

# Critical Implications

Exploring Ahmet Ögüt's *Intern VIP Lounge* as Critical Practice

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## Introduction

*“Can artistic practices still play a critical role in a society where artists and cultural workers have become a necessary part of capitalist production?”<sup>1</sup>*

You enter an exclusive space, providing a relaxed, entertaining ambience and platform for knowledge exchange, with a programme of events, meetings, presentations and film screenings.<sup>2</sup> At least, only if you were allowed entrance. For the 2013 edition of Art Dubai, within the framework of its not-for-profit Commissions Programme, conceptual artist Ahmet Öğüt (1981)<sup>3</sup> created *Intern VIP Lounge*, specifically for the grounds of the fair and in existence for its four-day duration only.<sup>4</sup> Öğüt’s artistic installation was a VIP lounge, which was exclusively accessible for interns working at the fair or the galleries in Dubai.<sup>5</sup> *Art Review* mentioned the artistic installation as “a deft comment on how the art world views work, pay and aspiration.”<sup>6</sup> Art critic Duygu Demir gave a similar interpretation, describing *Intern VIP Lounge*, as “sharply directed at the art world’s own failing systems of fair-minded professional conduct and exploitation of free labour.”<sup>7</sup>

In *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2007) sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello highlight the role of critique in the dynamics of capitalism.<sup>8</sup> The authors consider the years from 1965 to 1975 as a period when a critical movement coincided with a crisis of capitalism and the years from 1975 to 1990 as a period when critique was brought in line with a transformation and revival of capitalism, and aim to explain the “silence” or lack of critique from the 1990s onwards.<sup>9</sup> Distinguishing between “social critique” that denounces poverty and exploitation, and “artistic critique” that elaborates demands for autonomy, liberation and authenticity, they argue that while social critique is showing a “new lease of life,” artistic critique is “paralysed by the incorporation of part of its

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<sup>1</sup> Mouffe 2007, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Website Ahmet Öğüt & Art Dubai: </ artdubai.ae/commissions/2013> accessed 1-12-2015.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmet Öğüt lives and works in Amsterdam, Berlin, and Istanbul.

<sup>4</sup> Art Dubai’s 2013 edition took place from 20<sup>th</sup> until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March.

<sup>5</sup> Website Ahmet Öğüt & Art Dubai: </ artdubai.ae/commissions/2013> accessed 1-12-2015.

<sup>6</sup> Charlesworth 2013, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Demir 2014, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> First published as *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* (1999); English translation *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005); second English edition (2007).

<sup>9</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, pp. xii-xiii.

thematic into the new spirit of capitalism.”<sup>10</sup> Despite the aim of restoring critique, they consider renewal problematic, because of this “paralysis:” capitalism’s survival mechanism of assimilation has incorporated the demands for autonomy, liberation and authenticity in what Boltanski and Chiapello term the current, third “spirit of capitalism.”<sup>11</sup> Neoliberalism’s flexible approach to production and labour has subordinated these demands to profit making.<sup>12</sup> It can be said, as philosopher Bruno Latour aptly summarizes the problem in ‘Why has Critique Run out of Steam?’ (2004), that “the new spirit of capitalism has put to good use the artistic critique that was supposed to destroy it.”<sup>13</sup>

There is a link between capitalism’s assimilation of artistic critique’s and the art world. In *The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Memory and Post-Fordism* (2010), art sociologist Pascal Gielen explains how the social structure of the modern art world was a “social laboratory” for neoliberalism’s flexible approach to production and labour. Post-industrial economy focuses on qualities as communication skills, eloquence, creativity and authenticity, project-based employment, temporary contracts, flexible working hours and physical and mental mobility. These qualities were once defended as the central values of the art scene, Gielen argues.<sup>14</sup> Capitalism’s assimilation of artistic critique and its incorporation of the values of the art world, made boundaries between art and capitalism dissolve. In ‘Business Casual: Flexibility in Contemporary Performance Art’ (2013) art historian Sami Siegelbaum describes this increasing overlap between art making and other forms of labour within neoliberal capitalism as manifested in the similarities between the flexible concept of art and economy’s flexible modes of accumulation.<sup>15</sup> The dissolving boundaries evoke questions on the critical role of art in a society where art is part of capitalist production. As political theorist Chantal Mouffe, referenced at the top of this introduction, asks in ‘Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces’ (2007): “Can artistic practices still play a critical role in a society where artists and cultural workers have become a necessary part of capitalist production?”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 346.

<sup>11</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, pp. 419-420.

<sup>13</sup> Latour 2004, p. 231.

<sup>14</sup> Gielen 2010, pp. 2-4.

<sup>15</sup> Siegelbaum 2013, p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> Mouffe 2007, p. 1.

The nature of the relationship between art and society has always interested me. The topic of this thesis is a continuation of this interest, by focussing on the critical role of art of art, in the light of and in relation to urgent societal developments. Taking into consideration the paralysis of critique, the incorporation of art world's values, and the dissolving boundaries between art and capitalism, this thesis explores Ahmet Ögüt's *Intern VIP Lounge* (2013) as critical practice. This site-specific installation was situated at Art Dubai and in existence for the four-day duration of the art fair. It focused on the intern, labourer in the art world. In line with *ArtReview*'s and Demir's 'critical' interpretations of the artwork, this thesis aims to find out in what ways Ahmet Ögüt's *Intern VIP Lounge* can be considered as critical practice, and how it relates the possibility of art as critical practice in times of dissolving boundaries between art and capitalism. Referring to Mouffe's question on the possibility of art as critical practice, the aim of this thesis is to find out not if, but moreover *how* and to *what extent* the *Intern VIP Lounge* plays such a critical role.

While also addressing, amongst others, art historian Hal Foster's *Bad New Days: Art Criticism, Emergency* (2015), sociologist Brian Holmes' 'The Flexible Personality: For a New Cultural Critique' (2001), geographer Tim Cresswell's *In Place, Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (1996) and art theorist Boris Groys' 'Politics of Installation' (2009), it is Boltanski and Chiapello's *New Spirit of Capitalism* (2007) that supplies an overarching theoretical framework for the thesis. This thesis consists of three chapters, and each of these chapters is structured according to what Boltanski and Chiapello consider an essential part of the work of critique, being "the codification of 'what is not going well' and the search for the causes of this situation, with the aim of proceeding to solutions."<sup>17</sup> The first chapter addresses *Intern VIP Lounge*'s subject matter, exploring how it can be considered as a *codification of 'what is not going well,'* the second chapter explores the artistic installation as critique in relation to the *causes of this situation*, and the third chapter explores how the installation relates to *aim of proceeding to solutions*. In doing so, the aim is to find out what can be considered as the possibilities and challenges of art as critical practice.

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<sup>17</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 41.

## 1. Critical Subject, the codification of ‘what is not going well’

*“Information presented at the right time and in the right place can potentially be very powerful. [...]”<sup>18</sup>*

As starting point in exploring Ahmet Öğüt’s *Intern VIP Lounge* in the light of critical art practice, this first chapter focuses on subject. The subject is “*who* or *what* is represented in an artwork.”<sup>19</sup> *Intern VIP Lounge*’s subject is the figure the intern. An intern is “a student or trainee working, sometimes without pay, in order to gain practical experience in a particular field or employment, or to satisfy requirements for a qualification.”<sup>20</sup> Since the installation was exclusively accessible for interns working at the fair and the galleries in Dubai, this makes its interns ‘students or trainees, working without pay at the art fair or at galleries in Dubai, in order to gain practical experience or employment in the art world, or to satisfy requirements for a qualification.’ This chapter explores the figure of the intern as a critical subject, concentrating on what this subject refers to, and what it alludes to in terms of information. While subject is considered internal to the artwork, this chapter largely comprises of information ‘external’ to the artwork. In the following chapters, the scope is narrowed down to the artistic installation itself.

This first chapter is structured according to what Boltanski and Chiapello consider an important part of the work of critique: the codification of ‘what is not going well,’ or the source of indignation for a formulation of critique.<sup>21</sup> Consecutively addressing the notions of subject and critique, the situation of the intern and the context of this situation, the larger context of this situation, and the formulation of critique, the aim of this chapter is to find how the figure of the intern can be considered the source of indignation for a formulation of critique, and how critique could take shape.

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<sup>18</sup> Hans Haacke as quoted by Siegel 1971, p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (online) ‘subject,’ accessed 6-1-2016.

<sup>20</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (online), ‘intern,’ accessed 6-1-2016.

<sup>21</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 41.

## 1.1 Subject and Critique

When exploring the figure of the intern as critical subject matter, it seems important to define what is referred to when speaking of 'subject' and 'critique' within the framework of this chapter and the thesis as a whole. This section aims to define the notions of subject and critique.

A subject is *who* or *what* is represented in an artwork. The subject often largely defines the artwork as a whole. In selecting a particular subject, the artist determines what she or he presents to its spectators: what is beheld, or contemplated by the artwork's beholder – what the artist considers worthy of attention. To a certain extent determining subject is thus a critical act. If the selected subject is critical it can work to establish a critical stance. For example, late nineteenth-century paintings and photographs of working class subjects often voiced critique through depicting its subject's miserable living and working conditions. Contemporary artworks represent subjects in a variety of media. In 'Is it Heavy or Is it Light?' (2015), art critic Brian Kuan Wood describes how art's formal language is largely dematerialized in favour of time-based systems and ephemeral events, and how the subject is no longer depicted on flat or three-dimensional surfaces. Nowadays, information has become the artwork's 'material' support, argues Wood.<sup>22</sup> Artworks now 'refer' to their subject through information. In *Intern VIP Lounge*, the intern is not depicted on flat or three-dimensional surfaces; information can be considered its material support. Information is already embedded in the title of the installation. It is descriptive of what the artwork comprises of, as such it informs the spectator of its content. Since only interns were allowed to enter the space of the installation, the informative title is functional and can even be considered necessary. With exceptions for the purpose of publicity, the restricted accessibility was maintained for the entire four-day duration.<sup>23</sup> The title of the installation informed those who were not allowed to enter of the installation's content, and was probably the only means of beholding.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Wood 2015, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> See for example *Art Review* as cited in the introduction to this thesis, Charlesworth 2013, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> When Art Dubai's 2013 edition had ended, information and documentation in the form of photographs and lecture transcripts became available. Descriptions of the artwork in this thesis are based on similar post-documentary sources.

In terms of art, the subject is “*who* or *what* is represented in an artwork.” As an adverb, ‘subject of’ is someone or something that is under the rule or control of someone or something; it expresses a “relationship of liability, exposure between a person or a thing and a state, condition or experience.”<sup>25</sup> As verb, ‘subjected to’ means, “to make subject or bring into subjection to the rule, government, power, or service of a superior,” “to make submissive or dependent,” or “to make liable to something.”<sup>26</sup> As adverb and verb, it refers to structures of power and control. Philosopher Michel Foucault describes how individuals get to occupy subject positions (meaning the various roles existing within a discourse or institution) only through a process in which they are ‘subjected’ to power.<sup>27</sup>

In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, critique is considered as a means to address such structures of power and control. Critique “unmasks the hypocrisy of moral pretensions that conceal the reality of force, exploitation and domination,” argue Boltanski and Chiapello.<sup>28</sup> Critique as described by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is “the action or act of criticizing,” to judge something or someone critically, to make a comment on an action, person, or thing; critique is always addressing something.<sup>29</sup> Boltanski and Chiapello’s *The New Spirit of Capitalism* concerns both critique that addresses capitalism and the relation between critique and capitalism. They focus predominantly on the ideological dimension of critique, described as: “the way in which the formulation of indignation and the condemnation of contraventions of the common good operates.” They state that this highlights an essential part of the work of critique, being the codification of ‘what is not going well’ and the search for the causes of this situation, with the aim of proceeding to solutions.<sup>30</sup> Boltanski and Chiapello consider critique as meaningful only when there is a difference between a desirable and an actual state of affairs, stating that the formulation of critique presupposes a bad experience which prompts protest, either through personal experience or roused by the fate of others. This ‘bad experience’ forms a “source of indignation,” which is considered the primary level in the expression of critique. Its secondary level is reflexive, theoretical and argumentative, supplying concepts and schemas that connect the situations of critique with universal values. The

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<sup>25</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (online), ‘subject’ accessed 6-1-2016.

<sup>26</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (online), ‘subject’ accessed 6-1-2016.

<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault in Leitch (ed.) 2001, pp. 1617-1618.

<sup>28</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, pp. 27-36.

<sup>29</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (online), ‘critique’ 6-1-2016.

<sup>30</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 41.



work of critique consists in translating the indignation into the framework of critical theories, and then voicing it.<sup>31</sup>

In relation to art critique is often considered the critical judgement of an artwork. In the essay 'Critical Reflections' (2008), art critic Boris Groys describes a shift in the judgement of art, which lies therein that it is no longer the observer who judges the artwork, but the artwork that judges its public. This replaces the critic in the name of society by social critique in the name of art, argues Groys. He describes how the artwork no longer forms the object of judgement, but instead is taken as a point of departure for a critique aimed at society and the world.<sup>32</sup> The approach employed in this thesis is similar to Groys' shift. In exploring *Intern VIP Lounge*, the installation is considered as the point of departure for a critique aimed at society and the world. The 'judgement' thus lies in finding out how the installation conveys critique.

In summary, the 'subject' is who or what is represented in an artwork, and applies as such in this first chapter. Nowadays, information has become the artwork's material support: artworks refer their subject matter through information. As adverb and verb, 'subject of' or 'subjected to' refer to structures of power and control. The thesis' second and third chapter place more emphasis on the term as such. 'Critique' is a means to address structures of power and control. The formulation of critique presupposes a bad experience that prompts protest: the source of indignation. Critique is meaningful only when there is a difference between a desirable and an actual state of affairs. Critique translates indignation into a theoretical framework, and then voicing it. An essential part of the work of critique is the codification of 'what is not going well' and the search for the causes of this situation, with the aim of proceeding to solutions. In the critical judgement of art, the artwork no longer forms the object of judgement, but is taken as point of departure for a critique aimed at society and the world. This thesis employs a similar approach, aiming to find out what critique is aimed at and how the artwork conveys critique.

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<sup>31</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, pp. 27-36.

<sup>32</sup> Groys 2008, pp. 112-113.

## 1.2 Exploitation and Inequalities

Boltanski and Chiapello describe the idea of critique to be meaningful on grounds of a difference between the actual and a desirable state of affairs.<sup>33</sup> To consider the intern as a critical subject, its actual state of affairs should be different from a desirable state of affairs. In other words, to be a source of indignation for critique, the situation of the intern should prompt protest. This section addresses the interns' situation, aiming to find out if it can be considered a source of indignation for critique.

*Intern VIP Lounge's* intern is a student or trainee working, sometimes without pay, at the art fair or at the galleries in Dubai. Although working unremunerated, the intern is part of the art world's labour force. In the art world, labour has increasingly become a focus of attention in the past few years, as demonstrated by the variety in research, seminars, debates, publications, and artworks addressing labour practice and working conditions in general and within the realm itself. An example is the conference 'Labour of the Multitude: Political Economy of Social Creativity,' which resulted in the publication of *Joy Forever: The Political Economy of Social Creativity* (2014), consisting of essays by the conference's speakers.<sup>34</sup> The publication's general focus is the notion of 'creativity' as a relation between creator and other subjects involved in the creative process. The individual essays address a variety of social, economic, and political abuses of this notion, from the perspective of discourse and ideology, as productive force, and as critique.<sup>35</sup> In general, the essays express concerns on cultural realm's socio-economic situation and 'abuse' of creativity by society, politics, economics, and within the realm itself. The essays 'Notes on the Exploitation of Poor Artists' and 'Free Labour Syndrome: Volunteer Work and Unpaid Overtime in the Creative Sector' emphasize the intern as a subject involved in, or as Foucault described, subjected to the power of the creative process.

In 'Notes on the Exploitation of Poor Artists' economist and visual artist Hans Abbing addresses the financial situation of artists and others working in the art world. In defining the term 'art establishment', Abbing differentiates between 'art world's rich' and 'art world's poor,' considering art world's rich as part of the art establishment, and 'art world's poor' as not part of it. He describes how the designation 'poor' applies to art

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<sup>33</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 27.

<sup>34</sup> The conference took place at the Warsaw Free/Slow University, October 20-22, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> According to the editors Kozlowski, Kurant, Sowa, Szadowski, and Szreder 2014, pp. 1-6.

world's majority of artists, support personnel, volunteers, and interns. Abbing considers the exploitation of art world's poor different from the exploitation of other knowledge workers (such as academics), which generates consequences for actions aimed at reducing exploitation within the art world. This is "an affair internal to the art world, where the establishment profits from the low incomes in the arts," argues Abbing.<sup>36</sup>

What Abbing considers the 'non-establishment' or the "art world's poor," is termed the cultural realm's group of "precarious workers" by Precarious Workers Brigade and Carrot Workers Collective.<sup>37</sup> These UK based groups aim to find ways of organizing the labour involved in unpaid forms of cultural production, and can be considered as some sort of labour union.<sup>38</sup> Their collaborative contribution 'Free Labour Syndrome: Volunteer Work and Unpaid Overtime in the Creative and Cultural Sector' (2014) addresses the situation of these "precarious workers," such as volunteers and interns. It describes the eagerness for internships and willingness to work for free as a "widespread syndrome" in the cultural realm, which is termed 'Free Labour Syndrome.' Most susceptible to the syndrome are students, cultural or creative workers and interns, all considered as moments within the cultural realm's cycle of free labour. Free Labour Syndrome generates both positive and negative symptoms, the former masking the latter in its early stages. Positive symptoms are aspirations, hopes, promises, and an ephemeral sense of belonging to the art world. Negative symptoms are the drive or compulsion to work beyond one's physical and mental limits, the incapacity to resist unpaid overtime, and a generalised sense of frustration, isolation, worthlessness and insecurity.<sup>39</sup> The symptoms can be considered an apt description of the intern's 'actual state of affairs,' whereas specifically for the intern the most common negative experience is described to be either carrying out mundane tasks way below their level, or being assigned responsibilities that match those of a highly skilled employee without the same pay.<sup>40</sup> It is described how in the cultural realm free labour has gradually become the norm, generating a constant 'pool of free labour,' which is often condoned to be a structural necessity caused by the on-going withdrawal of public funds. As norm,

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<sup>36</sup> Abbing in Kozlowski et al. 2014, pp. 85-86.

<sup>37</sup> Precarious Workers Brigade and Carrot Workers Collective are both UK-based groups of interns, ex-interns and other 'precarious workers'.

<sup>38</sup> Website Carrot Workers Collective: < <https://carrotworkers.wordpress.com/about/>> accessed 12-1-2016.

<sup>39</sup> Precarious Workers Brigade & Carrot Workers Collective in Kozlowski et al. 2014, p. 211.

<sup>40</sup> Precarious Workers Brigade & Carrot Workers Collective in Kozlowski et al. 2014, p. 217.

the internship is perceived as the only way into paid employment in desirable professions. It is described how this generates a larger problemat. It requires financial means to work for free, and free labour as an access filter into desirable professions replicates the most classic lines of class distinction.<sup>41</sup>

In summary, Abbing argues that the intern belongs to art world's poor and is not part of the art establishment, in the art world where the establishment profits from low incomes in the arts. Precarious Workers Brigade and Carrot Workers Collective describe Abbing's 'poor' as cultural realm's group of 'precarious workers,' a group that is susceptible to the syndrome of free labour. Free labour appears a norm in the cultural realm, and is perceived as a way into desirable professions, which replicates lines of class distinction. *Intern VIP Lounge's* intern is part of Abbing's "art world's poor" and not part of the art establishment. The intern is at risk of exploitation and contributing to inequalities within the cultural realm. This actual state of affairs appears not desirable, which makes the idea of critique meaningful. It is considered a source of indignation for a formulation of critique.

### **1.3 Emphasis on Activity**

Generating exploitation and inequalities, the interns' situation is not desirable, to say the least. It is a source of indignation for the formulation of critique. How can it then be the actual situation? What is the context of this situation? Through addressing art theorist and artist Hito Steyerl's texts 'In Free Fall: a Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective' and 'Art as Occupation: Claims for an Autonomy of Life', and the chapter 'The Formation of the Projective City' from Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, this section frames the interns' situation within a broader context.

Hito Steyerl's 'In Free Fall: a Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective' (2011) describes the present moment as "distinguished by a prevailing condition of groundlessness." This condition situates everyone and everything in a permanent state of free fall. Falling is relational, and because everything is falling, this happens unnoticed. The groundless condition is related to the loss of a stable horizon and

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<sup>41</sup> Precarious Workers Brigade & Carrot Workers Collective in Kozlowski et al. 2014, pp. 211-217.

accompanying loss of a stable paradigm of orientation, Steyerl argues. She describes how new surveillance technologies, tracking, targeting and the growing importance of aerial views have led to loss of a stable horizon. Since linear perspective was constructed throughout modernity using navigation tools, gestures, and bodily positions in relation to the horizon, this also led to the decreasing importance of linear perspective. Linear perspective defined a calculable, navigable, predictable space, predictable notions of linear time and progress, and a calculable future. Now, linear perspective no longer dominates the visual paradigm.<sup>42</sup> It is replaced by perspectives of overview and surveillance, positioning the spectator distanced, displaced, floating in the air, disembodied, remote-controlled, and most important without stable ground, without a fixed tool of orientation, describes Steyerl.<sup>43</sup> She argues that the dismantling and decreasing importance of linear perspective led to the current condition of groundlessness, or 'free fall,' which she appears to consider not directly alarming, concluding that stable ground might be unnecessary, since "falling can also mean a new certainty, of falling into place."<sup>44</sup>

The socio-economic situation as sketched in 'The formation of the Projective City' bears resemblance to Steyerl's condition of 'free fall'. For describing current-day's 'new system of values' Boltanski and Chiapello employ the model of a *city*, which is "a constraining form, restricting the possibilities of action in a world whose logic [or, system of values] it embraces and legitimates."<sup>45</sup> The model of the projective city reflects current-day value system of the "new," or "third spirit of capitalism." Each of these spirits, or periods, is marked by changes in terms of money and work, Boltanski and Chiapello argue. In terms of money, the first spirit was marked by an ethics of saving, generated values of self-control, moderation, restraint, hard work, regularity, perseverance and stability. In the current spirit of capitalism 'saving' refers to time instead of material goods. Time now is the main scarcity, and saving means to prove sparing with it and allocate it thoughtfully. One also needs to prove 'sparing' with, or be

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<sup>42</sup> Steyerl 2011, pp. 1-5.

<sup>43</sup> Steyerl describes these changes as displayed in art, starting to show in nineteenth-century paintings' moving perspective, "through tilted, curved and troubled horizontal lines, continuing in twentieth-century cinema, montage, cubism, collage, abstraction, quantum physics and the theory of relativity, dismantling linear perspective and causing the observer to lose its stable position."

<sup>44</sup> Steyerl 2011, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 105.

responsible for the self. As producers of ourselves, we are responsible for our own bodies, image, success and destiny. In terms of work, the first spirit separated between worker's persona and its labour power; the second spirit separated between family life and the office or factory; in the current spirit a distinction between private and professional life is diminishing. There is no longer a separation between a person's qualities and the properties of their labour, between personal ownership and self-ownership. The first spirit's work ethic was associated with rational asceticism; the second spirit's work ethic with responsibility and knowledge; the current spirit's work ethic emphasizes activity. To be doing something, moving, changing, is what enjoys prestige, whereas stability is regarded synonymous with inaction, Boltanski and Chiapello argue.<sup>46</sup> Their model of the projective city describes how this emphasis on activity is manifested in the current system of values. In the projective city, the status of persons and things is measured by activity, which surmounts oppositions between work and non-work, stability and instability, wage earning and non-wage earning, paid and voluntary work. The aim of activity is to generate 'projects', to become integrated in projects, or to achieve integration in projects initiated by others. Anything can attain the status of a project; either capitalist ventures or ventures hostile to capitalism, illustrating the dissolving of boundaries. For engaging in projects the 'encounter' is necessary. Therefore it is the most important activity to integrate oneself into networks and explore these for opportunities of meeting people or associating with things liable to generating a project. Life is conceived as a succession of projects, which makes it vital to stay active, keep developing activity, to stay engaged in projects. Engagement is conceived as voluntary, and when engaged in a project one knows that it will last for a limited period of time. This awareness is accompanied by the hope that a new project will follow. The project's impermanent form makes it adjusted to the networked world. By multiplying connections and proliferating links, a succession of projects has the effect of extending networks. Boltanski and Chiapello describe the extension of projects in the projective city as "life itself," and "a halt to its extension comparable to death. This makes it essential to know how to engage in projects, which requires capabilities of enthusiasm, trusting those you engage with, availability for new connections and remaining adaptable, physically and intellectually mobile, flexible, and autonomous. Those not acting accordingly will fail to engage, to be employed on a project, or prove

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<sup>46</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, pp. 151–155.

incapable of changing projects. While one is not excluded a priori, the inability to engage increases risk of exclusion. Without a project, not exploring networks, one is at risk of not finding a way to attach oneself to a project, threatened with exclusion, ceasing to exist.<sup>47</sup>

As stated in 'The Formation of the Projective City' Boltanski and Chiapello describe the changed use of the terms 'saving' and 'property.' Nowadays, 'saving' concerns time instead of material goods, and 'property' is a responsibility towards the self, manifested in our current-day relationship to work, characterized by an emphasis on activity and diminishing distinction between private and professional life.<sup>48</sup> In 'Art as Occupation: Claims for an Autonomy of Life,' Hito Steyerl also relates a shift in use of terms to changing perceptions of labour: the shift from 'work' to 'occupation.' Describing the difference in terms, she considers labour in the sense of 'work' as implying a beginning, producer and result, and differentiates between person and professional skills. Work is seen as a means to an end, whereas labour in the sense of 'occupation' is considered the opposite. An occupation keeps people busy, is not dependant on a result and has no necessary conclusion. It does not differentiate between a person and their labour power. Furthermore, it does not necessarily include remuneration, since the occupation or the process in itself contains its own gratification, describes Steyerl. The occupation thus has no temporal framework, except the passing of time. It is not a means to an end, but an end in itself.<sup>49</sup> Steyerl considers the intern to be the 'prime figure of contemporary occupation,' because: "She [the intern] is supposed to be inside of the system, yet she is excluded from payment. She is inside the labour but outside remuneration, stuck in a space that simultaneously includes the outside and excludes the inside. As a result, she works to sustain her own occupation."<sup>50</sup>

In summary, Steyerl describes current-day society's groundless condition. She considers this free fall not immediately alarming, because it can lead to 'falling into place'.<sup>51</sup> This optimistic approach also reverberates from Boltanski and Chiapello's description of the values in the projective city, of continuous activity fuelled by the hope for new projects.

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<sup>47</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, pp. 109-120.

<sup>48</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, pp. 151 – 155.

<sup>49</sup> Steyerl 2012, pp. 47-49.

<sup>50</sup> Steyerl 2012, p. 52.

<sup>51</sup> Steyerl 2011, p. 9.

Boltanski and Chiapello also describe the downside: failing to stay engaged or failing to stay active puts one at risk of failing to attach oneself to a project, and this might lead to exclusion. In the projective city this is comparable to death.<sup>52</sup> Continuous activity is simultaneously driven by hope and the fear of exclusion, ceasing to exist. This combination of hope and fear manifests itself in the situation of the intern, which Steyerl describes as the “prime figure of contemporary occupation.”<sup>53</sup> Framing the intern’s situation within its societal context works to explain how this situation can exist as such. Working to sustain her occupation, the intern is simultaneously driven by hope and fear. The hope that a new occupation, either paid or unpaid will follow, because the alternative is exclusion from the art world the intern wishes to stay part of. In introducing their model of the projective city, Boltanski and Chiapello describe how people have a tendency to conform to emergent new rules, because these give meaning to “what would otherwise seem like an arbitrary proliferation of *ad hoc* mechanisms and locally convenient improvisations.”<sup>54</sup> Framing the situation of the intern within its societal context makes visible how the intern conforms perfectly to the values of the current, third spirit of capitalism.

#### **1.4 Precarious Critique**

The situation of the intern is considered the source of indignation for a formulation of critique. Working to sustain her occupation, the intern is conformed to the values of the current spirit of capitalism. A critique of the interns’ situation thus appears to simultaneously criticize capitalism’s values. Through addressing philosopher Pierre Dardot and sociologist Christian Laval’s ‘Manufacturing the Neoliberal Subject,’ part of their publication *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society*, art critic Brian Holmes’ ‘The Flexible Personality: For a New Cultural Critique,’ and the chapter ‘Precarious’ from art historian Hal Foster’s *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency*, this section aims to find out how a critique of the intern’s situation could be formulated, and how it relates to capitalism’s values.

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<sup>52</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, pp. 109-120.

<sup>53</sup> Steyerl 2012, p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 103.



In 'Manufacturing the Neoliberal Subject' (2014), Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval describes the contemporary subject, which they term "*neo-subject*" as uncertain, flexible, precarious, fluid, weightless, competitive, and wholly immersed in global competition. Contemporary practices for managing and manufacturing this *neo-subject* aim to make the *neo-subject* perceive their work for companies as working for themselves, at their own efficiency, intensifying their own effort. The *neo-subject* perceives self-conduct as deriving from itself, commanded from within by its own desire. Its seemingly self-driven productivity creates a chain reaction, wherein these subjects reproduce, expand, and reinforce the competitive relations between themselves, which requires them to adapt to ever-harsher conditions they created themselves.<sup>55</sup>

In his 'The Flexible Personality: For a New Cultural Critique' (2002) Brian Holmes describes a *flexible personality* that resembles Dardot and Laval's *neo-subject*. Holmes' ideal type links to the current economic system with its "casual labour contracts, just-in-time-production, [...] informational products and [...] absolute dependence on virtual currency circulating in the financial sphere," as Holmes describes. It also refers to positive images, of "spontaneity, creativity, cooperation, and peer relations, appreciation of difference, and openness to present experience." Holmes proposes the *flexible personality* as model for new cultural critique. It functions as 'ideal type,' which is a polemical image of the social self that can guide and focus various kinds of critique. Critique structured according to this flexible personality should be directed towards contemporary capitalist culture's negative traits of flexible accumulation in production and employment, and the emphasis and analysis of performance in all spheres. Ideally, Holmes envisions this critique to make visible the links between structures of power and everyday life, revealing the "systematic of social relations," by pointing to "a specific discourse" and its "images and emotional attitudes that hide inequality and raw violence." Such critique aims to disrupt "the balance on consent" by revealing "what economy consents to, how it tolerates the intolerable."<sup>56</sup>

Both the *neo-subject* and the *flexible personality* embody traits of the current-day societal and economic condition in a singular type. In the chapter 'Precarious' from *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency* (2015), Hal Foster considers the characteristics of *neo-subject* and *flexible personality* not as generalization or ideal type, but applies them

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<sup>55</sup> Dardot & Laval 2014, pp. 2-4.

<sup>56</sup> Holmes 2002, pp. 1-2.

to a group of existing subjects: the “precariat.” The term ‘precarious’ applies to the uncertain conditions of a vast number of labourers in neoliberal capitalism for which employment is not guaranteed, a condition that nowadays appears to be the rule, while relative job security and union protection form the exception, describes Foster. Following Gerald Raunig’s distinction between “smooth forms of precarization for digital bohemians and *intellos précaires*,”<sup>57</sup> and ‘rigidly repressive forms of labour discipline for migrants *sans papiers*’<sup>58</sup> Foster describes the precariat as no unified class.<sup>59</sup> This might problematize possibilities for its development as a social movement, argues Foster. He cites the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition of ‘precarious’, being: “deriving from the Latin *precarius*, obtained by entreaty, depending on the favour of another, hence uncertain, from *prece*, prayer,” to emphasize the precarious state of insecurity as a constructed one. Its state of insecurity is engineered by a regime of power that the precariat depends on for favour and that it can only petition for help, describes Foster. Critique should underscore these power relations. To criticize the precarious condition, which Foster describes as ‘acting out the precarious’, is “to evoke the perilous aspect of this condition, but also to intimate how and why its privatisations are produced, and so to implicate the authority that imposes this.”<sup>60</sup>

Summarizing, Dardot and Laval describe how the contemporary *neo-subject* perceives its actions as commanded by its own desire, which there is no question of resisting. The neo-subjects’ practice generates a chain reaction, recreating the conditions that created it over and over.<sup>61</sup> The neo-subject bears resemblance to Holmes’ flexible personality, but his ideal type is aimed for structuring critique.<sup>62</sup> The traits of neo-subject and flexible personality relate to the precarious conditions of an existing group of people, which Foster describes as the ‘precariat’.<sup>63</sup> It is their self-created chain reaction that creates their precarious conditions over and over. Both Holmes and Foster formulate a critique that address the subject’s precarious condition and the origins of the ‘chain

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<sup>57</sup> Which roughly translates as ‘precarious intellectuals.’

<sup>58</sup> Which roughly translates as ‘without papers.’

<sup>59</sup> For this distinction, Foster cites from Gerald Raunig’s *A Thousand Machines* (2010).

<sup>60</sup> Foster 2015, pp. 100-103.

<sup>61</sup> Dardot & Laval 2014, pp. 2-4.

<sup>62</sup> Holmes 2002, pp. 1-2.

<sup>63</sup> Foster 2015, pp. 100-103.

reaction', revealing the precarious state as constructed, and the regime of power or authority behind it.

In conclusion, this chapter aimed to find out if *Intern VIP Lounge's* subject of the intern can be considered the source of indignation for a formulation of critique, and how such critique might take shape. *Intern VIP Lounge's* intern is a student or trainee working, sometimes without pay, at the art fair or at the galleries in Dubai. The situation of the intern is considered the source of indignation for a formulation critique. Hans Abbing describes how the intern belongs to art world's poor and is not part of the art establishment. In the art world, the art establishment profits from low incomes in the arts. Carrot Workers Collective and Precarious Workers Brigade term the art world's poor as the cultural realm's group of 'precarious workers,' susceptible to the 'syndrome' of free labour. As the norm in the art world, this generates the risk of exploitation and contributes to inequalities. This is considered the situation of the intern. It is not desirable, which makes the idea of critique meaningful. It is the source of indignation for a formulation of critique. Considering the intern's situation in its larger societal context, works to explain how a critique of the intern would simultaneously be a critique of capitalism's values. In a world that emphasizes continuous activity, subjects are driven by hope of inclusion and fear of exclusion. Art world's intern wishes to belong to, or stay part of the art world, since the alternative is exclusion. She is driven by hope and fear combined, working to sustain her own occupation, to stay part of the art world. As such, she conforms to the values of the current spirit of capitalism, and contributes to its 'chain reaction' of neo-subjects. The intern recreates its precarious conditions over and over, by acting accordingly. Formulating ways of critique, aiming to stop this chain reaction, Holmes' flexible personality and Foster's 'acting out the precarious' both aim to address the condition itself through revealing the system behind it. Critique of the intern's situation should thus situation by exposing the underlying structure.

## 2. Critical Strategies, the search for the causes of this situation

*“The working premise is to think in terms of systems: the production of systems, the interference with and the exposure of existing systems... Systems can be physical, biological, or social.”<sup>64</sup>*

*Intern VIP Lounge*’s subject of the intern is considered critical for its precarious condition. Generating exploitation and inequalities, its situation is different from a desirable state of affairs, which makes the idea of critique meaningful. The precarious condition forms the source of indignation for a formulation of critique. Such critique should reveal the causes of the condition, by focussing on the conditions underlying structure. Continuing the exploration of *Intern VIP Lounge*, this chapter narrows down the scope to the installation itself. It is structured around Boltanski and Chiapello’s “search for the causes of this situation,” an essential part of the work of critique.<sup>65</sup> An emphasis on causes also reverberates from Foster and Holmes’ formulations of a critique that aims to address the precarious condition by revealing the system that produces it.

Concentrating on the artistic installation, this chapter explores how, and in what ways *Intern VIP Lounge* conveys critique through revealing the system that produces the condition of the intern. Tim Cresswell’s notion of transgression forms an overarching framework. This chapter considers the installation as transgression. Focussing on the four mechanisms at work in transgression, in relation to the installation as exclusive space, VIP lounge, adaptation of the art world, and example of anti-normative behaviour, the aim is to find out how the installation conveys a critique through revealing the structure of the (art) world.

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<sup>64</sup> Hans Haacke as quoted by Siegel 1971, p. 21.

<sup>65</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 41.

## 2.1 Space, Values and Sense of Place

The installation *Intern VIP Lounge* was site-specific, created specifically for the grounds of Art Dubai 2013 (**Fig. 1**). As a site-specific installation, *Intern VIP Lounge*'s location, place, and space are considered defining elements. In his *In Place, Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (1996), geographer Tim Cresswell argues that location, place and space can work to question the values that create, structure and maintain the 'natural' world of the established order. Cresswell examines times and places where the established order is questioned, which he terms 'transgressions.'<sup>66</sup> This section focuses on Cresswell's notion of transgression in relation to the installation.

It is key to Cresswell's notion of transgression that location, place and space are important for the creation and continuation of the values of the established order, its 'ideological values.' Transgression literally means, "crossing a boundary." It is a place where the values of the established are questioned. Transgression examines what is defined as normal and dominant.<sup>67</sup> Following sociologist Goran Therborn, Cresswell describes ideological values as "the constituting and patterning of our lives as conscious, reflecting initiators of acts in a structured, meaningful world:" these values define what exists and what does not exist; what is good, just and appropriate; and what is possible and impossible.<sup>68</sup> Cresswell draws upon sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theorization of 'common sense,' arguing that to be successful, an established order must make its world, structured according to the ideological values, appear as the common sense or 'natural' world.<sup>69</sup> When people act according to the values of the common sense world, their practice reproduces the conditions of this world.<sup>70</sup> Cresswell considers place as important because by existing in place, people are constantly engaging in acts of interpretation. He terms peoples' appropriate practice in place "sense of place." As an active participant in our idea of what is appropriate, the place of an act is important for the ideology of the established order, Cresswell argues. Ideological values influence and guide our practice in place. Place is produced by practice influenced by these values. It

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<sup>66</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 20-27.

<sup>67</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 149-173.

<sup>68</sup> Therborn terms these 'modes of interpellation'.

<sup>69</sup> Bourdieu's 'sense of limits' or *doxa* describes subjects having permanent *dispositions*, being "preferred and unselfconscious modes of acting," which connect their 'objective' position to 'subjective beliefs.'

<sup>70</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 18-19.

also reproduces these values, which makes them appear self-evident, or ‘natural.’ Place is constituted by value-influenced appropriate behaviour, and constitutes these values. This makes it an active force in reproducing norms and defining appropriate practice. Materiality of place makes the world appear the natural world, and this makes ‘sense of place,’ or expectations about appropriate practice in place important for the construction, maintenance, and evolution ideological values, Cresswell argues.<sup>71</sup> Cresswell describes the four mechanisms at work in the construction, maintenance, and evolution of ideological values as classification, differentiation, naturalizing, and linking ideas to action.<sup>72</sup> Place relates to all four mechanisms. It is a fundamental form of classification: classification of place structures the judgement of things in it, such as objects and actions. Differentiation through others is a basic ideological mechanism, and place works to differentiate between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ ‘in’ and ‘out,’ and ‘central’ and ‘marginal.’ Ideology obscures the social origin of its values to make them appear natural. The materiality of place makes it appear natural, making the nature of a place a justification for views of what is good, just and appropriate. To be successful, ideological values must connect thought to action, theory to practice. Place is the material context of people’s lives, forcing them to make interpretations and act accordingly, which contributes to the creation and reproduction of ideological values.<sup>73</sup> As such, place contributes to the construction, maintenance, and evolution of ideological values.

Making the world and people’s practice in it appear as the common sense, natural order of things is the most effective way for reproducing the conditions that produced this world. In his theorization of common sense, Bourdieu questioning the natural world is therefore one of the most fundamental and effective forms of struggle.<sup>74</sup> In a similar sense, Cresswell claims that the same mechanisms creating and reproducing the conditions of the natural world can work to question it.<sup>75</sup> He describes how being ‘in place’ generates the possibility of being ‘out of place.’ When people act ‘out of place,’ not according to these values, it can imply other possible interpretations. Cresswell states that if enough people act ‘out of place,’ a whole new conception of ‘normality’ could arise: interpretations of place guide actions in place, making place effective as site for

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<sup>71</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 12-19.

<sup>72</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 20-27.

<sup>73</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 158-166.

<sup>74</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 18-19.

<sup>75</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 161-166.

resistance to the established order.<sup>76</sup> Cresswell focuses on such “crisis points in the functioning of everyday expectations,” places where the values of the established order is questioned. He terms this “transgression.”<sup>77</sup> Events that upset common sense assumptions have the effect of annoying people. This helps them to discover the underlying structure that shapes their everyday practice. By disrupting patterns and processes of normality, transgression works to question the ‘natural’ world and its values.<sup>78</sup> Society and culture are structured in relation to the ‘other.’ Concentration on this other achieves perspective on its central workings. Transgressions are important for examining and questioning what is defined as normal and dominant, Cresswell argues. In art, transgression can be the appropriation of significant elements of an existing landscape, or the appropriation of pre-existing symbolism, which aims to challenge and transgress existing boundaries. Making the natural world appear less natural, by creating a way of being ‘out of place,’ can use, manipulate and divert its meaning.<sup>79</sup>

Place exists of the elements ‘location,’ ‘locale,’ and ‘sense of place,’ describes Cresswell: location is a position in space with specific relations to other points in space; locale is the broader context of social relations; sense of place is the subjective feelings associated with place. Together, location, locale, and sense of place affect our actions in place, argues Cresswell.<sup>80</sup> The installation *Intern VIP Lounge* was located the within the grounds of Art Dubai (**Fig. 1, 2**). *Intern VIP Lounge*’s location is the art fair Art Dubai, located in the city of Dubai, part of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), in the Arabian Peninsula. Its locale is Art Dubai and the broader context of the art world. Considered as transgression, how does the *Intern VIP Lounge* address the mechanisms of classification, differentiation, and linking ideas to action that construct and maintain the (art) world as it is?

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<sup>76</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 156-171.

<sup>77</sup> Different from ‘resistance,’ a transgression is judged on result, whether a particular action is being noticed and what reactions it causes, whereas resistance is judged by the intentions of its actors. There is an overlap between transgression and resistance in the sense that acts of resistance can be judged as transgressions, and transgressions can be intentional. Intentional transgression is a form of resistance that creates a response from the establishment.

<sup>78</sup> Cresswell follows ethnographer Harold Garfinkel’s findings on the effects of ‘abnormal’ events.

<sup>79</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 149-173.

<sup>80</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 149-151.

In summary, space is important for the construction, continuation and evolution of ideological values. For an established order to be successful, it must appear natural, or common sense. Place is both constituted by the practice of people according to their interpretations of place, and constitutes these values: the materiality of place makes the world appear 'natural.' The four mechanisms of classification, differentiation, naturalization and connecting thought with action, can work to reveal and question what is defined as normal and dominant in a place within the world. As such, a place of transgression destabilizes everyday, common sense practice, which works to question the world as it is, and the underlying values of the existing order. Taking in consideration the mechanisms of transgression, the following sections explore how *Intern VIP Lounge* works to question the (art) world as it is.

## 2.2 VIPs and Hierarchies

It is the socially constructed meaning of a place that directly affects judgements of the events in them, and every society and culture has places of some (socially constructed) kind.<sup>81</sup> The *Intern VIP Lounge* comprised a space presented as a VIP lounge that was exclusively accessible for the interns working at Art Dubai and the galleries in Dubai. How does the construct of the VIP relate to its context of Art Dubai? This section focuses on the notion of VIP, aiming to find out how it reveals and questions the order within the art world.

The installation *Intern VIP Lounge* was located the within the grounds of Art Dubai (**Fig. 1, 2**). Its locale is the art fair Art Dubai within the broader context of the art world. The installation focuses on art world's intern, and assigns them the VIP status. In the term 'VIP' the capital letters 'V', 'I' and 'P' are an abbreviation of Very Important Person: someone who, in a given context, is considered more important than others. In attributive sense the abbreviation is often employed in 'VIP treatment,' or 'VIP lounge,' referring respectively to the special treatment of those considered more important than others, or a space or place exclusively accessible for those considered more important than others.<sup>82</sup> The *Intern VIP Lounge* was such a space. While in theory anyone can be a VIP, this status is often attributed to those who are already considered to have a certain

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<sup>81</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 150-151

<sup>82</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (online) 'V.I.P.'



status: for instance ‘celebrities’ such as acclaimed actors, authors or artists. As such, VIP works both as a means to create and a means to affirm one’s position in relation to others.

Within the art world, the notion of VIP also works as a means to create and affirm status. Included in the vocabulary of most art fairs, Art Dubai’s 2013 edition offered a comprehensive VIP Programme that covered different locations in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, and even beyond Emirati borders. Art Dubai’s VIPs could start their trip in Doha, Qatar, a 45-minute flight from Dubai, attend the opening of Global Art Forum and visit Doha’s museums. Those less eager to travel visited Dubai Design Day’s Collectors Preview. Following days included Global Art Forum, Dubai’s Galleries Night, architectural tours, exhibitions, brunches, dinners, visits to Emirati cities, and of course attendance of Art Dubai’s opening night. The larger part of this VIP Programme was exclusively accessible for those in possession of Art Dubai’s VIP-card, while some activities were even ‘strictly by invitation.’<sup>83</sup> At an art fair such as Art Dubai, and within the general context of the art world, it can be said that the VIP status is attributed to those who are already considered as part of the art establishment. Abbing argued how the art establishment in general concern’s the art world’s rich.<sup>84</sup> This implies that status in the art world is based on financial means, wealth, or ‘value.’ Value can however also be considered in the sense ‘of achievement.’ For example, artists or critics can be *of* value to an art fair such as Art Dubai. Their presence or positive reviews can generate publicity, which reflects in visitor numbers. In turn, this can generate financial value. The status of VIP can thus also be attributed on grounds of the possibility of being of value. But either based on value in terms of financial means, or value in terms of achievements, within the art world the notion VIP works to create one’s position as a subject in relation to others: art world’s VIP is more important than others in the art world.

Classification is the way in which people create themselves as subjects in relation to opposites and differences, in relation to the ‘other.’<sup>85</sup> The status of VIP is relational, it is the position of a subject in relation to others: one can only be ‘more important’ in

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<sup>83</sup> Website Art Dubai < <http://artdubai.ae/sites/default/files/pdf/VIP%20Programme%202013.pdf> > accessed 29-2-2016.

<sup>84</sup> Abbing differentiates between art establishment and non-establishment, saying, “Those in the art world who are poor do not belong to the art establishment.”

<sup>85</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 151-166.

relation to others. Within the art world, the notion of VIP works to make visible classification and differentiation, creating the status of ‘very important’, or actually ‘more important than others.’ Constructed as a VIP lounge, the installation questions art world’s classifications, by assigning the interns, who are not part of the art establishment, the status of VIP.<sup>86</sup> The installation created two groups of VIPs at the 2013 edition of Art Dubai, two groups that were both considered ‘more important than others:’ Art Dubai’s VIPs, and Ögüt’s intern-VIPs. Whereas Art Dubai’s VIP Programme was exclusively accessible for those in possession of the fair’s VIP card, the *Intern VIP Lounge* was exclusively accessible with the lounge’s VIP card (**Fig. 3, 4**). While the groups could be considered its exact opposites, they were equal in their VIP status. Creating a VIP lounge for interns that gave them the status of VIP works to make visible the established order of the art world. It emphasizes both the ‘official’ VIP status of the art establishment, and the ‘unofficial’ VIP status of the interns, who are normally not considered VIPs. As such, it makes visible art world’s classification of establishment and non-establishment. Revealing unstated classifications makes visible what is defined as normal and dominant, Cresswell argues.<sup>87</sup> *Intern VIP Lounge* reveals the classification within the art world. Cresswell also states how classifications that remain unstated are powerful because they are recognized practically.<sup>88</sup> The artist-created group of VIPs works to recognize this classification, and it also questions it. Generating another group of VIPs diminishes the strength, or status, of the original group of VIPs. Since now, there are two groups of people who are more important than others. It also questions the constructed nature of the VIP. One could say that the status of Ögüt’s intern-VIPs was different from Art Dubai’s VIPs, in the sense that their VIP status was ‘created’ by an artist. But Art Dubai’s official VIP status was also a creation, a construct and re-creation of the existing social structures within the art world. Making visible the classification of establishment and non-establishment diminishes its power, and questions what is defined and normal within the art world.

In summary, the notion of VIP works to make visible the existing classifications within the art world. *Intern VIP Lounge* assigned the interns, who are normally not considered ‘more important than others’ the status of VIP. It worked to make visible art world’s

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<sup>86</sup> Abbing 2014 in Kozlowski et al. 2014, pp. 85-86.

<sup>87</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 151-166.

<sup>88</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 151-166.

unstated classification of establishment and non-establishment, the existing order within the art world. It diminished the status of Art Dubai's original VIPs, by generating additional, alternative, but not necessarily *secondary* group of VIPs. Through the mechanisms of classification and differentiation, the artist-created status of VIP revealed 'importance' as a construct, structured by the established order, and structuring the (art) world as it is.

### 2.3 Exaggerating the Natural

Attributing the interns the status of VIP generated the existence of an additional group of VIPs at Art Dubai. Their status was valid within the walls of the installation. *Intern VIP Lounge* brought an additional, second but not necessary *secondary* world in existence. As such, the installation can be considered a second realm of VIPs, with its own, artist-established order. For an established order to be successful, it must make its world appear the natural world, argues Cresswell.<sup>89</sup> This section focuses on the installation as a second realm of VIPs, and imitation of the materiality of the natural world. The aim is to find out how the installation as an imitation works to question the art world as the 'natural' world.

The materiality of place makes the world appear the 'natural' world, and making the world, or a place in it, appear less natural can work to question the values of the established order, argues Cresswell.<sup>90</sup> *Intern VIP Lounge* is considered as an imitation of what is defined as normal within the art world. Creating another realm of VIPs with its own hierarchy or order generated the existence of *hierarchies* within the grounds of Art Dubai. *Intern VIP Lounge* is considered as an imitation, and adaptation of the established order. For explaining the installation as adaptation, we turn to the strategy of 'canonical counter-discourse.' In the field of post-colonial studies, this is considered as a means to deconstruct and question the existing canon. Canon is also way of ordering, of classification. Helen Tiffin, leading scholar in the area of post-colonial studies, defines canonical counter-discourse as: "a process whereby the post-colonial writer unveils and dismantles the basic assumptions of a specific canonical text, by developing a 'counter' text, preserving the identifying signifiers of the original, while altering its structures of

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<sup>89</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 12-18.

<sup>90</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 12-18.

power.”<sup>91</sup> For example, in theatre it can work counter-discursive to stage an ‘intact’ canonical play, rewriting characters, narrative, context or genre of the canonical script.<sup>92</sup> Slightly reformulating Tiffin’s definition, *Intern VIP Lounge* could then be described as: ‘a process whereby the *artist* unveils and dismantles the basic, or *common sense* assumptions of a specific *existing order*, by developing a ‘counter’ *order*, preserving identifying signifiers of the original, while altering its structures of power.’ The installation is an imitation of the existing order, a counter-order that alters the existing structures of power by assigning the interns the status of VIP.

The *Intern VIP Lounge* is considered an imitation of the established order, which adapts the structures of power of the existing order, through a reversal of hierarchy. In ‘Rabelais and His World’ (1965), philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin describes his notion of the ‘carnavalesque.’ Of importance for this notion is the suspension of hierarchical rank. The notion of carnivalesque refers to the medieval carnival, which Bakhtin describes as “a second reality outside the official realm, existing alongside and in opposition to the established order.”<sup>93</sup> The installation resembles this medieval carnival, in the sense that it is a second order existing alongside and in opposition to the established order. It differs from the carnival because, as Bakhtin describes, in carnival’s second reality there is no distinction between actors and spectators because everyone participates.<sup>94</sup> As such it still bears resemblance to the *Intern VIP Lounge*, where there is no distinction between the intern as spectator and subject of the installation. But only the interns participate. Whereas, as Bakhtin describes, the second reality of carnival is “a special condition of the entire world in which all take part,” the conditions of *Intern VIP Lounge*, the VIP status of the interns, applies only within the installation.<sup>95</sup> Carnival is “a temporary suspension of all hierarchical rank, and all were considered equal during carnival.”<sup>96</sup> The *Intern VIP Lounge* is a temporary reversal of hierarchical rank that not applies to the entire world. Bakhtin describes the nature of carnival laughter as the universal laughter of all people, directed at all and everyone. He states that this makes it different from the “parody of modern times,” whose “negative laughter opposes the object of mockery.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Tiffin as quoted in Gilbert & Tompkins 1996, p. 16.

<sup>92</sup> Gilbert & Tompkins 1996, p. 17.

<sup>93</sup> Bakhtin 1965, trans. H. Iswolsky 1984, in *The Bakhtin Reader*, pp. 194-200, p. 194.

<sup>94</sup> Bakhtin 1965, trans. H. Iswolsky 1984, in *The Bakhtin Reader*, pp. 194-200, p. 196.

<sup>95</sup> Bakhtin 1965, trans. H. Iswolsky 1984, in *The Bakhtin Reader*, pp. 194-200, p. 198.

<sup>96</sup> Bakhtin 1965, trans. H. Iswolsky 1984, in *The Bakhtin Reader*, pp. 194-200, p. 198.

<sup>97</sup> Bakhtin 1965, trans. H. Iswolsky 1984, in *The Bakhtin Reader*, pp. 194-200.

The 'laughter' of *Intern VIP Lounge* is not universal and opposes the existing order, its 'object of mockery.'

*Intern VIP Lounge* appears to take the term 'mockery' quite seriously in the installation. As an adaptation of the existing order, it preserves what Tiffin described as "identifying signifiers of the original."<sup>98</sup> Constructed as a VIP lounge, the installation preserves the exclusive, restricted access to such a space. Within this imitation, the structures of power that accompany the notion of the VIP within the art world are adapted by assigning the interns the status of VIP, reversing the existing structures of power. But *Intern VIP Lounge* contains not only an adaptation of these structures of power. It also adapts some of the identifying signifiers, in the sense that they are mocked through exaggeration them. In its function of "relaxed and entertaining ambience," the *Intern VIP Lounge* was equipped with a chocolate fountain, offered massages, popcorn, a table-tennis tournament, and snacks and non-alcoholic cocktails (**Fig. 5-7**).<sup>99</sup> These particular features probably made *Art Review* describe the installation as the "most self-referential, institutionally parodic art-fair project commission."<sup>100</sup> In a way, these features appear to mock the constructed exclusivity of art world's established order, imitating and exaggerating the idea of an exclusive space.

In *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency* (2015), art historian Hal Foster a strategy of imitation and exaggeration. He terms this strategy "mimetic adaptation" or "mimetic exacerbation," and describes it as an imitation of the real, which is heightened or exacerbated.<sup>101</sup> *Intern VIP Lounge* is an imitation of the 'real' art world. While it is not presented as such, which probably relates to its location at Art Dubai, it certainly references it. Foster claims that contemporary art assumes a critical position through the strategy of mimetic exacerbation, and how this strategy can work to expose the existing order as fragile, or failed. What he considers as the problem of mimetic exacerbation is that it can be mistaken for an affirmation, or celebration of the ideology it seeks to criticize.<sup>102</sup> The creation of a VIP lounge for interns might have been mistaken for such an affirmation, if considered as a nice gesture towards the art worlds less fortunate. Perhaps even some of the interns interpreted it as such. But as the cited

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<sup>98</sup> Tiffin as quoted in Gilbert & Tompkins 1996, p. 16.

<sup>99</sup> Website Ahmet Ögüt: < <http://www.ahmetogut.com/ahmetwebinternvip.html> > accessed 12-2-2016.

<sup>100</sup> Charlesworth 2013, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup> Foster 2015, p. 78.

<sup>102</sup> Foster 2015, pp. 78-95.

review illustrates, its was certainly noticed as a critique of established order within the art world, grounded in the ideology of capitalism. In describing the strategy of mimetic exacerbation, Foster refers to art critic Clement Greenberg's emphasis on the capitalist dimension of kitsch. In describing the strategy of mimetic exacerbation, Foster refers art critic Clement Greenberg's emphasis on the capitalist dimension of kitsch. In 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' (1939), Greenberg describes the kitsch as a product of the industrial revolution that substitutes genuine culture, and is sold by the "dominant bourgeoisie" to "peasantry-turned-proletariat." This mass-produced kitsch supported the illusion that the masses actually rule, argues Greenberg.<sup>103</sup> Foster describes his interpretation of kitsch as a means to create fictional feelings.<sup>104</sup> As such, the "relaxed and entertaining ambience" of the *Intern VIP Lounge* can be considered ambivalent. It could be both celebration and critique of art world's established order. Interpreted as a celebration it creates fictional feelings of importance on part of the intern. Interpreted as critique in the sense that it, as an imitation, adaptation and exaggeration of the natural world, makes this world appear less natural.

In summary, *Intern VIP Lounge* is an imitation, adaptation, and exaggeration of the established order within the art world. It imitates the exclusivity of art world's establishment, employing the construct of the VIP lounge. In this lounge, existing structures of power are adapted by reversing its hierarchies. The exaggerated features of the lounge mock the exclusivity within the art world. Imitating the natural world of the established order works to make it appear less natural.

## **2.4 Invisibility and Acting 'Out of Place'**

Cresswell described how place exists of location, locale, and sense of place. Together, these elements affect our actions in place.<sup>105</sup> *Intern VIP Lounge* was located at Art Dubai, within the context of the art world. This section concerns 'sense of place,' the subjective feelings associated with place.<sup>106</sup> It focuses on two works that were part of *Intern VIP Lounge's* screening programme *Dream Factory*. Both works address sites of labour.

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<sup>103</sup> Greenberg 1961, in Foster 2015, p. 71.

<sup>104</sup> Foster 2015, pp. 78-95.

<sup>105</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 149-151.

<sup>106</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 149-151.

Cresswell described how for an established order to be successful, it must connect thought to action. Classification and differentiation by place affect our perception of the world, and these perceptions affect our actions in place, argues Cresswell.<sup>107</sup> This section aims to find out the selected works from the screening programme visualize the mechanism of linking ideas to action, and make visible how practice in place can be affirm, or oppose the natural world of the established order.

*Intern VIP Lounge* offered the interns a programme of events, including meetings, presentations and film screenings. The films were part of screening programme *Dream Factory*, curated by Aily Nash and Andrew Norman Wilson.<sup>108</sup> As they describe, this selection of works addresses the various modes of examining new forms of labour, consumption as production, and the aesthetics of globalized lifestyles. *Dream Factory* contains videos that address topics varying from the agency of objects, appropriations of advertising imagery, and considerations of the space of labour.<sup>109</sup> Focusing on practice in place, this section focuses on the last-mentioned category, works that were considerations of the space of labour: *Workers Leaving the Googleplex* (2009-2011) by Andrew Norman Wilson (1983) and *The Trainee* (2009) by Pilvi Takala (1981).

Andrew Norman Wilson's *Workers Leaving the Googleplex* (2009-2011) is an 11-minute two-channel video that takes Google's flexible, temporary labourers as its subject (**Fig. 8**). These employees are hired to scan pages for Google Books. Wilson describes how these employees are "barred from contact" with the regular Google employees and do not have the same privileges. *Workers Leaving the Googleplex* depicts what the artist describes as "the Google caste system" in action. As he describes in an interview, Wilson worked for a year on Google's campus. As contracted employee he wore a red badge, whereas full-time employees wore white badges, and interns wore green badges. Wilson noticed how one group stood out. He describes this group as the "fourth class of workers." They worked in a separate building, wore yellow badges, and were only allowed to access the building where they worked. They all left at the same time everyday, because their superiors had asked them to. It was a separate departure

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<sup>107</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 151-156.

<sup>108</sup> *Dream Factory* included works by Michael Bell-Smith, Neil Beloufa, Guy Ben-Ner, Harm van den Dorpel, Harun Farocki, Mark Leckey, The Otolith Group, Hito Steyerl, Pilvi Takala, Ryan Trekartin and Andrew Norman Wilson (see list of appendices).

<sup>109</sup> Website Aily Nash: < <http://ailynash.com/curatorial/dream-factory/> > accessed 6-2-2016.

time from the other workers. While Wilson intended a larger project on these employees, he was fired immediately. He was left with his account of the events, and footage that resulted in the video *Workers Leaving the Googleplex*. It shows the “classes” of employees, arriving and leaving, passing by, and entering and exiting buildings at the Googleplex.<sup>110</sup>

In ‘Business Casual: Flexibility in Contemporary Performance Art’ (2013), art historian Sami Siegelbaum argues how art making is now understood in the context of a global precarious condition, a global precariat of freelance workers, subject to economic forces.<sup>111</sup> Wilson’s video depicts a group within this global precariat of freelance workers. Part of its screening programme, the video is shown within the context of the *Intern VIP Lounge*. This installation focuses on the intern, but the intern is also its exclusive spectator. Presenting them a video that depicts “Google’s caste-system,” works to mirror of their own position as precarious workers of the art world. It also appears a way to show them the invisibility of their labour. In ‘Is a Museum a Factory’ (2009), Hito Steyerl describes the art space itself as a factory. She states that political films are no longer shown in factories, but in art spaces. She considers these art spaces as contemporary sites of production, and, as she describes: “staffed by eager interns who work for free.” Similar to the factory, the art space is a site of production, exploitation, and political screenings.<sup>112</sup> Showing Wilson’s *Workers Leaving The Googleplex* (2009-2011) in the context of the art space appears a hint towards such a political screening.

In what Steyerl describes as the “museum-as-factory,” production continues in installation, maintenance, discussion, networking, and also viewing. Following Jonathan Beller, who argued that cinema and its derivatives are factories in which spectators work, she argues that now “to look is to labour,” and that whereas a factory arrests its workers, contemporary cinema arrests its spectators, both disciplinary spaces and spaces of confinement. But whereas the workers are a mass, the spectators are a multitude – not a coherent crowd of people.”<sup>113</sup> While the interns are a group within the lounge, they can be considered more multitude than mass. Steyerl also emphasizes how the traditional factory is ‘invisible’ to the public, citing Godard who stated, “the exploiter doesn’t show the exploitation to the exploited,” and that in the museum labour is also

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<sup>110</sup> Tseng 2014, (online resource).

<sup>111</sup> Siegelbaum 2013, p. 51.

<sup>112</sup> Steyerl 2009, pp. 1-2.

<sup>113</sup> Steyerl 2009, pp. 5-6.



publicly invisible. She concludes in stating how any conventional cinematic work will try to reproduce the existing setup of “a projection of a public, which is not public after all, and in which participation and exploitation become indistinguishable.”<sup>114</sup> The screening of *Workers Leaving the Googleplex* can also be considered as such a projection of a public, which is not public after all, participation indistinguishable from exploitation, ‘showing the exploitation to the exploited.’ Steyerl proposes political cinema as an exiting screen through which people can leave the museum-as-factory.<sup>115</sup> If the screening of Wilson’s *Workers* is considered as political screening and possible exiting screen, is this also the function of other parts of the screening programme?

Pilvi Takala’s *The Trainee* (2008) (**Fig. 9**) is the account of a month-long period when the Helsinki marketing division of the global professional services corporation Deloitte hires the artist as trainee “Johanna Takala.” During the course of her stay at the company, Takala gradually ceased to perform any work activities. This behaviour evoked unease in her co-workers, who were unaware of her double identity. In response to their questions, the artist-guised-as-trainee answered that she was engaged in “brain work.” During her stay at the company, Takala recorded her own activities and the reactions of her co-workers, using hidden cameras and email documentation. This result was *The Trainee*, an installation comprising video footage, a PowerPoint slideshow and several objects including an employee ID card, Deloitte’s welcoming letter and office supplies.<sup>116</sup> Takala herself describes the installation as “a disruption of the supposed consensus that governs normative behaviour in a work environment.”<sup>117</sup> In ‘Business Casual: Flexibility in Contemporary Performance Art’ (2013), Siegelbaum describes Takala’s work as “an encounter between contemporary art and corporate labour.”<sup>118</sup> Considering both contemporary performance art and corporate management discourse as responses to political changes in the late 1960s, Siegelbaum suggests performance, such as Takala’s *Trainee*, to function as model for anti-normative behaviour.<sup>119</sup>

Drawing upon Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*, Cresswell describes how peoples’ everyday actions recreate the values of the established order. He argues how if enough

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<sup>114</sup> Steyerl 2009, pp. 6-7.

<sup>115</sup> Steyerl 2009, pp. 7-8.

<sup>116</sup> Siegelbaum 2013, pp. 52-55.

<sup>117</sup> Website Pilvi Takala, < <http://www.pilvitakala.com/thetrainee01.html> > accessed 22-2-2016.

<sup>118</sup> Siegelbaum 2013, p. 54.

<sup>119</sup> Siegelbaum 2013, p. 51.

people act out of place, a whole new conception of normality may arise.<sup>120</sup> Anti-normative behaviour is thus a way to resist the established order. Takala's behaviour is 'out of place' in the normative landscape of the workplace. In her temporary role as trainee, Takala behaves out of place in the workplace. In doing so, she no longer reproduces its objective conditions, no longer contributes to maintaining the established order. As suggested by Siegelbaum, within the framework of the *Intern VIP Lounge*, Takala's *Trainee* appears to be a model of anti-normative behaviour, an example of acting out of place, for its intern-spectators. To what extent can the artwork function as an example? In *The Trainee*, Takala's artistic performance is the mirroring of work performance, the latter subjected to instrumental demands and institutional protocol, describes Siegelbaum.<sup>121</sup> The firm commissioned Takala as an artist, and in this position she is not subjected to instrumental demands or institutional protocol. It can be said that Takala is 'out of place' from the start, which enables her to behave anti-normative. Her behaviour is anti-normative in terms of place, but normative in terms of her role as an artist. To what extent can the artwork, or artist, be an example of anti-normative behaviour? If Deloitte's employees would follow her anti-normative, out of place behaviour, would the consequence be 'a whole new conception of normality' or would it lead them to get fired? What consequences would following this model of anti-normative behaviour generate for those who do not enjoy the same freedom as the artist, either Deloitte's employees or the interns? Would anti-normative behaviour lead to change, or to exclusion?

In summary, Andrew Norman Wilson's *Workers Leaving the Googleplex* (2009-2011) and Pilvi Takala's *The Trainee* (2008) make visible how practice in place is influenced by interpretations of place. The intern is presented with what Siegelbaum describes as other workers within the global precariat of freelance workers who are subject to economic forces. Both Wilson and Takala's work relate to the interns precarious condition: through addressing the invisibility of labour, and exemplifying anti-normative behaviour. Practice in place is also presented as a way to affirm, or oppose the natural world of the established order. But for the interns, would anti-normative behaviour lead to change, or exclusion from the art world?

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<sup>120</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 12-19.

<sup>121</sup> Siegelbaum 2013, p. 53.

In conclusion, the space of the installation functions as transgression in the sense that it employs the mechanisms of classification, differentiation, naturalizing and linking ideas to actions to question the values of the 'natural' world of the existing order. It both makes visible and questions what is defined as 'normal' and 'dominant' in the art world. The installation as an exclusive VIP lounge reveals classification between establishment and non-establishment. Shaped as a VIP lounge makes visible the mechanism of differentiation and status as a construct. Imitating, adapting and exaggerating the 'natural' world of the existing order makes this world appear less natural. The selection of works from the screening programme reveals the intern's invisibility of their labour, and examples of 'acting out of place.' Questioning the values of the 'natural' world of the existing order is a fundamental and effective form of struggle. If enough people act out of place, a whole new conception of normality may arise, Cresswell argues.<sup>122</sup> It remains the question if an intern could 'act out of place' without the risk of exclusion from the art world.

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<sup>122</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 156-171.

### 3. Critical Alternatives, the aim of proceeding to solutions

*"It can affect the general social fabric."*<sup>123</sup>

It is the precarious condition of the intern that forms the source of indignation for a formulation of critique. *Intern VIP Lounge* focuses on the subject of the intern, and the installation reveals the constructed nature of the established order, veiled as a "relaxed and entertaining ambience."<sup>124</sup> In reviews of the fair, the installation is described as "a deft comment on how the art world views work, pay and aspiration."<sup>125</sup> Art making is understood in the context of a global precarious condition, a global precariat of freelance workers, subject to economic forces.<sup>126</sup> Revealing the constructed nature of the established order, as part of, and referencing the art world, it appears to imply not only the current spirit of capitalism, but also the art world itself as the authority that imposes this condition. Continuing the exploration of *Intern VIP Lounge*, this third chapter focuses on the aim of Boltanski and Chiapello's "codification of 'what is not going well,' and the search for the causes of this situation:" the aim of proceeding to solutions.<sup>127</sup>

Taking into consideration the ambiguous nature of the critique and authority it imposes, this chapter explores if, and how the *Intern VIP Lounge* can proceed to solutions. It concentrates on the events that took place in the installation as a "space for knowledge exchange."<sup>128</sup> Subsequently addressing the ephemeral nature of the installation, the artist as authority, and the conversation with Ahmet Öğüt and Hans Ulrich Obrist that took place within the installation, focussing on the theme of education, the aim is to find out how *Intern VIP Lounge* relates to the aim of proceeding to solutions.

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<sup>123</sup> Hans Haacke as quoted by Siegel 1971, p. 21.

<sup>124</sup> Website Art Dubai: </ artdubai.ae/commissions/2013> accessed 1-12-2015.

<sup>125</sup> Charlesworth 2013, p. 1.

<sup>126</sup> Siegelbaum 2013, p. 51.

<sup>127</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 41.

<sup>128</sup> Website Art Dubai: </ artdubai.ae/commissions/2013> accessed 1-12-2015.

### 3.1 Making Visible

*Intern VIP Lounge* is considered a transgression, in the sense that it employs the mechanisms of classification, differentiation, naturalizing and linking ideas to action to reveal and question the constructed world of the established order. Cresswell argues how transgression can only be ephemeral, in existence for a limited period of time, in which it deconstructs and destabilize, and hints at alternatives. But, as Cresswell states, the new social spaces that result from the transgression of old social spaces will become old social spaces “pregnant with the possibility of transgression.”<sup>129</sup> *Intern VIP Lounge* was in existence for the duration of four days.<sup>130</sup> Both considered as transgression and temporary installation, it can only hint at alternatives. Addressing the texts ‘Critical Reflections’ and ‘Politics of Installation’ by art theorist Boris Groys, Jacques Rancière’s *Emancipated Spectator*, and the chapter ‘Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices’ from political theorist Chantal Mouffe’s *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, this section considers the temporality of the artistic installation, aiming to find out how it could hint at alternatives.

In the earlier addressed essay ‘Critical Reflections’ (2008) Boris Groys describes a shift in the judgement of artworks, arguing that the artwork is no longer the object of judgement, but it is now taken as point of departure for a critique aimed at society and the world. Groys considers this shift problematic because, as he states, “now, all that remains for art is to illustrate a critique that society has already levelled at or manufactured itself.” Groys considers distance from society a precondition for critique, and considers art practiced “in the name of existing social differences,” is similar to demand the affirmation of the existing structure in the guise of social critique.”<sup>131</sup> This longing for critical distance appears futile when taking into consideration the dissolving boundaries between art and capitalism. His argumentation is reminiscent of the question as posed by political theorist Chantal Mouffe’s in ‘Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces’ (2007): “Can artistic practices still play a critical role in a society where artists and cultural workers have become a necessary part of capitalist production?”<sup>132</sup> In his ‘Politics of Installation’ (2009), Groys focuses not on the question

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<sup>129</sup> Cresswell 1996, p. 176.

<sup>130</sup> Website Art Dubai: </ artdubai.ae/commissions/2013>, accessed 1-12-2015.

<sup>131</sup> Groys 2008, pp. 112-113.

<sup>132</sup> Mouffe 2007, p. 1.

‘if’, but ‘how.’ In the essay, distinguishing between the exhibition space and the space of an artistic installation, he describes the critical power of an artistic installation, which he considers a space of “*unconcealment*.” It makes visible the “heterotopic, sovereign power that is concealed behind the obscure transparency of the democratic order.”<sup>133</sup> It has been addressed in the preceding chapter how the installation *Intern VIP Lounge* is a ‘space of unconcealment.’ Similar to the function of the artistic installation, Groys attributes art practice in general the ability of making visible the “realities that are generally overlooked.” He concludes in saying that it is not the goal of art to change things, because things are always already changing by themselves.<sup>134</sup> In terms of alternatives, the ability of art lies in making visible. Possible alternatives might present itself to the spectator through what is made visible.

In *The Emancipated Spectator* (2011), philosopher Jacques Rancière describes what he terms the “aesthetic experience” of art. He argues how this aesthetic experience can disrupt “the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations” through the “loss of destinations it presupposes.” As he further explains, this aesthetic experience does not produce “rhetorical persuasion about what must be done,” or said otherwise, presents the spectator with alternatives. Rancière describes the effect of aesthetic experience to reframe the relation between bodies, the world they live in, and their ability to adapt to it. He considers the effect of aesthetic experience that it “unveils the multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experiences.” Unveiling works to change the perceptible, thinkable and feasible, allows for new modes of political construction of common objects, and new possibilities of collective enunciation, argues Rancière.<sup>135</sup> This effect, or ability to unveil resembles Groys’ *unconcealment*, the ability to make visible. The ability of art to hint at alternatives is manifested in the relation between artwork and spectator. Unveiling, or making visible can allow a change in perception on part of the spectator, and this perception can hint at alternatives. Both Groys and Rancière consider it not the ability of art to present alternatives – experiencing art can hint at alternatives.

In ‘Agonistics and Artistic Spaces,’ a chapter from *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (2013), political theorist Chantal Mouffe presents a somewhat different view on the ability of art. Mouffe addresses the agonistic public space, a “battleground where

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<sup>133</sup> Groys 2009, pp. 6-7.

<sup>134</sup> Groys 2009, pp. 8-9.

<sup>135</sup> Rancière 2010, p. 72.

different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation.” She envisions the art space in relation to the agonistic space, and the objective of artistic practices to “foster the development of [...] new social relations,” which can produce “new subjectivities” and elaborate “new worlds.” Mouffe argues how to achieve such practice artistic intervention should reach outside the traditional institutions, in a multiplicity of social spaces. As such, artistic practices offer space for resistance, in undermining the “social imaginary” that is necessary for capitalist production, argues Mouffe.<sup>136</sup>

In summary, while Mouffe describes the ability of art in a more active, or more activist manner than Groys and Rancière, either unconcealing, unveiling, or undermining, all terms refer to art’s ability of making visible. Making visible the values of its object of critique, and making visible how these values are transmitted, can establish a change in perception on part of the spectator.

### **3.2 Rules and Authority**

*Intern VIP Lounge* distinguishes the interns who are inside the space from those on the outside, differentiation between ‘in’ and ‘out,’ and ‘us’ and ‘them.’<sup>137</sup> Within the lounge, the interns belong to the same group. Cresswell describes how in place, insiders know the rules of a place and obey them. Not knowing the rules existentially removes the outsiders from the milieu of the insiders.<sup>138</sup> Focussing on Boris Groys’ ‘Politics of Installation’ (2009), this section explores who defines the rules that apply within the installation, and how this influences what it makes visible to its spectators.

In his ‘Politics of installation’ (2009), Groys analyses the differences between the standard exhibition and the artistic installation, aiming to differentiate between the roles of artist and curator. He understands the exhibition space as an empty, neutral public space, the symbolic property of the public, administered by the curator in their name. As representative of the public, it is the curator’s role to “safeguard the space’s public character, bringing artworks into the public space and making them accessible for

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<sup>136</sup> Mouffe 2013, pp. 87-88.

<sup>137</sup> Cresswell 1996, pp. 151-166.

<sup>138</sup> Cresswell 1996, p. 154.

the public,” describes Groys. The workings of an artistic installation are considered the opposite of the exhibition space. Groys argues that “the artist-as-curator” of the artistic installation changes the role and function of the exhibition space, “by means of a symbolic privatization of the public space of an exhibition,” and describes the artistic installation as designed by the “sovereign will” of the artist.<sup>139</sup> Groys considers the artist as sovereign, meaning someone who has authority over others.<sup>140</sup> As sovereign, the responsibility of the artist is different from that of the curator, argues Groys. It is different in the sense that the artist does not need to justify its selection of the included objects to the public, nor the organization of the space as a whole.<sup>141</sup>

This aspect of justification is interesting given that the exclusive character of the *Intern VIP Lounge*: the space of the installation was only accessible for interns working at the art fair and the galleries in Dubai. While the artist as sovereign of the artistic installation is not obliged justification to any public, when considering the critical nature of the installation, the absence of any justification to the public appears a thought-out strategy. But the artist was also not obliged justification to its public of interns. In the artistic installation, the domain of the sovereign rights of the artist is expanded from the individual art object to the exhibition space itself, states Groys, and argues that as such, artist and curator embody different kinds of artistic freedom: the curator embodies the institutional, conditional, publicly responsible freedom of curatorship, and the artist the sovereign, publicly irresponsible freedom of making art.<sup>142</sup> As the artist-as-sovereign of the *Intern VIP Lounge*, Ögüt enjoys the publicly irresponsible freedom of making art.

Irresponsible in terms of justification to the public, the artist as sovereign of the installation space is not free of all responsibility. As Groys describes, the artistic installation is nowadays often viewed as a form that allows the artist to democratize its art, take public responsibility, or to act in the name of a certain community. Democratizing its art can be established by transforming the enclosed – and in terms of *Intern VIP Lounge*, ‘exclusive’ – space of the installation into a platform for discussion, democratic practice, communication, networking and education.<sup>143</sup> For *Intern VIP Lounge*, Ögüt takes on the possibility of democratizing the space of the artistic

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<sup>139</sup> Groys 2009, pp. 1-4.

<sup>140</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (online), ‘sovereign.’

<sup>141</sup> Groys 2009, pp. 1-4.

<sup>142</sup> Groys 2009, pp. 1-4.

<sup>143</sup> Groys 2009, p. 4.



installation. In addition to offering the interns a “relaxed and entertaining ambience,” the installation was also created to be a “knowledge exchange space.”<sup>144</sup> In its function as knowledge exchange space, the installation presented a programme of events that included meetings, presentations and film screenings.<sup>145</sup> The preceding chapter addressed two works from the screening programme. The following section considers one of the meetings that took place within the framework of the installation as knowledge exchange space. Its function of space for knowledge exchange transforms the space of the *Intern VIP Lounge* the platform for discussion, democratic practice, communication, networking and education. Groys describes how as such, the artist can act in the name of a certain community. Since *Intern VIP Lounge*’s public consisted of Art Dubai’s interns only, this can be the community in whose name the artist acts.

Considered as a community, a group, the interns are part of the art world’s group of precarious workers, and part of the global precariat. As art critic Sami Siegelbaum describes in ‘Business Casual: Flexibility in Contemporary Performance Art’ (2013), art making is now understood in the context of the global precarious condition, a global precariat of freelance workers subject to economic forces.<sup>146</sup> By acting in the name of the interns, Ögüt also acts in the name of the community he is part of. While the artist and the group of interns are part of the global precariat, and subject to economic forces, they are not equals within the space of the installation. Within the lounge, the intern’s role is complex: it is subject and spectator of the installation, but it is also subjected to the laws that apply within the installation, the laws created by the sovereign artist. The artist the sovereign of the installation enjoys the publicly irresponsible freedom of making art.<sup>147</sup> This makes the position of interns and artist also different within the context of the global precariat. Artists and interns are subjected to economic forces, but have different privileges. The artist enjoys the privilege of artistic freedom, and in this position the artist can question or oppose the established order. It is this artistic freedom that enables Ögüt to question the established order of the art world in his *Intern VIP Lounge*. The interns take part in his opposing, or questioning, and partake to a certain extent, but they remain subject, spectator, and subjected to the laws of the artist.

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<sup>144</sup> Website Art Dubai: </ artdubai.ae/commissions/2013>, accessed on 1-12-2015.

<sup>145</sup> Website Ahmet Ögüt: < <http://www.ahmetogut.com/ahmetwebinternvip.html> > accessed 22-2-2016.

<sup>146</sup> Siegelbaum 2013, p. 51.

<sup>147</sup> Groys 2009, pp. 3-4.

As such, they can safely be part of the artist's oppositional strategy. Opposing the established order not veiled by their position within the installation puts them at risk of exclusion.

In *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency*, art historian Hal Foster explains how the term 'precariat' is derived from the Latin *precarius*, meaning "obtained by entreaty, depending on the favour of another, hence uncertain, precarious," and how the precarious situation is constructed, engineered and maintained by those in power, of whom the precariat is dependant.<sup>148</sup> In his 'Politics of Installation,' Groys describes how entering the artistic installation means leaving the public territory, into a space of sovereign, authoritarian control." The artist act as sovereign, legislator of the installation space – regardless of the law given by the artist is a democratic one, states Groys.<sup>149</sup> While artist and interns as part of the global precariat are all subjected to economic forces, within the installation space the intern is once again subjected, to the laws of the artist. Addressing what Abbing described as "an affair internal to the art world," Ögüt addresses this affair in the name of the interns.<sup>150</sup>

In summary, the artist is the sovereign of the installation space and creates its laws. The intern is subject and spectator. All part of the precariat, they are subject to economic forces. Within the art world, their status differs in the sense that the artist can oppose the established order, without the consequence of exclusion. Opposing the established order would generate risk of exclusion for the individual intern. Within the installation space the intern is protected by and subjected to the laws of the artist, who acts in the name of the community of interns.

### 3.3 Talking Values

As artist, Ögüt defines the subject, the structure of the installation space, and its content. he defines the laws of the installation space and acts in the name of the community of interns. In addition to a relaxed and entertaining ambience, *Intern VIP Lounge* presented the interns a "knowledge exchange space," including meetings, presentations and film

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<sup>148</sup> Foster 2015, pp. 100-103.

<sup>149</sup> Groys 2009, p. 4.

<sup>150</sup> Abbing 2014 in Kozlowski et al. 2014, pp. 85-86.

screenings.<sup>151</sup> In the previous chapter, a selection of the film screenings was addressed. The artistic installation as knowledge exchange space also consisted of different meetings and presentations.<sup>152</sup> This section addresses the meeting with *Intern VIP Lounge*'s creator Ahmet Ögüt and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist. Focus is on art's ability of making visible and the different roles of artist and intern, aiming to find out how the programme of knowledge exchange relates to art's ability of making visible, changing perceptions, and the *Intern VIP Lounge* questioning, critique of the established order.

*Intern VIP Lounge*'s meetings and presentations covered the four-day duration of the installation. It consisted of presentations, or "talks" by artists and curators, and meetings that were also termed "conversations." The more or less 'one-directional' presentations included artists Basim Magdy, Pilvi Takala, Dina Danish, Maha Maamoun and Abbas Akhavan, and curators Basak Senova and Isabella Ellaheh Hughes. The pair of more 'two-directional' meetings or conversations included a meeting between curator and founder of the Delfina Foundation Aaron Cezar and a not further specified 'special guest, and a conversation with curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and artist Ahmet Ögüt himself. The conversation between Obrist and Ögüt took place in March 2013, within the Art Dubai-located *Intern VIP Lounge* (**Fig. 10, 11**). Later, a transcript of the conversation was published. All references to and quotations from the conversation are retrieved from this transcript.<sup>153</sup> Whereas the presentations within the lounge, were of a formal, one-directional nature, the meetings or "conversations" aimed to engage dialogue with the audience of interns.<sup>154</sup> Fitting in the framework of space for knowledge exchange, a recurring topic in the conversation with Ögüt and Obrist is the value of 'education.'

In '(Extended) Footnotes on Education' (2010), curator Florian Schneider considers different views on what he describes as the "current crisis" in the system of public education: it has reached an impasse by failing to generate alternatives to the

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<sup>151</sup> Website Ahmet Ögüt: < <http://www.ahmetogut.com/ahmetwebinternvip.html> > accessed 22-2-2016.

<sup>152</sup> The programme included talks by artists Basim Magdy, Pilvi Takala, Dina Danish, Maha Maamoun and Abbas Akhavan, and curators Basak Senova and Isabella Ellaheh Hughes, and conversations with curator Aaron Cezar and a 'special guest,' and with curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and artist Ahmet Ögüt.

<sup>153</sup> A transcript of the conversation was published in *Tips and Tricks*, edited by C. Erdem, published by Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Mouse Publishing, Umur Printing 2014.

<sup>154</sup> Website Ahmet Ögüt: < <http://www.ahmetogut.com/ahmetwebinternvip.html> > accessed 22-2-2016.

existing order. Describing how in the past, disciplinary institutions organized education as a process of “subjectivation,” that worked to continuously re-affirm the existing order and distribution of power, the author sees today’s crisis as a refusal to be subjugated, “by the demand of an educational system that represents the fading paradigm of industrial capitalism.”<sup>155</sup> He describes how this refusal triggered a process of deinstitutionalization and deregulation, promising self-organized access to knowledge, independent of any mediation. Schneider employs the term “control society” for current-day society, when arguing that the promise of self-managed education is now presented with its caricature, being “the education of a self, subject to constant renegotiation and trading,” and that it has replaced academic grading by “a variety of informal and proprietary codes, ranging from corporate certificates to confirmation of internships.”<sup>155</sup>

*Intern VIP Lounge’s* subject and spectator of the intern pursues the confirmation of internships, as such conforming to the values of the third spirit of capitalism. These values are also addressed by Schneider, who argues that all these codes “stress the fact that one is not only responsible for oneself, but also that the infinite process of self-examination is an end in itself.” In control society, it is necessary to continuously perform “selves:” “self-managed profiles, animated images of a self that needs to be multiplied infinitely in order to satisfy the insatiable demand for omnipresence that renders possible the very idea of control.” Schneider argues how the idea of self-education makes it possible to outsource the effort, the costs, and the resources needed to perform an efficient system of control, to the individual.<sup>156</sup> The individual intern, taking self-responsibility in pursuing an internship, supports the efforts, costs and resources that work to maintain the system as it is.

Presented as an “informal conversation,” during the conversation of Ögüt and Obrist the audience of interns is allowed to ask questions “at any point of the talk,” as Ögüt emphasizes at the beginning of the conversation. As first, introductory question for Obrist, Ögüt asks: “Perhaps you could tell the interns how you started out as a curator, and about your first exhibition, in a kitchen.” In answering elaborately on the course of his curatorial career, it is remarkable how often Obrist refers to the notion of ‘self-education.’ He starts in saying that he has “always believed in a do-it-yourself approach,” followed by a short description of his first, self-organized exhibition in a kitchen. Then

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<sup>155</sup> Schneider 2010, pp. 1-4.

<sup>156</sup> Schneider 2010, pp. 1-4.

an intern asks him: “Do you help other people do what they want to do? Do you give them advice? For example, by telling them how you started of, as a model?” Obrist’s answers affirmatively, saying that as “a way of transmitting knowledge,” also emphasizing that what is most important is “to spend time with the artists themselves.” Furthermore, he describes how he gained knowledge “just by learning on the job,” and concludes by emphasizing the value of “work experience” in addition to curatorial training, since “curating is not an academic experience.” When Obrist continues to describe the course of his studies, which did not involve any art-related discipline, Ögüt jumps in to add that the process of learning does not end when finishing your academic studies, saying that “while working [...] you learn what you need: all in all, it is a continuous learning process.”

Obrist sees the *Intern VIP Lounge* as a way of “building new communities,” or “social networks.” Since an exhibition has the potential of building communities, *Intern VIP Lounge* has the potential to do so as well, argues Obrist. “It has the potential to create a community that stays in touch [...] a big shared community.” In terms of community, Ögüt considers the *Intern VIP Lounge* to be “an alternative kind of school, with its talks and community in creation.” But Ögüt envisions the installation to be more than an educational project. He emphasizes the importance of knowledge as an exchange, when saying that “It doesn’t matter if it’s a terrible school or a good one, it is always about the dialogue you create. It is not only a teaching process, it is an exchange. This exchange process is not just knowledge production, we can’t ignore what’s happening outside contextually. Artists are as responsible as the other people who are programming it.”

What reverberates from the conversation is the recurring emphasis on self-education, the experience, and the continuous and infinite process of learning, either through education or experience. This contrasts with *Intern VIP Lounge*’s focus on the intern and the installation that reveals the constructed nature of the established order. Its programme of knowledge exchange takes the opposite direction. The condition that the installation’s subject and space seek to reveal, question, and oppose, is precisely what this conversation appears to affirm. Emphasizing values of self-education and continuous learning, these values resemble the values of the current spirit of capitalism. It is remarkable, to say the least, how the conversation emphasizes these values, when taking into consideration that its audience consists of interns only.

Interns, performing internships as confirmation, are constantly performing “selves,” and constantly working to sustain occupation, to evade exclusion, conforming to the values of the current spirit of capitalism.

In ‘(Extended) Footnotes on Education’ (2010), Schneider described education as a process of “subjectivation” that continuously re-affirmed the existing order and distribution of power.<sup>157</sup> Following philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, continuous to describe education as the “arena of an inescapably circular relationship between the ways in which power can produce knowledge, multiply discourse, induce pleasure, and generate power.”<sup>158</sup> Boltanski and Chiapello’s *New Spirit of Capitalism* also considers education as a means to re-affirm the existing order. They argue how capitalism has survived extended because it could rely on shared representations – capable of guiding action – and justifications, which represent it as an acceptable and even desirable order of things.<sup>159</sup> In her ‘Agonistic Politics and Agonistic Spaces’ (2013), Mouffe considers undermining these shared representations as a means to resist the existing order. She envisions the artistic space as space of resistance, by undermining the “social imaginary” that is necessary for capitalist production. In others words, artistic spaces offer the possibility to undermine the ideas that justify the world as it is.<sup>160</sup> In the artistic space of *Intern VIP Lounge*, where subject and space appear critical of the values of the existing order, the opinions expressed in the informal conversation work to support the values of the current spirit of capitalism, of the system that is responsible for the intern’s precarious condition. The conversation does not undermine the shared representations, the social imagery; it is transmitting its values. On the justifications of the existing order, Boltanski and Chiapello argue how these “must be based on arguments that are sufficiently strong to be accepted as self-evident by enough people to overcome the despair of nihilism, which the capitalist order likewise constantly induces – not only in those whom it oppresses, but also in those who have responsibility for maintaining it and, via education, transmitting its values.”<sup>161</sup> It appears that Obrist and Ögüt, within the framework of knowledge exchange, transmit the values that the other aspects of the installation oppose.

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<sup>157</sup> Schneider 2010, p. 2.

<sup>158</sup> Schneider 2010, p. 1.

<sup>159</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 10.

<sup>160</sup> Mouffe 2013, pp. 87-88.

<sup>161</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 10.

In summary, whereas the subject and space of installation appear to oppose the values of contemporary capitalism, based on the conversation between Ögüt and Obrist it appears as if the *Intern VIP Lounge* in its function of 'knowledge exchange space' takes the opposite direction: the values that are emphasized in the conversation between Ögüt and Obrist resemble the values of the new spirit of capitalism. In terms of 'responsibility,' Boltanski and Chiapello describe on transmitting ideological values of capitalism "those who have responsibility for maintaining it and, via education, transmitting its values." The values that are transmitted are the values of the current spirit, and Ögüt and Obrist are the ones that transmit these values.

In conclusion, this chapter aimed to find out how the *Intern VIP Lounge* relates to the aim of proceeding to solutions. The installation is in existence for four days only, but it can hint at alternatives. As expressed by Groys, Rancière and Mouffe art has the ability to hint at alternatives through unconcealing, unveiling, and undermining the construction of the way things are. Considering its subject and the installation as transgression, *Intern VIP Lounge* functions as such, created by Ögüt. He is the sovereign of the artistic installation, defining subject, content, and the rules that apply within. The artist cannot be held responsible as the authority that imposes the precarious condition of the intern. But considering the artist as sovereign of the installation space, as authority of this space, within the *Intern VIP Lounge*, the artist, intended or unintended, transmits the values that uphold the structure of the established order.

## Conclusion

*“Information presented at the right time and in the right place can potentially be very powerful. It can affect the general social fabric. The working premise is to think in terms of systems: the production of systems, the interference with and the exposure of existing systems... Systems can be physical, biological, or social.”<sup>162</sup>*

This thesis aimed to find out in what ways Ahmet Öğüt's *Intern VIP Lounge* can be considered as critical practice, and how it relates to the challenges of the critical role in times of dissolving boundaries between art and capitalism, when artists and cultural workers are part of capitalist production. Exploring how and to what extent *Intern VIP Lounge* plays a critical role, the thesis consecutively addressed the subject, installation space, and programme of events within the installation.

Its subject of the intern is considered as source of indignation for a formulation of critique, for its precarious condition that generates a risk of exploitation for the individual intern and increases inequalities within the art world. Formulations of critique aim to address this precarious condition by revealing the structure of the existing order that produces this condition. The installation conveys such critique. Considered as transgression, a place where the established order becomes questioned, the installation is related to differentiation, classification, naturalizing and linking ideas to action, the mechanisms at work in the constitution and maintenance of the established order. The space as a VIP lounge makes visible the classification within the art world of establishment and non-establishment. The exaggerated features within the lounge mock the exclusive character of this establishment. Works within the screening programme focus on the invisibility of the interns' labour, and present examples of anti-normative behaviour, acting 'out of place.' In *Intern VIP Lounge*, these mechanisms work to reveal the constructed nature of the established order. The installation was in existence for the limited time of four days, similar to the ephemeral nature of transgression, it can only hint at alternatives. The critical ability of art in relation to the precarious condition is to make visible, to reveal the constructed nature of the

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<sup>162</sup> Hans Haacke as quoted by Siegel 1971, p. 21.



established order and the world as it is. As such, the experience of art could evoke a change of perception in its spectator, and the actions of the spectator might lead to change. *Intern VIP Lounge*'s subject of the intern is also its spectator. Considering its precarious situation, acting 'out of place' puts the intern at risk of exclusion from the art world. It is subjected to the conditions of the established order. Within the *Intern VIP Lounge*, the intern is subject, spectator, and also subjected. It is subjected to the authority of the artist, who defines the rules within the installation. The artist acts in the name of the community of the interns. He creates the installation, its critical nature veiled by the relaxed and entertaining ambience it offers the interns. He also makes the installation function as a space for knowledge exchange. It is this framework that makes visible the complex nature of critique. For its continuation, an established order is reliant on the maintenance and evolution of its ideological values. Questioning these values is a fundamental and effective way to oppose the established order. Within the framework of the lounge as space for knowledge exchange, a conversation between Ahmet Öğüt and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist took place. During this conversation, there is a recurring emphasis on values of self-education and the never-ending process of learning, either through education, or experience. These values are similar to the values that maintain the established order. The artist as authority of the installation space is transmitting the values of the established order within the framework of knowledge exchange. This opposes the critique of the precarious subject and the installation as means for questioning the constructed nature of the established order.

In this thesis, the installation is considered as the point of departure for a critique aimed at society and the world. As such, the 'judgement' concerns not the installation itself, but its ability to voice critique. *Intern VIP Lounge* voices critique through its subject of the intern, and installation as a space of 'unconcealment.' As a space for knowledge exchange, it takes the opposite direction, by affirming the values of the established order it appeared to criticize. As such, it contributes to the maintenance and evolution of this order – most likely not intended. In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Boltanski and Chiapello describe a potential recovery of critique as based on "the intellectual analysis of the phenomena associated with capitalism's current state" and an analysis of "its conjunction with suffering that is diffuse – in the sense that those who experience it

have difficulty pinning it down or attributing it to a source that can be denounced.”<sup>163</sup> *Intern VIP Lounge* acknowledges the precarious situation, and how these conditions are reproduced by existing order. In affirming the values that uphold the structure that subjects the precariat, the installation fails to attribute it to its origin: this is not an authority that can easily be opposed, but the values of contemporary society. As such, all of us could be considered as subjected to the precarious condition. All of us could be contributing to the maintenance and evolution of these values, without even being aware of it. Practicing accordingly to these values works to maintain the structure of the established order. As such, it is questionable whether the practice of the artist outweighs the practice of the interns: either expressing values in speech, or practicing the values in pursuing internships, it all contributes to the maintenance and evolution of the established order. However, the freedom of the artist appears a safeguard for ‘acting out of place’ without the risk of exclusion. This supposed ‘freedom’ of the artist might be one of the challenges of art as critical practice. Art making is understood in the context of the global precariat, and artists as well as cultural workers are subjected to the capitalist order. Opposing the existing order could also lead to exclusion for the individual artist. If enough people act out of place, a whole new conception of normality may arise. But all who individually oppose risk exclusion.

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<sup>163</sup> Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, p. 420.

## Appendices

### Illustrations

1. Ahmet Ögüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013 (installation view, entrance seen from the outside)



2. Ahmet Öğüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013 (installation view, entrance seen from the inside)



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4. Ahmet Ögüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013 (installation view with VIP card)



5. Ahmet Ögüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013 (installation view with chocolate fountain)



6. Ahmet Ögüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013 (installation view with bar)



7. Ahmet Ögüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013 (installation view with table tennis table)





8. Andrew Norman Wilson, *Workers Leaving the Googleplex*, 2009-2011 (video still)



9. Pilvi Takala, *The Trainee*, 2008 (still from “Working at Deloitte for a Month”)



**10.** Ahmet Ögüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013 (installation view, conversation with Ahmet Ögüt and Hans Ulrich Obrist)



**11.** Ahmet Ögüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013 (installation view, meeting Ahmet Ögüt and Hans Ulrich Obrist)





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Fig. 2. Ahmet Öğüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013, site-specific installation, image courtesy of the artist, source: website Ahmet Öğüt.

< <http://www.ahmetogut.com/InternVIP2.jpg> >

Fig. 3. Ahmet Öğüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013, site-specific installation, image courtesy of the artist, source: website Ahmet Öğüt.

<[http://artdubai.ae/sites/default/files/photolib/g87/medium/Intern\\_VIP\\_lounge\\_card\\_1360652662.jpg](http://artdubai.ae/sites/default/files/photolib/g87/medium/Intern_VIP_lounge_card_1360652662.jpg) >

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Fig. 5. Ahmet Öğüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013, site-specific installation, image courtesy of the artist, source: website Ahmet Öğüt.

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Fig. 11. Ahmet Öğüt, *Intern VIP Lounge*, 2013, site-specific installation, variable dimensions, image courtesy of Art Dubai, source: website Art Dubai.

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< <http://www.ahmetogut.com/InternVIPLounge3.jpg> >

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