editors to become curators (think of Francesco Bonami or João Ribas)

in order to finally reach a position where authorship can move within a stream of recognition. Museum-based editors are more often than not treated like mere technicians (we don't even know who they are) and only institutions such as Witte De With in Rotterdam or the dOCUMENTA (13) team have publicly prominent editorial figures, Monika Szewczyk and Bettina Funcke respectively, as their heads of publications.

In the editorial of *The Last Post*, the first of these differently-titled newspapers produced for *The Last Newspaper* exhibition, Latitudes wrote that “Curating per se – of content or of people – could be seen as one of several parallel models of editing and vice-versa”. I'm sure a deep analysis of these two figures is ever more necessary. At the same time, I dare say that the practice of editing – an indirect practice based on collaboration and outsourcing which is never clear of the agency of its signature – is now the next thing we need to more fully understand and digest in order to embrace a more complete and multifaceted perception of our cultural landscape. □

demanding long hours for low pay from their editors; the company refutes these claims, saying that 75% of their employers earn as much or more than their last job (the average wage for a Patch editor is \$35-40k), and that the hours are standard for new start-up companies. There is also some fear from local organizations that Patch will come to dominate the local advertising market.

Evil or not, I spoke to Warren Webster, Patch's President – a former local newspaper executive – to learn about the Patch angle on reporting the news.

What is Patch's goal?

We want to give the local residents of small communities the most important information with which to live their lives. That means news, information, business information, special offers, events – the ten most

Traditional media is contracting, the big dailies don't have the resources to cover local news.

important things you need to know every day.

How is it funded?

Advertising. We are connecting local advertisers with their consumers. Every cluster of sites has an advertising manager, who is somebody local who evangelizes the site, is a member of the local chamber of commerce, sells the ad products, shows the advertisers how to use our DIY ad system, and arranges local deals.

Now is the perfect timing for this – eyeballs and ad dollars are coming together, and there's a big opportunity for local content. It's an untapped frontier.

How much original journalism do Patch sites generate?

We believe in journalism, not user-generated content. Each site is a combination of curation and journalism, and every local edition has a freelance budget with which to hire writers, including for investigations. We also see bloggers within each market as potential content partners, rather than competition.

We see what we do as being complementary to local newspapers – there are things that they do well, and things that we do well. Traditional media is contracting, and the big dailies don't have the resources to cover local news as they once did. On a micro level, there's a lot we can do that they can't.

How do you ensure that your reporting is reliable?

It's something that we are constantly addressing. So far, our writers have done really well, and they get a lot of oversight from their regional editors to ensure that all the stories are properly vetted.

What is the structure of the operation?

Each local edition has an editor in that community, with an average of 6.6 years of journalism experience. All edition editors report to a regional editor who has fifteen or more years' experience. Patch needs to operate as a local media company in each region. From our base in New York, we provide the platform, the support and the guidance.

We're also partnering with twenty-five journalism schools across the country to provide students with experience working on their local Patch edition, either as interns or for school credits.

Why haven't you launched yet in Manhattan?

We want our first efforts to be focused on under-served communities, where Patch is most needed and has the greatest chance of success. We're currently in Hoboken and Bronxville, and opening in Brooklyn. We're keeping an eye on Manhattan, though. We're the kind of company that wants to test everything. All we have to do is hire the right people, give them the equipment they need, and flip a switch at our end to make it happen. The nature of our platform is that it is so scalable, it's a highly efficient operation.

Where do you see the future of Patch?

I hope that we become the trusted brand for local news and information, a safe place for people to share information. We're still an infant company, working up to 500 sites. In the long term, I could see us having so much regional content that we almost become like a wire service for other media, as well for as our own sites. All news happens somewhere local. □



THE NEXT NEWSPAPER: PATCH

PROFILING THE ORGANIZATIONS, PROJECTS, INITIATIVES AND INDIVIDUALS REDEFINING INK-AND-PAPER NEWS

Patch

**Andrew Losowsky interviews
Warren Webster, company president.**



Warren Webster. Courtesy Patch.

At the recent Online News Association conference, the Chairman and CEO of AOL, Tim Armstrong, faced an unusual question about the company's new community journalism arm:

“Is Patch evil?”.

An online network of 309 hyperlocal news sites at the time of writing, Patch.com is an attempt to harness community-specific news and information through a vast network of local journalists and editors.

There's some serious money behind the operation, too – \$50m is being invested this year, much of which is being spent employing 800 journalists, which makes it the largest hirer of journalists in the country, and probably the world.

It has its critics, however. People have accused Patch of

GIVE PEACE A CHANGE



REPORT

On Coping With Change could not have been a more fitting title for the conversation led by Francesco Mancini, Director of Research at the International Peace Institute at the New Museum on 28 October. While he spoke directly about coping with change in international politics in regards to seven ‘mega-trends’, the conversation held much resonance in both the physical and conceptual space of *The Last Newspaper*. The event was the second in a series of Perpetual Peace Project conversations organized by the Slought Foundations’ Aaron Levy which are taking place in the Perpetual Peace Arena – a public programming space (a circle of blue carpet) on the fourth floor of the museum. An intimate circle of individuals surrounded Mancini as he spoke about change, trends in change, and the individual and institutional ability to adapt to change. Mancini noted that although his work deals specifically with

international politics, “it can be adapted to a lot of other things”. He asserted that there is, in fact, nothing new about change. While the concept of change is not new, it is the unprecedented speed of change that has rendered the individual, institutional, and bureaucratic capacity to adapt too slow. This gap, between the rate of change and subsequent reactions, between “the fast train and the slow carriage,” is the real issue. This is visible not only within the institutions that work on the seven mega-trends – the unprecedented growth of people and urbanization; technology, its posits and gaps; disparities in resources; renewable energy; environmental degradation; violence and insecurity; and shifting influence and powers – but across disciplines. The newspaper and journalism industries are paradigms of institutions largely unable to adapt and cope with the change that surrounds them. Yet, can we blame them? Mancini suggested that open source, free and democratic technology serves as the antithesis of the newspaper institution. While the technological industries are developing exponentially, the newspaper industry – one that has functioned in a consistent fashion for hundreds of years – cannot adapt quickly enough. Mancini also suggested that our understanding of how to create change, by aggregating

Irina Chernyakova on the ‘Perpetual Peace Project’ of ‘The Last Newspaper’ partner organization the Slought Foundation.

individuals to form institutions that slowly compromise on issues, usually results in much debate, but little final action. These discussions do not occur at the necessary speed, resulting in a diminishing ability and capacity to react. “We are reactive”, he states: when there is a problem, it is fixed. What is lacking, however, is a discussion of the broader agenda, and the institutions that should be in charge of this do not have the resources and thus are incapable. In a recent interview with The Art Blog, Aaron Levy argued that theory “allows us to sit back and think about our situation”, and thus should be reintroduced. A theoretical filter could posit a framework for our actions. This is the core of the Perpetual Peace Project: to bring together theorists and professionals through a series of symposiums, events, and conversations, while engaging the public through the display and participation of the events. This unusual matching could produce necessary interesting, progressive insight and ways to move forward. *The Last Newspaper* exhibition functions to provide a physical setting for such a discourse. Conversations take place on Thursday evenings, around 7 pm, and are shortly posted online (www.perpetualpeaceproject.org). In a quick discussion after Mancini’s talk, Levy mentioned that paradoxically, although



Installation view of a Slought Foundation media station in the lobby of the New Museum. Photo: Latitudes

the idea behind the conversations within the gallery space is to encourage engagement, the opposite seems to occur. This particular event was set up in a ‘conversation configuration’ – a loose, circular arrangement of chairs. Yet it was received as a lecture at which Mancini spoke, and a Q&A followed. The presence of *The Last Newspaper’s* partner organizations is based on engaging the public – yet are the methods of engagement actually effective? Perhaps a more effective format might be a ‘pecha kucha’ of sorts, which is orchestrated around a physical space of participation and a chairperson, and yet where there is much less pressure for the active participation required for a discussion to occur. As *The Last Newspaper* moves into the second half of its run, how can the New Museum critique itself on its ability to cope with change? A talk such as this one can spark conversations and present choices for evaluation. The art on the walls cannot constantly change – or can it? Yet change can be understood not through a period of weeks or months, or even exhibitions – but as a continuous process. □



Installation view of the Perpetual Peace Arena on the fourth floor of the New Museum. Photo: Latitudes

PPP
IN BRIEF

The Perpetual Peace Project, initiated by the Slought Foundation, explores philosopher Immanuel Kant’s 1795 essay on the idea of peace with social theorists and political practitioners. The project takes place through a panoply of mediums at various scales – films, symposiums, exhibitions and so on. It animates and occupies the ancillary and interstitial spaces of the New Museum, engaging the public in dialogue about cultural and socio-political affairs through collaborations with cultural producers, communities, universities, and governments. It seeks to

frame the discourse about how peace is negotiated and understand by encouraging discursive moments within the space of the New Museum for dialogue, interaction, and reflection. Media stations scattered throughout the building allow the public to witness its film initiative, which features conversations about contemporary prospects for reducing geopolitical conflict. The public programming space positioned on the 4th floor, houses a variety of events and conversations, ranging from the formal to the informal in regards to the project and the issues it raises. □

Dear Arianna Huffington

ADAM CHADWICK ATTEMPTS TO GET IN TOUCH WITH ‘THE HUFFINGTON POST’ FOUNDER FOR HIS DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT THE NEWS INDUSTRY.



Arianna Huffington of the Huffington Post. (CC) JD Lasica, socialmedia.biz.



Whether or not Arianna Huffington ends up doing an interview for *Fit to Print* is still up in the air. The team has forwarded her various requests and does hope she will eventually respond to one of them. Why would it be great to sit down with her for an interview? It may seem obvious, but her co-founded news aggregation site, *The Huffington Post*, still seems to be the talk of the town. It’s the most visited news blog on the internet. Some of the debate circling *The Huffington Post* is good, some of it bad, but the bulk of that chatter is coming from legacy media executives and traditional news organizations. After all, *The Huffington Post* has boasted over 40m unique visitors to its site according to a recent *Business Insider* report. Much of its content is linked back to

sites such as nytimes.com and others. Legacy news organizations continue to feel pressure from The HP because of what many view as theft of their original content. Her take on these and other issues, outside the comfort zone of an appearance on *The Charlie Rose Show* or another traditional media circuit, might prove worthwhile for her. If nothing else, it would prove to her audience that she can take one-on-one questions from a pro like Keith Olberman from MSNBC, while also taking the time to talk to ‘nobodies’ such as the *Fit to Print* team. But it doesn’t seem that she is open to such requests. When I plugged “Arianna Huffington interview” into a YouTube search, it came up with various pages of her talking to reporters from Bloomberg, Al Jazeera, MSNBC, and of course, *The Charlie Rose Show*. The closest matches I found to any ‘independent’ circuit interviews came from *The Henry Rollins Show* on IFC, Harvard Center for Public Leadership, and a few questions she answered while walking past a female reporter at The Webby Awards. I would be interested to get her take on the future of long-form

100 YEARS AGO...

'The News-Herald' (Hillsboro, Highland Co., Ohio) 1886-1973 (changed title to 'The Hillsboro Press Gazette' (1973-1985), November 10, 1910.



Image: Library of Congress / Ohio Historical Society

investigative journalism (especially since she has set-up an investigative fund through her blog), as well as how reading habits are different online compared to print, the dangers bloggers and independent journalists face with libel lawsuits, how search engine optimization is playing a major role in the news industry, and several other vital topics of conversation. Wasn’t it Huffington’s intention when she helped to create The HP to provide an open platform for ordinary citizens outside of the mainstream media to have their voices heard? Many critics look down on The HP because of its occasional gossip story, such as the Tiger Woods scandal (which happened to spike the site’s traffic exponentially). However, the site does an amazing job at allowing non-traditional journalists the opportunity to build a reputation and perhaps even a career by providing them with a jumping-off platform where their stories can reach a wider audience. But how do you feel about the future of the newspaper industry Arianna? How do you respond to critics? The ball is in your court if you care to email me at adamgchadwick@gmail.com □