

Yoga for Adjuncts

The Somatics of Human Capital
by Christian Nagler

Greetings practitioners!

Let's begin by balancing on one leg. Good. Or if you can, try balancing on no leg! Feeling shaky? Remember: falling over is totally all right. Precarity is the greatest teacher. Let me start off with a simple fact: art schools—which employ artist-teachers at intermittent, recombinant intervals—have led the way in the loosening up of the rigid idea of the educator as wage-earning body. Let's accept this—let it sink in. Let it quiver under the fascia. We can't go home again. We can't go back. We have only now. Or, to put it another way, let's find a new home in the floating world of now's institution, of managed, interlocking slots of short-term info-labor. The private art school: overseen from afar, quantitatively, by tech-entrepreneur trustee boards and investment bankers with teams of consultants to translate their risk-management strategies into

administrative policy. Let's take some deep breaths. Let go of attachment—drop in, log in to a few hours of contact time. Let's call the teaching artist it. Short for *spir-it*. A transparent crystal of self, clear bridge between worlds. *It*: ancient wisdom of the one who dwells at the margins of the institution, who plays at the edge of stability. No past, no future, alive and vigilant in the shimmering present.

* * *

What does the artist offer the educational institution? It offers an idea of work as a shirking of work. A miracle! If you're working there's something wrong. You're always working. You're never working. The divine worker is the one who works hard but whose value lies in her capacity to shirk work, to put joy above duty. Let's embrace these contradictions. The divine art worker is one whose suspicion of the institution is a practice of non-attachment. Whose skillful practice of non-attachment inspires trust in others—especially in those multiplying administrators who float like lonely bodhisattvas. Pause now to ignite the divine worker who reposes fitfully, deliciously in the center of the anahata chakra. It is the divine worker. The divine cognitive worker in me bows to the divine cognitive worker in you.

Why cling to the old contractual baggage that neoliberal institutions have dispensed with? Flow with the new labor-capital relation, where there is no longer any determined quantitative time-value, where there is no longer any necessary constant in economic relations. In all the time of life, the human machine is there, pulsating and available, like a brain-sprawl in waiting.

* * *

Still standing on one leg? Give in to the wobble. The wobble, if accepted, will help you stand tall, or to fall if you need to. Trust in the abundance of the universe to manifest an infinite supply of labor just like you. No demands—only supply! You, the divine worker, love your free-time—time to create!—but you know there could never be enough time for the expansiveness of your visions. This is wisdom. So you abide in the space of a conceptual free-time, where you work for no pay. Instead of clinging tightly to your free-time, you let the institution imagine this free time for you. The work of the divine institution records the infinity of your conceptual freedom-time! In this way the divine cognitive worker is supple and selfless, letting your imagination become one with a greater force. You're still balancing ? Amazing. Don't worry if those around you fall

over. Failure—failure to have a career, a house, a guaranteed income—is the greatest teacher Remember, the universe, the institution doesn't need you. All it asks is that you show up. Or not. Aspire to this simplicity of need. Identify with a higher force, which knows more about larger flows than your limited body. Throw out the rigidity of contracts. No contraction—expansion! No positions—poses to move through. There is a juiciness to this angle of flow. Hold this paradox in your inner expanse: That you are beautifully extra, that this excess, this abundance, composes you, cellularly. And yet you yourself compose the institution. You are three quarters, or more, of its actual being!

You are its perfect face!

Note: Some of these ideas were adapted from the following texts: *After the Future*, by Franco Berardi; *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*; *Human Capital*, by Gary S. Becker.

This text originally served as script for a participatory performance at the Berkeley Art Museum, as part of *Valuing Labor in the Arts: a Practicum*.

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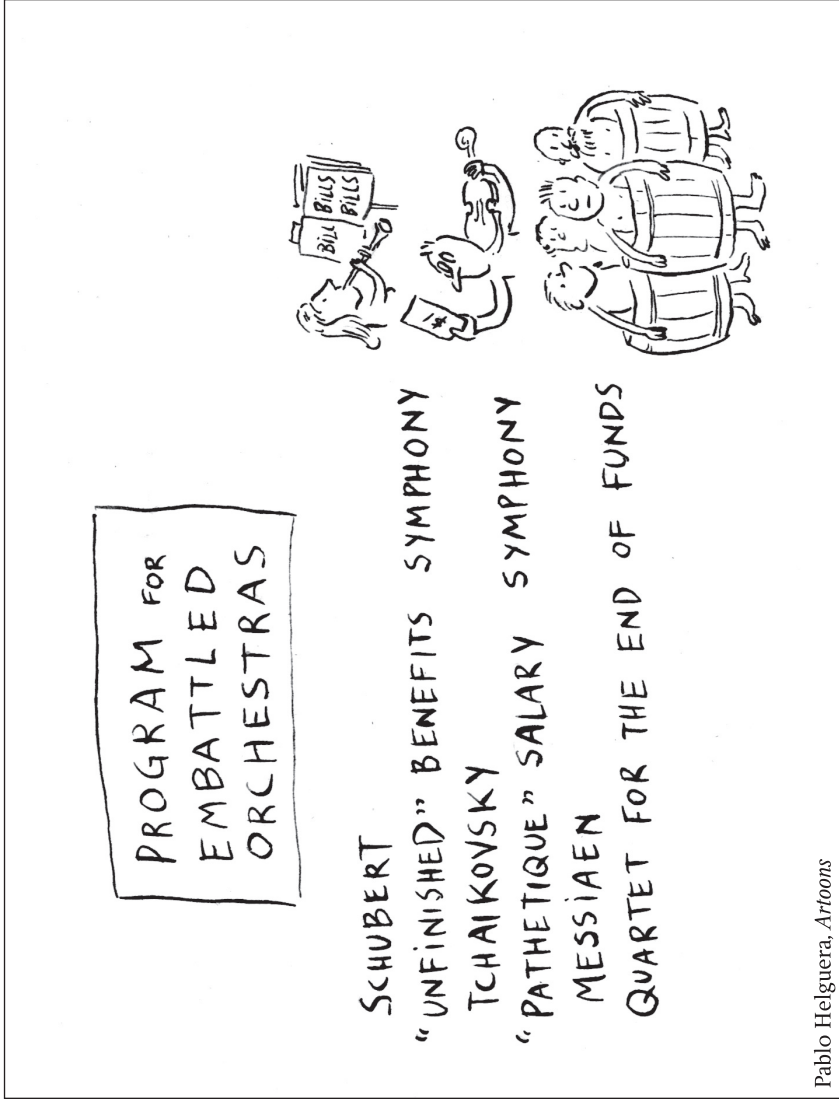
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Because of our reliance on credit, the credit rating industry has become the primary way of measuring and regulating integrity and trust. But this credit is not real credit. And if you feel like a failure because of a low credit score, glance at your checks and recall what real failure looks like—images of 2008 financial meltdowns are pictured in the background of each check.

GIVE ME CRED is a project by Cassie Thornton, supported by the Feminist Economics Department (the FED). Please be encouraged to establish new forms of trust, support and cred—independent of corporate credit.



Pablo Helguera, *Artoons*

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STANDARD

What is the value of artists' work?

DEVIATION

Issue No. 2, 2014, San Francisco

DEAR READER

What you have in your hands is a collection of thoughts, questions and tools (some found, some made) which invite you to consider the complex relationship between artistic labor and its value. My own experience has been one of gradual learning and a delicate balancing of idealism and practical strategy. Public dialogue is needed in order to address the inherent inequality of the system in place. Art can not be standardized, but as artists we can each set standards for ourselves. It is through our stand as individuals that we promote the value and survival of all artists. This second issue of S.D. echoes the voices heard at the *Valuing Labor in the Arts* practicum at UC Berkeley in Spring 2014. —H. Keeffe

WHO ARE THEY (NON-PROFITS) FOR?

“We already know that the vast majority of artists don't earn their living primarily, through the wages [stipends, fees etc]] from arts organization. Instead, artists are fluidly crossing between the commercial and nonprofit arts, between being a choreographer and a teacher, between working for someone else and finding their own revenue streams. [So] we are left saving arts organizations for the administrators who run them.” (Devon Smith)

FOR LOVE & MONEY

“While popular conceptions of love imply a certain starry-eyed daze, loving one's work does not preclude questioning its conditions. In fact, love, which in its highest form Socrates called the pursuit of wisdom, can prompt that kind of inquiry. Whether one is considering paid or unpaid work, the determination should involve a personal dialectic and an examination of one's motives: Am I doing this for love? Beauty? Money? Guilt? What is being sacrificed and is it something I can spare? Though the answers will arrive introspectively, they should not remain private... While artists struggle publicly to make the value of art work visible, they are bound... by the uncertainties and sacrifices they share in common... artists can gain power by making their deliberations transparent to each other, especially their mixed feelings about their own artistic labor and its value. Such disclosures are oriented toward a kind of practical wisdom, a collective striving for a more equitable society in which work done for love might be understood, valued, and compensated...” (Elyse Mallouk)

WHO PAYS ARTISTS?
CompensationFoundation.org

Might the art world itself be sufficient to support artists?

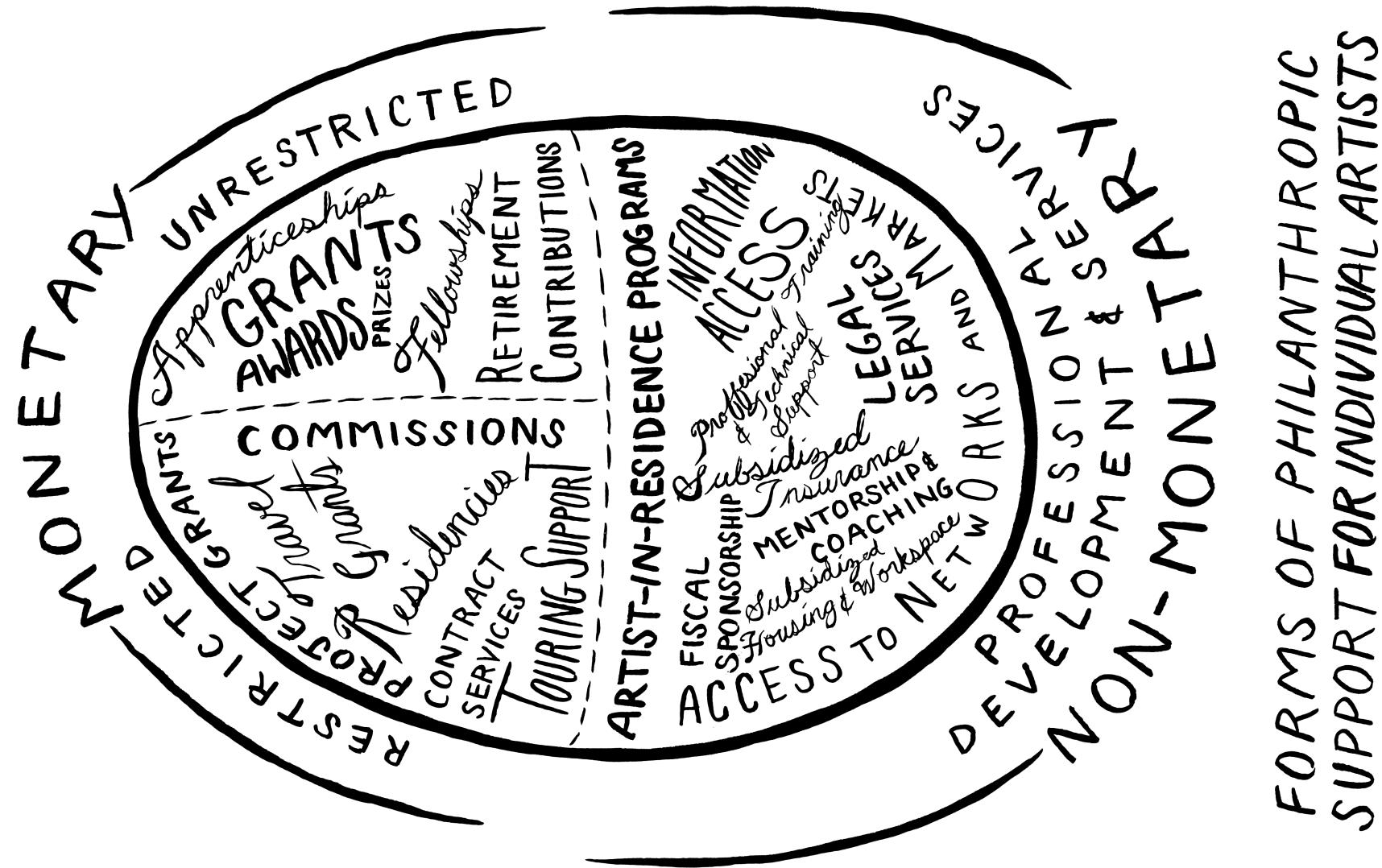
“...Initiated shortly after the Second World War... the musicians union worked out an innovative agreement with the recording companies such that a small percentage of the sale of each recording would go into a trust fund... After half a century this institution, the Music Performance Fund, still... distributes millions of dollars annually and supports thousands of concerts in the United States and Canada. It's the largest sponsor of live, admission-free music in the world.

...Artists need not always go begging to tax payers or private patrons; *the arts themselves produce wealth* and therefore, if we have the wit [or power] to organize the needed institutions, the arts ought to be able to support the arts. In the United States, *The Arts Endowing the Arts Act* was, in fact, the name given to a legislative proposal that—had it been realized—would have nicely reproduced the structure of the Music Performance Fund.” (Lewis Hyde)

A SMALL NUCLEUS OF VALUE

Artists are educated by the art world to see... failure as a kind of chaff that must be removed to release a small nucleus of value, yet even this agricultural metaphor reminds us that a “wasted” husk once protected a valuable seed. Perhaps most importantly, this creative chaff maintains and reproduces the system's symbolic hierarchies by exchanging information about the luminaries of the art world at openings, parties, on blog sites, doing so reflexively like a vast field of heliotropic flowers always oriented toward a brightly lit center. Even if the soil at the margins of this field is sewn with bitterness, such gossip reinforces the apparent naturalness of the overall art economy and its hierarchy. (Gregory Sholette)

*Full citations for sources in bibliography



Interpretation of a diagram in *A Proposed National Standard Taxonomy for Reporting Data on Support for Individual Artists*, Grantmakers in the Arts, August 2014 (drawing by H.Keeffe)

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for thinking of me when you sent a request for a donation of my art for your upcoming auction but I must politely decline. I feel it is only fair to let you know the reasons why I am saying no and it is certainly not that I don't believe in or want to support your cause.

1. Original art is a very popular item at auctions. Art is something that rarely loses its value yet it is usually undervalued when it sells for less than its gallery retail price at auctions. This does not look good in the eyes of other collectors of that particular artist's work because it devalues their own collected item. Generally the only time artwork sells for its value at an auction is at events where the audience is primarily made up of art connoisseurs/ collectors who are there specifically to buy art.
2. Contrary to what most organizations tell artist donors, auction attendees rarely contact the artist whose work they purchased to buy other works. Perhaps they figure they can wait until the following event to buy it for less than retail.
3. Artists do not get any tax break or incentive when they donate their own work to an auction. We can only deduct the cost of materials at the end of the year which we already do as a regular cost of doing business. A collector who buys an artwork, however, can indeed declare the

donation of an artwork (for its full retail value) as a tax-deductible charitable donation.

4. Artists are asked to donate their means of making a living (more than any other professionals) to auctions and fundraisers for causes, many of which have nothing to do with art, yet visual art is one of the lowest paid professions.
5. When a work is sold at auction, not only does the artist not make money but neither does the gallery that spends their time and energy trying to promote and represent him/her and also depends on sales.

6. For many artists, the work “sitting around” in their studio is their retirement account and you don't want to be partly responsible for depleting it.

Now, here are some alternative suggestions:

1. Ask some wealthier folks to purchase artwork from artists, perhaps at a negotiated amount and in turn they can donate it to the auction. The artist does not completely lose all the income for that particular work and the patron does get a tax break when they donate.
2. If you still feel it is right to ask artists to donate their art to your organization, you may want to select artists that you know are either wealthy, not depending on sales of their work to pay their bills or newer/younger artists that really want/ need some exposure.
3. An evening at an artist' studio! Ask some better known artists to open up their studio for a group, and auction that off instead of an individual artwork. You could probably arrange

for them to donate a percentage of any sales made during that evening at his/her studio to your organization. This brings that promised exposure to the artists and there is a chance for the artist and the organization to make money; both from the auction item and from the event at the artist's studio later.

4. Invite some artists to have work for sale (not auction) at the event for the valued price and give the artists 50% if the work sells.

5. Lobby the IRS to change its policy on the way artwork is valued when donated by its creator. Suggest that the artist should get whatever the selling price is (not even the value) as a charitable tax deduction.

Most artists I know are socially minded folks that generally do want to help their communities. Unfortunately we are often only valued as an easy donation any time money needs to be raised. Until some organizations realize these inequities, we are kept in similar situations as some of the causes these very non-profits are trying to help. I hope you realize that whatever criticisms I may have are not personal and are only meant to be constructive and beneficial to all involved.

Respectfully yours,
Juan Alonso

*This letter appears as part of Non-Participation, a collection of artist-written-letters assembled by Lauren van Haaften-Schick