



Theater Gates: Artist as Catalyst for Community Development

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Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces

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Can art/design practices still play a critical role in a society where the difference between art and advertising have become blurred and where **artists and cultural workers** have become a necessary part of **capitalist production**?

Nowadays artistic and cultural production play a central role in the process of capital valorization and, through 'neo-management', **artistic critique has become an important element of capitalist productivity.**

This has led some people to claim that **art had lost its critical power** because any form of critique is automatically **recuperated and neutralized by capitalism.**

Different Strategies of Opposition

What is needed is widening the field of artistic intervention, in order to oppose the totalization of capitalism. The objective should be to undermine the imaginary environment necessary for its reproduction.

Imaginary environment - not external just happens to be like that at this moment

Some modern artists, far from offering a chance for society to collectively reflect on the imaginary figures, it depends upon for its very consistency, its self-understanding.



How is architecture related?

Arch public part env
Is architecture p
merely aesthetic
political agents
space?

Liberal consensus

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Properly political questions always involve decisions which require us to make a choice between conflicting alternatives. This incapacity to think politically, is to a great extent due to the **uncontested hegemony of liberalism**.



The dominant tendency in liberal thought is characterized by a rationalist and individualist approach which is unable to grasp adequately the pluralistic nature of the social world, with the conflicts that pluralism entails, conflicts for which no rational solution could ever exist, hence the dimension of antagonism that characterizes human societies.

One of the main tenets of this liberalism is the rationalist belief in the availability of a **universal consensus based on reason**. Liberalism has to negate antagonism since, by bringing to the fore the inescapable moment of decision - in the strong sense of **having to decide in an undecidable terrain** - antagonism reveals the very limit of any rational consensus.

agonism:

political theory that emphasizes the potentially positive aspects of certain (but not all) forms of political conflict.



ne social from the political.

political is the internal order or logic of a system that chooses one particular way over others and at its very base is a concept that can be changed

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Society is not to be seen as the **unfolding of a logic exterior to itself.**

Every order is the **temporary and precarious** articulation of contingent practices.



Things could always be otherwise and therefore every order is predicated on the **exclusion of other possibilities.** It is in that sense that it can be called 'political' since it is the **expression of a particular structure of power relations.**

It is in this sense that one ha

The social is the practices of everyday acts dependent on the **political institution** and which are **taken for granted**, as if they were **self-grounded**.

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The frontier between the social and the political is essentially **unstable** and requires **constant displacements and renegotiations** between social agents.

Every order is therefore political and based on some form of exclusion. There are **always other possibilities** that have been **repressed** and that **can be reactivated**. The articulatory practices through which a certain order is established and the meaning of social institutions is fixed are 'hegemonic practices'.

Every hegemonic order is susceptible of being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices, i.e. practices which will attempt to **disarticulate the existing order so as to install another form of hegemony**.

The '**agonistic**' **struggle** recognizes that society is always politically instituted and never forgets that the **terrain in which hegemonic interventions take place is always the outcome of previous hegemonic practices and that it is never an neutral one**. This is why it **denies the possibility** of a **non-adversarial democratic politics** and criticizes those who, by ignoring the dimension of 'the political', reduce politics to a set of supposedly technical moves and neutral procedures.

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hegemony is a construction

An agonistic conception of democracy acknowledges the **contingent character** of the **hegemonic politico-economic articulations** which **determine the specific configuration** of a **society at a given moment**.

They are **precarious and pragmatic constructions** which can be **disarticulated and transformed** as a result of the **agonistic struggle**.

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***The public space
not for consensus
but battleground***

The most important consequence is that it challenges the widespread conception that, albeit in different ways, informs most visions of the **public space conceived as the terrain where consensus can emerge**. For the agonistic model, on the contrary, the **public space is the battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted**, without any possibility of final reconciliation.

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