



CONTINUOUS PROJECT

With Continuous Project Bulletin

Continuous Project is a mirror in time, a resurrection or a rebirth. Its members are editor Bettina Funcke, artists Wade Guyton and Seth Price, and designer Joseph Logan. Since 2003 they have adopted a variety of recuperative strategies that are less about nostalgia for (art) history than they are about the status of the material being reintroduced to the present. Price has argued that “sampling is not concerned with repetition. Its purpose is the creation of new, discrete events. Each reproduction is an original and a new beginning. Each, in fact, is the first in a potentially infinite sequence, which is to say an infinite sequence [...] In any case, there’s no longer such a thing as a copy.”¹

Yet Continuous Project began with copies. The group has used a scanner, printer, and photocopier to produce a majority of its reproductions. It has also held public readings, documented itself on video, duplicated documents for inclusion in other magazines, and published original work in bound volumes. In each case, the serial has been carefully staged within an art context: through institutional invitations and sponsorships, with launches in art spaces where the publications are distributed, or located within art-oriented publications.²

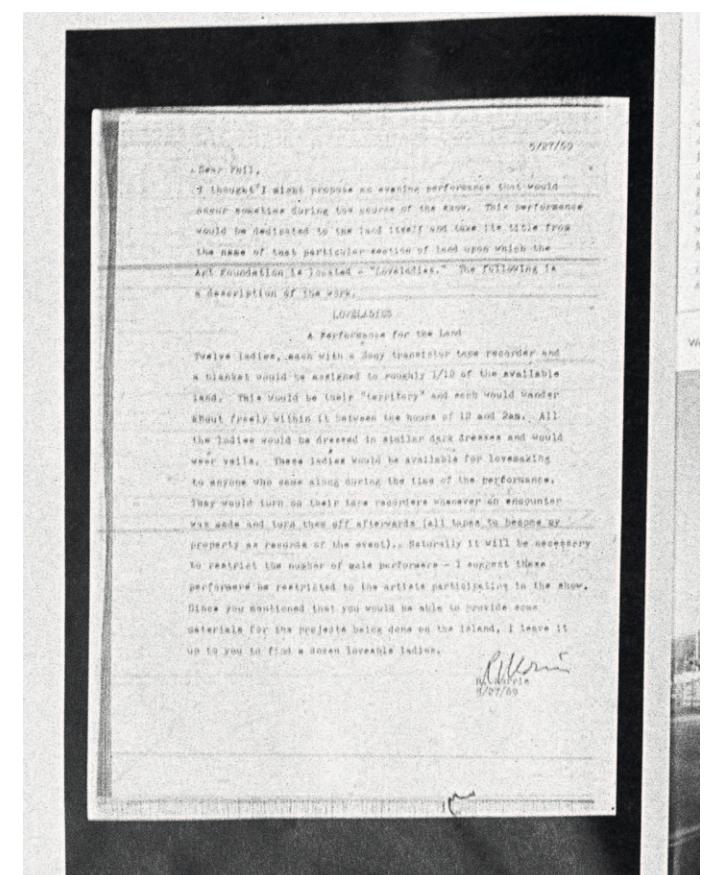
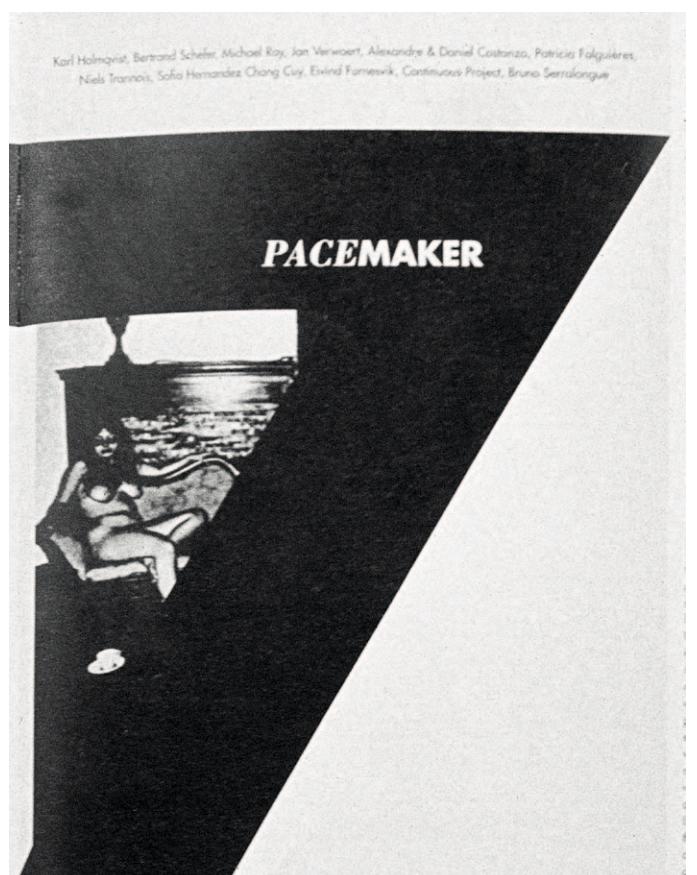
Continuous Project’s first issue reproduced in its entirety the first issue of Willoughby Sharp and Liza Bear’s *Avalanche* magazine (Fall 1970); and for Continuous Project’s launch in May 2003 the photocopied pages were displayed on the walls of Maccarone, Inc., Gallery. A second, unpublished issue was planned as a book project but went unrealized (although the group took up some aspects of that project to produce its first bound issue,

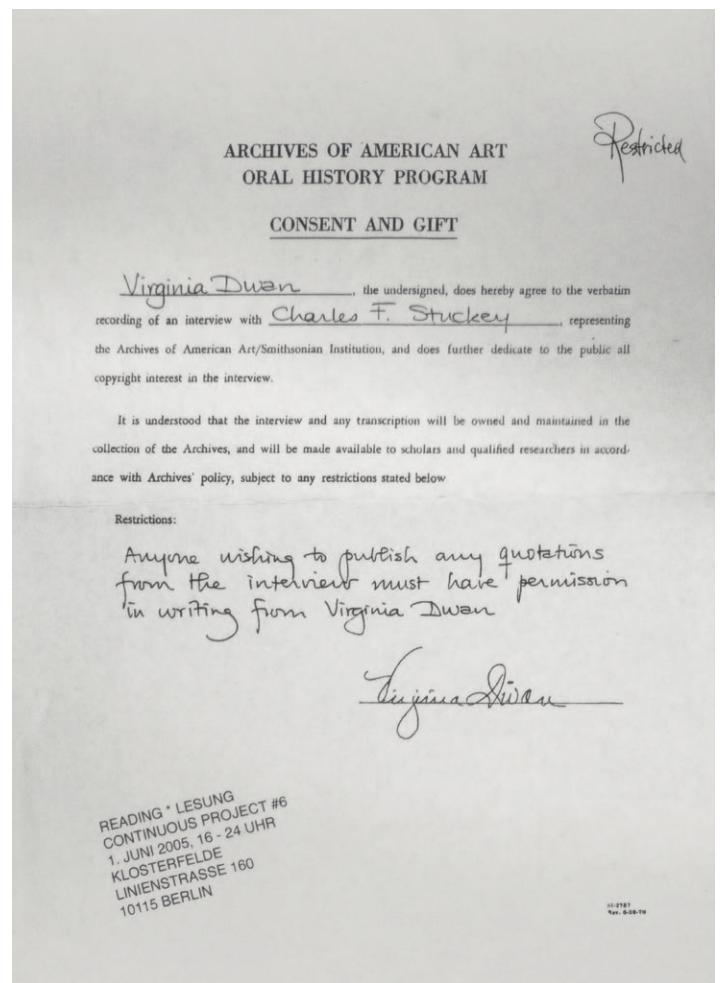
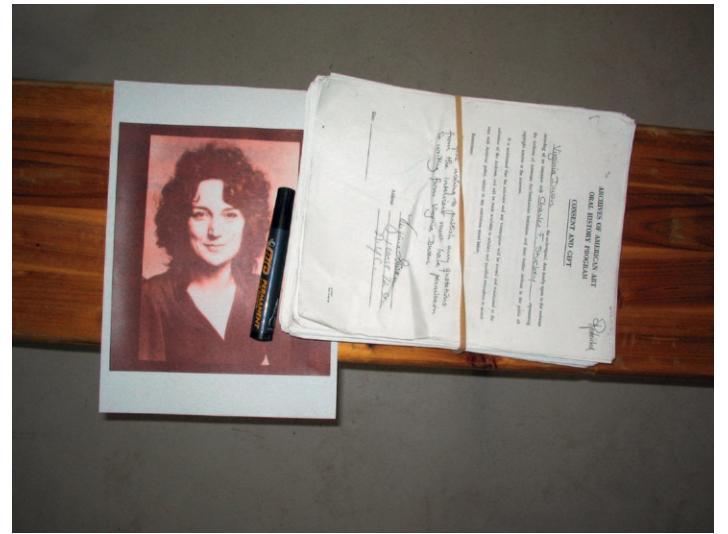
number 8).³ Number 2, then, was indicated temporarily by a gap in the sequence, which has since been filled, as the collaborative has designated its website’s code as number 2. The first issue was followed, counterintuitively, by the fourth issue, a reproduction of the first issue of Monika Sprüth’s *Eau de Cologne* (1985), a 1980s feminist periodical that the editors of Continuous Project chose to contrast with *Avalanche*’s 1970s conceptualism. Six months later, *Continuous Project* number 3 instigated the “Dictator Series” with a reproduction of Muammar Qaddafi’s 1998 collection of short stories, *Escape to Hell and Other Stories* (though no other “Dictator” issue has been published, leaving this a “series” of one).

Continuous Project’s fifth incarnation introduced its second tactic: *Pacemaker*, a Parisian art and culture periodical, accepted the submission of a scan of “Loveladies,” a typed proposal for an artwork by Robert Morris. Somewhere between this style of viral intervention and its earlier method of reproduction, number 7 appeared in the first issue of the “curated” Viennese art magazine *Parabol*, for which Continuous Project replicated Ferdinand Kriwet’s *Publit*, originally published by the Nova Broadcast Press in 1971. The reproduced copy was one of several artists’ works in *Parabol*’s enormous plastic bag.

Its latest tactic has been a tandem of original, bound bookworks, marathon readings, and video documentation of those readings. In 2005, an unpublished interview between gallerist Virginia Dwan and historian Charles

Bettina Funcke, Wade Guyton, Joseph Logan, and Seth Price
New York City, Paris, Vienna, and Oxford
13 issues
2003–present

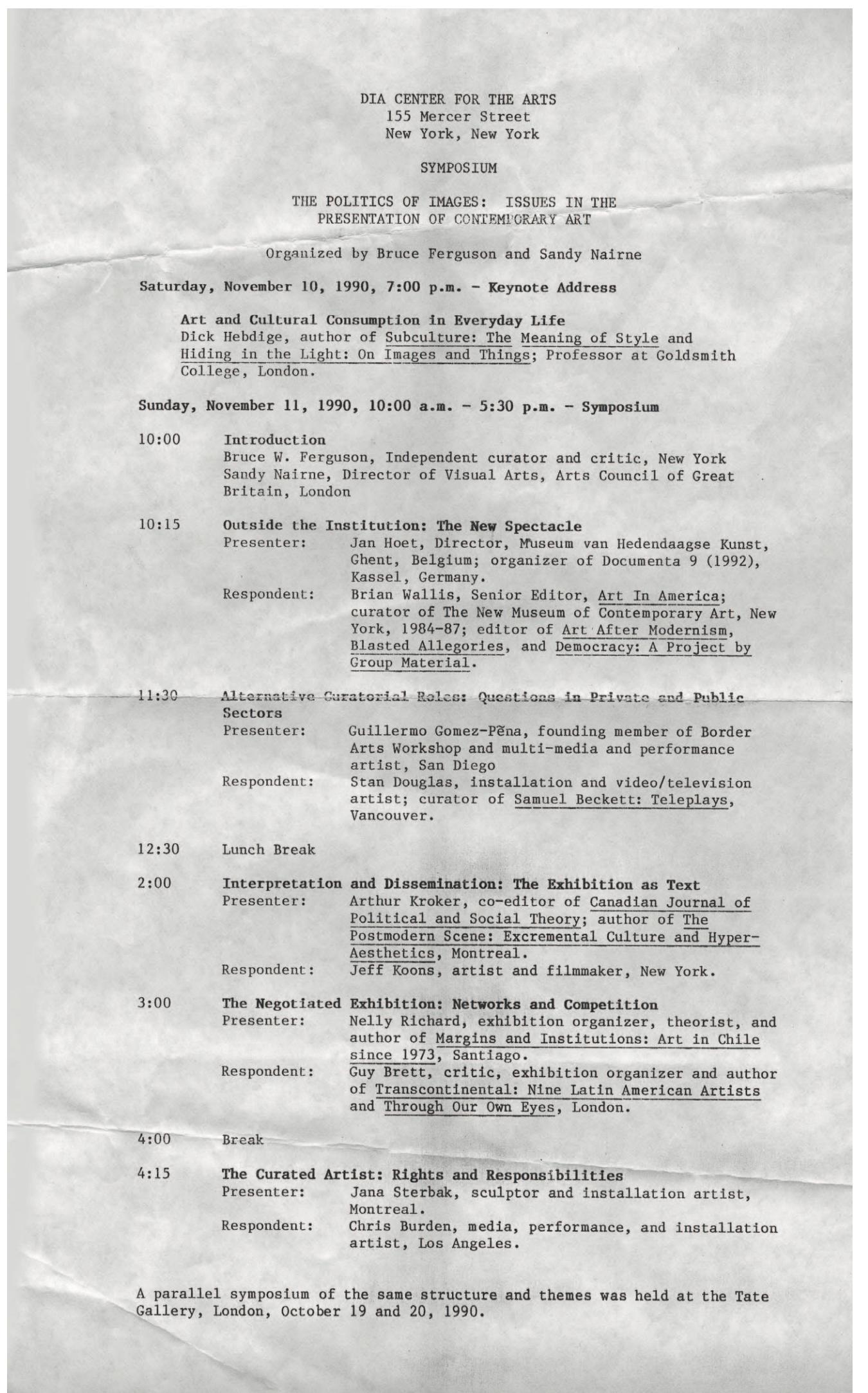




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Stuckey was read aloud by Continuous Project members for nine hours in a Berlin art space. This public reading was designated number 6, the first of the "reading" issues presented rather than published—in this case, out of respect for the copyright holders' stated prohibition against reproduction (Dwan was still not amused when she heard of the reading). This exigency inspired the group to use other source texts, which have included symposia on "The Politics of Images" (originally held at the Dia Center for the Arts and the Tate Museum in 1990),⁴ and the transcript of a 1974–75 court case, the Church of New Song v. U.S.⁵ These readings have not been voiced or staged as performances in any sense (no rehearsals, no sets or props), but simply read straight by project members and audience volunteers. The readings have often come at the invitation of art institutions, which have also sponsored physical manifestations of the series. The latest two performances (issues number 9 and number 11) were video-recorded, which recordings were then sequenced with the other publications as, respectively, number 10 and number 13, despite the fact that they have not been "issued" in any sense to the public. Only number 10 has made an appearance, when it was included in an exhibition at Air de Paris.

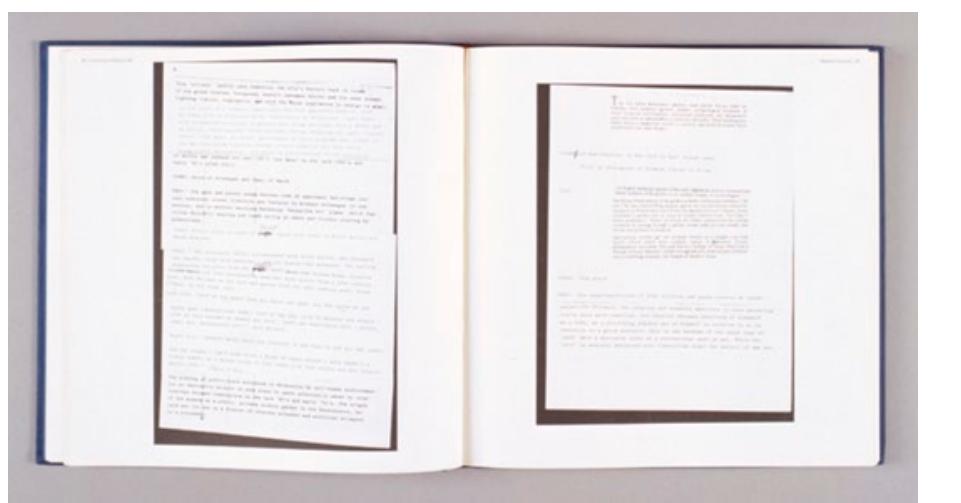
The blue books (number 8 and number 12), as part of Continuous Project's "institutional series," continue aspects of the basic "reproductive" premise—including, for example, a scanned typescript of Dan Graham's proposal for *Two-Way Mirror Cylinder Inside Two-Way Mirror Cube*—while they expand upon its scope to produce a curated anthology. In the introduction to number 8, Continuous Project defines that issue's concerns as arising out of thoughts "about critical theory and how it relates to art. Loosely speaking, the relationship between art and politics. More specifically, art and spectatorship [...] We didn't want to ask what kind of theory is appropriate for art, but how art reacts to theory." If the early issues call into question notions of temporality and originality through a reproductive gesture, the blue books blur lines between art theory and art practice, between context and content. The blue books are formally indistinguishable from each other, but for printed paper bands around their front covers (the editors created the band for number 8 in postproduction). Without the bands, one can't tell the difference between number 8 and number 12 until one opens to the title page or carefully inspects the spine. (In a similar manner, the photocopied issues flatten out design aspects from the original publications, shifting color to grayscale and reducing variations in size to an 11 x 17" field.) The books' square design, identical embossed covers, and uniform one hundred sixty pages render the volumes brand-resistant to sponsors (and difficult to grab quickly off a shelf for reference). By repeating itself, the container



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forces attention inside to the contents: the borrowed, the translated, the conversational, the self-referential and reproduced, and the theoretical. The contents are presented, moreover, in gymnastic layouts whose variety, set against the books' strict geometry, seems designed to prove an argument about creative potential within rigid forms.

The paradoxes and ambiguities that characterize *Continuous Project* are in large measure a consequence of a working method whose only real interest is in realizing the project at hand. The editors declared number 8 their final issue and yet have since produced five more.⁶ They recuperate history but often in an unbound, transitory form that turns a historical document into a disposable memory via a technologically regressive gesture: where many of the other publications documented here are making an art of ephemera, *Continuous Project* is making art into ephemera.⁷ On one hand, the project uses a numbering system as an "organizational tool"⁸ to suggest, if not consistency or coherence, then at least affinities or a progression of thought (or a brand) from one issue to the next. Yet this is undercut by a desultory distribution system, missing or unavailable issues, and shifting forms that are profoundly elusive—none more so than the "reading" issues, which are available only to a given audience on a single occasion. The fact that these readings are documented on video and given a place in the numbering scheme (creating, in a sense, a "copy" of the previous issue), and yet not produced or distributed as the publications are, only complicates the matter. One often has to be at the right place at the right time to pick up or experience an issue when it is distributed or read aloud at sundry international venues. "Everything is around, there are copies of everything, but at the same time, no one knows where they are or how to get one," Price has explained.⁹ In light of its conscientiously maintained art context, this might be interpreted as a deliberately preemptive gesture to ward off the fetishization of its output, as happened with strands of conceptual art whose documentation has become collectible. Price argues that

If art is about how things signify, then you're talking about production of meaning, and more importantly, the circulation of certain understandings. Since meaning is always a currency, it can't be separated from distribution and transmission, and therefore it can't be separated from power and economy.¹⁰

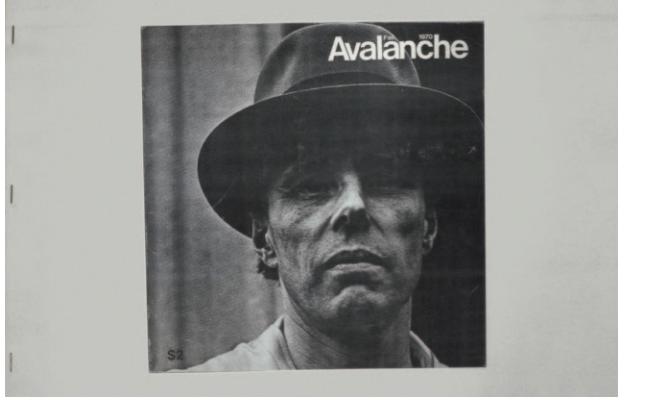
It is yet another paradox that *Continuous Project* might ward off object-fetish, even as it manifests its fascination with these same documents.

Notes

- Price, "Was ist Los," 85.
- Although the context accounts somewhat for the publication's status as art object, the selected texts and documents exist in an arbitrary relationship with their venue. No particular commentary is intended by the juxtaposition of, for example, the first issue of *Avalanche* and Maccarone, Inc.
- Price, in an e-mail to the author.
- See Greenberg, Reesa, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, eds. *Thinking about Exhibitions*. New York: Routledge, 1996. This volume, however, does not reproduce the text of the *Continuous Project* reading, since the editors' operative principle is to create access, however momentarily, to unavailable material.
- Theriault v. Silber*, 391 F.Supp. 578 (W.D. Texas 1975). The case deals with messianic convict Harry W. Theriault's petition to have his grassroots religion, the Church of New Song (CONS), recognized as a religious organization so that it could meet and practice within the prison system; the result of several findings in the mid-1970s went in Theriault's favor. But as recently as April 2004, the group had its status revoked and its activities curtailed after allegations of white supremacy led the court to find that the group's "rituals" were "a masquerade designed to obtain First Amendment protection for acts which would otherwise be unlawful" (see Umbright, Emily. "Officials Allowed to Limit Prison Religion's Rituals, Activities." *St. Louis Daily Record & St. Louis Countian*, April 1, 2004). The thrust of much of the legal arguments hinged on the "sincerity" of beliefs as manifested in demeanor and practice, as could be determined by judges and witnesses, thus attaching notions of spiritual validity to nuances of apparent actions. Or, as was suggested in prefatory remarks made before the *Continuous Project* reading, "the Church improvised within a particular idiom, that of aestheticized ritualization, sacred narrative and ultimate conviction, in order to craft a disbelief suspending semblance of that thing—religion—for which a *mere* representation is said to stand in diametric opposition to the thing itself that it purports to *mis/represent*" (from promotional materials sent by the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford).
- They also later abandoned a proposed change of name, announced in number 8.
- One might also note that, deliberately or not, *Continuous Project* has not yet gone "cross-platform": all of its readings have been transcripts of events that were originally performative in some way, and all of its publications have other publications at their root. That said, the books do contain transcripts of speeches and conversations, but the books are of a different editorial order than the reproductions.
- Price, correspondence with the author.
- Ibid.
- Price, "Real Cheating," 159.

Works Cited

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- Cotter, Holland. "In the Public Domain." *New York Times*, October 3, 2003.
- Firstenberg, Lauri. "Notes on Renewed Appropriationisms." *Parkett*, no. 67 (May 2003): 170–3.
- Indepth Arts News: "Wade Guyton, Seth Price, Josh Smith and Kelley Walker" [Kunsthalle Zurich]. Absolute Arts website, <http://www.absolutearts.com/artsnews/2006/04/10/33830.html> [viewed December 2007].
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- . "Real Cheating: A Conversation with Seth Price." Interview by Daniel Baumann, *Parkett*, no. 75 (2005): 154–9.
- . "Role-playing Games: An Interview with Seth Price." Interview by Ed Halter. *Sound Collector*, no. 8 (Fall/Winter 2002): 54–8.
- . "Was ist Los?" In *Uncertain States of America Reader*, edited by Noah Horowitz and Brian Sholis, 85–90. New York: Steinberg Press/Oslo: Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, 2006.
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- Schambelan, Elizabeth. "Seth Price." *Artforum* 43, no. 9 (May 2005): 236–7.
- Smith, Roberta. "Art in Review: Seth Price." *New York Times*, September 29, 2006.
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- Zittel, Andrea. "Shabby Clique." *Artforum* 42, no. 10 (Summer 2004): 211.

**Continuous Project, no. 1**

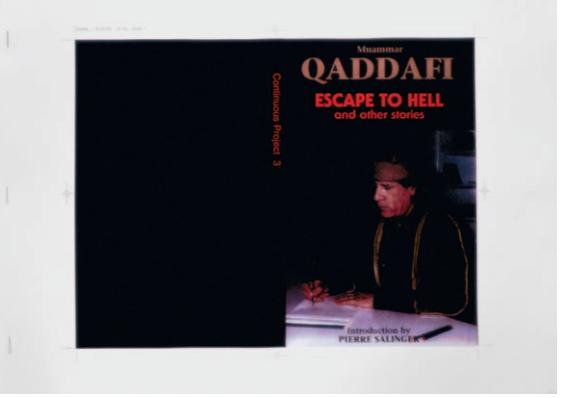
May 2003
96 pages, 17 x 11", b/w photocopy; color glossy covers; [estimated edition of 100]; \$2.00.

Reproduction of *Avalanche* magazine, no. 1 (1970). Launched and distributed on May 11 at Michelle Maccarone, Inc., New York.

**Continuous Project, no. 4**

[March 8, 2004]
76 pages, 11 x 17", b/w photocopy; b/w glossy covers; [estimated edition of 60].

Reproduction of Monika Sprüth's magazine, *Eau de Cologne*, no. 1 (1985). Distributed by Passerby, New York.

**Continuous Project, no. 3 ["Dictator Series"]**

[November 13, 2004]
49 pages, 17 x 11", b/w photocopy, side-stapled; color photocopy cover; [edition of 75].

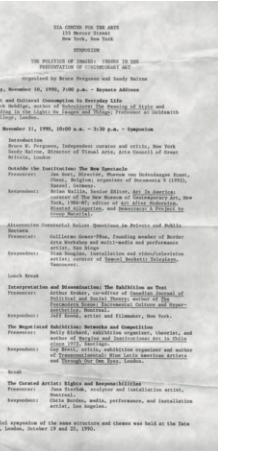
Reproduction of Muammar Qaddafi's *Escape to Hell and Other Stories* (Stanke, 1998), with introduction by Pierre Salinger.

Distributed by Centre National de l'Estampe et de l'Art Imprimé, Point Ephémère, Paris.

**Continuous Project, no. 5**

[January 2005]
1 page, 5 x 7 1/2", in unpaginated poster publication, 23 1/2 x 16 1/2" (unfolded); edition of 7,000; free.

Scan of Robert Morris's proposal letter (May 27, 1969) for project titled "Loveladies" in *Pacemaker*, no. 7 (Paris, Toastink Press).

**Continuous Project, no. 9**

November 12, 2006, 6:00 p.m.
Museum Moderner Kunst (MUMOK) Factory, Vienna
Reading of transcript for "The Politics of Images: Issues in the Presentation of Contemporary Art" symposium (1990), as part of Wieder and Wider/Again and Against: Performance Appropriated exhibition.

Invitation pictured.

**Continuous Project, no. 10**

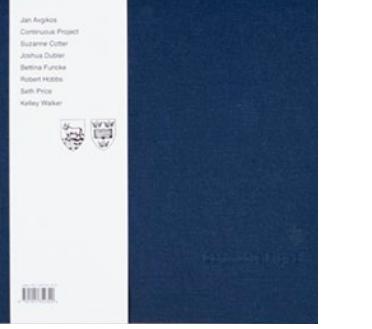
November 2006 (unreleased)
8-hour video-recording of no. 9.

Invitation pictured.

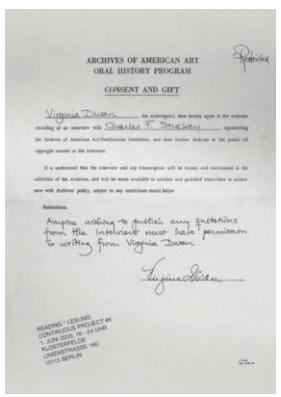
**Continuous Project, no. 11**

April 28, 2007, noon; free.
Modern Art Oxford, 30 Pembroke Street, Oxford

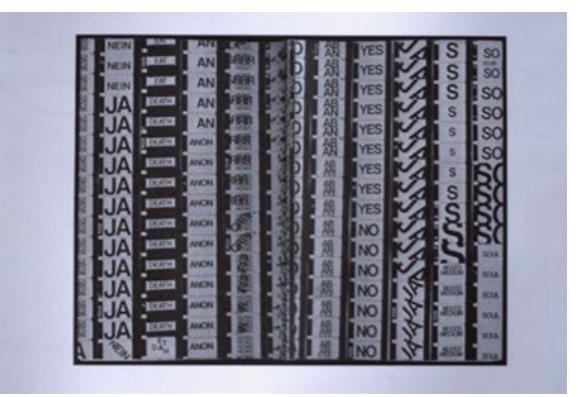
Reading of court transcript *The Church of New Song v. U.S.* (El Paso, Texas, 1974-75).
Invitation pictured.

**Continuous Project, no. 12**

June 2007
160 pages, 10 1/4 x 10 1/4", hardbound in embossed blue covers; [edition of 1,500]; £19.95.
Contributors: Jan Avgikos, Suzanne Cotter, Joshua Dubler, B. Funcke, and Robert Hobbs.
Published by Museum of Modern Art, Oxford.

**Continuous Project, no. 6**

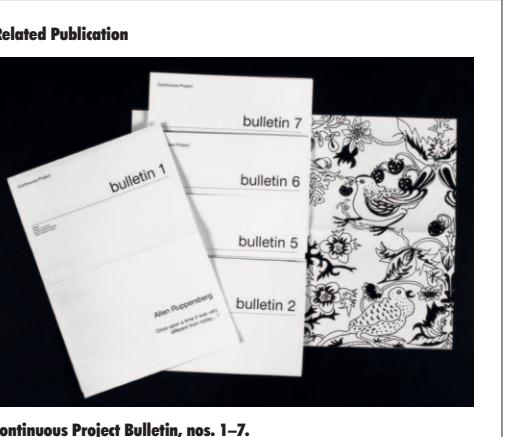
June 2005
Klosterfelde Project Space, Berlin.
9-hour reading of transcript of an unpublished Virginia Dwan and Charles Stuckey interview.
Invitation pictured.



Invitation pictured.

**Continuous Project, no. 8**

May 20, 2006
160 pages, 10 1/4 x 10 1/4", hardbound in embossed blue covers; [edition of 1,000].
Contributors: Ei Arakawa, Simon Baier, Nico Baumbach, August Bebel, Matthew Brannon, Johanna Burton, Serge Daney, Joshua Dubler, Claire Fontaine, Bettina Funcke, Melanie Gilligan, Tim Griffin, Karen Kelly, Alexander Kluge, Pablo Lafuente, Maria Muhle, Oskar Negt, Warren Nieschuchowski, Mai-Thu Perret, Seth Price, Jacques Rancière, and Allen Ruppersberg.
Published by the Centre National de l'Estampe et de l'Art Imprimé, Paris, to accompany exhibition in Chatou.

**Continuous Project Bulletin, nos. 1-7**

(2005) Each issue, 4 pages, 7 1/4 x 10 1/4", folded, b/w photocopy; [unspecified editions].

Contributors included (in order): Allen Ruppersberg, Kelley Walker, Aleksandra Mir, Christophe Chérix and Barry LeVa, John Kelsey, Rachel Harrison, and Roman Ondák and Jens Hoffmann.