"Ungrounded Opposition: Cultural Resistance as Virus"

Sarah Kanouse

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School of Art and Design, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
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Abstract

Practitioners of political and cultural resistance have always struggled to find ways to inhabit and modify a world largely created by the very forces they are resisting. As modernity passed into the postmodern and capital expanded from an early industrial model to a late service/consumer model, public space has become increasingly privatized and commodified. Some politically engaged cultural workers have sought more subtly disruptive methods of occupying physical, discursive, and relational spaces in order to confront and reshape them. These practices, which I describe as 'viral resistance,' have not arisen so much to supplant other forms of resistance, which continue to exist with arguably diminished success, but to perturb, disrupt, and reimagine spaces in which people might encounter something closer to democracy. This paper defines and describes viral resistance through an analysis of the cultural work of Krzysztof Wodiczko, Emily Jacir, Indymedia, and Temporary Services. The analysis also addresses critically the promise and shortcomings of the approach from both aesthetic and instrumental perspectives.

Contents

Introduction

The contemporary call, "Who's streets? Our streets!" echoes across centuries of radical activism focused on occupying space in order to make claims for economic, racial, or gender justice. From the barricades of 19th century French uprisings, for example, to the current movement of *fabricas recuperadas* in Argentina, occupation has been a central tactic of leftist organizing. Occupation has also emerged as a tactic of resistant artists. From Daumier's insertion of satire of the bourgeoisie into bourgeois newspapers, to radicalizing the politics espoused in community pageantry, to Dada's reversal of gallery and theatrical forms, politically-engaged artists have sought to occupy existing structural features of the culture to recuperate, reinvent, and redeploy them for oppositional ends.[1] As modernity passed into the postmodern and capital expanded from an early industrial model to a late service/consumer model, those structural features of the culture that constitute 'public space' have become increasingly privatized and commodified. Some politically engaged artists have sought more subtly disruptive methods of occupying physical, discursive, and relational spaces in order to confront and reshape them.

The evolution toward despatialized forms of resistance has been part of far longer and larger transition in global economic and cultural values that has increasingly privileged and rewarded the theoretical over the applied, the immaterial over material, and the virtual over the physical. These approaches are anti-utopian and do not attempt to make spectacular claims to physical public spaces. Resistant tactics, like the general trends in public art observed by Miwon Kwon, move "from a physical location—grounded, fixed, actual—to a discursive vector—ungrounded, fluid, virtual."[2] These practices have not arisen so much as a new vanguard to supplant other forms of resistance, which continue to exist with arguably

diminished success, but as tactical responses to perturb, disrupt, and reimagine a critical, participatory, discursive culture.

The resulting heterogeneous set of practices and tactics may be called aspects of a "viral resistance," a term I use to describe oppositional cultural strategies that disturb hegemonic relations and the spaces in which they unfold. Viral resistance infects these spaces, using variants on their own strategies, with shifted power relations, suppressed information, altered subjectivities, and critical content. These varied perturbations engage in a multidimensional discourse, sustaining themselves and being formed and reformed through use. Nicholas Bourriaud has written on the "culture of use" in contemporary art practice. Artists become "critical interpreters of this ideological scenario, by playing with other scenarios and by constructing situation comedies that will be eventually superimposed on the narratives imposed on us."[3]

Theoretically, practices of viral resistance owe a great deal to the idea of the 'rhizome' developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.[4] An extensive network of diversified, autonomous productivity, the rhizome connects diverse arenas of resistance, from language, to the arts, to activism, to everyday practices. The structure is permanently unstable, perpetually unfolding, constantly mutating, and able to adapt quickly to the rapidly changing conditions and faces of the oppressive forces it opposes. The rhizome is also the condition of what has been called Empire itself, apparent in such features as networks of finance, surveillance, and force; an emphasis on flexibility in labor markets and military strategy, and the ability to survive apparent defeat in one location by redeplying energies laterally to another.[5] Because of this diffusion, the traditional sites and architecture of power—banks, government buildings, corporate offices—survive as little more than "empty bunkers," in the

words of the Critical Art Ensemble.[6] Oppositional rhizomes like viral practices adapt these strategies to avoid the futility of camping out before the empty bunkers of capital and top-heavy, slow-moving, and easily defeated organizing.

Imperial Citizens and Spaces

Because viral resistance represents a specifically tactical move, responsive to material changes in public space wrought by late capital, features of viral resistance and criteria for considering it will be most effectively drawn from a consideration of that matrix. Taking our lead from Hardt and Negri's rhizomatic model of Empire and informed by Claude Lefort's definition of totalitarianism, Jan Nederveen Pieterse's theory of neoliberal militarism, and Ellen Mieksin Wood's empire of capital, we might describe our present global condition as a totalitarianism of capital.[7] Just as Lefort holds that totalitarianism tends "to efface the traces of social division" rendering "the dividing line between the state and civil society…invisible," Hardt and Negri descibe an aspect of empire as the conflation of capital with the totality of social, economic, political and cultural life such that it claims a sovereignty of its own and provides the basis of its own legitimacy.[8] The contemporary hegemony, called at various times in the last twenty years by assorted pro- and opponents the Third Way, neoliberal or corporate globalization, the Washington Consensus, Empire, American Imperialism, the Empire of Capital, and others, is heralded as "the triumph of democracy," though democracy is defined less by politics and participation and more by economics and consumption.[9] Indeed, democracy becomes conterminous with capitalism, and the collapse of the political and economic spheres is enforced through permanent military threat.[10]

The administrative apparatus of this Empire is both everywhere and nowhere, existing in a spatial, digital, and juridical network of electronic financial transactions, the rulings of the World Trade Organization, and airport security procedures. The traditional sites and architectures of power exist as more metaphor for the system's operations than real engines driving it. In addition to transcending a fixed location, Empire also exists outside of the direction of any one of the entities that constitute it, though it rewards some nation-state and corporate entities more than others. Empire's strength lies in the mythology that it developed naturally, organically, uncontestably, inevitably. Its site of production is not a vulnerable physical location but the combined activities of a myriad of individuals, corporations, organizations, and nation-states. In fact, the activities and ideologies of different actions, while often topically in conflict, manage to mediate consistently in favor of the formation of Empire. However, the apparent organic nature of Empire consistently reveals its own weaknesses, through mass privation, ecological devastation, and large-scale corporate meltdown. The failings of neoliberal capitalism are concealed by the coercive fear, popular distraction, and economic booty produced by permanent war and the management of populations by the nation-state.

While this definition of Empire offers a framework in which to understand the interrelations of such apparently disparate international issues as the War on Terrorism, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and ongoing efforts to deregulate and consolidate key 'public interest' sectors (such as communications), it also offers insight into debates on the nature of public space, political subjectivity, and democracy in which the contributions of artists and critics have been significant. Definitions of public space and citizenship become discursive sites at which Empire can either be produced or contested through viral resistance.

The category 'public' has become increasingly slippery, even vacant, as public spaces and public institutions have become increasingly co-mingled with the private.[11] A buzz word of development in the 1980s and 1990s was the 'public-private partnership,' which usually involved some massive transfer of public funds to private ownership, demonstrated domestically by the financial bailout of collapsing corporations or school voucher programs, and internationally by IMF-imposed privatizations of state-owned utility systems or the awarding of no-bid contracts to rebuild Iraq after the US invasion. In more quotidian ways, private or corporate interests have co-opted the idea of a public plaza, often under the direction of well-meaning city council ordinances to 'democratize' or make more 'livable' housing and business developments. Increasingly, 'public space' is understood as a place where 'order' must be maintained, where any form of conflict or power analysis must be expelled or, better yet, managed into a conflict-less consumer fantasy of exciting, but non-threatening, difference. The result is a set of public spaces through which people pass, rubbing elbows perhaps but otherwise engaged in 'private' consumer activities, such as shopping in a mall, individual travel trajectories in a transportation center, or silently 'communal' spectatorship.[12]

Empire harnesses the political productivity of social life to its own ends in order to produce compliant subjects that continue to have, but never exercise, agency, or rather, consistently choose to exercise agency in directions that reproduce Empire. "The great industrial and financial powers produce not only commodities but also subjectivities…they produce needs, social relations, bodies, and minds—which is to say, they produce producers."[13] This notion of production encompasses Noam Chomsky's analysis of the 'manufacture of consent' primarily through the framing of information by the mass media[14],

but extends it to analyze how the relation of the individual to society—political subjecthood—has been defined.

Political subjecthood has become, like public space, a largely empty concept. As public spaces have been privatized and sanitized of any contestation, concepts of 'citizenship' from both the democratic and liberal traditions have fallen victim to market-oriented definitions of agency.[15] Increasingly, political subjecthood said to be achieved not through participation in the *∂emo*ɹ (however constituted) nor through membership in the family of 'humankind," rather through consumer participation in the market. The market is understood to have resolved the pesky conflict between left and right, and the term 'free market' has become an acceptable, even anticipated modifier of the noun 'democracy.'[16] Capitalist democracies may continue to *∂eny* rights on the basis of 'citizenship,' but they primarily *confer* them according to consumer status. Political activists on both the right and the left are equally guilty of the validation of the economic citizen, with calls for "taxpayers' rights" on the one hand, are met by demands for "consumer's rights" on the other. National citizenship, though still an important variable along which mobility may be granted and rights denied, is de-valued as a source of subjectivity in favor of consumer status. The emphasis on subjecthood-as-consumption also conceals how other variables, the deconstructionist 'big three' of race, class, gender, along with national identity, continue to striate and confine social experience.

The management of subjectivity in order to maintain an image of diversity and democracy, or the allowance of a certain amount of 'free play' of difference across a purportedly smooth, undifferentiated space is a key goal of Empire. Fora for the dispassionate but lively debate imagined by Jurgen Habermas to have once existed in the

bourgeois public sphere[17] are nowhere to be found, nor are physical and discursive spaces for the contestation and argumentation advocated by more radical theorists of public space.[18] 'Public' participation seem limited to registering a consumer choice of candidate every few years and participating in polls conducted by the media just as often on matters of the spectacle (such as the preferred outcome of a soap opera) as on substantive policy issues. Disgruntled citizen-consumers can petition their representatives and receive form letters in reply, or even camp out with tens of thousands of others in front of the empty bunkers of imperial power. These activities, and a myriad other forms of resistance, from middle class gestures like joining certain groups or reading certain books to more profound breaks with consumer-citizenship signaled by some forms of illegal activity, may be grounds for losing whatever freedoms citizenship may formally confer. The PATRIOT act and proposed PATRIOT II enforce a blandly white, middle class, and conservative consumer model of citizenship and reveal the violence at the heart of Empire domestically in much the same way that, internationally, the threat of permanent war enforces neoliberal ideology.

As 'public space' is physically evacuated, concrete locations for resistance and disturbance become increasingly difficult to find. As 'citizenship' is conceptually evacuated, what constitutes standing for making political demands becomes more and more indeterminate. While the recent mass mobilizations against corporate globalization and American militarism have sought to descend on the locations in which transnational, diffuse Empire temporarily coalesces in the form of a G8 meeting or WTO ministerial, no one involved in those actions can seriously believe the agendas at work are halted for more than a day (at best) by such spatial interventions. A range of voices, both left and right, political and cultural, increasingly point to the ineffectiveness of street protest alone. The migration of

the language of marketing to politics exemplified by George Bush's comment that massive, global street protests in advance of his invasion of Iraq constituted no more than a single 'focus group' for his policies points that the construction of citizen-consumer is so far gone that activism itself becomes nothing more than another marketing niche.[19] The Critical Art Ensemble succinctly sums up the problem, "At best, such an occupation is a disturbance that can be made invisible through media manipulation; a particularly valued bunker, (such as a bureaucracy) can easily be reoccupied by the postmodern war machine. The electronic valuable inside the bunker, or course, cannot be taken by physical measures."[20]

While recent anti-globalization mobilizations have faced mounting repression and anti-war protests have consistently battled unflattering, marginal, and inaccurate media coverage, such a reaction on the part of Empire should not be construed to prove their instrumental effectiveness. Rather, the repression and suppression of these mobilizations indicates a need to manage their impact as metaphor—that is, their effectiveness in the discursive public space. I use the term 'manage' and not 'eliminate' because part of the maintenance of the illusion of a functioning democracy depends on Empire being able to demonstrate that a lively (if marginalized, misrepresented, and ridiculed) dissent is tolerated. The diversity of consumer goods guaranteed by Empire—and the diversity of subjectivities produced by those consumer goods—becomes evidence of how 'democratic' it is, without any actual political activity needing to take place.

Because Empire has become so adept at proving its own sovereignty, as Hardt and Negri observe, both survival-motivated adjustments to neoliberalism and ostensible challenges fuel the self-legitimizing process.[21] 'Public' universities and school districts build stadiums with corporate names and sign exclusive beverage contracts with Coca-Cola for givebacks

that partially compensate for the neoliberal defunding of education. Such strategies to cope with depersonalized, sprawling urban areas and the bankrupting of public education soon become proof of the success of the neoliberal measures that brought these conditions about in the first place. Furthermore, they acclimate 'the public' to a concept of 'public' in which monied private and corporate interpenetration is beyond comment. In another example, during the inexorable march toward "Operation Iraqi Freedom," the existence of anti-war protesters all over the world ironically provided an image of a 'free society' against which to measure Iraq and justify its invasion on humanitarian and democratic grounds. The marketplace is self-evidently good because it appears to offer an ever-expanding array of consumer choice—not just of clothing, cars or furniture, but also of lifestyle and identity itself.

Identifying and Evaluating Viral Resistance

Cultural and political activists have struggled to find ways to intervene self-consciously *within* a culture of increasing and accelerating penetration of capital into every aspect of life. Perhaps in contrast to other forms of cultural-political opposition, practitioners of viral resistance recognize their immersion within Empire and seek to utilize it, refusing the arrogant position of purity, or being outside, above, or exempt from capital, sometimes assumed by more utopian traditions. However, viral resistance presents its own problems along with the solutions its offers. Accompanying the abandonment of illusions of purity may come also an abandonment of the empowering and generative parts of utopianism. A privileging of the temporary, intangible, flexible intervention over the building of permanent structures for the contestation of power may represent a "capitulation to the logic of capitalist expansion," as Miwon Kwon has cautioned.[22] A reliance on virtual, immaterial, and

theoretical modes of operation may hasten the further erosion of value placed on physical, material, and applied forms of knowledge, with destructive consequences for everything traditionally on the 'wrong' side of the culture/nature binarism. A move toward cultural activism and an emphasis on representation as the *primary* location for resistance may further erode the responsiveness and strength of counter-power institutions, such as labor unions, which seem consigned to the dustbin of history even by many leftists.[23] As viral practices become more critically accepted, alternative spaces discovered as hip outposts of the leisure industry, and the work embraced by art institutions, significant questions—concerning both ethics and effectiveness—must be asked about the appropriation and recuperation of tactics that originated outside the art world.

For instance, much of the work Bourriaud heralds as subversive for remixing existing commodity forms and liberating them in the 'culture of use' frequently merely re-present the fun face of consumer capital. For instance, Daniel Pflumm's wall-hung lightboxes based on corporate logos, words removed, may scorn the vacuity of corporate identity, but it does so with such familiar, kitschy and ultimately friendly objects that whatever critical bite may have been intentioned turns into something more akin to a love nibble. Joshua Davis's installation visualizing and animating data collected by the surveillance software *Carnivore* may expose that such surveillance is occurring and make the information gathered less privileged, but it also makes surveillance look impressive and, well, pretty. At best, these 'viral' efforts may be neutralized by their context or through their participation in the economies of the art object. At worst, they reiterate or even celebrate imperial uses of technology or social forms.

While camping outside the empty bunkers of power will have little effect, so to will filling the new networks of power simply with new 'content,' leaving the structure of space

and subjectivity untouched. The Critical Art Ensemble takes issue with cultural activists who utilize media and new technologies, such as video, but who leave intact an authoritarian narrative structure that fails to instigate an oppositional mode of subjectivity in their audience, preferring instead to replace a totalizing narrative of the right with one of the left.[24] Similarly, rhizomatic decentralizations does "not always favor resistant action…without frames of interpretation to enhance the individual's capacity for autonomous action."[25] Unfortunately, open-endedness can often yield opaque results whose inscrutability merely compound the cultural capital of those privileged enough to "get it." So, given the slippery nature of the concept of viral resistance and the very real danger of merely reproducing the virtual structures of Empire rather than occupying and altering them, what are useful criteria for identifying and evaluating this work?

In elaborating a framework for thinking critically about practices of viral resistance, traditional tensions over culture's symbolic value, with the aesthetic tradition favoring transcendence and the engaged tradition favoring instrumental effectiveness, re-emerge. This question become especially vexing when reminded of the censorship of culture workers, whether by Joseph Stalin or Jesse Helms, in the name of salutary social or political ends. And, of course, aesthetic and formal criteria are particularly implicated in conservative cultural criticism, with its unexamined assumptions about race, gender, class and 'quality.' Rather than running from the conundrum, perhaps an "aesthetic of engagement" can be elaborated for viral resistance, for those practices commonly called 'culture' and 'politics' alike. Such an aesthetic is distinct from formal concerns, which may vary from piece to piece and may or may not be linked to instrumental questions. Rather, an aesthetic of engagement negotiates the traditional division between aesthetics and utility, culture and politics, perhaps

now or then falling on one side or the other, relaying information back and forth, and forever forestalling conclusion.

i. Viral resistance occupies existing virtual and physical spaces, networks, and relations with the intention of re-using them for oppositional ends.

Because Empire is constituted at the intersections of individuals, states, capital, and transnational organizations, it offers multiple and constantly shifting access points for engagement. The regime is also unstable and very vulnerable—not to frontal assault, nor to the destruction of any one of its manifestations. Rather, it is vulnerable to those resisters able to occupy and disrupt one of its virtual locations or production. The Critical Art Ensemble has argued persuasively that the most important arena for engagement is the virtual—the direct disruption of the electronic flow of information through which power is maintained and profit guaranteed—by hacking into computer systems or virtual sit-ins which overload government or corporate servers with information requests. However, because the desires and activities of daily life elaborate and sustain the hegemonic regime, social relations and social space offer a myriad of possibilities to interfere. Hardt and Negri describe Empire as a rhizome of "corruption" that makes sick the social and political body. To occupy or, better still, 'infect' this social body with generative, liberating impulses, as oppositional rhizomes seek to do, is to make it well.[26]

ii. Rather than inheriting a consumer-public viral resistance constitutes and activates its own public.

Empire harnesses the political productivity of social life to its own ends in order to produce compliant subjects that continue to have, but never exercise, agency or consistently choose to exercise agency in directions that reproduce Empire. "The great industrial and financial powers these produce not only commodities but also subjectivities…they produce

needs, social relations, bodies, and minds."[27] By contrast, viral resistant practices distill a public out of atomized consumers, instigating a pivot from a consumer mode to a subjective one, and activating critical recognition, confrontation, and negotiation.

iii. Viral Resistance reveals its own partiality in order to show up the much greater structural failures of Empire.

Viral Resistance recognizes that it presents to viable or durable alternative to Empire, that it's interventions are partial and necessarily incomplete. But these incomplete gestures expose the workings (and the failings) of regimes of economic and political control, in an attempt to activate the newly constituted audience to challenge them. Jan Nederveen Pieterse maintains that Empire is specifically American, an artificial extension of US primacy and enforcement of disastrously failed neo-liberal policies through permanent military threat. Mass privation, crushing debt, ecological devastation, and large-scale corporate meltdowns demonstrate the failure of Empire, increasingly in the "First World" as well. These failings are concealed by the coercive fear, popular distraction, and economic booty temporarily accomplished by war, but the regime is inherently unstable.[28] Likewise, Hardt and Negri see Empire as a doomed proposition: "Imperial power can no longer resolve the conflict of social forces through mediatory schemata that displace the terms of conflict." [29] Viral resistance reveals the impossibility of Empire by prompting the contradictions at its core to unmask themselves.

iv. Viral Resistance fosters a democracy of dissent rather than consensus, replacing an idealized harmony with an adversarial practice.

While the notion of the once democratic but now degenerated public sphere may be a "phantom," as Bruce Robbins claims, the latest incarnation of the phantom is one which neutralizes dissent through recuperation, management, or ridicule and fetishizes consensus, as

exemplified by the reflexive approval of political 'bi-partisanship.' Since the "smooth space"[30] of empire is carefully managed to ensure a bit of diversity so long as it presents no real challenge to the continuing expansion of capital, viral resistance chooses instead to foreground conflict.

In opposition to the Washington Consensus, political theorist Chantal Mouffe argues persuasively for what she calls an "agonistic" public sphere in which participants clash not only over 'issues' but over the more foundational questions usually elided under assumptions of "the public good" and the nature of legitimate debate. She characterizes these encounters as "agonism" between "friendly enemies," as distinct from outright antagonism. While democratic decisions must be made, these resolutions are temporary and tactical and always subject to further consideration. Mouffe stresses that the moment of decision is always one of the exertion of power, and the fetishization of consensus is really an act of silencing.[31]

v. Viral resistance operates simultaneously as metaphor and enactment of its own condition.

Hardt and Negri maintain that Empire is a corruption and inversion of what they term the generative power of the multitude. A redeployment and redirection of the energies that produce subjugation will produce liberation. Because the dominant regime is created and sustained by representation, metaphor, action, and structures, oppositional work must also engage all those dimensions simultaneously.

vi. Viral Resistance takes risks; it does not know how when its infection of hegemonic space will end or if it will succeed.

Because the practice of democracy is constant and unpredictable, a certain risk is inherent if resistance is actually contesting public space and re-animating notions of subjectivity. The Critical Art Ensemble writes, "Acts of disturbance are gambles. It is

frightening to think that radical action is built upon guesswork, but if there were assurances, by what means would this work be radical?"[32]

Having elaborated a few criteria for identifying and critically discussing viral resistance, we are now prepared to measure these criteria against existing practices and bodies of work. Notably, viral tactics are not to be found exclusively or primarily in the art world. Indeed, many of the artists engaged in viral practices appropriate heavily from the technology-enhanced explosion of more general, 'amateur' cultural production that Gregory Sholette refers to as "creative dark matter," out of sight of the mainstream art world[33]. Many practitioners may find the designation 'art' at times irrelevant or even dangerous to their work, and some 'non-art' activities may be constructively considered within the frameworks provided by art criticism. It may be helpful to borrow terminology from the Critical Art Ensemble, who differentiate between "political activists" engaged in social change through organizing movements to seize power, and "cultural activists," who challenge social space by engaging issues of discourse and representation. While the difference is fluid, as individuals are able to engage in more than one activist form, and perhaps even dangerous, because it may map too closely on existing hierarchies of knowledge and labor, the term is provisionally useful in this investigation.

Because these practices cut across traditional boundaries separating 'art' from other forms of cultural production, I have chosen to select four practices that are similarly interdisciplinary. Well-known political public artist Krzysztof Wodiczko helps put into focus the differences between 'viral' practices and an approach that might be termed 'spectacular'. The international Indymedia network, which coordinates and facilitates production and publication of activist journalism by non-professionals, highlights the promise of rhizomatic

organization for fostering participation and dissent and points to challenges stemming from the radical pluralism and a focus on virtuality and discursivity. Artist Emily Jacir has received substantial recent attention for her appropriation or occupation of heterogeneous strategies from conceptual art and cultural activist traditions. Finally, Temporary Services, an artist and curatorial group, creates social and spatial interventions that bridge the frequent gap between cultural resistance and political activism. A careful consideration of each of these practices will allow us to later revisit questions about the shortcomings and dangers of viral approaches.

Krzysztof Wodiczko: From Metaphor to Enactment, From Spectacular to Viral

"…Wodiczko's work functions not only as critique but as proposition, not a universal proposition, but a local proposition, a proposition of questioning, a proposition of change."[34]

The apparent 'split' in the practice of Krzysztof Wodiczko exemplifies differences between a spectacular oppositional art practice and a practice of viral resistance. Best known for temporary projections on civic or capitalist structures such as war memorials, museum, and government buildings, Wodiczko since the 1980s also has created a series of prosthetic objects for the bodies of socially marginal people: the homeless, poor, and immigrants. These prostheses enable the individual to mark the spaces s/he passes through with a presence or voice that is usually managed into invisibility. This marking and voicing questions the constitutions of the margins of political subjectivity and public space while simultaneously engaging more topically political issues, such as the role and roots of homelessness and low-wage labor in an imperial economy and culture.[35]

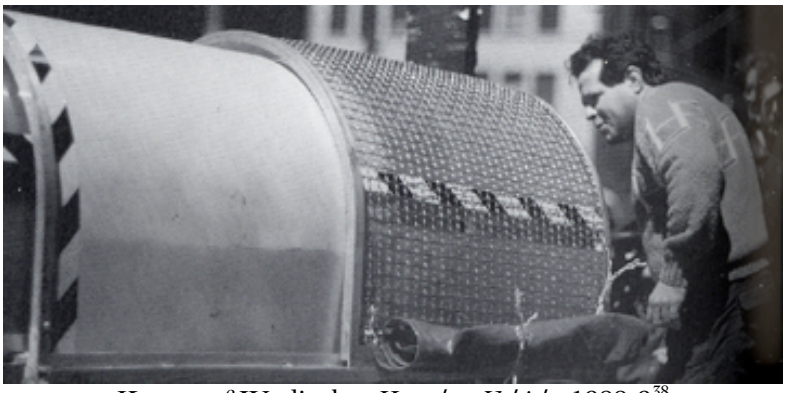
Wodiczko's projections typify what might be termed transitional viral practice. On the one hand, they are aggressive and spectacular reclamations of nominally public spaces, invited and funded by major art institutions primarily for their audiences. The projections directly address the 'bunkers' of empire, seeking to reveal on the level of metaphor concealed truths about the civic and capitalist structures they modify. For example, Wodiczko's 1988 projection on a church-cum-cultural-center in Tijuana depicted a white man's hands clutching a knife and fork and a set of presumably Latina arms chained and holding aloft a bowl of fruit. The images condemned the servant-master relationship and imperialist extraction propped up

by the Catholic church and questions how different the function of the building actually is as a cultural center. On the other hand, the projections recognize their own tragic

Krzysztof Wodiczko, *The Border Projection, Pt 1, 1988*[56]

incompleteness: they are merely flickering images that can do nothing more than temporarily, and in the liminal time and space of nightfall, 'shed light' on the injustices more solidly built into the bricks and mortar, glass and steel of the structures they detourne.

Because of the temporary nature of the projections, their refusal to make any permanent claim to territory, and their refusal to exist inside the field defined for art (the gallery space), Denis Hollier refers to Wodiczko's projection works as "guerilla warfare."[37] The term echoes Deleuze and Guattari's "nomadic war machine," which is simultaneously a structural feature of late capital and one of the faces of rhizomatic resistance. The language, however, is still one of battle—less frontal, more oblique, but nevertheless engaged in outright—and spectacularly aestheticized—contestation on the physical plane of the 'bunkers' of Empire. Wodiczko's prosthesis projects, such as "Homeless Vehicle" and the "Alien Staff," exist rather by modifying and marking the intimate and daily production of Empire within the realm of social activity itself.



Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Homeless Vehicle*, 1988-9[38]

Wodiczko's first prosthetic project, the "Homeless Vehicle" (1988-9) is a self-contained, mobile living unit for the urban homeless. Based on the ubiquitous homeless person's supermarket cart and designed with the input of homeless individuals, the vehicles provide for the rudiments of daily life: shelter, bathing, protection of personal property, food preparation, and remunerative work (the vehicles allow for storage of collected aluminum cans awaiting recycling). The vehicle is arguably a far more effective form of cultural

resistance than the projections because, as Mark Rakatansky argues, it "does not symbolize its condition, it enacts it."[39] Rather than operating on the level of metaphor and spectacle to an art audience, the vehicle circulates through the urban and social fabric, constituting its own public as it goes. In this circulation, and in the frame provided by the vehicle, the homeless individual 'performs' private tasks in public, thereby revealing the privilege and artifice at work in maintaining the illusory fixity of those categories in space. The vehicle forces a visibility of the homeless on the temporarily constituted public that must then recognize the normative exclusion of the homeless from the category 'public.'

Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Homeless Vehicle*, 1988-9[40]

The vehicle's primary enactment is of its own partiality and failure. It places in high relief the monumental injustices it is powerless to correct. As an instrumental response to structural failure, the vehicle is ludicrous, pathetic, even monstrous because it seems to accept that "the poor will never cease from the land."[41] The project begs the question why individuals can be asked to capitulate to the brutalities of the market by modeling just that capitulation.

Similarly, "Alien Staff" (1992-4) and the related "Aegis: Equipment for a

City of Strangers" (1998) are prostheses for immigrant bodies made marginal to the spaces they occupy through the cruel rule of Empire under which money is mobile but people must not be. With electronic devices, LCD monitors, speakers, and microphones, the prostheses allow 'strangers' or immigrants to convey a multiplicity of their stories to the 'natives' with the authority only high-tech electronics can convey. Technology, usually deployed for surveillance to exert authority *upon* the immigrant body, is now used *by* the immigrant body to assert authority and achieve subjecthood in public space. Like the vehicle, these devices attempt to enact their own condition, highlighting the normative construction of subjecthood by performing the elaborate measures that must be taken for certain subjects to achieve voice. However, because the objects were rarely used by anyone other than Wodiczko's studio assistant, they are never deployed into the world to expose and interfere with the exclusions that constitute citizenship.

Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Alien Staff,* 1992-4[42]

"Homeless Vehicle," "Alien Staff," and "Aegis" dance on the edges of some very sharp razors. Most significantly, as Peggy Phelan has observed, visibility does not automatically equate to empowerment.[43] The visibility these prostheses impart to their users oscillates between stigma and agency. In an era of criminalized poverty, forced deportation, and