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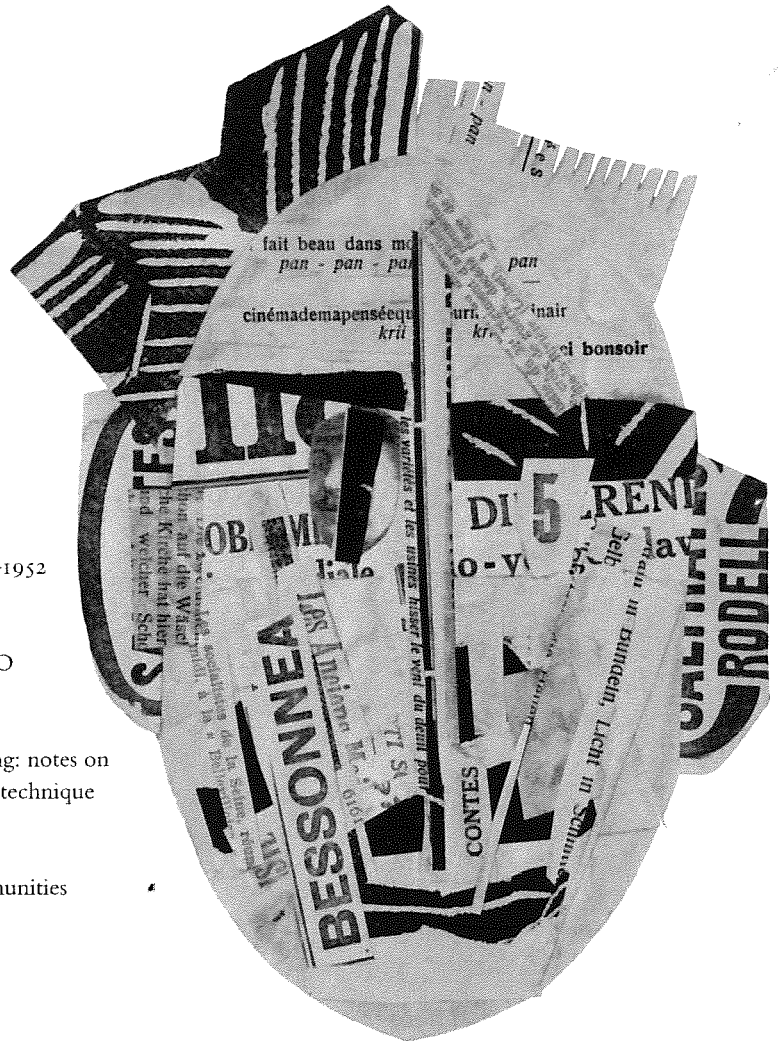
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REHEARSALS FOR REVOLUTION: COMMUNITIES AND COLLECTIVE MOVEMENT

Larne Abse Gogarty

Perhaps the theatre is not revolutionary in itself,
but it is surely a rehearsal for the revolution.
Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974)¹

As the quotation above suggests, I am mobilizing the concept of rehearsal in this paper to discuss performances that act as preparation for real-life struggles. The works I focus on were produced in the US during the 1930s and 1990s, and existed as pedagogical experiences for audience and performer alike. I begin with *The Roof is on Fire* (1994) and *Code 33* (1999), two performances drawn from *The Oakland Projects* (1991–2001), a decade-long community-based artwork led by the artist Suzanne Lacy. I then turn to focus on *Injunction Granted* (1936), a Living Newspaper produced by the Works Progress Administration Federal Theatre Project (WPA-FTP).² This analysis of collective, community-based performances from both the 1930s and 1990s offers a new perspective on the recent, largely dehistoricized accounts of the growing field of practice variously labelled socially engaged art, dialogical art and social practice.³ What is frequently missing from this debate is a sense of how individuals and groups work together in the production of artworks, and how this is informed and shaped by political and historical transformations. My argument is that by exploring projects dating to the 1990s in relation to works from the 1930s we might expand and complicate our histories of social practice, and gain a better sense of continuities, as well as unexplored paths.

In order to expand on how these performances operate as rehearsals for real life, I draw on Bertolt Brecht. In particular, the Brechtian emphasis on interruption as a method for denaturalizing experience relates to my proposal that the performances under discussion can be viewed as rehearsals. As Robert

Baker-White has noted, the open activity of the rehearsal is 'inherently interruptible' and marked by the possibility of participants repeatedly rethinking their roles in relation to one another.⁴ In addition, Georg Lukács's analysis of the 'type' assists with exploring how the use of 'types' in *The Roof is on Fire*, *Code 33* and *Injunction Granted* function as a means for critiquing social reality. In May 1936 the 'types' of the WPA-FTP Living Newspaper were described by the critic John Mullen in *New Theatre*: 'each character is an individual with problems and needs, representing not only himself but a large group of people'.⁵ This bears comparison to Lacy's comment that the process of performing in *The Oakland Projects* was to 'step into the role of yourself not only as an individual but as a member of a particular group'.⁶ Since their well-known disagreement over the aesthetic form realism should take, the characterization of the Brecht–Lukács debate as marked by bitter antagonism has been frequently challenged. As Lukács himself acknowledged in 1968, their positions grew closer through their ongoing dialogue up until Brecht's death.⁷ Given that their disagreement has often been interpreted as a difference over style, Brecht's belief that realism is not a matter of form should be kept in mind.⁸

For Lukács, avant-garde innovations such as montage and fragmentation failed to go beyond merely reflecting 'the immediate experience of chaos, dehumanization and alienation in advanced capitalist society'.⁹ Lukács particularly opposed Brecht's *Lehrstücke* (learning plays) for presenting characters seemingly devoid of subjectivity. Instead, Lukács called for realism to create – as in Balzac's novels – 'types' that stand for a social group larger and more meaningful than themselves, but which nevertheless retain the qualities of plausible, rounded individuals, thus showing the potential for humans to be fully rounded subjects in a post-capitalist society. Frederic Jameson moved the Brecht–Lukács debate forward by suggesting that Lukács's 'realism' is closely connected to his earlier texts, *Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat* and *Class Consciousness* (1920). As Jameson explains, realism 'is the bearer of the force of de-reification, which suggests that our stereotypical idea of Lukácsian realism as a "form" in its own right, and a constraining and antiquated one at that, may not be altogether accurate'.¹⁰ His observations seem particularly pertinent when considering passages from the *Reification* essay where Lukács argues that class consciousness consists of the 'appropriate and rational reactions 'imputed' [*zugeschrieben*] to a particular typical position in the process of production'.¹¹ Jameson's analysis of the residues of this in Lukács's later writings connects to Brecht's claim that

realism needs to be free from aesthetic restrictions. Indeed, as with Lukács's belief in realism as a force of de-reification, Brecht emphasized that realism should reveal and lay bare 'society's causal network'.¹²

A recent article by Sabeth Buchmann and Constanze Ruhm explores how the rehearsal has become a trope in contemporary art and frequently serves as a means for artists to collaborate with social groups beyond the 'classical exhibition visitor'.¹³ In their account, this stems from the rehearsal as a theatrical space which offers the potential for breaking down divisions of labour between technicians, director, actors and so on. Their proposals are strikingly close to Brazilian dramatist Augusto Boal's claim that the techniques he founded with Theatre of the Oppressed acted as rehearsals for revolution.¹⁴ In particular, Buchmann and Ruhm's statement that the rehearsal 'enables one to overcome idle habits, routines, and role relationships by visibly acting them out and revising them' is akin to Boal's emphasis that revolutionary theatre involve participants changing dramatic action, trying out solutions and ultimately training for 'real action'.¹⁵ In my view, the tendency towards the rehearsal in contemporary art should also be understood as a corollary of the growth in social practice over the last two decades.

The works discussed here involve using performance to try out solutions to social conflicts. I suggest that they incorporate Brechtian and Lukácsian qualities to develop a mode of realism that attempts to denaturalize such conflicts not only for spectators, but also for performers. Their realism is further complicated by the performers being *actually* implicated in the drama presented. In *Code 33* and *The Roof is on Fire*, policemen and youth played themselves. Similarly, in *Injunction Granted*, the performers – as organized labour allied with the Workers Alliance and employed by the WPA-FTP – were directly implicated in the labour struggles presented on stage. Crucially, as Buchmann and Ruhm note, the rehearsal blends the private and public spheres of production and performance, thus entwining different registers of reality, media representation and fiction, tropes common to all three works.¹⁶

I *The Roof is on Fire*

The Roof is on Fire and *Code 33* were two public moments within *The Oakland Projects*, a frequently private yet collective process that emphasized pedagogy, social policy and the mass media. The project involved collaborating with mostly African-American and Latino teenagers in Oakland, California, and

initially gestated out of media literacy workshops that Lacy coordinated in 1991–2 at the Oakland Technical High School with the photographer Chris Johnson. These developed ways for teenagers to analyse and critique negative stereotypes of youth in the mass media. During 1990–8 in California, sixty-eight per cent of stories about violent crime in the mainstream media involved youth, while only fourteen per cent of arrests for violent crime actually involved young people. This over-reporting was strongly racialized by the media, which emphasized gangs and young African-American men as perpetrators.¹⁷

In 1994, the media literacy programme developed into *The Roof is on Fire*. The performance was organized by a committee of teenagers, working with Lacy, Johnson and Annice Jacoby who operated under the label of TEAM (Teens, Educators, Artists, Media Makers). Though *The Roof is on Fire* was collectively produced, Lacy alone directed the staging (figure 1). A week before *The Roof is on Fire*, Oakland saw a large-scale riot between youth and police that started after a summer festival. Despite later investigations, which revealed that the behaviour of the police had escalated a minor fistfight between youths, the enduring legacy was a news clip of a young man putting his foot through a glass window.¹⁸ *The Roof is on Fire* was thus transformed into a direct critique of the very media stereotyping which painted youth as the sole perpetrators of the riot. In performing themselves, the teenagers became further conscious of how their bodies were inscribed within the social landscape of Oakland through race, gender, class and age.

On the night of the performance, 220 teenagers ascended to a rooftop garage in downtown Oakland, and took their positions in 100 cars which formed a succession of stages. Arranged in a haphazard fashion, the cars pointed towards one another and lacked uniformity. Jeeps, convertibles, saloons and estate cars were populated with mixed groups of between two and five youths of different gender, race and age – most were between fifteen and seventeen years old. Beginning at 7pm, the initial sections of the performance were lit by evening sunlight, but by the end the roof was in darkness, aside from overhead lighting (figure 2).

The audience was free to roam between cars and listen to the rehearsed conversations on topics including sex, violence, the police, their neighbourhoods, families and futures. Video documentation shows adults awkwardly leaning into partially closed windows to listen to the performers.



Figure 1 Suzanne Lacy, *The Roof is on Fire*, 1994. Performance by Suzanne Lacy, Chris Johnson and Annice Jacoby. Copyright © 1994 Suzanne Lacy.

The spectators were free to wander in and out, to talk and to move around the cars any way they pleased. However, in terms of how they interacted with the youth, their bodies and movements were tightly controlled. They were not allowed to intervene or stick their heads into the cars. If they did, a member of TEAM would explain that they were there to give space to the young people. As Lacy has expressed, this was also a theatrical decision that kept spectators within their prescribed role in the performance.¹⁹

As they moved from car to car, the spectators experienced *The Roof is on Fire* as a series of episodes, a structure that may be related to Brechtian theatrical devices. In *The Messingkauf Dialogues* (1939–42), Brecht explained that he cut his plays into 'a series of little independent playlets', often announced by theme, as in the scene titles of *Mother Courage*.²⁰ In *The Roof is on Fire*, a distancing effect was achieved by making the spectators aware of their implication in the performance. Their experience was constantly textured by moving in and out of the main action as they wandered from car to car, creating an episodic performance. As the audience listened to the teenage performers publicly recounting real experiences, the participants also

listened to each other. This rehearsal and recounting of reality on behalf of the performers was as much a part of the process of the work as the flickering view given to the spectator.

As a staging device, the car is significant. Particularly for young people, cars can lend a public visibility that begets the very police harassment addressed in the performance of *Code 33*. Paul Gilroy has noted that there is much to mine in the racial dimensions of car culture in America. Gilroy argues that the centrality of cars as objects of conspicuous consumption by African Americans, exemplified by their prominence within hip-hop videos for example, can be analysed in relation to 'the distinctive history of propertylessness and material deprivation' within those communities that 'has inclined them towards a disproportionate investment in particular forms of property that are publicly visible and the status that corresponds to them'.²¹ Within *The Roof is on Fire*, the appearance of the car chimes with this racialized, working-class culture of public consumption. However, its centrality as a staging device within

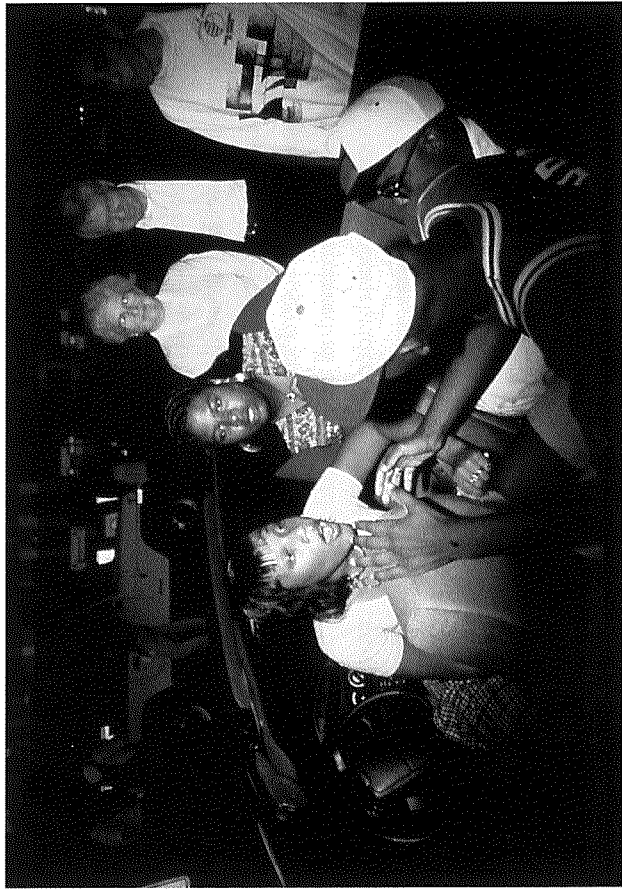


Figure 2 Suzanne Lacy, *The Roof is on Fire*, 1994. Performance by Suzanne Lacy, Chris Johnson and Annice Jacoby. Copyright © 1994 Suzanne Lacy.

Code 33, the next performance I discuss, was further problematized by the performers being not only youth but also police officers.

II *Code 33*

Code 33 ran from 1998 to 2000; my focus here is on the performance that staged a dialogue between youth and police on 7 October 1999. This was the culmination of two years of police-youth workshops, a youth art and leadership programme and the creation of a training video for police made by young people. Like *The Oakland Projects* as a whole, these activities slid into one another and were propelled by Lacy and a core group of participants, with the performances acting as flashpoints that made the process, or rehearsal, public.

To understand properly the conflict between young people and police as thematized in *Code 33*, it is essential to chart the history of resistance to police violence in Oakland. In late 1966, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence in the city. The Black Panthers were committed to organizing and emancipating black communities and their initial actions in Oakland involved conducting armed surveillance patrols against the police.²² To the present, the Oakland Police Department remains notorious for corruption, brutality and misconduct, as illustrated by the homicide of unarmed Oscar Grant in 2009, which provoked riots in the city. In 2011, the Occupy Oakland movement was also met with excessive force. Since then, well-attended and regular 'Fuck the Police' marches continue to take place.²³

The youths with whom Lacy worked grew up in communities beset by drug-related crime, violence and disinvestment. In addition, changes in legislation such as the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act removed all Federal Aid to the Families with Dependent Children program, popularly identified with the black poor. Such reforms were part of the economic realignments that took place under the administration of Bill Clinton, which secured a neoliberal consensus dressed up as a 'third way'. In effect, the 'third way' meant a further shrinking of the state with the third sector positioned as capable of compensating for diminished welfare spending.²⁴ Henry Giroux, the cultural critic and radical pedagogue, has argued that such neoliberal economic policy sought to strip the role of the state down to its surveillance function. Prisons became big business, and by 2000 more than a hundred cells were built per day, with much of this work outsourced to private providers such as the Corrections Corporation of

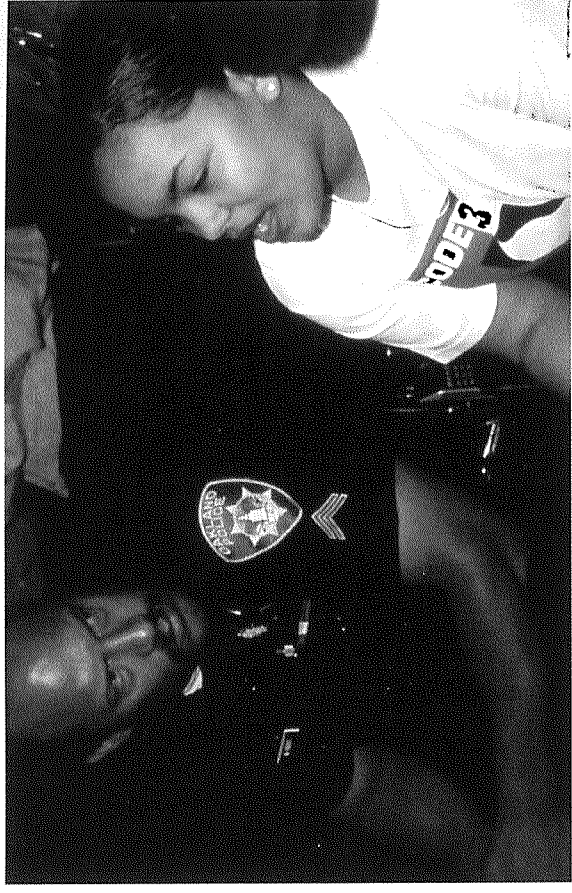


Figure 3 Suzanne Lacy, *Code 33: Emergency, Clear the Air*, 1999. Performance by Suzanne Lacy, Julio Morales and Unique Holland. Copyright © 1999 Suzanne Lacy.

America.²⁵ These developments had a particular bearing upon the young people participating in *The Oakland Projects*. By 1993, 708,000 young Californians were attending college, while 930,000 were held on felonies in prison, on probation or on parole.²⁶ *Code 33* sought to examine this relationship between the criminalization of youth and media hysteria by focusing on how and why youth are aggressively policed in Oakland. As my analysis of *Code 33* and then *Injunction Granted* proceeds, we will see how these performances characterize and negotiate the coercive function of the state in relation to capital.

Code 33 was on a far larger scale than *The Roof is on Fire* in terms of its length, multi-level staging, and the number of participants and spectators. As with *The Roof is on Fire*, cars were arranged on the roof of a garage in downtown Oakland. The first act involved the presentation of partially rehearsed, partially improvised conversations between youth and police, sited around the cars (figure 3). The second act, which I do not analyse here, invited preselected audience members to respond to the first act in rehearsed 'neighbourhood conversations'.

A parade of low-rider cars initially planned could not take place due to the type of aggressive policing the performance scrutinized.²⁷ As a first act, low riders invited from a local car club were going to drive around the perimeter of the garage in opposite direction to circling police cars as spectators and performers entered the site. Each low-rider's souped-up sound system was to blast out a soundtrack designed by artist David Goldberg, composed of found sound, prerecorded music tracks, and conversations between police and youth from the workshops.²⁸

The parade was cancelled in response to police anxiety about an assembly that gathered below the garage demanding justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther and journalist who had been on death row since 1981 for supposedly shooting a police officer, following a trial that many deemed controversial.²⁹ The protesters were responding to *Code 33*'s focus on policing, pledging their own investment into the issues being staged. As recalled by Moira Roth, art historian and participant in *Code 33*, it was initially unclear what was happening. A passer-by asked her 'What's going on? A protest?' and Roth responded 'No, no. It's a community performance', only becoming aware of the demonstrators as their chanting of 'Justice for Mumia' became more audible.³⁰ As Roth noted, there were 'two events in the street between the Federal Building and the City Centre West Garage. Both events [were] about police, prisons, youth, and race'.³¹ Like the riot that exploded in Oakland a week before *The Roof is on Fire* and which made the performance part of a constellation of events within the city, the 4 October Supreme Court denial of Abu-Jamal's appeal had come just three days prior to the performance, prompting the assembly outside *Code 33*.

Lacy cancelled the procession after receiving strong advice from the Chief of Police who was nervous a protestor might 'scratch' one of the low-rider cars and prompt a 'riot'.³² However, this did not provide the kind of hermetic seal between art and life, or protest and performance, the police intended. Instead, the police prevented anybody wearing a 'Free Mumia' sticker from entering the garage and, according to art historian Grant Kester, who was present, the majority of officers abandoned their role as 'performers' in order to return to their usual role in public-order situations. Scores of would-be spectators and participants were turned away as the police 'aggressively secured and cordoned off the space around the garage, and packed off handcuffed protestors in a police van'.³³

Within the performance, conversations about police brutality against the protestors coalesced to form an unrehearsed counter-narrative. As Roth described the situation, 'three determined Mumia protesters gained entry and travelled from group to group trying to interrupt the conversations.... Many rumours fly around; for instance, of three arrests on the 7th floor of the garage'.³⁴ The protest as 'interruption' thus destabilized the collaboration that had been established with the police by shifting the performance's terrain beyond its pre-established boundaries.

The dialogues following the interruption were far more heated than those within the workshops (figure 4). As a young woman performer explained, the trust established in the workshops broke down, partly due to the performance involving 'a larger group of police officers and the police officers would tell you "I don't want to be here, I'm here because I have to be here"'.³⁵ Similarly, not all the young people performing had attended the workshop, and in many cases brought an unmediated suspicion and fear of the police with them. To give an example of the dialogue in the performance, one young man told of



Figure 4 Suzanne Lacy, *Code 33: Emergency, Clear the Air*, 1999. Performance by Suzanne Lacy, Julio Morales and Umique Holland. Copyright © 1999 Suzanne Lacy.

how he saw a policeman repeatedly punch a handcuffed person and asked how it was possible for the police to get away with this violence. When a police officer responded by saying that he had never seen such behaviour in ten years of being in the force, claiming that officers were always penalized for brutalizing the public, another young man responded by stating 'It happened in Riverside to a young girl, what are you talking about that never happens?'³⁶ This referred presumably to the shooting of nineteen-year-old African-American woman Tyshia Miller by four white police officers in December 1998. As Lacy has explained, the primary risk during *Code 33* was 'that the police might freeze up' following such tense exchanges.³⁷

The 'freeze-up' Lacy anticipated was expressed in how the police handled the Free Mumia protestors. The 'cops got vigorous not letting people in', and abdicated their role in the performance, whilst those that remained found the conflict seeping into the staged conversations.³⁸ This clarifies that the participation of the majority of the police was directed from above by their chief as a public relations stunt, and as unrehearsed performers, they swiftly affirmed their structural role at the point of the Free Mumia interruption. The events surrounding *Code 33* exemplify some of the inherent problems in Lacy and TEAM's ambitions of working with the police. The initial cooperation did not result in a less abrasive relationship. Instead, policemen demonstrated their inability to move beyond their coercive duties. For this reason, they expressed themselves as a type. Boiled down to representatives of a social force more meaningful than themselves as individual officers, the police participants, in Lukácsian terms, enacted the role 'imputed' to them within the reproduction of capital. I propose that this prompted a process of self-education for the teenage participants.

The interruption of *Code 33* also connects to the open-ended qualities of the rehearsal. In Brecht's account, the rehearsal is marked by the relative independence of distinct theatrical elements (performers, text, staging) with their mutual alienation enabling the process of development and learning.³⁹ This is exemplified in the disjuncture between workshop and performance in *Code 33*. The Brechtian qualities can also be seen in the police participants' dual role as police on duty and police as performer, the teenager's performance of themselves, and the spectators' implication into the performance. For Brecht, actors were not waiters who serve up their parts as 'meat', but rather, their 'job as political human beings was to use art or anything else to further

their social cause'.⁴⁰ Brecht was intent on actors bringing their own life and concerns into the work to further enable a critique of social conditions. Of course, Brecht's actors were professionals, distinguishing them from the performers in *The Roof is on Fire* and *Code 33*. However, the status of youth and police as performing themselves complicates this, since they potentially exceed the professional capabilities of an actor, thus eclipsing the Brechtian call to inflect a character with personal experience.

The process of *The Oakland Projects* from media-literacy workshops to the performances demonstrated that teenagers can assume many roles. Conversely, the breaking down of police stereotypes proved close to impossible. Here, types materialize by defining themselves against one another, forming realistic characters by their ability to, in Jameson's account:

stand ... for something larger and more meaningful than themselves, than their own isolated individual destinies. They are both concrete individualities, and yet at the same time maintain a relationship with some more general or collective human substance.⁴¹

These strategies are present in *The Roof is on Fire* and *Code 33* through the oscillation between the reification and de-reification of the police's role. The teenage participants became more conscious and critical of their lived reality as policed individuals, and as a social group. By turning to *The Living Newspaper*, I explore the historical continuities and transformations in such approaches to making collective performance works. The attempt here is to illuminate points of connection, enabling a more open reading of how performance has been mobilized as a rehearsal for a broader social critique.

III *Injunction Granted*

The Living Newspaper Unit of the WPA-FTP was set up like a 'large city daily' with an editor-in-chief, managing editor, city editor, reporters and copy readers. As the WPA-FTP director Hallie Flanagan emphasized, 'the Living Newspaper from the first was concerned not with surface news, scandal, human interest stories', but rather, sought to present contemporary 'social conditions'.⁴² The issues presented were often closely tied to Depression-era, Popular Front causes such as housing, unemployment, labour, international struggles and lynching, with the latter two concerns never making it to



Figure 5 Final scene, *Injunction Granted*, 1936. Courtesy of the Arnold Goldman Living Newspaper collection, Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University.

the stage due to censorship. This approach to mass media connects to the origins of *The Oakland Projects* in media-literacy workshops, and echoes Brecht's insistence that realism shows the dominant viewpoint in society as the viewpoint of the dominators.⁴³

Injunction Granted was directed by Joseph Losey. The script was written collectively by the Living Newspaper Unit, supervised by Arthur Arent and produced by Morris Watson.⁴⁴ *Injunction Granted* opened on 24 July 1936 at the Biltmore Theatre and played to full houses for three months.⁴⁵ A chronicle of labour struggles in the US, it ended on a polemical note by arguing that all workers should unite behind the newly formed umbrella organization of industrial unions, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). In the final scene, at least one hundred performers playing steel workers, female garment workers and coal miners alongside other groups

took the stage in a pageant formation, reminiscent of a picket line or rally (figure 5). Like *Code 33* and *The Roof is on Fire*, the structure was episodic. If the spectators in Lacy's work had to move from car to car, *Injunction Granted* generated a similar effect through the revue-like pageantry.

Many scenes began with a tableau vivant activated by the disembodied 'Voice of the Living Newspaper', which explained action on stage, providing contrary details or a prehistory. The Voice also played a practical function as the speed of the performance necessitated some form of narration. Throughout *Injunction Granted* the actor Norman Lloyd assumed the role of a mute clown based on Harpo Marx, who supplemented the 'Voice' through frequently satirical visual commentary, often appearing with a prop that would typify the other characters on stage, such as a giant cigar during an interaction with stockbrokers (figure 6).⁴⁶ Magic tricks, film projection and a



Figure 6 Clown with cigar, *Injunction Granted*, 1936. Courtesy of the Arnold Goldman Living Newspaper collection, Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University.

cacophonous array of sound effects prompted the cultural journal *New Masses* (associated with the Communist Party USA) to describe *Injunction Granted* as carrying 'suggestions of the Greek chorus, burlesque, the *March of Time*, Symbolism, the miracle plays, and Charlie Chaplin'.⁴⁷ The staging drew on the innovations of Vsevolod Meyerhold, and consisted of platforms, runways and steps which composed ten separate acting areas to accommodate the large cast (figure 5).⁴⁸ The staccato, percussive score mimicked the industrial landscape of *Injunction Granted* and was composed by Virgil Thomson, a leftist composer who had studied with Erik Satie. As Thomson described, the use of 'ratchets, sirens, drums, ship's bells, trombones and trumpets' punctuated this performance 'that jumps about in tiny little pieces'.⁴⁹

Scene Eighteen, dated 1929, is entitled 'Partnership'. It opens with a 'demagogue' standing on a platform dressed in an outfit split down the middle, reflecting his listeners, who on his right represent capital and on his left a group of workers. The side facing capital wore a pinstriped trouser, jacket, slick hair and half a moustache whilst the side facing Labour donned an overall leg, half a blue shirt, tousled hair and one horn-rimmed glass. The demagogue personifies the types of 'worker' and 'capitalist', thereby functioning as an embodiment of the conflict between the two larger social groups that form the assembly in front of him (figure 7). The demagogue gave a speech to the capitalists and workers, to which each side applauded 'deafening, in unison, automatic' conducted by the Clown. The saccharine dialogue affirmed that:

Capital is wonderful – – and Labor is wonderful too! We cannot do without Labor, and we cannot do without Capital! They are both wonderful! Nintenths of the difficulties between Labor and Capital spring from the lustful Joins of

- Bolshevism –
- (Capital applauds)
- Fascism –
- (Labor applauds)
- Socialism –
- (Capital applauds)
- and un-Americanism! –
- (Both applaud, extra loud)⁵⁰

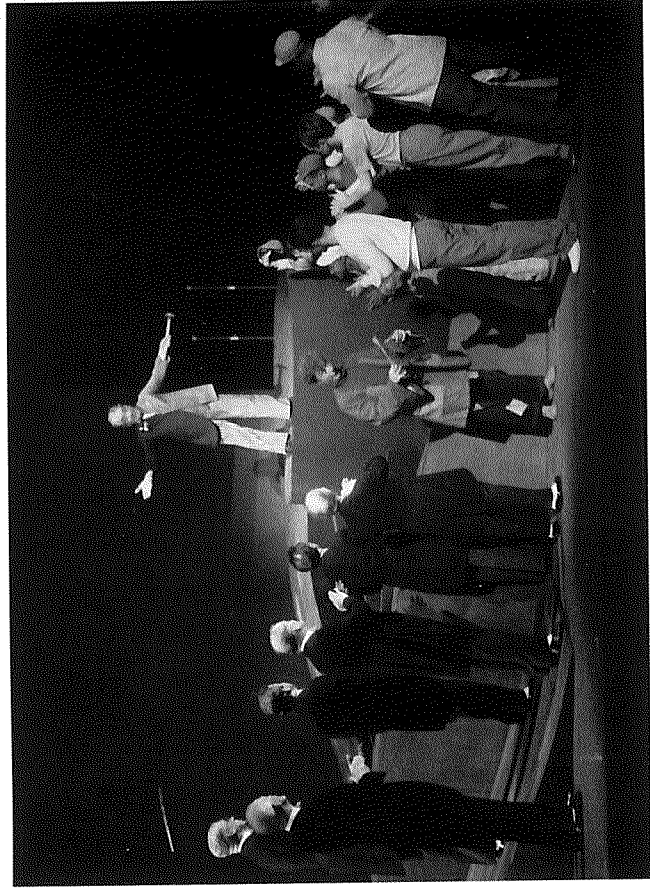


Figure 7 Demagogue, *Injunction Granted*, 1936. Courtesy of the Arnold Goldman Living Newspaper collection, Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University.

This scene was punctured by the Clown blowing a horn, causing the demagogue to raise his voice. It ended with the Clown inflating a balloon to bursting point. As it pops, he brandishes a bouquet towards the demagogue, perforating with this gesture the nationalist, sentimental, hot-air speech. After a black out, the lights come up as John D. Rockefeller appears on stage. Rockefeller proceeds to echo the demagogue's sentiments that Labor and Capital should put their petty gripes behind them, a statement met with the Clown solemnly handing a giant dime to Rockefeller, satirizing the multiple images which circulated of him handing out dimes to children and the poor.⁵¹

The satire provided by the clown undercuts the swaggering confidence of the demagogue and Rockefeller, and throughout this scene the year 1929 was projected on the scrim, symbolizing the follies of financiers. The Clown's ridiculing of the demagogue and Rockefeller is not only funny, but incites antagonism amongst the audience towards these representatives of capitalist

interests. The entire cast of *Injunction Granted* were relief workers, some of the 10,000 unemployed theatre workers who had found employment in the FTP. The actors, therefore, like their working class audience, formed a bloc that countered the on-stage embodiments of capital.

In the final scene I will describe, 'Jennings vs. Hearst', the network of allegiances between capital, state and the media is depicted through a boxing match between the tycoon William Randolph Hearst and the copy-writer Dean Jennings, who had been fired by Hearst for union activity. The referee announces Jennings as the 'pride of the Newspaper Guild' and Hearst as the 'Champion of the Non-Collective Bargaining Athletic Association'. The fight is acted out by each throwing a punch and freezing that action before contact, as the 'Voice of the Living Newspaper' narrates (figure 8):

There they go! Hearst leads with a left...he misses...Jennings tries an uppercut...he misses...Hearst leads with left...he misses...Jennings tries an uppercut...HE SOCKS HIM! HE'S DOWN! The National Labor Board orders Jennings reinstated.⁵²

As the referee counts down to Jennings' victory, Donald Richberg, head of the National Recovery Administration (NRA) appears on stage, announced by a sign. Richberg was renowned as a turncoat who had begun as a supporter of trade unions but moved to the right, issuing several anti-labour edicts during his time in office. Though Hearst is out cold, Richberg instructs the referee to hold a rematch that follows the exact choreography of the first. Even though Jennings knocks Hearst out with an uppercut, Richberg runs in with a decision, overriding the referee. Contrary to what the audience has witnessed, the referee lifts the unconscious Hearst's arm in victory and declares 'The winnah!'⁵³ This result is a metaphor for real-life events. After Jennings was fired for his organizational activities on the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, the Newspaper Guild petitioned the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and National Industrial Recovery Board for his reinstatement. Their initial support for Jennings dissolved when Hearst petitioned President Roosevelt, who nullified the NLRB decision.⁵⁴ The lack of justice, as the referee declares 'winnah!', also echoes the repetitive call of the courts 'Injunction Granted!' which punctuate the performance, whenever a capitalist such as Hearst wins a battle against labour in the legislature.

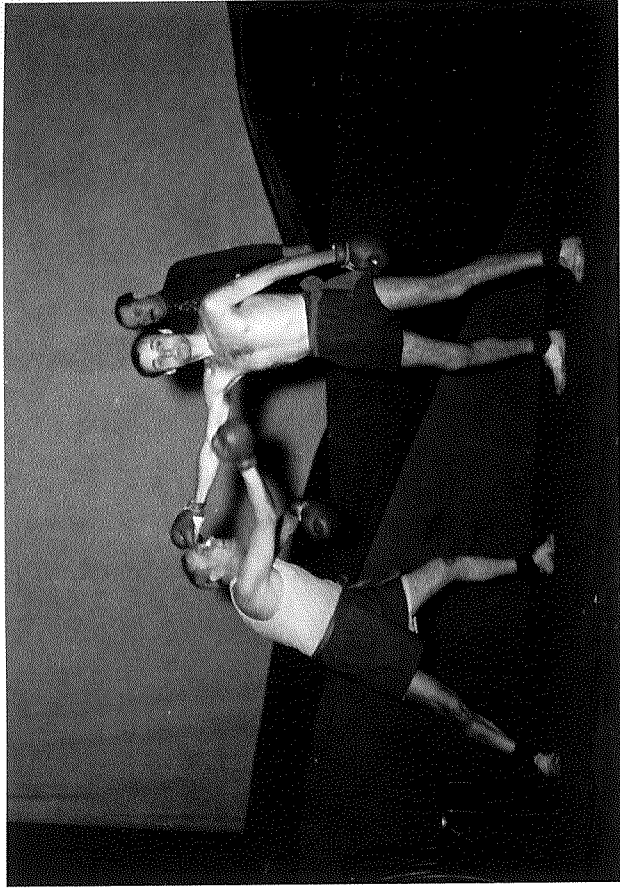


Figure 8 Boxing match, *Injunction Granted*, 1936. Courtesy of the Arnold Goldman Living Newspaper collection, Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University.

Conclusion

Injunction Granted shares an emphasis on legislation with *Code 33* and *The Roof is on Fire* and works to reveal the hegemony of state and capital by exposing the use of law as a means of oppression, either via the courts or the police. However, as already indicated, the comparison also reveals the divergent state formations of the 1930s and 1990s in the USA. Law in *Code 33* and *The Roof is on Fire* is solely embodied by the policeman, whilst in *Injunction Granted* the whole apparatus is exposed through numerous scenes, which I do not have the space to discuss here, involving judges, courtrooms and legislators. This exemplifies the waning of the neoliberal state down to its coercive function. The policeman as a 'type' comes to stand for a network of interests much larger than the individual officer. Within all these performances, the relation of community to the state is contested. As such, the performances function as rehearsals for negotiating this relationship in reality. Notably, unlike the

frequent proclamations by the courts in *Injunction Granted* that industrial action was a 'threat to community', for the workers on-stage community was formed and sustained through the transformative potential of direct action and collective bargaining. Equally, the youths participating in *The Roof is on Fire* and *Code 33* were potentially strengthened by the performances which stood as rehearsals for real life, and able to conceive of themselves politically as a social group structurally opposed to the police.

However, it is important to register that *Injunction Granted* represents industrial, unionized workers, while *The Oakland Projects* represents primarily African American and Latino youth, who when not in education were often unemployed or unorganized when they were employed. The difference between these situations offers a measure of changing class composition in the USA. If the 1930s saw the transferral via the New Deal of new responsibilities for the reproduction of workers onto an embryonic welfare state (the Social Security Act, 1935), the 1990s saw punitive federal and local reforms of welfare, education and health, alongside the abolition of New Deal era economic reforms such as the Glass-Steagall Act.⁵⁵ Within a period of mass outsourcing, continued deindustrialization and militarization in the USA, the reserve army of labour in the 1990s became configured as a racialized surplus population that may never work. As Michael Denning has put it, financialized neoliberal capitalism has resulted in a situation where 'it is not the child in the sweatshop that is our most characteristic figure, but the child in the streets, alternately predator and prey'.⁵⁶ In *The Oakland Projects*, the figure described by Denning forms the primary subject, in contrast to the industrial worker as primary subject in *Injunction Granted*. The metamorphosis in the subject of these performances as shaped by shifts in class composition underscores the attempt of these works to investigate the positioning of individuals within social groups formed through the reproduction of capital.

In presenting an account that transits across two periods, I analyse the forms of class struggle that underpinned these works and hope to supplement the current discourse around community based, or socially engaged art. In the dominant accounts by writers such as Grant Kester and Claire Bishop, the politics of working collectively are rarely discussed. Instead, critical engagements centre upon the limitations of the supposedly 'ethical' framework of community based art.⁵⁷ Moreover, practices such as Lacy's are frequently, and I argue problematically, positioned as inheriting the

Minimalist inquiry into the cognitive effects of space and scale, and the politics of institutional critique.⁵⁸ By reading *The Roof is on Fire* and *Code 33* in relation to *Injunction Granted*, I have sought to offer an expanded interpretation that goes beyond valorizing socially engaged art as an entirely new innovation. Instead, by broadening our current histories of collective art and performance to think more seriously about the politics of production, we might strengthen our ability to analyse this ever growing field.

Notes

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- 1 Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974), London, 2009, p. 97
- 2 The WPA-FTP was a relief programme for unemployed actors and theatre workers, and sought to create a culture that was egalitarian, accessible and in line with the political urgencies of the day. For an account of the development of the Living Newspaper from its inception in the Soviet Union to its presence within the WPA-FTP see Lynn Mally, 'The Americanization of the Soviet Living Newspaper', in *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 1993, February 2008, p. 5.
- 3 There are differences between these terms, but in a broad sense their proliferation stands for the growth of interest in art works made by artists in collaboration with non-artists. For a sample of the literature on this topic see Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London, 2012, Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, London and Los Angeles, 2004 and Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, London and Cambridge, MA, 2002.
- 4 Robert Baker-White, *The Text in Play: Representations of Rehearsal in Modern Drama*, Lewisburg and London, 1999, p. 49.
- 5 John Mullen, 'A Worker Looks at Broadway', in *New Theatre*, vol. 3, no. 5, May 1936, p. 25.
- 6 Suzanne Lacy, personal interview, 27 April 2012.
- 7 Georg Lukács, 'Life and Work' (1968), in Francis Mulhern (ed.), *Lives on the Left*, London 2011, p. 9.
- 8 Bertolt Brecht, 'The Popular and the Realistic', in John Willett (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett, London, 1964, p. 110.
- 9 Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism*, London and Los Angeles, 1982, p. 83.
- 10 Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, London, 2009, p. 204.
- 11 Georg Lukács, 'Class Consciousness', in Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*

- (1920), trans. Rodney Livingstone, London, 1971, p. 51.
- 12 Brecht, 'The Popular and the Realistic', p. 109.
- 13 Sabeth Buchmann and Constanze Ruhm, 'Subject put to the Test' in *Texte zur Kunst*, vol. 23, no. 90, June 2013. Available at <http://www.textezurkunst.de/90/buchmann-ruhm-subject-put-test/> (accessed 27 August 2013).
- 14 Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, p. 97.
- 15 Buchmann and Ruhm, 'Subject put to the Test', op. cit. and Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, op. cit., p. 97.
- 16 Buchmann and Ruhm, 'Subject put to the Test', op. cit.
- 17 Nicholas Espiritu, '(E)Racing Youth: The Racialized Construction of California's Proposition 21 and the Development of Alternative Contestations', in *Cleveland State Law Review*, vol. 52, 2005, p. 194.
- 18 Suzanne Lacy's *The Roof is on Fire* text is available at http://www.suzannelacy.com/1990soakland_roof_overview.htm (accessed 30 July 2013).
- 19 Suzanne Lacy, personal interview, 27 March 2012.
- 20 Bertolt Brecht, *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, trans. John Willett, London, 1977, p. 74.
- 21 Paul Gilroy, 'Driving while Black', in Daniel Miller, (ed.) *Car Cultures*, Oxford, 2001, p. 84.
- 22 Chris Rhombert, *No There There: Race, Class and Political Community in Oakland*, London and Los Angeles, 2004, p. 154.
- 23 Paul Harris, 'Oakland Police: Controversial History sets Tone for City's Discord', in *Guardian*, Wednesday 26 October 2011, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/blog/2011/oct/26/oakland-police-department-black-community> (accessed 16 August 2013).
- 24 Robert Pollin, 'Anatomy of Clintonomics', in *New Left Review*, second series, no. 3, May-June 2000, p. 26.
- 25 Henry Giroux, 'Mis/Education and Zero Tolerance: Disposable Youth and the Politics of Domestic Militarization', in *Boundary 2*, vol. 28, no. 3, Autumn 2001, p. 80.
- 26 Suzanne Lacy and Ann Wettrich, 'What it Takes' (2002), in Suzanne Lacy, *Leaving Art: Writing on Performance, Politics and Publics 1974-2007*, Durham, 2010, p. 223.
- 27 Low-riders are classic cars with modified hydraulic suspension so the height can alter. In the 1990s, Oakland became known for its 'sydeshows': informal and illegal demonstrations of automobile stunts, closely associated with the Bay Area genre of hip-hop.
- 28 Moira Roth, 'Making and Performing Code 33: A Public Art Project with Suzanne Lacy, Julio Morales and Unique Holland', in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, vol. 23, no. 3, Sept 2001, p. 50.
- 29 After a sustained campaign, Abu-Jamal was taken off death row in January 2012.
- 30 Roth, 'Making and Performing Code 33', op. cit., p. 56.
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 Suzanne Lacy, personal interview, 27 March 2012.
- 33 Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, op. cit., p. 185.
- 34 Roth, 'Making and Performing Code 33', op. cit., p. 58.
- 35 Transcribed from video documentation from *Code 33* available online at <http://vimeo.com/4041923> (accessed 30 July 2013).
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Tyshia Miller was killed by police in December 1998 in Riverside, California. The four policemen were cleared of charges in May 1999. Don Terry, 'California Officers Cleared in Killing of Young Woman, Prompting Protests', *New York Times*, 7 May 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/07/us/california-officers-cleared-in-killing-of-young-woman-prompting-protests.html> (accessed 30 July 2013).
- 38 Suzanne Lacy, personal interview, 27 March 2012.
- 39 Baker-White, *The Text in Play*, op. cit., p. 51.
- 40 Brecht, 'The Messingkauf Dialogues', op. cit., p. 71.
- 41 Frederic Jameson, 'The Case for George Lukács', in *Salmagundi*, no. 13, Summer 1970, p. 25.
- 42 Hallie Flanagan, 'Introduction', in Pierre de Rohan (ed.), *Federal Theatre Plays*, New York, 1973, p. vii.
- 43 Brecht, 'The Popular and the Realistic', op. cit., p. 109. Brecht was surely responding to Marx and Engels' claims in *The German Ideology*: 'The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are *subject* to it' (my emphasis). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, New York, 1947, p. 39.
- 44 Losley later became a well-known film director in the UK after being blacklisted during the McCarthy period. The Living Newspaper Unit was a subsection of the WPA-FTP.
- 45 Lorraine Brown and John O'Connor, *The Federal Theatre Project: Free, Adult, Uncensored*, London, 1980, p. 77.
- 46 Norman Lloyd, 'Living Newspaper Unit, New York', in Bonnie Nelson Schwartz (ed.), *Voices from the Federal Theatre*, Madison, 2003, p. 29.
- 47 Alexander Taylor, 'The Theatre: Injunction Granted', in *New Masses*, 4 August 1936, p. 29.
- 48 Brown and O'Connor, *The Federal Theatre Project*, op. cit., p. 82.
- 49 Virgil Thomson quoted in O'Connor and Brown, *The Federal Theatre Project*, op. cit., p. 80.
- 50 Editorial Staff of the Living Newspaper, script of *Injunction Granted*, 1936, scenes 1-5, view online at <http://dspace.wrlc.org/doc/bitstream/2041/66691/1/InjunctionGranteddisplay.pdf> (accessed 30 July 2013).
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933-1940*, Chicago, 2010, p. 136.
- 55 The Glass-Steagall Act was passed by Congress in 1933 and prohibited affiliations between commercial banks and investment banks.
- 56 Michael Denning, 'Wageless Life', in *New Left Review*, second series, no. 66, November-December 2010, p. 79.
- 57 Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', in *Artforum*, vol. 44, no. 6, February 2006, p. 178.
- 58 Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, op. cit., p. 53.