Guest Editors - Kristopher Holland and Hallie Jones

Epilogue

Hallie: As I stare at the blank page, I find myself thinking, "Damn, I wish we thought to record some of our conversations!" during our planning sessions for the 2014 International Žižek Studies Conference. We had so many conversations about both specific and far-reaching topics, including:

- Formal incorporation of artistic and creative activities into 2014 International Žižek Studies Conference
- Questioning the implicit norms of "conferencing" as a social and pedagogical program in terms of its actual formal qualities (paper presentations, panels, talking heads, taking notes, sequencing of time, agenda setting and topical grouping, hierarchies of voice/presence/power, the use of space, etc.)
- The hegemony of written language in relation to the current episteme and where/how artistic representations are situated within this regime
- The potential for artistic and creative forms to span ideological divisions and populate the negative space between binary oppositions in thought/language through prefiguration and the subsequent generation of new images

- How institutional deprofessionalization of the fine arts - as a research-based subject within the academy - limits human thinking, communicative innovation and the expansion of knowledge
- How our training in critical epistemology is compounded by being an "artist", the implications this places on our thinking and the ways it affects our careers in higher education by positioning us as interventionists and agitators

I feel somewhat of a loss in our failure to capture the discussions, for in these moments we were passionately engaged in a process of creative generation that was pivotal and transformative for me. As a practicing "interdisciplinary artist" and "interdisciplinary scholar", I never fit neatly into a professional position, academic discourse, social space, cultural group or discipline (artistic, academic or otherwise). My experience in higher education is a catch 22. Scholars tend to be unresponsive to creative and artistic scholarship as it falls within the domain of "art" – Artists tend to be disinterested or disengaged from scholarship as it falls within the domain of the "written". For the artist/scholar, however, thinking and making are intertwined. Whatever the underlying drive – be it curiosity, cultural critique, social intervention, emotional expression, etc... - artist/scholars are either wrestling with complicated ideas and/or are complicating ideas. Interpreting and creating meaning in a plurality of ways, for the artist/scholar established conventions for communicating scholarly ideas is limiting when we have the ability to imagine and produce symbolic representations using multimodal forms of expression; images, written text, performance, sound, movement, digital media, sculptural or biological material, social and cultural forms, etc. [1]

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[1] Perhaps the artist/scholar evokes what Baudrillard referred to as the "transparency and obscenity" associated with the collapse of the horizon of meaning, which he conceptualizes as the transpolitical form (Baudrillard, 1990). For him, an obesity of information and communication forms saturates the postmodern cultural landscape. Following this line of thought, written and spoken language in scholarly form may equate to that of the transtheoretical object. The artist, then, whose ties with the symbolic order have been severed, seamlessly leverages multimodal forms of communication where meaning and traditional aesthetics collapse into the transaesthetic object (Gane, 1991).

I wonder if we might not begin to conceive of the actively practicing artist/scholar as engaging in a practice of transhermeneutics where inquiry into meaning occurs during the generative and interlaced processes of making and thinking. The residual symbolic artifact(s) may yield interpretations as transpolitical objects – open to

transtheoretical, transaesthetic, transdisciplinary and transhermeneutic readings. Of particular interest (to me) is the actual process and engagement in practice itself - and the artist/scholar's ability to demystify "creativity" by making the processes that underlie practice TRANSparent... by TRANSlating. Hence, communicating that which is rarely communicated, showing that which is rarely shown and evoking feeling of that which is rarely felt. All these things might be encoded in or inscribed upon an artifact, but I am interested in the transparency of the artistic/scholarly practice and its potential for revealing the implicit. This demands production of a completely different set of artifacts that are documentary in nature.

An exceptionally crude example of transparency documentation in artifactual form can be seen in "*The Shilly-Shally of Holding & Hitching Horses*" (2015): http://youtu.be/-4tbh6lkcoI
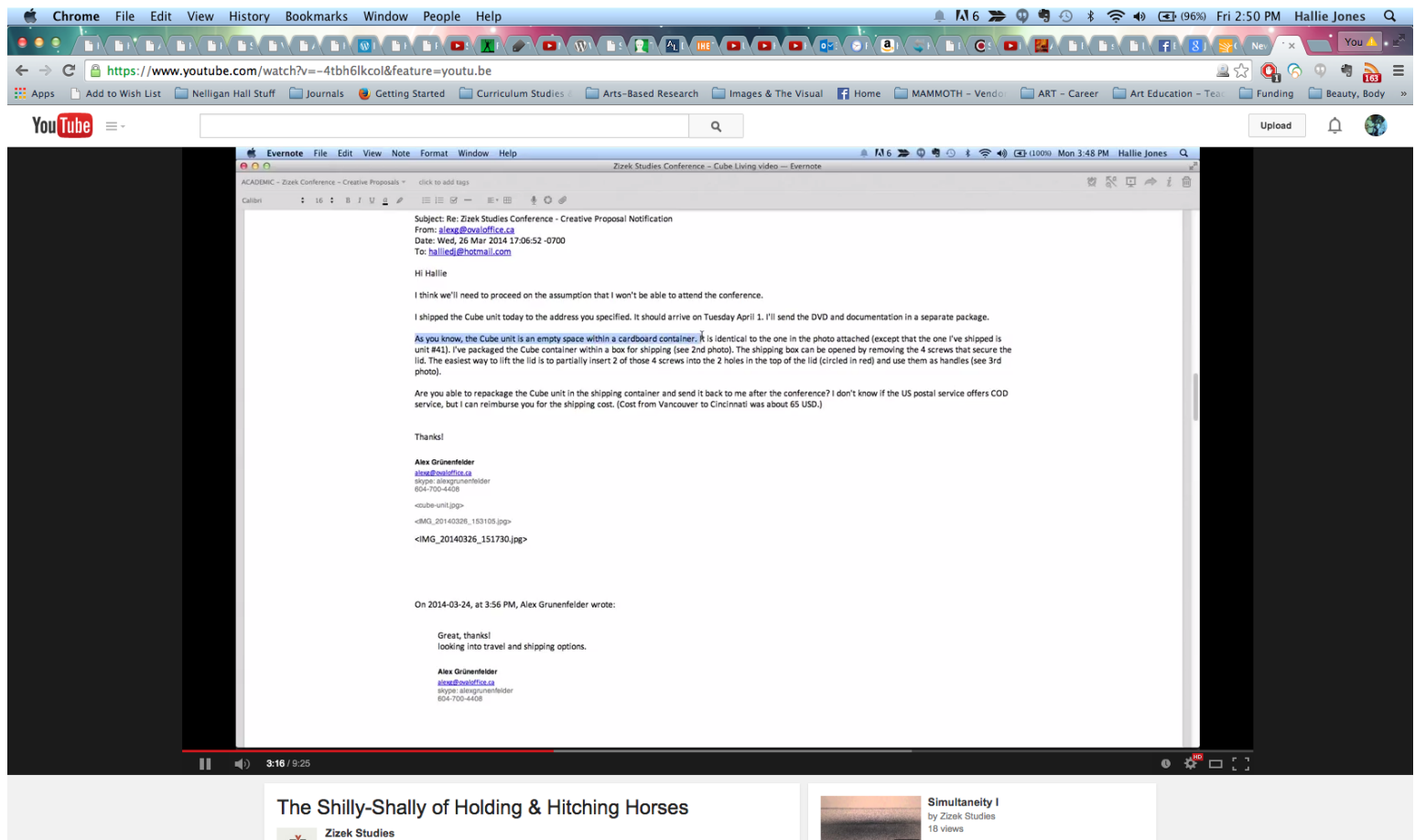
As opposed to an artistic representation, this video makes portions of the process involved with "showing art" and "incorporating art" into the 2014 International Žižek Studies Conference visible. Written email exchanges between the authors and conference participant Alex Grünenfelder are digitally captured as a video recording of a computer screen. Providing transparency into the communicative exchanges concerning its practical aspects while simultaneously illustrating the collaborative processes that underpin production of the art exhibition, this "transaesthetic" object thus fails to evoke an aesthetic response in the same vein as a painting or an installation.

However, I find transparency useful in this particular example because it allows for the practical issues and the collaborative process to be seen. From this, we can extract meaning and implications that can be used to problematize taken for granted norms. We might demonstrate
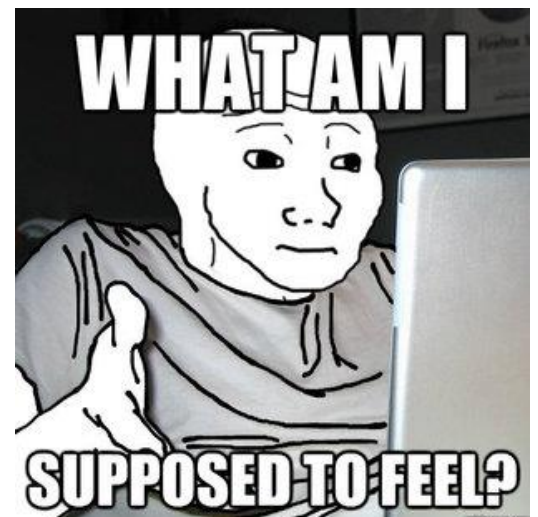
how the practice of "blind review" and its underlying ideological framework impedes participation in scholarly forums by those seeking to contribute in artistic ways. Briefly sketching out the political, practical, economic and cultural values bound up in the ideology of "hierarchy and expertise" that supports the gender-biased "blind review" as a common practice and comparing those to the values undergirding an ideology of "collaboration and creation" can reveal insights to help us understand what we (artists and artist/scholars) are up against when it comes to the tasks of making and legitimizing spaces for our work.

I hold this lingering fear that my readings of philosophical texts, such as Baudrillard's concept of the transpolitical, are viewed as unsophisticated by critical theorists as philosophers. My conceptual orientation toward the text is always something different... as an artist/scholar doing "otherwise". Playing with meaning, thinking through different interpretations of a concept and dancing across the horizon of potential meanings, I am searching for that which compels me to harvest it for artistic "making". It requires a willingness to break from convention. Intuition and an expansive curiosity drive the pursuit of new ideas that are intended for an artistic or creative expression. Based on personal experience, I would point to the sound of two fax machines or dial up modems trying to connect as a metaphor to illustrate the artist/scholar and the theorist/philosopher engaging in discourse (see *Articulating the Making Troubles of Practice*: http://youtu.be/GAxzLdCXUPE). The way of the artist/scholar is always to be doing "otherwise", questioning the "known" and "accepted" territories, continuously posing new questions and creating new possibilities from what we have to work with, be it theory, media, images, material or experiential.

Articulating the Making Troubles of Practice

Throughout the process of planning, organizing and facilitating the conference in Cincinnati, and during the collaborative project of co-editing this special issue of the journal, I found myself feeling overwhelmed by uncertainty. We are artists and scholars, not academics with specialized areas of expertise in a particular theory or discipline... and not artists with a specialized practice in a particular

medium or creative form. Our thinking practices and making practices are enmeshed, forming a messy and chaotic space from which potential concepts, images and material representations might emerge. Our academic and artistic practices are resistant to the institutional norms and disciplinary expectations of "the academy" and "the art world". Our work does not easily fit within the pages of a journal or book and it is oftentimes too academic for exhibition in commercial and non-commercial gallery spaces. Frequently, I experience "disciplinary practices" as an implicit expectation that undermines or completely incapacitates my ability to engage in the productive and creative generation of my contributions in terms of producing "legitimate forms" of "scholarship" and "creative activity".

When approaching both of these service projects (the conference and co-editing this special issue), I felt unqualified because I am not a "properly trained" philosopher, rhetorician, psychoanalytic theorist, critical theorist, etc. What could I possibly contribute that would be of relevance and interest to the respective audience for the conference and the vast readership of the International Journal of Žižek Studies? Should I binge on past issues of the journal and attempt to ground myself in an established discourse? The monumental effort required for such a project cannot be understated. At some point, I realized that our project here and its overarching purpose is not about repetition of what is currently being done in academic and artistic practices. We were not invited to co-edit this special issue of the journal because of our expertise as philosophers or cultural theorists. Rather, we were granted access to an established scholarly platform for the purpose of exploring the possibilities and limitations that develop along the intersections of enmeshed artistic and scholarly practices. With this special issue of the journal and the artistic/creative presentations at the conference, we hoped to demonstrate what Graeme Sullivan characterizes as an "independent identity" for artistic scholarly practices in his book *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the visual arts* (2010). In questioning the purpose of our contribution and its overall relevance to an international academic readership from a variety of disciplinary traditions, I find Sullivan's work to be insightful:

> "Creative and critical inquiry responds to research demands by exploring the *unknown*, and this presents an essential vantage point in critiquing the *known*. This means that the goal of research of constructing new knowledge can be arrived at from different points of view."
>
> (2010, p. xx)

Upon reviewing the submissions from the artists/scholars who are included in this special issue, it became clear that we were presenting a different form of "discourse" to the readership of the journal. Eisner and Barone make a distinction between "literal language" as discursive and the affective domain of artistic forms as nondiscursive in *Arts Based Research* (2012). Many of the ideas and concepts articulated in this special issue represent uncharted territories as they ask us to engage in a hermeneutical shift oriented toward creative possibilities and the conceptual reinterpretation of both material and immaterial forms. The contributions do not offer readers a description of the world's state of affairs so much as "an evocative and emotionally drenched expression that makes it possible to know how others feel" – and in this particular case, how artist/scholars feel, think and create as their practices encounter the works of Slavoj Žižek (Eisner & Barone, 2012: p. 9). This special issue asks the journal's regular readership to step outside of the familiar discourse in terms of content, interpretive frameworks and symbolic form. It also provides a timely space for the publication and exploration of "artistic scholarship" as a complex and compelling form of discourse with interdisciplinary implications that are constructive and potentially consequential. As noted by Sullivan, artists have a unique ability to create and critique phenomena in profound ways that can be used for troubleshooting and innovation within higher education itself (Sullivan, 2010).

As Žižek suggests himself, "the time is to interpret again…. to start thinking".

An exploration of Zizek's "call to action" is captured in the transmedial, transaesthetic and transhermeneutic remixed transposlitical object (see **Horizons of Slippage and Certain-nity… Kool-Aid and Tests:**

Horizons of Slippage and Certain-nity... Kool-Aid and Tests
http://youtu.be/qV1Xp2DqDvw

I still feel somewhat of a loss, as we did not record the countless hours of in-depth conversations that led us to this point. In my imaginary vision of what "could be", we would have included audio files, video clips and excerpts from our conversations for further reflection and reconsideration. Instead, we were tasked with the challenge of filling the negative white space of the page by creating the positive space taking the form of content. It was "the time is to interpret again…. start thinking". This challenge speaks to the special issue of the journal and it will continue to resonate in subsequent years of the conference as we expand the possibilities for, and presence of, artistic and creative activities.

What lies in the horizon of possibility when interdisciplinary artist/scholars are invited to participate in discourse?

Kris: *"…during the collaborative project of co-editing this special issue of the journal, I found myself feeling overwhelmed by uncertainty."* And I, dear readers, find myself thinking of the term '*certain-nity*' (cer-

tan-nity). This word, the combination of certainty or being really certain about something as a/the structure of thinking and being, and a sanity | or insanity, which makes one 'certainly sane' or 'insanely certain.' This notion, taken in jest, yet extremely serious speaks to the expectations and reception of this special journal issue. For example, I am certain this issue's content reflects the hard work of the authors, reflecting a kind of 'certainly sane' point of view. But I am also certain all the behind the scenes intrigue from the Peter Eisenman DAAP building site installation, all the missing works (artists who chose not to participate in this issue), the parallax and parallel art show from the conference at the Hebrew Union College Skirball Museum that is missing from this collection reflects an 'insanely certain' affect that drives my desire to continue this project. To be honest this journal feels too incomplete, and abstracted from the event of the conference art installations and goals of the arts-based philosophy ideas we intended. In addition, the missing voices of those who chose not to publish, did

not want to 'be edited,' or ran out of time to create a document for us here, haunts me. They create layers of *certain-nity* in the negative sense. I want them here, yet am certain of the work we have, and certain those who did answer the second calling for a further iteration of their work in an academic journal form are part of something special.

Thus my *certain-nity* – my 'certain+sanity' pulls me to the place where the conversations about arts-based philosophy, and a future for articulating philosophy in a form other than writing is boldly affirmed and brought forth in this issue, but my other *certain-nity* – my 'certain+insanity' directs me to the dead letter office of ideas about writing, philosophy, the arts, etc., and the self-doubt that comes along with any project of this type.

Perhaps I should say, my *certain-nity* – consists of the moments of certainty that create uncertainty I think we all have this as writers, makers, artists, thinkers, etc. When we put a work into this world there is a secret certainty that it is good, that certain people will 'get it,' and perhaps new friends will be made. There is also a secret doubt that the world won't listen, that no ears will be filled with the inner voice of reading, that no one will 'see' it. Or worse it will be seen and rejected, put out of joint, tarred and feathered by those we wish would join our certainty of ideas and help project the struggle onward.

There is a struggle with *certain-nity* that goes undiagnosed – or is under-diagnosed. The mental blood and guts of editing anything, especially events that you recall differently than others, wished would have reached into different places, sites, and audiences, and all the 'what-ifs' that end up creating entirely different scenarios for this and that grate on your nerves. All the surplus possibilities for reconstructing the history of the event converge into making *un-certain-nity* infect the psyche. Thus a new liminal space is born in which *certain-nity* is allowed for one to document and create a journal issue such as this. All the while *certain-nity* unhinges me, makes me worry and fret about the declaring this and that or making decisions I will regret. This space creates a threshold into new territories, resulting in insomnia, stomach pains, and headaches only Tylenol and Boylan Cane Cola (caffeine) seem to fix.

Why do I stress myself out? Why do I put myself out there to be judged and read? Perhaps because of my *certain-nity* – my insanely devotion to being certain about the power of philosophy and art, or its discourse (both discursive and non-discursive) and the role it plays in my life. I am *insanely certain* about the power of philosophy, art, theory, etc. - so certain I am fanatically devoted to its dissemination – as evidenced by this journal issue.

Hallie: "*…certain-nity unhinges me, makes me worry and fret about the declaring this and that or making decisions I will regret. This space creates a threshold into new territories, resulting in insomnia, stomach pains, and head aches only Tylenol and Boylan Cane Cola (caffeine) seem to fix.*"

After reading your response and considering your concept of "certain-nity", I was inspired to incorporate a visual impression of this notion into the overall image of this remixed Žižek video. Thinking of your comment above and the edited clips as they were merging in After Effects, I could not help but to be reminded of Timothy Leary. I then started thinking about the work of anthropologist Jeremy Narby who is interested in Amazonian epistemologies derived from usage of Ayahuasca. Žižek discusses the realization of universality that emerges from an embedded and culturally contingent location within a particular lifeworld in *Violence* (2008) and connects this to a brief discussion of ethical and aesthetic struggles. He argues that "… a properly universal dimension *explodes from within a particular context and becomes 'for-itself,' and is directly experienced as universal,*" (Žižek, 2008; p. 152).

<interruption> yes but read on…

Kris:
"*Perhaps the most elementary hermeneutic test of the greatness of a work of art is its ability to survive being torn from its original context.*" (Žižek, 2008; p. 152) I would also find, further down that particular page (152) of *Violence* a connection to our troubles and my *certain-nity* that there is value and possibility from taking the works out of context from the DAAP building installation and putting them into the journal.

 "*I was meandering on this idea of universality and how it connects with certain-nity, the idea that we all feel the questionable and uncertain nature of "truth" and "reality" but artists are willing to embrace and reveal this through our work specifically by critiquing,*

troubling and problematizing ideologies and social forms that present a false image of the fixed and finite, the unplastic and immovable, the stable and solid." (Jones, 2015, *This Epilogue*, IJZS)

The way in which we operate, our *certain-nity* as artists perhaps lies in the thought above –as Žižek continues in that section of Violence vetting the notion of *decontextualisation*. I would argue Žižek is right here and on to something beyond art as well. Philosophy, like art survives - thrives even - out of context. Just think: Plato in 21st century Ohio, Kant in New York, and Rousseau in a small Indiana town. So what is 'it' that survives *decontextualisation*? How do we re-cognize the universals – the *universality*? Is this the same point as '*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*'? The instability of a *particular context* is the default

setting – meaning the struggle to maintain and discipline for a stable and particular context creates the moment when we realize its opposite – the *decontextualisation* of art and philosophy is at once both its universality, and ability to '*survive being torn from its original context*' and put into new realities – new uses.

This *decontextualisation* process (as the process for art and philosophy) is sort of like a 'hosting' of the idea for a while, or the hosting of the 'universal context' via a *particular event* or moment. Nietzsche is hosted by Deleuze and Foucault (Žižek, 2008; p. 154), and then passed on to another moment in philosophy. A theory of 'hosting,' or of 'hosted discourse' might be in order.

Hosted Tragedy
https://youtu.be/fDmoKmmJD8E?list=PLub-7l65lF51DZct-uToGibrfTkRwcNnA

In **Hosted Tragedy**, Hallie is reading passages from *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*.

Hosted Violence
https://youtu.be/AOSyURvEdww?list=PLub-7l65lF51DZct-uToGibrfTkRwcNnA

In **Hosted Violence**, Hallie is reading passages from *Violence*.

Hallie: Reflecting on your notion of a "theory of hosting" or of "hosted discourse", I find myself conceptually drawn toward the Latin prefix "trans" as indicating boundary crossing. Interdisciplinary artistic practice and interdisciplinary thinking are TRANS-disciplinary forms. What might happen if we/artist-scholars begin to *render the invisible…visible -* in terms of ideas/ideologies

(thinking) and the process of creating/creations (making) through TRANS-lation and TRANS-parency? Do we need another theory? How can we challenge ourselves to push beyond words, terms and written ideas to draw attention to the TRANS-theoretical, TRANS-historical, TRANS-political, TRANS-aesthetic and TRANS-hermeneutic? Would you agree that historicism, the history of philosophy,

the archeology of ideas and discourse analysis already is a "theory of hosting" and that language complicates as well as facilitates communication and understanding?

As a TRANS-disciplinary reader of texts, I stumble across obstacles in language and terminology. The United States children's television game show *Double Dare* airing in the 1980's and 90's featured an obstacle course where contestants faced a range of physical challenges, such as wading through slime, running on a human-sized hamster wheel, digging in a giant nose full of green goop to find a flag, belly flopping into a pool of mashed potatoes

and having their bodies squeezed between a conveyer belt and a giant (foam) steamroller. With border crossing and the associated practices of TRANS-disciplinarity challenges and problems emerge, much like the obstacle course on *Double Dare*. Do artists have the potential to make these connections more meaningful by *showing* them? I recently stumbled across the *Indiana Philosophy Ontology Project* (https://inpho.cogs.indiana.edu/) while browsing the web. The project uses data mining technologies and concept hierarchies to provide a visual representation of philosophy. Notably, the project is an initiative of the cognitive science program and information sciences.
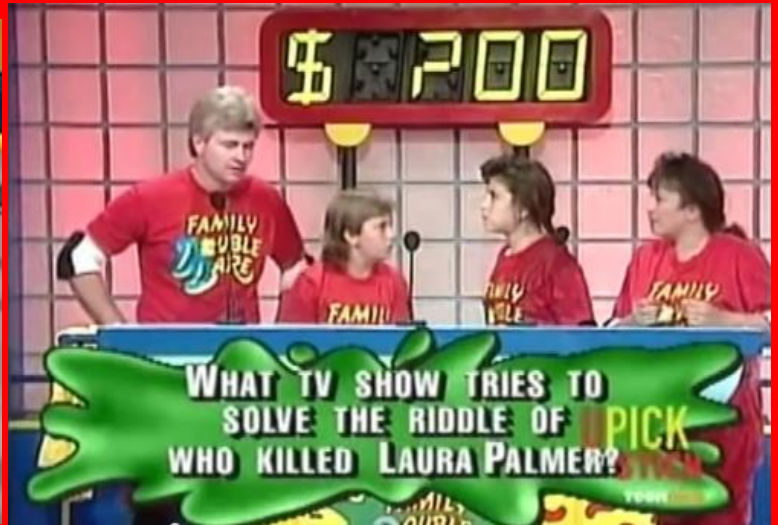
Double Dare & Family Double Dare – Nickelodeon

As intellectuals, artists and social beings, we are shaped by the disciplines and the disciplines shape what we can say and think. In the Žižekian sense, ideology is doing the work of "hosting" as an invisible colonizing force. In the "***Articulating the Making Troubles of Practice*** " video, I incorporate a quote from Mark Deuze's *Media Life* (2012):

> *"Media as the air we breathe, as part of our genetic code, as extensions of our bodily and sensory being, as the interchangeable code of technology and biology – it certainly seems like we have arrived at a crucial point in time, where the unmediated life is inconceivable – even impossible. Media and life are mutually implicated. Any technological system is also a social system… Any and all media must therefore be seen as technical-social or sociotechnical systems - as determining what people can say and experience, while at the*

> *same time being subject to (often subtle) transformations originating from the social processes of their everyday use. (p. 28)*

Do we resist being "hosted" through mechanisms associated with submission to being "hosted", even though we are conscious of this inconsistency? Graeber (2007) juxtaposes the "political ontology of violence" (force and technologies of physical coercion, public understanding that imaginary entities known as "nations" can produce violence and take your life) against the "political ontology of imagination" (whereas imagination is the primary source of power and is likened to notions of the sacred) in his discussion of anarchist political activism (Graeber, p. 406). I freely admit to privileging the imagination, the artistic impulse and experimental practices rather than surrendering to the current status quo and becoming an artist-turned-scholar. Nietzsche places his deficit model of

thinking in contrast to the psychology of the artist, which is the basis for his construction of a model of thinking based in abundance. He characterizes intoxication as the driving force… "The essence of intoxication is the feeling of plentitude and increased energy. (Nietzsche, p. 72)". From here, he goes on to explain how this condition of intoxication functions to create transformation and that through this process of interaction with "all that which he is not" man attains joy in himself and is able to realize perfection in himself. The artist is conceptualized as the anti-Christ because he is the creator, bestowed with the power to transform and create, emerging.... *becoming* through this concept of abundance that is free from the error of reason. Gendered language aside, this is a very feminist idea in essence. Can we make a case that encourages a shift in direction by creating a space for the emergence of the scholar-turned-artist?

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