

Opening to a Discussion on Judgement

Editors' note: This text is derived from the transcript of the opening statements from Simon Critchley, Mick Wilson and Andrea Phillips at a public discussion on the theme of "Judgement" held in Gothenburg in April 2014 and marking the initiation of the Platform for Artistic Research Sweden. The format of the event was an open dialogue, during which each of the three speakers was asked to open with a short statement that would frame the issues and concerns that the question of judgement currently sets in play in the context of contemporary artistic practice, education and research. The purpose of this exchange between three members of the PARSE Journal editorial committee was to frame the theme of judgement as a point of departure for the new publication. While retaining the relatively informal mode of address of the original context of presentation, the transcript has been edited and modified for publication.

SIMON CRITCHLEY

Simon Critchley is Hans Jonas Professor at the New School for Social Research. He also teaches at the European Graduate School. His many books include *Very Little... Almost Nothing*, *Infinitely Demanding*, *The Book of Dead Philosophers*, *The Faith of the Faithless*, and, with Tom McCarthy, *The Mattering of Matter: Documents from the Archive of the International Necronautical Society*. A new book on Hamlet called *Stay, Illusion!*, co-authored with Jamieson Webster, was published in 2013 by Pantheon Books in the US and Verso in the UK. An experimental new work, *Memory Theatre*, is forthcoming. Simon Critchley writes for *The Guardian* and is moderator of 'The Stone', a philosophy column in *The New York Times*, to which he is a frequent contributor.

MICK WILSON

Mick Wilson is an artist, educator and researcher; Head of the Valand Academy of Arts, University of Gothenburg (2012-); member of European Artistic Research Network (2005-); formerly chair of SHARE (2010-13); founder Dean of GradCAM, Ireland (2008-2012); and first Head of Research, NCAD, Ireland (2005-7). Edited volumes include: with Paul O'Neill, *Curating Research* (2014); and *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2010); with Schelte van Ruiten *SHARE Handbook for Artistic Research Education* (2013). Ongoing projects include "the food thing" (2011-); and "dead publics" (2009-). See <http://www.smallfatman.com>

ANDREA PHILLIPS

Andrea Phillips is Professor of Fine Art in the Department of Art, Goldsmiths, University of London, and Director of the Doctoral Research Programmes in Fine Art and Curating. She publishes widely in art and architecture journals, artist's monographs and collections on politics, philosophy and contemporary art practice, and speaks internationally on art, architecture and politics. Between 2006-2009 she was Director of Curating Architecture, a think tank based in the Art Department that investigated the aesthetic and political relationship between architecture, curating and concepts of public display, and resulted in an exhibition and publication. Andrea Phillips was the Curator of the Public Programme at the Istanbul Biennial in October 2013.

AP: Shall I begin? I am Andrea Phillips and I work at Goldsmiths in the University of London, and I am responsible for what is here in Sweden called “artistic research.” In the UK context it is normally understood as “practice-based research” which is a slight difference in language, but effectively we are talking about the same thing. I also curate, and work on developing public programmes and institutions, galleries and museums in various places in Europe and internationally.

MW: I am Mick Wilson and I am the Head of the Valand Academy of Arts here in Gothenburg. An artist by training, I would primarily identify myself as a teacher, but I also engage in research and in writing criticism.

SC: I am Simon Critchley, and I am Chief Philosopher of the International Necronautical Society, and a supporter of Liverpool Football Club.

AP: What’s a *Chief* Philosopher?

SC: Well, there is only *one*. We’ve got a General Secretary, a Head of Propaganda, a Chief Philosopher...

AP: Marvellous!

SC: ... and an Environmental Engineer.

AP: All you need.

MW: So we begin with this very general question of judgement...

AP: I think it’s quite important to say that the first issue of PARSE is on the theme of judgement. So one of the things we’re trying to think through is the way in which judgement refracts within the field of contemporary art, curating and research. That’s the context for our talk here today, but as befits the way in which we’re approaching PARSE, we’re not really concerned with spending a lot of time investigating what artistic research *is*. We feel that

that question has been mulled over, perhaps for too long already within the Anglo-European context. The dialogues on artistic research that we wish to promote are those that may have broad significance for everybody working within the contemporary political and social context. Therefore *judgement* seemed to us to be a very important nexus of what we might call “missing thought”: We don’t think enough about judgement. So it seemed to us an interesting point of departure rather than a question about the definition of artistic research as such.

MW: ... and I see that Simon has some notes prepared, so maybe, Simon, you would be willing to kick things off then?

SC: Well, ok then, I have some remarks here. The first is that I don’t know how to judge art works: I don’t know how to make aesthetic judgements, and when I see a work, I don’t know what to say: *Do I like it? Is it good?* – I don’t know. I’m consumed by anxiety at that moment. You’re looking at something in a museum... What’s it called? Who’s the artist? You look for help. So the whole experience of judgement for me induces a kind of massive anxiety, and you wait for other people to say something: *What do you think? Do you like it?* Then you might say something like: *“Oh it’s interesting.”* The word “interesting” is used a lot in relationship to contemporary art. I was with an artist last week and the word that he kept using to describe his work was “complicated”: *“It’s complicated.” “It’s interesting.”* What on earth do those things mean? We don’t have a vocabulary of judgement. We don’t really know how to judge, and so we say things like “interesting.” And we hope that people won’t think that we’re fools. So my problem with judgement is – and this is my second remark then – none of us really know what to think ... *“Did you see that?” “Yeah I hated it” – or “I liked it.” “Oh you liked it?” “I hated it.” “Yeah, but maybe you’re right, maybe I liked it too.”* It’s like Facebook. You like it. You don’t like it. So judgement becomes reduced to this... this anxiety inducing banality: You don’t know what to think.

Now, I wish that art were more like sports, particularly more like football, because, when it comes to football, questions of judgement are much more precise. I could say a number of things – I won't do this in this context – about Liverpool Football Club. Their merits. Their demerits. Their complications.

I could provide complicated reasoning to justify a position, and, if you knew about that too, you could provide complicated counter-reasoning, and we could watch a game together, and we could discuss it, and judge things at every moment, and we'd be relaxed, we'd be enjoying ourselves, and we know what to think, and we'd be happy to make judgements, and we'd be happy for there to be counter-judgements against the judgements we make, and that's the way it is. Recently I've gone back to looking at Brecht for other reasons, and Brecht, in his early writings, is thinking about the kind of audience that he would have liked for his work, and he said that the kind of audience he'd like would be like a sports crowd. And he wanted people to smoke cigars and drink during theatre performances, because they'd be more relaxed, because the idea is that, basically, the real thing about judgement is that people are either consumed by anxiety, and then they go into a theatre and they kind of switch off – nothing happens, they go to sleep – so how do you keep an audience awake and informed and intelligent? Well, a sports crowd does that all the time, and so it becomes a kind of paradigm for judgement for me, relaxed judgement... so I wish audiences in galleries were more like audiences at football matches. It would be a lot more fun.

Now, the peculiar thing about aesthetic judgements is that the form of aesthetic judgements is one where we want some kind of agreement, so when I say: I like it, or this is beautiful, the form of that judgement is one where we're trying to get assent or agreement from somebody else. It somehow isn't enough when it comes to aesthetic judgement to say: "*This is fine for me. I like this.*" We want in the form of judgement some kind of agreement or assent,

which is to say that aesthetic judgements have the peculiar character of being trans-subjective, they're expressions of taste or of distaste, but they have an intersubjective form, they make an appeal to others... They are judgements that I say in the hope of finding agreement, or in the hope that you don't think I'm an asshole, or that I've got no taste.

So there's something about the form of judgement that doesn't appeal to others... trans-subjective... and that's even true, it's most true negatively, so someone says something outrageous, you know, they go and see this show here, and they say to you: "*Yes, I'm the artist,*" and they say, "*It was shit, you should be ashamed of yourself.*" That expression of negative judgement is also a confirmation of agreement. By saying an outrageous statement, you're inverting the kind of agreement that is necessary to the form of aesthetic judgement, and that's a peculiar thing. Then we face this old classical problem, which I want to just raise, I don't really have a solution to it, but... judgement, aesthetic judgements, are trans-subjective, they're more than... they're more than me. They seem to have some form that requires assent, and that's what usually leads to the claim that aesthetic judgements require universality.

That's the argument basically in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, more or less, very, very simply. Judgements concerning the beautiful have within them something that can cause a universal voice, so then we end up in this conflict between universality of judgement and particularity of judgement. We seem to expect that judgements should have a universal form, and if they're not universal that means that anything goes and we're in some situation of relativism. That is where things play up, and that's kind of uninteresting, I think. Aesthetic judgements have a trans-subjective form *and* they are contextual, they are contextual judgements. I think we can give up on the problem of relativism, and just accept that judgements are judgements which I make in a certain context, which I want other people to agree with, but which I don't expect

everybody to agree with. There is no need at that point to immediately go to the question of universality. I am talking about this on a very basic level, not complicated judgements. I am talking about this in relationship to things like... going to see a movie and that moment when you see a movie together with someone, perhaps someone that you know well, and you leave the cinema, and you're with a crowd of people, and it's dark, and you're not sure what the other person thought about the film. There's that moment where you say: "*Did you like it?*" You put it in the form of a question: "*Did you like it?*" or, "*I thought that was great,*" and they say: "*I thought that was shit,*" and then you respond... "*Oh really?*" ... There is something again in those expressions of aesthetic taste. For example, at the moment I've recently rediscovered, in the last two weeks, the genius of Scott Walker, of the Walker Brothers, and this extraordinary career of, sort of, avant-garde music. I discovered this. I've written a book on David Bowie, which is coming out soon, and Scott Walker was a huge influence on Bowie. Now, I want people to like Scott Walker, you know, because it's just amazing. Every chance I get I'm playing Scott Walker tracks to people saying "*Just listen to this.*" (*Laughter*) It's extraordinary, and they say, "*Yeah, I suppose it's ok,*" or "*Maybe that works for you, maybe it's a boy thing*": My wife said that. I played *Farmer in the City*, which is about Pasolini: "*Oh maybe it's a boy thing.*" (*Laughter*) I'm crushed at that point, so my judgement at that point is a judgement about the genius of Scott Walker. It isn't enough for me, just to play those tracks on Youtube in my hotel room, which I did this morning, I want those judgements to be... general.

That's an opening remark then, that's actually five, six, no, four remarks and the others can be really quick. I'm teaching Hölderlin next week. I won't go through this, but Hölderlin, the great poet, for some of us, *the* poet, who has this fragment from 1795 called *Urteil und Sein* (Judgement and Being). It's an incredibly enigmatic fragment. It's a page, in German, and Hölderlin says in respect

of Judgement, *Urteil*, that it links back to the idea of separation, of *Teilung*. *Urteil*, judgement becomes primary separation, separation from what, separation from Being, *Sein*. So the thought in Hölderlin is that there is Being, by which Hölderlin means everything, the world, the whole, and in judgement we separate ourselves from the whole. The judgement that Hölderlin is thinking about is the judgement: I am I, I am I... He kind of leaves it at that, because he was Hölderlin and he was a bit crazy... and he can do things like that. But the thought there seems to be that in judgement I say: I am I, or I am Simon, but in saying I am Simon, I'm separating myself both from the world of objects. I am not chairs, I am not buildings, I am me, and I am separating myself from myself. So in saying: I am I, I am not, as it were, presenting myself, I'm presenting myself in a separate or divided form.

So there's something very peculiar about the form of judgement, it is separation from the world... "*I am Simon*" and, in saying that, it is a separation from myself. To give another example, a kind of local example, there's the amazing moment, it's the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare, which, well there we are... Well, he had a way with words didn't he, Shakespeare? And there's the extraordinary moment in Hamlet, where in Act 5 Scene 1, there is the funeral of Ophelia, and Laertes jumps in the grave, because Laertes is very frustrated with the lack of ceremony surrounding the suicide of his sister. Hamlet sees this and loses it at that moment, and runs towards the grave and he says: "*It is I, Hamlet the Dane.*" It is the only time in the play that Hamlet names Hamlet. He names himself in the third person. It is a judgement. It is a judgement made in relationship to another, Laertes, a kind of a double with whom he is comparing himself, and separating himself from... The assertion: "*It is I, Hamlet the Dane,*" is not the articulation of some kind of unified subject. It is a separation of the subject from itself. So judgements also have that form, it is very peculiar... and that is Hölderlin's thought.

The other things that I was going to say, two more things... I had this remark about Nietzsche, but that can wait. Going back to Kant... now, in Kant's critique of aesthetic judgement there are two categories of judgement: judgements of the beautiful and judgements of the sublime. Judgements of the beautiful, where I say: "*This is beautiful*," are expressions where, Kant says, there is a kind of free play of the imagination and the understanding. The way I understand that, is that the beautiful is a kind of harmony. Kant is not thinking about art works, he is thinking about our experience. For example, if you could imagine driving a Volvo... No, you drove a Volvo... Imagine driving a very expensive Mercedes through the California desert, and your car is working perfectly, and you've got the music, you've got Scott Walker... (*Laughter*)... on the music, and there's no traffic on the roads, and everything is in a kind of harmony, beautifully. That's the beautiful for Kant. Judgements of the beautiful have that form. Judgements of the sublime are refractory to the beautiful. They are almost too much, Kant says, but not too much. We can still articulate them in relationship to something vast, like a raging sea, or... St. Peter's in Rome is an example that he gives. Or, because Kant was Kant, the experience of the moral law... the moral law for Kant is the experience of the sublime. He was a bit strange that way.

What is important in this notion of the sublime is that the sublime is almost too much, it is a judgement that is almost too much, but it's not too much. There has to be a limit, for Kant, between judgements of the sublime, which are almost too much, and judgements of the monstrous, the *Ungeheuer*, which are too much. Judgements of the monstrous do not have any place in the aesthetic realm. That is the distinction I want to draw attention to: Judgements of the sublime are almost too much, and judgements of the monstrous, which are absolutely too much, and which pull us outside of the aesthetic realm. They induce in us cancers and experiences of disgust: the word in German is *Ekel*. It's a very interesting word, it's all over Nietzsche,

it's all over Heine Müller. *Hamlet Maschine* is all about *Ekel, Ekel, Ekel*. I mention the monstrous here because it seems that what has happened in different areas of art over the last century, in different media, in theatre, in visual art, have been articulations of the monstrous. It is the way we could think about Bacon's painting, it's the way we can think about the blood orgies of Hermann Nitsch or Artaud's theatre of cruelty or the theatre of Sarah Kane, or whatever. We've got innumerable examples. What is interesting about experiences of monstrosity like these, that produce disgust in us, is that they raise the question of judgement, which pushes at the border between art and non-art. When we're looking at something and it disgusts us, we often ask the question: "*Well, is it art? Is it?*" Or we are disgusted by it – "*It's just a fucking empty bed*," Tracey Emin, "*That's not art, it's an empty... unmade bed with a bunch of crap in it*." Art is often about those explorations of the limits between art and anti-art, which turn on this question of monstrosity, which is also a perplexity about judgement. It seems to me that what is going on, or what has gone on, in relation to judgement in a whole number of areas can be seen to turn around this question of the porosity of the border between art and non-art. So whatever art is, we are uncertain what art is, and we're uncertain what art is in relationship to different forms of non-art, and that takes on different articulations. This could be non-art in terms of economic value, in terms of "*Well this isn't art, it's just reducible to its financial form*"; it can be the frontier between art and fashion, "*This isn't art, it's fashion*"; "*This is not art, it's pop music*"; or "*This isn't art, it's advertising*". The whole debate around Warhol and pop art, and the way this has been articulated for us in recent years, picks up on something much older and much deeper: this is the relationship between art and non-art, and judgements concerned with that in relationship to politics.

Let me give you a concrete example to explain what I mean. After Zuccotti Park, after Occupy Wall Street happened, a friend of mine called Colin,

who's also a Liverpool fan, published a book three weeks afterwards, a print on demand book, a very fast book, of interviews, of documents from people that were in the protest, and it began with a two-dimensional plan, a two-dimensional overview of Zuccotti Park. Zuccotti Park was represented as a kind of rectangle in a two-dimensional overview, a floor plan, and you have the assembly area, the library, the kitchen, the media centre, the sleeping area, the drum-beating area, whatever, it's all laid out in the plan. Looking at that two-dimensional plan, I thought: *"Fuck, it was an installation; of course it was an installation, it always was an installation, and not just any installation, it's a Thomas Hirschhorn installation."* Zuccotti Park was a Thomas Hirschhorn installation. Thomas Hirschhorn was in town around that time because he was planning to do his Gramsci Monument in the Bronx, the fourth in his series of monuments. Spinoza, Deleuze, Bataille and Gramsci... So I said to Thomas: "Isn't it funny that Zuccotti Park looked like one of your installations?" and he said, *"Yes, yes... It looked like one of my installations, but what I'm doing is art and not politics."* This is interesting, in that moment, there's a judgement, and so what you have is that porosity between art and non-art, which takes on different articulations: one articulation of that is the art of politics, demurring, and, at which point some of us would say *"No, it's not art, it's politics"*; or *"It's not politics, it's art."* This is something which is structural for us. Whatever art is, it becomes something which is not just what the artist says it is: This is not Duchamp's moment, it's the kind of moment where art practice is, as it were, systematically resembling something which isn't art. Last week I was in Chicago inside this thing by a Chicago based artist John Preus, a work called *The Beast*. There was a huge dead bull or a dying bull – Chicago Bulls, big bull's head, meat, slaughter houses, Upton Sinclair. We were all inside this bull having a discussion, about 20 people, and John Preus just wants it to be a space where people can hang out. A lot of artists like that, we call it... what... "social practice." He wants a kind of community

centre, but it's inside an art work, and that is one, as it were, symptom of this that then raises the question of judgement again in a really peculiar way, and that's about it...

AP: Was it a real bull?

SC: No, it was a bull made out of... it's interesting, he's an artist who, to make money, made furniture and developed incredibly good carpentry skills... It's a wooden structure which is covered with carpets which were discarded... Everything that it's made from was thrown away from buildings in the area so it is all this sustainable, reused material, all very good.

We were inside this structure and it was furnished with school desks that were from public schools that were closed the previous year in Chicago, so it's about things that are dead or considered useless and which are being re-used, in order to create a space where people can hang out. That's only one example, there are thousands like that across the world where what's going on in art is something that is pushing on that frontier between art and non-art, and where that question of judgement I think, for us, gets really complicated. *What is this? What does it mean?* and then, *What do we say in relationship to it?* If I sit there for a couple of hours and say: *I like it; It's beautiful, That's interesting; It's complicated.* What do I say? Maybe say nothing, I don't know.

MW: Where to pick up from here...? The word "judgement", in English at least, indicates both the capacity, the power of judgement, but it also indicates the event of the judgement, and this event entails both the content and the consequence of judgement. So there is the power, and there is the event of judgement. The event of judgement can be seen as punctal, it happens at a point, the decisive moment when judgement is pronounced. However, there is also this kind of durational aspect of judgement, there is an ongoing power to give judgement, and in the notion of the punctal

judgement there is the possibility that a number of possible different futures exist, a number of possible scenarios, a number of contingencies are there, and then an act of judgement is made, and there is some closing down of the futures, some path is selected and a judgement may be seen to determine this path.

This can be a matter of the judgement of the court of law, but it can also be in the judgement made within an art world context: *“Is this thing before me, is it art or not?”* It is in the power of some that their judgement that *“This is not art”* determines that this does not command further discussion. In each case the judgement in some way determines that some futures are closed down and another pathway is opened out. Therefore these aspects of judgement, both the punctal judgement, which delivers a consequence, but also the more general durational process of judgement, and the capacity to produce it so as to effect consequences, these are things that arise in the normal business of teaching artists. However, it is interesting how it happens within the process of teaching artists because, on the one hand, the student artist will be in a situation of maybe waiting upon the judgement of either their peers, or the teacher, or the visiting artist or whomever is going to make a pronouncement on their work: *“Is what I’m doing interesting? Is it important? Does this look like art to you?”* and so there is a certain sense of waiting upon that punctal event of judgement. *“She said she liked my work.”* In some sense we teachers are supposed to be communicating a capacity, or elaborating or encouraging the capacity of judgement. So students regularly show up to art school with their passion for... I mean it was Salvador Dali a few generations ago, and now I guess it’s probably Damien Hirst or something like that, or maybe Tracey Emin...

AP: Thomas Hirshhorn?

MW: It is simply that the student artist arrives with a particular set of judgements already made and a particular set of art interests. They show up with

this certain set of passions and investments, and, typically, regardless of what that investment is, one of the tasks of education is to somehow disenchant them, it is to somehow problematise it. Therefore the student is placed in a situation of anticipating or receiving a judgement from the “Master-who-knows.” This applies also in the situation where the student wishes to hear this judgement if only so they can say that the one who presumes him- or herself to be master is wrong, and is mistaken in their claim to authoritative judgement etc. (*Laughter*) In some way the student is still dependent upon a judgement to come from elsewhere (if only the judgement to admit them to the institution of art education). At the same time, the idea seems to be that the teacher has the task of cultivating judgement in the student.

What makes this particularly problematic is that we operate in the wake of a whole series of avantgardes and aesthetic revolutions and so forth. We recognise that the institutions of art education were not the site where these earlier breakthroughs happened, that in some way the institutions were characterised precisely by their initial rejections of these developments. (In music education we speak of Conservatories, and this is an appropriate term for much of what passes for art education.) The avantgarde was the avantgarde because the institutions, the academies, rejected these developments. So now we have this kind of institution where we know (or believe we know) that, historically, the academy, teachers made the mistake of disavowing the new, of rejecting what would subsequently be valorised as the cultural achievements of the age, and we have this anticipation that we cannot disavow the new based on some inherited frame of value or criteria. This is especially the case when, in some way, the task of the student is apparently to overthrow the inherited regimes of taste and judgement, and so forth. Therefore in the art teaching process we are in this really problematic situation of being, on the one hand, afraid to make judgement and on the other hand, trying to encourage judgement. Often this means that we dump the problem all back onto

the student: “What do you think? What do you find interesting? What do you decide in favour of?”

This situation is not just the question of what one feels or thinks or enjoys or finds relevant or meaningful, it is about when the encounter with an art work passes over into a particular moment of communication about that encounter, when one pronounces upon it. You go see a movie with a friend, and in the aftermath of viewing there is somehow an expectation, or even a need, to pass comment on the movie. This is often a moment of expectation where something has to be said. The experience has to pass over into language and there is something about this passing over into language that is anxious and unsettling. In some contexts, like the game of football that Simon describes, or in many other contexts, this passing over into language of our judgement is not one that is freighted with the same kind of anxiety: It just happens in the flow of social exchange, and it may be even that we can find great joy in the pronouncement and even great fun in the gaming with another person that has counter-judgements and so forth...

SC: Yeah, absolutely.

MW: ... but when it comes to the moment of art we have this question of, well, what's the consequence of me making this judgement? And I would suggest that part of the issue is that you can make the judgement on the Liverpool team for example because it can be done as if it's important... but really it is without strong consequences, and so we can play that game with a certain ease. In the case of art, it's probably largely without strong consequence, but there is this apprehension that perhaps there *should* be consequence here. This is supposed to be a space of significance and importance and there *should* be consequence. In some sense the hesitancy of judgement in respect of the art work might be that we anticipate that there should be something of consequence here, something should proceed from this, and one of our concerns perhaps is recognis-

ing that, in the gaming around judgements in sport, again the case of Liverpool, there's a certain game of the production of the self. However, in respect of this gaming around the production of taste judgements (as we know from Bourdieu and so forth) one of the things that we are marking with a distinction when we pronounce upon the work of art, or when we make these pronouncements of taste, is ourselves, we are producing an idea of ourselves. The distinction that we are making is not really about: *is this good or bad?*, or what's out there, but what kind of person am I and where do I sit within the social order. I would not wish to reduce the questions of taste and judgement to only that action of social reproduction, but I do want to acknowledge that it is a substantial moment in what's going on in the occasion of judgement. Perhaps, this is a significant part of the apprehension experienced in making judgement. Even this question of the judgement of “interest” which while commonplace is still something that we can find as a cause for anxiety that makes us slow to judge: “*O, you really think that's interesting and complicated?*” On the other hand, there are many other kinds of judgements that we do make as we shift around the art work, perhaps *avoiding* commitment on: *Is this a good piece of work or not? Is this important? Is this compelling?* We might still make assertions on seemingly simpler questions like (I'm citing Danto here) “daintiness”, or “prettiness” or “funkiness”, or “cool-ness”. So there are pronouncements that we are making that are amenable to the same analytic as the judgement of beauty or the judgement of the sublime, they fit within it in some way.

AP: ... and then become inconsequential?

MW: They are pedestrian as well... to see something as dainty or not dainty, that discernment is not necessarily something that's freighted with the same significance and burden of subject formation as happens with the pronouncement on the beautiful. These are things that have a different history to them. I think that there are a lot of aesthetic

judgements being produced within the contemporary art field, they're just not the discursive site that's charged with great significance. Returning then to this question of where judgement is being prioritised: perhaps this has shifted up to the judgement of *"Is it art or not?"* Perhaps that's the primary judgement theme we work with now.

In finishing then, I don't really know how to tie these fragmentary thoughts together. I would suggest that there is something in the punctal aspect of judgement that might respond to the issues I have listed here: the fact of making judgements that we do not attend to, that we do not give significance to (*"This is pretty," "This is neat"*); the anxiety of making judgements that we see as being in a higher register – *"Is this art?" "Is this good art?" "Is this important art?"*; and the way in which this anxiety of judgement is institutionalised, in one example, in art education. In the current climate of our culture, the kind of moment that we're in, and I use education as one site that acts as an index of this anxiety about the decision, the decisive judgement. I'm interested in the possibility that what we have lost within the present moment is an investment in the idea of the punctal judgement, the decision, the ability to act and say *"These futures we close, this pathway we open up, and we cannot go back from here."* This is the judgement we make now. It's a moment of decision, and, while the judgement may be reviewed later and even re-decided, we cannot go back from this moment of judgement. Consequences proceed from this: We are making the decision. We are making the choice.

Indeed, I would go further and say that there is an aspect of judgement which I think we have lost, which is even more severe than this idea of the decision, and it's the idea of preaching. I wonder about the way in which, within an earlier moment of modernity, preaching was a central form of public judgement-making, and a judgement-making which was often self-instituting rather than the judgement of the court. The preacher steps up and, while the

preacher may draw upon the establishment of the church, there's also the preacher who steps forth on the street corner, the preacher who announces herself and begins to produce not just one judgement but a flurry of judgements, a flood of judgement and demand. I wonder about the way in which the only modern image of the judgement practices of preachers that we have is really the disturbing and unattractive kind connected to North American evangelical Christianity. This evangelical model of preaching is rightly seen as the authoritarian culture of the right and so forth. However, I'm wondering what are the possibilities of preaching that might come from an (almost) over-production of judgement, as a counterpoint to a moment in our culture when we are afraid to produce judgement, when we see the wish to externalise judgement in systems, in matrices, in audits, in some form of system that will make the judgements but relieve us of the burden of judging.

I was doing a class with some students the other day where I presented this teacher's dilemma as a thought experiment for the group: *"You have a student, you have just marked them, they fail, you learn from the counsellor that if you pass them they will get their scholarship, but if you fail them, that's it, they won't get their scholarship; what do you do?"* The class group's response was – overwhelmingly – that they would try to find a way not to have to make that choice. One should try to find a way not to make the choice because one doesn't want to do that. In effect each student was saying *"I don't want to do the right thing. I don't want to do the wrong thing. I don't want to take a decisive action. I want not to have to make a choice."* I think as a corrective to this, we might create a situation where there is a demand for an overproduction of judgement and a sense of consequence to those judgements. Not that we become pretenders of consequence, but rather to go back to this question – *"Is it art or not art?"* – and to give consequence to this. Is there some consequence to proceed from: *"Yes, this is art, this is what matters, attend to this, this counts"*; and I think this is really a

problem. I point to it in education, but I see it as a problem about our own willingness to step forward and say: *“Some choices we reject, and some choices we make, and we proceed, some futures close for us, and some pathways open.”* I think that as just one last item on this, there’s a particular fear of judgement which is identified as authoritarian, the preacher’s judgement is especially wrong: To be preaching is bad, to be judgemental is bad. This presents as a fear of the imposition of an extrinsic authority but it is actually the fear of taking power and experiencing the consequences of power, the fear of responsibility. I see this... rather than the forms of the political in art, this question of art and activism and so forth which I see as a distraction... as a more fundamental question: Accepting that one has power and taking the responsibility of using power.

AP: I agree.

SC: Good.

AP: So I’ll try and follow through with some of that, because I want to talk about judgement, value and money. I think this is directly related to these questions that you both brought up. For me, it’s not a preacher, but it’s a politician, but I think we’re describing the same subject, or subject position.

I think that what we’ve done is we have allowed judgement to be taken away from us, within the field of art, contemporary art, we’ve allowed judgement to be taken by others. However, we can’t point to that other, so we can’t say it’s Nick Serota or it’s Daniel Birnbaum, or it’s the funding council, or it’s the rector, or the dean, because we produced a system which is very much related, I think, to your analysis, whereby there isn’t the capacity to understand that moment of judgement, or enact it, or take responsibility for the person, the being of it, in a sense. I recently saw an exhibition at the House of World Culture, HKW, in Berlin, *Forensis*. It’s a very complex exhibition, comprising architectural and spatial evidence of human rights atrocities as

documented and annotated by activists, architects and planners in various parts of the world. The exhibition is a very broad overview. It is both immense and very dense. Afterwards I had a kind of violent argument about the pros and cons of this exhibition with a friend. The friend was profoundly supportive of the exhibition, and I was profoundly against it, not because of the content: We both agreed that the content was superimportant, but our argument was about whether the material should be produced in an exhibition format.

My friend’s argument was that the profundity of the visual imagery, and the re-purposing of this in the form of political information, was incredibly well rendered. My argument was that this material is wasted in an installation at HKW. It should be in a newspaper. It should be somewhere else, but it shouldn’t be here.

We had a long debate... our blood was boiling... and then we both kind of shrugged, and we looked at each other as if to say: *“My God, what have we just done?”* It was as if somebody had clicked their fingers and we became our normal conciliatory selves again and so we started to say... *“Well, of course you’re absolutely right,” “No, no, you’re right,” “No, I can see what you mean...”* We moved from this fantasy of the football terrace, or the boxing ring, the moment in which Brecht makes us argue, because he presents two positions to us, and he says: *“You need to decide, You’re in the audience, You’ve got your cigar, You’ve got your beer, and you need to decide” “Is Simon right? Or am I right?”* If you don’t walk out of his theatre having made a decision, then Brecht has failed in his job as a playwright, preacher, politician. I think we are, as Mick says, in a moment where we have allowed other people to take over the judgement of our work. This is what happens when we are in this situation you’ve described, where our instinct is to fail the student because the work doesn’t fulfil the criteria, which we have spent endless time writing. We can tick off the criteria, and say, well, yeah, it’s aesthetic criteria, 20 per cent... ability to make a

kind of contribution to knowledge, mmm...10 per cent... you know whatever the kind of ridiculous sets of criteria ...

SC: Originality

AP: Originality... So I think that we have invented systems and structures that allow us not to have to take these decisions. There's a reason for that, and I would call the reason the history of liberalism. I would say that the Kantian moment is the beginning of the development of liberal taste. It is the process of liberalism as a political formation that has allowed us to renege on our responsibility to make judgements, or – to push it slightly further – that has produced the conditions through which it is almost impossible for us to be *directly* judgemental about art.

Liberalism is a financial construction (a political methodology based on property as the basis of civility). An individual called the artist emerged, from just before and throughout liberalism. That is an artist rather than an artisan with a specific set of craft skills. This new figure – individual, autonomous – was a new assemblage of judgement, value and finance. This is where the indirect experiential transaction around art you've both described emerged.

The experiential transaction has moved from one logical transaction to another. The first is, to be crass: *"I think this is worth this much money and this is how much I'm going to pay for it"*, and we might haggle: *"OK you're quite good at woodcarving, but you're not quite as good as that guy over there so I'll pay you this much if you make my fireplace."* The experiential transaction is no longer that: We would now never ever have that kind of transactional conversation with an artist. The transactional conversation is the site where judgement becomes porous, illusory, opaque, or removed. We would never, ever, unless we were *very* unsophisticated: my children would do this but of course I wouldn't. (*Laughter*) We'd

never say: "How much is that painting?" (*Laughter*) We would never say that because it would break a whole series of social codes, bourgeois codes etc.; we wouldn't do it because it would presuppose the idea of value attached to judgement equalling price. We cannot base any of our criteria on that, which is why we use terms such as "complex" and "interesting" in the way that Simon has laid out so well for us.

"Complex" doesn't equal price, we don't say, *"Well, it's more complex, that Hirschhorn is more complex than Emin, so we'll pay more for Hirschhorn than Emin, because clearly it took Hirschhorn longer to wrap up that thing in duct tape than it took Emin to get somebody to bring that bed into the gallery."* We don't have that kind of conversation (and you know Hirschhorn doesn't do as well on the art market as Emin does). We have this experiential transaction which has taken a different form, which is a non-monetised form. Or at least it seems to be a non-monetised form. But it's actually profoundly monetised. Contemporary art is the avoidance of judgement on the basis of a new form of experiential transaction and this is due to a particular mythos, the myth that the artwork is priceless, the concept of the transactional experience is based on the pricelessness of art.

Art is priceless, which is why we can't give it direct value, we can't give it price quite literally because it's price-less. So if art is priceless, then that concept of pricelessness underscores every value that the whole structure, the whole edifice of artistic production, is based upon, from education through to what is circulated, what is displayed in galleries and museums, from the small artists' run space through to the Moderna Museet, the Tate and MoMA... They are all premised on the concept of art's pricelessness, and pricelessness is a direct challenge to the concept of judgement, because pricelessness is saying judgement is impossible. We can't put a value on Hirschhorn because Hirschhorn's work is not just about the stuff, it's not just about how much the duct tape costs and how long he spends in the Bilmer talking to the locals and wrapping them in

duct tape... We can't put a price on that because it's not just about that, it's about the conversations he has, and the fact that he brings philosophers in to talk, which is profoundly important in some way. It's also about the fact that he's placed this work in this particular situation which has this kind of political patina to it which seems to be important. All these things mean that we can't put a price on the work, and that we value it in different ways. So pricelessness is the fact of contemporary art that moves not only from art school to gallery, but importantly also, it is the conversation that happens in the auction house and in the dealer's back room. So you never ever, if you're trying to buy a work of art, you never ever go into a gallery and say: "I like that one, how much is that?"... (*Laughter*) ... Gagosian or... Barbara Weiss or... I don't know what commercial galleries you have here in Gothenburg ... but you never do that.

First of all you never even begin to have the conversation about money, unless there is an acknowledgment between you and the dealer that you are part

of a circuit of experiential transaction that understands the value of pricelessness in contemporary art. If you are a part of that transactional, experiential, non-judgemental value creation mechanism (i.e., if you're quite rich and you've already bought some stuff) then you will be invited into the back room of the dealer. Then you will begin to talk about how much you love that work, by Hirschhorn or whoever... Schiele, whoever it is... At that point, and of course you have to be incredibly much part of the conversation, if you even get to have the conversation about a Schiele work, because they are rare and they are even more priceless... at that moment, the deferral of judgement continues and it continues in this relationship between the person who wants to look after the work in perpetuity, not *buy* the work, and the dealer who recognises in the person that wants to do it that there are a set of values and a set of properties resplendent within the subject, who is the buyer, that will be able to look after, in perpetuity, this wonderful priceless piece of work; and then my people talk to your people about money, but that is not done at any point here; there

is not a cheque written at that point; so this is the way in which money is transacted in the conditions of lack of judgement and pricelessness that are the conditions of value within the contemporary art field. These are not simply important for people who want to buy work, or for art fairs, for the directors of art fairs, for those artists that are represented by galleries that get 50 per cent of the unnamed sum, but, these are very important for art educators and their students. Those of us who teach in art schools are all part of the creation of that pricelessness every time we cannot say: *“Actually, if you hadn’t used blue in that painting, then it would be good, but because you used blue in the painting, it’s bad”*, or whatever, because of course as soon as you try to say it, it sounds banal and stupid.

I won’t take much longer. However, to round up this question and come back to this concept of liberalism – this idea of pricelessness I’ve described is our inability to judge art’s value in merely transactional terms that are not experientially transactional but are financially transactional. This is not found-

ationless, as many myths would seem to propose. It has not been like this forever, as I described very summarily earlier on: There was a time before the development of this “artist/art work condition” that is pricelessness, when the transaction was much more direct. It was, if you will, Brechtian. It was: *“Do you want it, or do you not want it? I can make it bigger, I can make it smaller.”* I have heard of situations where naïve people have walked into galleries and said: “I like that one, but I prefer it in blue” ... and they have been removed, gently and subtly, from the conversation.

SC: It’s not going to fit over the fireplace...

AP: It’s not going to fit over the fireplace, yes... So it is not foundationless, it is historically contingent on the development of a value system that is called liberalism. The importance of liberalism in this debate arises from the conditions of property ownership that developed in Europe and then became exported through colonialism to many other parts of the world, including the United States:

the key idea is the importance of property as the basis of the Bourgeois subject under liberalism. The appearance of this idea of property being not simply something you own but something that profoundly conditions your subjectivity, is also the moment at which this idea of pricelessness in art emerges.

There is a very interesting correlation between these historical developments. (Here I must also mention the fantastic work of a PhD student of mine, Nick Ferguson, he and I have talked for four years about this concept of property under liberalism. Conversations with Nick have really informed my thinking about these things.) In other words, art was not always priceless, but has become priceless through a shift in the values ascribed to it by liberalism. There have been other times when there were not these conditions of pricelessness. So if there were other times when there were not these conditions of pricelessness, working in the manner of the preacher or the politician, what would it mean to bring back the idea of price into our conversations about art? What edifices would crumble? What ways would we have to re-think the value structures of our world? And

in what ways would that expose the very conditions upon which the structures of our value system are made by, are shaped by, the financial situation that we are not able to name because of this condition of pricelessness? This is the contribution to the question of judgement that I wish to make. I have indicated that education, galleries and museums are very much part of this, however what this does, in a way, is to hide what pricelessness does, what lack of judgement does within the contemporary art sphere. It stops us being allowed to have a conversation about the conditions of the art market that that actually shapes and forms everything we do. There is this circuit of opacity that is engaged with every time we cannot have a conversation about... every time we cannot have a stand-up argument about a judgement regarding an art work.