Portland State University
PDXScholar

Reference Points | Archive Organized by Project Title

2014

# Ben Kinmont & Mark Menjivar

Mark Menjivar

Ben Kinmont

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/reference_points
Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation
Menjivar, Mark and Kinmont, Ben, "Ben Kinmont & Mark Menjivar" (2014). *Reference Points*. 3.
https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/reference_points/3

This Book is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reference Points by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

# Ben Kinmont

# &

# Mark Menjivar

PSU Art and Social Practice
Reference Points

## Again

When conducting a project, consider the contexts in which the project is occurring. Consider the natural and human-made environment. Consider the participants' interests and expectations, their well-being, and sense of privacy. How will their involvement be understood and represented? Do you need to obtain consent, either verbally or written, before involving them? Do they need a means to back out? Do you know how and when you will end the project? Have you been clear on what you can and cannot provide as part of the project? Is it important to discuss this ahead of time? As the initiator of the project, it might be interesting to consider where you are locating authorship. Is it with you or those involved? Is it shared? If something is sold, what happens to the money generated? Should your finances be transparent? And, finally, you may have a sense of responsibility to your idea but should your responsibility also extend to those involved in the project? If so, for how long? Are there boundaries to this accountability? Are there boundaries to the project itself?

BK 2011

# Ben Kinmont

# &

# Mark Menjivar

PSU Art and Social Practice
Reference Points

6
**Introduction**
Mark Menjivar

12
**A Conversation**
Ben Kinmont
& Mark Menjivar

# Introduction

## Mark Menjivar

I first met Ben Kinmont when he came to Portland State University to give a talk and workshop in the Art and Social Practice MFA program. I knew very little about his work, but as he spoke about his life and art practice, I instantly made connections to my own.

After completing my undergraduate studies in social work, I spent several years working with individuals experiencing homelessness and with women working in the sex industry in the United States and in South America. My focus was on developing policies and program structures, but direct one-on-one connection with people has always been a primary motivator in my practice. Many of Ben's projects explore this malleable space between two individuals. His articulation of what he terms the Third Sculpture resonated deeply with me.

Ben spoke about how he uses archives and how archives can be invitations for interaction. Because they provide a workable structure for the multi-year projects I tend to undertake, and can be activated variously and site-specifically, I often use archive as form in my own work. Archives exist for the public and almost always have a use value, whether for historical or personal purposes.

I was also drawn to Ben's teaching practice. In the workshop that Ben led, the group collaboratively wrote a contract to be shared with participants in socially engaged art projects. The process of having to articulate our own ethics and collectively negotiate a final set of agreements was rigorous and provided a framework for us to utilize in future work. Two-hundred copies of the final contract were printed and distributed to the public that same day.

But the day I heard Ben speak I most connected with when he described his ongoing work as an antiquarian bookseller specializing in fifteenth to early nineteenth-century

books about food and wine, domestic and rural economy, health, perfume, and the history of taste. That work provides a significant contribution to his family's living costs and the focus of the pursuit provides a broader context for Ben to see domestic activity as meaningful.

For the past nine years I have worked as a freelance photographer specializing in architecture and public art documentation. While I'm thankful for the financial independence this provides, I have sometimes struggled to find meaning in the more mundane aspects of that work. Last year I rewrote Ben's project description of *Sometimes a better sculpture is to provide a living for your family*, replacing my own circumstances for his. Doing so helped me to consider one of the central questions I find in Ben's work. Where do we locate the meaning in what we do?



*Sometimes a nicer project is to be able to provide a living for your family.*

*I have started a photography business to help support my family. The artwork is not the business itself, but the contribution to our cost of living. Because the business specializes in architectural and public art documentation, it also provides a broader context in which to see private and public space as meaningful. So far it has been successful.*

*Begun 2005. San Antonio, Texas. Projects photographed include architecture, public art, and institutional collections. Project ongoing. In the collection of the artist.*

(MM)

# PROSPECTUS

Forty-two
works
by
Ben
Kinmont

# A Conversation



MARK MENJIVAR: To start off, can you tell me how you first became interested in the arts?

BEN KINMONT: I grew up around artists and their families in Northern California in the 1960s and '70s, so it wasn't so much a matter of becoming interested in the arts. It was always around, it was our home life.

My dad is a conceptual artist, and at the time the San Francisco art scene was very small, with lots of kids running around, and usually the moms keeping track of everything. Dad was producing poetic, hand-made objects out of plastic, wax, and wood, and autobiographical photographic works which were taken by my mother with her Rolleiflex camera. At the time, she was photographing his actions as well as the family, and when not watching us kids, she was either in the darkroom, studying herbal medicine, or meditating. She also photographed things for others, such as the image for the poster of the *Repair Show* in 1969 at the Berkeley Museum.

Although all of us kids were making art, none of us ever wanted to be artists. We just grew up around studios and making art was an easy and natural thing to do. When I went to Pomona College, I was drawing and painting but not with the goal to become an artist. Shortly after arriving I realized that the pay scale was higher at the college's museum than within the student work program. So I started working there as an installer and then later as a teacher's assistant to the painter Karl Benjamin. I also started making paintings to sell to various people in the administration and to fellow students who came from rich families. This was how I was able to pay for my college tuition during those four years.

At one point I started a student-run art gallery. But even then, I wasn't an art major. I was studying American culture

studies and had planned to go into academia. Then after my BA, I received a Watson Fellowship to go to Europe to conduct a year of independent research. This, ironically, was for art and the subject of my study was to look into what Joseph Beuys was doing around Dusseldorf, the Mülheimer Freiheit group, and German painting. Unfortunately Beuys had died by the time I arrived in Germany. After the year of travel and writing, I moved to New York City and it was only then that I made the decision to make art with the eventual goal to try to start showing. That was in 1987.

MM: What kinds of things were you doing when you first got to New York?

BK: I just did what most artists do. I was making work assuming that I would end up showing in a gallery to be able to support myself. At that time I was making paintings and sculpture and doing some projects. It was all happening simultaneously.

The first person I showed my slides to was Lawrence Markey, who I had gone to college with. At that time he worked at a gallery in SoHo. He said, "Ben, when you are ready, just show me your slides first and I'll give you advice on who to take them to." So I made work in New York for a year, showed him my slides, and he said go talk to Tom Cugliani. Tom gave me a show and at one point brought in another dealer, Sandra Gering, who was working privately at the time.

So the two of them represented me for several years, and that worked until I decided that I only wanted to exhibit the archives. When that happened we had a major fight, and I felt it was like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. It simply wasn't working and I could



see it wasn't good for them either. It just didn't make sense for any of us.

MM: Were the problems you were having around monetization issues?

BK: Part of it was how do we sell this and how do we package this? Though it was also because galleries sell work most efficiently when selling distinct objects, when the person coming in doesn't need a lot of time to understand the work. But with project work, before you can even find out if someone likes the project, you have to spend hours to describe what happened and what the piece is. Then the collector has to decide if they like the work, want to purchase it or if it fits within their collection.

I tend to view things in systems and it's hard for me to understand something by a small part. I need to see all the different parts. In sort of a weird way, it's my strength and my weakness. I realized that this little part—my representation by galleries—was not working, but the bigger system of the developing projects themselves was OK. So I needed to just step outside of the galleries. It felt very risky at the time because I was making a goodly portion, if not all of my contribution to our cost of living, from selling work through the galleries. But what was at stake for me in the work was much bigger than my issue with the galleries. So I needed to figure something else out that didn't involve them. That was seven years after I came to New York.

MM: Were you already working in the bookselling business at that time?

BK: The first job I had when I came to New York was helping design and set up for the renovation of a gallery on the Upper East Side that was selling contemporary Chinese oil paintings. It turned out to be a cultural front for a Texas natural gas company that had interests in China. The artists were being treated terribly. They were being flown from the Academy in Beijing and like six artists were being put into a one-bedroom apartment in Jersey. It was a weird situation and I was like, "this is bullshit." So I left that after six months and worked a couple different jobs. At one point I was a truck driver for Art Cart and I worked briefly at a library installing antiquarian book exhibitions.

But I had always been a bibliophile, and I had been collecting and studying radical political pamphlets made in the seventeenth century. I told the guy I was buying them from that I wanted to learn about the rare book trade but I didn't want to go to library school. He knew someone that needed an assistant, so I start working for Jonathan Hill. I got very lucky because Jonathan deals in extremely good medicine and science books. I worked as his assistant for ten years. It was during that time that I left my galleries, focusing only on my project work, curating, and doing publications. I finally went on my own as a bookseller in 1998.

MM: I'm always interested in how we support ourselves or, as you say, make a contribution to our overhead. In my own life, having kids and wanting to participate as little as I can in the debt society, I've found that having a hybrid practice works best for me.

BK: I think that for young artists the art world is one of the most extreme examples of that debt society. Most of the young artists that I was with in New York were making ambitious work, large sculpture with big budgets. I realized that it was not sustainable. In the process, these artist friends of mine were getting disillusioned. They would spend every penny they had and borrow money from family, if they could, only to end up being really angry and part of the attrition rate in the arts. It made me realize how important this basic issue was. How can one establish a practice that's sustainable and have an interest in a radical type of work, which can continue well into the end of your life? Not just something while you're idealistic and right out of grad school and willing to take on debt. But how can you have a practice where you can also have basic things like a family? A vacation once a year? Insurance? These normal things that everyone wants. But the art world is too tied to the luxury market, to these unrealistic levels of existence. It's all or nothing.



MM: I really value having a degree of financial independence in my art practice. I've worked as a freelance photographer and artist for nine years now and none of my projects are dependent on getting a grant or other sources of funding. While it's always nice to have outside support, I try to find a way to do them myself.

BK: I think what it comes down to is something as simple as that when you are involved in your professional art life, it is crucial to be able to say, "no, thank you." And it's hard to set yourself up like that. Like where you can say, "OK, I understand that you would like X to occur, but I'm not the artist for that. There are artists who do that, and thank you for the invitation, but this isn't going to work."

Ultimately if artists are in the position to be able to say that more, the art will benefit. There would be more people

being clear about the purpose and premise of their practice. Better work would be made. But so many of the institutions are used to getting the artist to bend according to their own mandates or objectives. Sometimes it's really hard to not be led by them.

MM: I first came to know you when you led a workshop at Portland State University around contracts and ethics, which really resonated with the students. I know you have taught in various capacities over the years, and for a while you were faculty at the California College of the Arts (CCA). Can you talk about how you got starting teaching?

BK: In New York City I didn't do much teaching. Only as a substitute teacher or guest lecturer at times. But when I moved to Sebastopol, California, I began teaching at CCA because Ted Purves (who was a member of the faculty) had earlier invited me to a symposium about generosity and contemporary art practices, which eventually became his book *What We Want Is Free*. Ted told me that they were trying to get a critical mass of faculty together to start a new program and asked if I would teach. We slowly put together the social practices program. It was Ted, Amy Franceschini, and, very briefly, Jon Rubin, until he went to Carnegie Mellon.

I also had friends in Paris who are art historians, and they would ask me to do teaching gigs. So between those workshops in France and teaching at CCA, I ended up doing projects I would have normally done on my own on the street as part of my teaching practice. That is why there are ten to twelve publications I did with students here and in France, around issues like, is it possible to help others through an art



practice, issues of instrumentalization through an art practice, and ethics. Those came out through my teaching practices.

MM: Are you still teaching now?

BK: No, I got overwhelmed. I was teaching at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) and CCA. At CCA I ended up doing departmental stuff—dealing with student issues, voting on grad candidates, administrative stuff—as well as working with fourteen thesis students and teaching the required first semester seminar in the new program. It was my own fault, because I said yes to whatever they asked me to do. Eventually it was too much, and then I realized that I was done. I taught from 2003 to 2006.

MM: That's a lot to take on. Were you still doing the bookselling while you were at CCA?

BK: Yes, and that was difficult. But the tides of the book-selling business come and go according to whether I have just published a catalogue or whether there was a recent auction where I bought a lot of inventory. It depends on a lot of things. Since it's just me with a part-time assistant, I can work on it eighty hours a week or I can work ten.

MM: I like to visit used bookstores when I'm in a new city. There's always a sense that I may discover a well-loved classic or something totally new among the shelves. How do you acquire books for the business?

BK: Normally I visit another bookseller, or they send me a catalogue, or I buy it from auction. Rarely someone will

contact me and say that they have something for sale. Sixty to seventy percent of the books I sell are to institutions. It has to do with a few things: one, there is a lot of research going on in universities about the history of food right now; two, my skill set is well suited to what the librarians need. And there are also some private customers spread around different parts of the world.

MM: You have done several projects that involve food or the act of cooking. It's nice to see that connection between your art practice and the books you sell. I started working on a project involving refrigerators and food issues in 2007. It's ongoing, but the public's interest in food issues seems to have become really popular in 2009.

BK: It kind of shifts. In different countries it peaks and does different things. I'm amazed at how popular the subject has become in the art world. I had thought it was maxing out in the early '90s, but it's back again. That's partly why I did the *Exhibition in your mouth* project. I wanted to show that artists have been working with food for a long time.

MM: Projects that involve food can have multiple entry and exit points for audiences. We all eat and care about food in one way or another. We deal with it numerous times a day. This accessibility is one main reason I originally wanted to work with it.

BK: Which is a good reason. But it has never been about food for me. It's been about the social space. Like when I did the *Waffles for an opening* piece. It wasn't about the waffles. It was about the idea of trust as sculpture. About the idea of strangers

coming into my home. And the waffles were convenient because there was a clearly defined parameter. It was about leaving the art institution and coming into someone's home. Would art still exist there in that domestic space, in an activity that was occurring before the show, and would it continue afterwards?

*I will wash your dirty dishes* and the waffles project were like a pair. *Waffles for an opening* was about me trusting strangers to come into my home. Would my family be there or not be there? We had a newborn baby at the time. It wasn't a performance art piece. It was just us having waffles. *I will wash your dirty dishes* was the reverse. Me trusting to go into a stranger's home and a stranger trusting me to come into their home. Washing dishes was convenient because it was a way for the person inviting me into their home to control how long I was there, four dishes versus forty, as opposed to someone coming and cleaning the house. When are they going to be done? Where are they going to go? Washing dishes was a controllable activity for the person participating.

MM: During the times you were washing dishes were you and the participants talking? Were you documenting the process?

BK: Yes. I speak some German but not a lot, so I had a translator there when needed. Everyplace we went we had a video camera on a tripod in the corner of the kitchen, which never moved. Just a single shot. It was definitely documentation, but there wasn't a cameraman. It was just something that was happening. The whole time we were talking. "Is this art or not art? Why? What's the point? Oh, can I use your dishwasher?"



MM: You have used the term question-based practice to describe your art practice. To me that implies a formulation of a thought or desire, and then going out to explore and learn. What do you mean when you describe your practice that way?

BK: When I start thinking about a project, it is a combination of being aware of something that is meaningful to me, an idea, and then trying to find a way to explore it. The way I explore it is sometimes through research and sometimes through asking a question of others. The idea of opening this up to a broader audience, of who gets to have input into that, is important to me.

MM: I often think about how knowledge comes from multiple sources. Some of those include expert sources, non-experts, and our own experiences. Do you go to expert sources, looking to philosophy or other artists' practices?

BK: To some degree. But I don't have in my mind the idea of expert and non-expert sources. For the kinds of questions I'm asking there are no experts, really. They are basic questions: "What's meaningful to you? Can I wash your dishes?" I just want to hear what people think. The closest I get to making distinctions in types of people I talk to is whether they are already coming from the art discourse or not. That's important to me to know.

In more recent years, I've loosened my grip on the notion of those distinctions. People who are familiar with the art discourse are just people also, naturally. But the differences are important to me in terms of how I approach their understanding of what I'm doing with them. So if there is somebody

Waffles for an opening.

Many years later, I read that Robert Filliou had thought that art about life was not so important for what it did for art, but for what it did for life.

For a two-month period people came to our house for waffle breakfasts. I was thinking about if it was safe for my family, how many would come, and who was trusting most. My biggest surprise was how my friends didn't come, but strangers did. We signed the paper plates as a thanks for coming and I started to see it as the gift sculpture object.

Archive begun 1990. New York City. White Columns and my home over thirty-one days. 432 people took invitations. Thirty-two people ate waffles. Project can be repeated. Archive in the Bill Arning Collection.

Ich werde Ihr schmutziges Geschirr waschen, I will wash your dirty dishes.

On the street, talking with people to discuss the dilemma of the artist as visionary, and seeing if people would invite a stanger into their homes. The test was also to myself, a sort of the flip to "Waffles for an opening." Usually women invited me home, to talk about absent hubands and boyfriends, or to help with chores and children and have some adult conversation during the day. Always, though, the hardest was to say goodbye, us exchanging addresses for some future remembrance.

Archive begun 1994. Munich: Marienplatz (unterfussgang), Pariserplatz and Lindwurmstrasse, Kapuzinerstrasse and Arbeitstrasse, Theresienstrasse and Barerstrasse, Leopoldstrasse and Franz-Joseph-Strasse. Five hours and forty-one munites spent on the street. 1150 catalytic texts given. Eleven strangers' homes visited. Twenty-two hours and thirty minutes spent in these homes. Each participant received a sponge, printed with the project's title and signed by myself and the participant. Project can be repeated. Archive in the collection of the artist.

who is versed in the ethical dilemmas in Christo's work, or the history of Joseph Beuys' work, it's going to be a different thing than talking to somebody who doesn't ever go into a museum or have any interest in contemporary art. So I do make that distinction. The one time I did talk with a professional happened in the *Digger dug* project, for which I talked to a social worker. I was interested in her profession and what it meant for her around the issue of helping others, and how she would reflect on the artist doing it. That's the only instance I can think of.

MM: In some of your projects you use the term sculpture. It stood out to me when I first saw that because you don't make sculptures in the traditional sense. Could you define the term or speak to how you use it?

BK: A lot of the language I use to discuss a project comes out of my desire and experience in talking to people out on the street. I couldn't launch into deconstructionism as a beginning point, or literary theory—which was one of the overriding theories that was popular during the 1980s and 1990s in the art world, when talking to people on the street. In America, for example, for a lot of the street projects, I would have to start with somebody like Monet and get from Monet up to Beuys. Then try to talk up to a more expansive notion of sculpture as art. I like to use basic, accessible terminology to try to talk about something more complicated. Personally, I find it easier to understand something when people use normal terminology to comprehend an idea, so I figure others would probably find it easier to understand as well.

The other reason I focus on sculpture, other than the fact that it is a good reference point to Beuys and social



sculpture, is I can talk to somebody who is not versed in art history about it and they can understand it. I can say to them, "imagine you have a model, and you have a lump of clay. You're in the studio looking at that model, and you're shaping that lump of clay to represent it in some form, or to have some relationship to the model." The basic idea of receiving stimuli and shaping it into something that is meaningful to you is what sculpture is to me. And it's very connected to William James' idea of the truth-making process, radical empiricism, and pragmatism, which is something else I had studied. Even Beuys' work touches on this idea, on the cognitive process as a sculptural process. And I like that idea, because that three-part dynamic is empowering.

MM: When you talk about the three-part dynamic, you're talking about social sculpture?

BK: No, not yet. There's the model, there's the artist, and there's what they're shaping. Receiving it, conceiving it, and shaping it—there are three elements. And that dynamic has the potential to be empowering for a lot of people.

I've never been partial to the deterministic universe view of philosophy. I like the idea of free will, the notion that we have choices we can make, and that we can shape things. That basic idea of empowerment is something that I think is accessible for a lot of people to talk about, and it doesn't need to be thought of as sculpture. It can be thought of in other ways. In politics, people talk about it in terms of democracy. You could talk about it in terms of religion, free will, and philosophy. There are lots of ways to talk about it, but I come from the art world, the art discourse, so I choose to talk about it in terms of sculpture.

The Digger dug.

Looking back at myself, I wondered if it was possible to help others through an art practice and how a move outside of the institution might benefit or complicate that effort. So I spoke with a friend who was a social worker to ask for her thoughts on this question, and to hear what she saw as the difference between a professional social worker and an artist who wants to help someone through their work. She answered that it was actually difficult for an artist to help another because the concept of authorship was an obstacle: nobody participating in a project would want to be "authored" by another, no matter what the purpose. She also noted the difficulty for artists to have a meaningful effect on others due to the brevity of most artists' commitment to a given social cause.

Later, in 2006, I worked with my students on the same question, eight in France and eight in the United States, each of whom conducted their own project addressing this issue. In France, the students noted the various ways in which helping others "can create new possibilities of human exchange" while also creating a "risk factor [which] is much higher than in most forms of object-making because another's life is directly involved." The American students were more concerned with issues of sincerity and whether it was the role of art to "unpack" the complications of trying to help another.

Archive begun 2004. Sebastopol, CA. Descriptions of the student's individual projects and conclusions can be found on the two "Student Series" Antinomian Press publications sutbitled "considerations towards helping others in an art practice." Project can be repeated. Archive in the collection of the artist.

MM: My undergraduate education is in social work, and I have spent years working on the streets here in the United States and in South America. I have always been drawn to the unpredictability that comes from being in that environment. How did you begin working in the streets?

BK: I think I was attracted to the populist interest of trying to expand who was included in talking about art. Sort of like, if you've got an idea like social sculpture, how many people about whom social sculpture is written are actually having input into the idea of social sculpture. So it was a little bit of that and it was a little bit of, quite simply, that things feel more urgent and dynamic on the street than in a gallery. And a lot of it was question-based stuff, like, what would happen if I tried to talk with the public, with strangers, about these ideas which are important to me? What will people say? What will people think? I think it's good to sometimes put yourself in an uncomfortable position while making work, and it was an uncomfortable thing for me in the beginning. It still is in some ways. So that was part of the impetus behind it.

What is at stake in art for me is something that can't be contained in a gallery or museum. Very personally, if you're going to try to do something that is ambitious, it necessitates a departure from the museum and the capitalist gallery. Maybe it's not called art. Whatever it is, it just felt really uninteresting, unambitious, to stay in the gallery and institutional setting. When one learns to have an artistic touch to make something beautiful, and aesthetic, and sublime, or whatever you want to call it, OK great. But there are a lot of folks that can do that, and is it really needed right now? So it's also coming back to this notion of urgency. There is some kind of urgency to me about what was really at stake. Something that couldn't be contained in the institution.



MM: Was it also a shifting of value systems? So much of your income was coming from the gallery, but then you started working in the streets, five years before you left the gallery. Was that due to a shift in what you valued?

BK: It was more of a slow realization that I was fine-tuning my communications skills, if you will, through my work. I was realizing that what I was interested in was not being registered in the galleries. What I was interested in was not being realized in the sculptures and paintings when they were done by themselves. The value in the subject never changed.

For example, you're doing a painting and you think it's about social justice, and it's curated into a show that has to do with the color red. It's really a bummer. That's an easy example, but there are more subtle gray areas where that happens. So it's kind of a matter of learning—"OK, wait a minute, no, thank you very much, but no." Or maybe even someone writes about your work negatively, but you know that what they are interested in was, in fact, what you thought you were working on, and you're like, "what the fuck?" You realize you're not really communicating clearly, or you're getting the cart in front of the horse, or whatever. So, I think that what happened was that I was becoming more aware of what was urgent to me, and that this urgent thing was not best pursued in the galleries.

MM: When you were working on the streets you often gave out texts you had written. I have read many of them and think the majority of the language is accessible, but they also

read like philosophy. I remember the first time I read one of your texts I had to approach it as poetry in a sense of just letting it wash over me and then jump back into it. So they are difficult conceptual ideas to dive into as well.

BK: Well, it was important to me to not lower the text to the lowest common denominator. That's generally how the public is treated, but I felt that you'd be wildly surprised what people have to say if you listen. It's a good position to put yourself in—to have these complex ideas about art and life, and to figure out how you justify or explain what it is you're thinking about to a thousand strangers.

I realized from speaking with people in the *I am for you* project that one of the most human things that connects us, that we all have to cope with, is how the hell do we survive? How do we feed ourselves? How do we have a place to live? And I went through that. There was a point in my life where I was counting coins to make sure I had enough money for food and trying to make it work. I knew what that felt like, and that basic feeling, that meaningfulness of how do we survive, is what ultimately led into the bookselling business project.

MM: One thing I noticed is that each of the texts that you gave out in *I am for you* changed significantly. Did it change because you were thinking about it differently after the conversations with people on the streets?

BK: There's a specific sequencing to the four texts, or "catalytic texts," as I call them. The first one contains the declarative exclamation point text, the introductory, and then a paragraph for each of the three ideas. The following flyers deal with Social Sculpture, Third Sculpture, and



Thinking Sculpture. There is a specific relation between them; in New York each one was handed out on a different day as I was writing them. In Cologne they were all handed out at the same time.

MM: Who or what was influencing your thinking around the time you wrote the *I am for you* texts?

BK: I had gone to Europe in 1986 on a fellowship to study contemporary German art and was interested in Beuys. I thought I would try to meet him because I had grown up hearing about Beuys, but he died in January of '86, a few months before I arrived.

While an American studies student at Pomona College, I was particularly interested in William James, the American philosopher of pragmatism. At the time most of my friends were focused on literary theory, especially Derrida.

James made an effort to include all kinds of experience. His book *Varieties of Religious Experience* is a very inclusive, holistic attempt to try to understand and write intelligently about all of the different religions and the different experiences within those religions. He also wrote *Principles of Psychology*, the first major manual on psychology written in America. Then you have all of his numerous volumes of philosophy. But it was so different than reading Derrida, speaking about difference and deference, and looking at discussions of the void, and the impossibility of language and how this was fracturing things.

Instead, I've always had this interest and feeling that we can build something new, and we can do it on a popular level. That's the fight to fight, and if we lose our galleries for it, that's fine. If the institutions are no longer interested

I am for you, Ich bin für Sie.

William James had talked about the shiftiness of truth, about its lack of a single center. So, to test my idea about the third sculpture, I wrote catalytic texts and gave them out on the street. Most didn't view it as art and the project evolved through their understanding and criticism. Most importantly, you could have walked by and not even noticed that it was going on.

Archive begun 1990. New York City: Prince and Broadway, Court and Joralemon, Thompson between Spring and Prince, 5th Avenue and 57th Street. Cologne: Rudolfplatz, Wallraffplatz, Ehrenstrasse and Apostelenstrasse, Olivandenhof and Zeppelinstrasse. 22 hours and 45 minutes spent on the street. 11,750 catalytic texts given. Project can be repeated. Archive in the collection of the artist.

WE ARE THE SOCIAL SCULPTURE!
THIS IS THE THIRD SCULPTURE!
YOU ARE THE THINKING SCULPTURE!

I wish to open up our understanding of life. You are my friend, my enemy, my sculpture. We are here to explain the notion of Social Sculpture, an idea given to us by Joseph Beuys during the sixties, an idea very much related to German Nationalism and consciousness during the post-war years. As I am an American my distortions of his genius shall take a personal form without practical political applications. I will set forth a batch of ideas that expand Social Sculpture to include the personal, to include the intimate sides of our life, the embarrassing moments without the transcendental meaning of a shaman, and show how everyman and everywoman is an artist now, without the prerequisite of a transformed society, of the Green Party or the Party for Direct Referendum. I will explain how a baby's cry, a banker's greed, and a Brice Marden line should all be considered as sculpture, as an expression to communicate our existence without the trappings of intellectual intimidation and unhealthy power trips.

As a community we shape our lives through communication with others. We talk to the grocery store cashier and experience his or her life for a moment. We share our own life. We present ourselves and simultaneously mould the other and the self. We take this plastic relationship and create a moment with a multitude of meanings. We create a memory to be recalled or to be stored away within our respective subconsciousness, a thought which has a communal existence and therefore can alter

a community. It is a thought which is expressive of and shaped by a community. It is a Social Sculpture.

In between the self and the other there exists a space. A malleable space determined by both the self and the other, by myself and the cashier, by myself and you. It is a space which exists simultaneously as a positive and negative space. It is both the anti-object of communication and isn't something to be frightened of; it isn't an area which renders communication impossible or isolates people. It is out of this third space, this space between you and me, that personality comes, that love, hatred and humor arise and cause us to spend an afternoon together. It is because of this area, this Third Sculpture, that you and I understand and have a sense of an other.

As an active participant in our meaning, our community, you and I are each Thinking Sculptures. The verb of Sculpture is to think, to understand and to participate. And yet because we exist within a web of interconnectedness, our active participation is the participation of the whole. It is the everyday fulfillment of an ever changing premise, of our fears, loves, shame and joy. It is the birth and death of banalities, promises and sex.

The Thinking Sculpture is the Third Sculpture is the Social Sculpture.

Ben Kinmont, 1990

WE ARE THE SOCIAL SCULPTURE!
THIS IS THE THIRD SCULPTURE!
YOU ARE THE THINKING SCULPTURE!

I wish to share an understanding of life. But first I want you to slow down and listen. Notice the fear, the love and energy that is our sculpture, our community. We are of that sculpture, we together, you and I, and those around us; and because we are all joint creators, co-creators in a piece that includes the poor, the rich, the patriotic, and the sick, we must realize that the act of the individual is the act of the community. We must learn to accept ourselves as sculptors and the sculpted.

Remember to have compassion for yourself, the other and our space that lies in between. Because we are a culture based on the individual, one of private goals and loneliness, we need to start with the personal, the moments where we feel fear and joy and create understanding. We must leave behind the American poet's declaration that "I am a multitude" and realize that we are a multitude. WE ARE A MULTITUDE.

Ben Kinmont, 1991

WE ARE THE SOCIAL SCULPTURE!
THIS IS THE THIRD SCULPTURE!
YOU ARE THE THINKING SCULPTURE!

From one to another I am for you. We have walked across a field of separation to find you here at this moment and now we would like to share an idea about sculpture, an idea that is both about and for you.

In between two ideas there exists a space that is both positive and negative. In terms of drawing and two dimensional thinking, the space is usually understood in an either – or relationship; one where the space is either a “gap” or “the thing itself.”

But, when we begin to understand our distance in between as multi-dimensional, determined by a variety of cultures, fears, and desires, and that the relationship between or amongst these ideas and people is dependent upon the ideas and people themselves, then we can start to discuss and act upon our relationship to the other; that is, we can begin to see that this middle space, this Third Sculpture, is, in fact, malleable to both an individual and communal will.

It is from this position of empowerment that the moment can change.

Ben Kinmont, 1991

WE ARE THE SOCIAL SCULPTURE!
THIS IS THE THIRD SCULPTURE!
YOU ARE THE THINKING SCULPTURE!

This moment is for you. I am here to explain how you are a thinking sculpture by shaping what is around you and within you.

In experiencing the moment, you mould sensations with preconceptions and hopes. These experiences become the memories upon which your future ideas are built and thus provide both a context and beginning for your actions. Even now, as you read this text and hear the activity around you, you determine the situation as an individual participant who is part of a larger whole. You sculpt your surroundings. In this way, you create violence, fear, understanding, love, and compassion.

You are the Thinking Sculpture.

Ben Kinmont, 1992

in us, that's fine also. If we become something else in the process, that's fine, but we need to find that thing that we're interested in. We need to find that thing that we're after, and my hope is that this thing which we're after, this content in the work, is not something that's going to create further argument for alienation or disconnection. My hope is that it will bring people together, create new possibilities for things not yet understood, even if it takes us out of an art practice. This position has stayed with me my whole life.

When I started looking further into Beuys' idea of social sculpture and reading interviews with him, I realized how similar his ideas were to the Jamesian idea of the cognitive process, and how well social sculpture worked with pragmatism and empiricism. At the same time, I was thinking about spaces in between. Partly due to my dissatisfaction with Wittgenstein and Derrida, and their arguments towards the impossibility of language, I began to think that perhaps it was this space in between that was making it all possible.

So I'd already had this idea of this space, and I realized that instead of calling it a void, which is such a pejorative word, I would call it sculpture. The great thing about the term Third Sculpture is that it references syntax, the idea of the first and the second, and the notion that between two points there's always a space. Then as soon as that space is identified it becomes another point, thus creating additional spaces in between.

In American studies, we are constantly exploring issues around dominant culture and subculture. Talking about minority studies, women's studies, and marginalized groups. So this notion of there being a space between two cultures, between two ideas, between two different power structures, already existed for me. The notion that there could be a space



that exists, and therefore becomes a point or a sculpture, and that thus creates additional points. References to other points and spaces in between those points.

Ultimately Third Sculpture becomes a type of verb, because the moment you are identifying it and recognizing it, it creates other spaces in between. This also worked very well with the idea of questions and question-based practices. That was how I created my syntax. Now I suddenly felt OK; I've got my world in which I can operate and I can understand what I'm doing. Now I'm going to start doing projects within this syntax.

MM: Do you feel that the concept of the Third Sculpture still plays out in your work?

BK: It's a little more tucked away in the back now, but I absolutely couldn't be doing what I'm doing now if I hadn't done it. It's very foundational for me. If you want to build a structure, you can't build it if you haven't got the tool and the Third Sculpture was the tool that allowed me to build. The other parts of that structure were my publishing activities and the curatorial activities that I do. All of these things were the tools that allowed me to put together this structure. The great thing about a tool is that it can be shared, you can hand it off to somebody. Equally, a structure is something that can be inhabited by others.

MM: Your regard for structure makes me think about your use of archives. *I am for you* was the first project that you really began to utilize archive as form inside of your practice. Can you talk a little bit about how you came to use archives in your projects?

BK: It really came from realizing that with the *I am for you* project there was no single video, photograph, sound documentation, contract, flyer, or description that was the piece. There was no singular piece. I worked with 11,750 people over a four-year period. It was an ambitious project for me. I didn't start out saying, "This is what we're going to do." But that's what it became.

The archive was like a mnemonic device to help me remember what had happened. Also, to fuck with the hierarchy that we usually maintain in regards to the object; that the handmade object is of greater importance in the hierarchy than the photograph of it, than the description of it. When doing a project like this, things that were super important to me at the beginning became less important years later. Things would change and I would forget how things would happen. The archive helped me to know and understand what I had done.

Also, I realized right away that the meaning of the project was changing. I thought, well, this is a nice container in which to map that change for me and what it meant to other people. Whether it be people who had participated in the project or others writing about it later on.

It was also coming out of my dissatisfaction, let's say, with Christo, that there was no singular place where I could go to see how he wrote that letter to the California Coastal Commission for *Running Fence*. Did he get paid anything by anybody? All of those parts that with project work you are constantly working on. Where are you locating the artwork? What is it that's making it an artwork? Is it located in the conversations with the participants? Is it located in the beautiful drawings that are made later? Is it located in the photographs that you take of the event? Is it located in the



square meter of fabric that was used for *Running Fence?* Where is it located, in fact? The archive was a way to both think about this issue as an artist producing work, but also to make it transparent for others. I would say the *I am for you* project was important for me because that was the project in which I was figuring out how to archive for the first time. Before that, I had done stuff with documentation but I hadn't made an archive out of it.

MM: When I think about archives, I think about accessibility. In my head, archives are for the public and collections are private.

BK: I totally agree with you about that difference between archives and collections. For me, even if it's not spelled out so clearly in dictionary form, that's how they're used. There's an assumption of public usefulness to an archive and its use value for research. I also like the idea that we could think of a sculpture as an archive object. That an object could be read. For example, when you look at an antiquarian book it's not just the text. You're also reading it as an object. I think that's a nice context for archives. It's important to move performance and sculpture towards that.

When I started working with archives, I was also spending time doing research, working with librarians and selling antiquarian material. I was being trained in the history of the book and how to use bibliographies. To this day, I spend much of my professional time with such material, and it naturally influences my understanding of the printed object.

MM: One thing I really appreciate about your work is the generosity you extend to people by letting them reactivate

some of your projects without your permission. I've had conversations with Harrell Fletcher about how often in music you have bands that just cover other bands' songs. When a good idea is a good idea, it's solid. Why are we so unwilling to do somebody else's work, but in our own way?

BK: In one of the framed broadsides here in the shop is a text entitled *Passing on*. In it I draw a connection between the history of artists' instruction pieces, musical compositions, and recipes. I argue that they should be viewed together and that, in a way, such work results in a decentralization of the singular author. It kind of puts us, maybe gets us a little bit closer to the transmission of the idea behind the work, or the recipe, or the musical piece. When the culinary historians talk about historical recipes it's understood that each time the recipe is being recreated, it's a different thing. I mean, we don't know when the Romans call for cinnamon in a recipe, how powdered was the cinnamon? Or when we hear that the bird in seventeenth-century France was cooked until it smelled like it was done, how long was that? What did it actually taste like?

MM: Which animal got to the back pasture that year and changed the flavor of the onions?

BK: Exactly. In music, we're familiar with the difference between hearing it on modern versus original instruments. But even then, the tuning, the bow that was used on that string instrument—all of this changes the sound. Then it's funny that in the contemporary art world there's such an attachment to the notion of the singular author. The notion of intellectual copyright, the notion of trying to control how real a piece is.

It has to do with ideas of financial viability and such, but at the same time, for some work it's antithetical.

My attitude is to alter the form and distribution in a way that is not antithetical to the work. So with the issue of reactivation and the archives, because I have the collector's gene in me, I like thoroughness. I like everything being all together. I have no problem with ownership of things, and so the archive is a place where a collector can participate in the project through an act of patronage and ownership. So this way the collector can have a relationship to supporting an activity, which is this type of archiving, this type of project work. The collector can satisfy the desire to build a collection that he or she identifies with, but it's also the role of caretaker because this is an archive that people can access, that will pass on to another eventually. This is an acquisition of a sculpture in which the collector is more like a librarian than a consumer of a luxury object.

MM: The idea that you just talked about is touched on a little bit in *Our contract.*

BK: Exactly. In a weird way it's a very dynamic social contract that the collector enters into. When I did *Promise Relations; or, thoughts on a few artists contracts* it simply arose out of my doing research about artists working on different ideas of contracts. I was trying to figure out how can I see to the future of my archives in a responsible fashion, but without seeming as though I was trying to be an asshole to the institutions or to the collectors. Although parts of my practice fall into institutional critique, it occurs more inadvertently or secondarily. I'm not specifically trying to weaken or critique the basis of the power structure. It's more like going along the lines of, let's say in this case, a collector. You've got this desire to be thorough, you've got this desire to own, you've got this desire to identify yourself and define who you are by this collection. I'm totally down with that, that's fine, but let's think about it more creatively. If you've got this desire and this is what's happening in current contemporary art practices, let's try and see if these impulses can work together somehow.

The collector plays a very important role in cultural production. They are the ones who have the assets, the resources to acquire things or support the institutions to acquire. Through that act of acquisition, they're making that object available to the public, but in a place where conservation and preservation is possible. So we all play a role. Whether we are a dealer, an artist, a curator, a critic, everyone plays a role.

To me the purchase of an archive is an opportunity to look at the way the act of acquisition can be seen as an act of patronage, to support and help the continuation of a certain type of practice. The *Our contract* text defines that relationship and the way that these archives function as objects, the way they can be owned and how they continually change as objects.

MM: It's dynamic.

BK: Exactly. That was one of the things that was significant to me about the MoMA acquisition of the Antinomian Press archive. It was the first time they had acquired something for their collection that would be added to over time.

MM: But it's in the Museum's collection, not in the library, which is very significant.

# APPENDIX

## Our Contract;
or, some thoughts on archive ownership and exhibition.

I have written the following sentences in an effort to clarify how I view the archive as a work of art to be collected, maintained, exhibited, and used by others.

Like the projects themselves, the archives have no single moment or object that is the archive.

The archive is, instead, an accumulation of materials and traces.

It is a map of the project with a beginning and an open end.

It is a collection of documentation that is a context for watercolors, drawings, and sculpture as well as contracts, bills, notes, correspondence, and receipts.

It is an invitation for future interaction.

It is a system that emphasizes custodianship of a given idea or work and as such, it supports the collector's desire to be involved in something he or she finds interesting.

It is a means for a collector or institution to encourage another's practice through an act of patronage.

It is a way to make transparent the project's formulation and to show who was involved.

It is a form through which to observe a project in both its profound and boring aspects.

It is a place in which to bring things together without heirarchy.

It is an opportunity to understand what has happened.

With these thoughts in mind, I would like to point out the following: after ownership, material can be added to the archive to continue mapping the project's use and meaning. If such addition occurs, the new objects will be described and included in the archive's inventory list and numbered accordingly (see the footnote below). If the owner sells the archive to another individual or institution, the owner must notify the artist's representative and when such a change of ownership occurs, this text will accompany the archive and be brought to the new collector's attention. It should also be noted that the archive can never be broken up to sell to individual items.

---

Each item in the archives is assigned a number that follows a specific system. For example in the *Exchange* archive, there is a document numbered 11.95.08.55. This number means that that particular document is from the 11th project to have an archive; the project was begun in 1995; this particular item was added in 2008; and it is the 55th object in the archive. The purpose of this cataloging system is to give an individual item a relation to the larger whole as well as make it possible for a collector or registrar to identify a particular item.

BK: Yes. And like you said, I'm often talking about sculpture, and I view these archives in connection to sculpture, so it's important to me that they can be seen next to sculpture and in exhibition spaces.

MM: Can you talk about the beginnings of Antinomian Press?

BK: The beginning of the Press was connected to leaving my galleries. I had starting writing these project descriptions and making inventory lists of the project archives, and publishing them as Antinomian Press publications. I realized that this was a more efficient system than working with a gallery. So they kind of replaced the gallery.

Then I started mailing them to friends who were writers and artists. People who I felt were interested in this kind of work in their own practice. I wanted to communicate with them and to hear what they thought about it. It was a means of being public about what I was doing that was connected to the development of the ideas themselves. So it wasn't like, "oh, I finished something, let's show it and sell it," which is the gallery. It was more, "I'm working on this idea, this is what I've done so far, what do you think?" I had remembered reading about Leibnitz, who would work on a math problem and then make manuscript copies and send these to other mathematicians. This was how they would communicate about a given math problem that they were all working on.

So it was just this idea of defining a practice clearly, and then knowing what you need to continue to go on—not financially, just emotionally—to find the energy to go on. For myself, I realized I only really needed about six people to care about what I'm doing, but that they need to be people that I care about also.



MM: Do you remember who some of those original people were that you were sending stuff to?

BK: Some of them were artists. Some of them were people that kind of became more established. It was just coincidental that this happened. Christophe Cherix was one of them. He was just a young curator in Geneva at the time and now he's at MoMA. And one of them was Nicolas Bourriaud. He was an awkward young writer from France who had moved to New York, but he wasn't what we think of now. He may have just published his essay, but not the book. It was before his *Traffic* show in Bordeaux. Then there was Carlos Basualdo, who was a poet and art writer. He is now the senior curator of contemporary art for the Philadelphia Museum. He is from Argentina and was very important for bringing attention to Central and South American art during the '90s in New York. Then there were people like Paula Hayes, Joseph Grigely, and other artist friends and family.

MM: It's really interesting to think about how your projects were shaping them and their ideas and projects were helping shape you.

BK: We were all trying to figure it out. So Nicolas came up with Relational Aesthetics. Paula was merging her gardening practice and art practice. Joseph was working on conversation. I came up with the Third Sculpture. We were all coming up with our own ideas on how to talk about what we were doing at the time.

The other thing behind the Antinomian Press that was important to me is that the Antinomians were extremist Protestants who were accused of being anarchists because

Antinomian Press.

Needed and unhappy with representation, I began to publish project descriptions. Then, as an agency to support project work, I began to publish work by and about others.

Begun 1995. Project on-going.

they believed that they could act on their own without needing the ecclesiastical government. That idea of self-empowerment, and then publishing those ideas, was a reference to me that was important. To take my action as a young artist in New York and put it in a historical context that went back hundreds of years, as opposed to just discussing things like post-war art or just what was in front of us. So I wanted to view my creation of ephemera, my publishing on the street, handing things out on the street, in a context of these guys who were doing this kind of stuff in the seventeenth century. That was important to me as a form of empowerment as an artist, and to say we don't need the curators, we don't need the galleries, we don't need the museums. We can do this on our own. We can write history, make connections, and in so doing, redirect our attention to something more urgent.

MM: I'm sure that the maintenance work for the Press is different than the maintenance work for an archive.

BK: The Press is a way to draw connections between various actions and activities that I do, from my teaching, to being on the street, to publishing things about the rare book world. It's a form, a tool. When I come in to do a project, it's one of the things that I can do. So I have an idea, do I want to do this as something with the Press? Do I want to do this as an action on the street? Do I want to do this as a curated thing for a museum? All these possibilities come into play. The great thing about the Press is that it's another means of distribution. The publications can be for free or they can be sold.

MM: In the book publishing world, do people ever recognize the historical connection of some of the things you are doing?



BK: I love it when the people from the rare book world can make the connection, but to be quite honest, the rare book world doesn't have much interest in contemporary art. The art world has more of an interest in the rare book world than the other way around. Occasionally people will make the connection and be really interested in it, but for the first ten years nobody in the rare book world even knew I was an artist, let alone that my business was an art project. According to the rare book world, I am a dealer in antiquarian books in gastronomy in the United States. That's who Ben Kinmont is. When they find out I'm involved with art, they're like, "Oh, so you make paintings on the weekend?" If they want to know, I will explain it to them. But then it's like I'm coming out of the closet as an artist to the rare book world and they are vaguely embarrassed. Part of the significance of my shop here, today, is that I've got my studio on one side with all my archives, and I've got my bookselling business here on the other side. This is the most public connection I've ever made between my two practices, so it's an interesting moment for me.

MM: What made you decide to open the storefront?

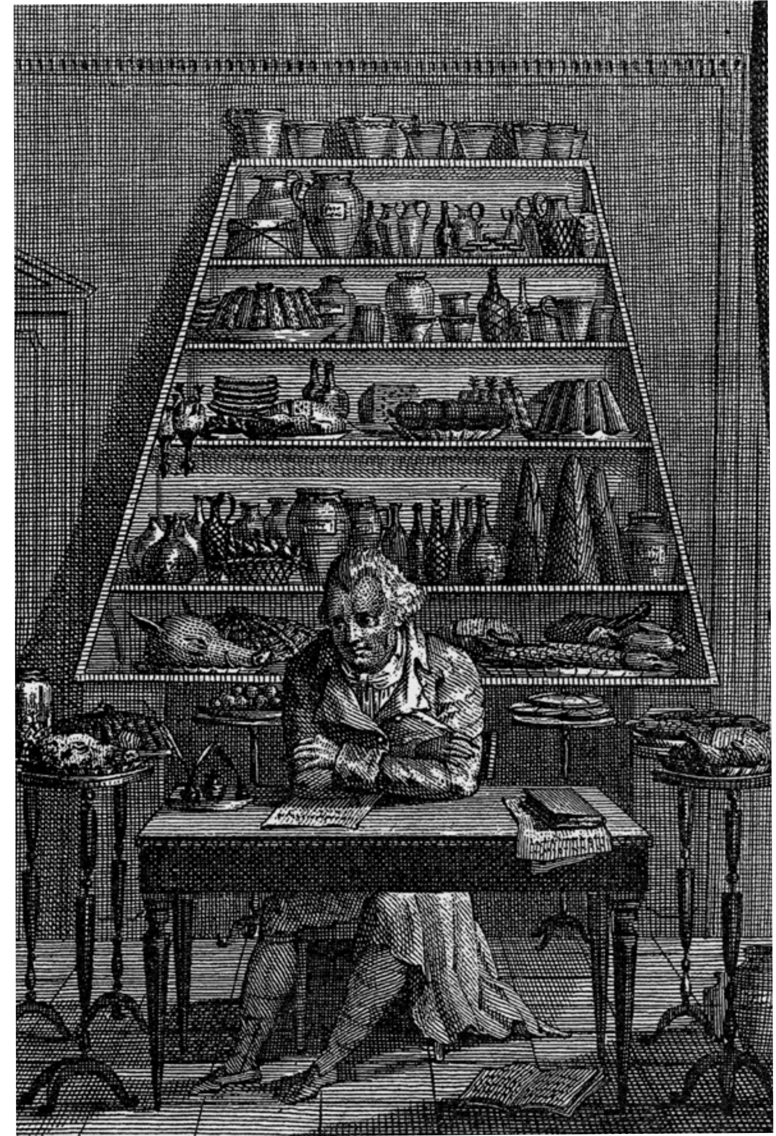
BK: We had just sold our house and I needed a place to run the bookshop. Also, it was because I'm always pissing and moaning about the digitization of text, and about how the public does not realize that when reading a text, it is also about reading the object. But if I'm complaining about all this and yet having a private bookshop that is just in my home, then what am I really doing to combat the problem? I felt like I needed to put my money where my mouth is, and have a public shop where people can come in and handle and see what

an eighteenth-century binding looks like or touch a fifteenth-century vellum manuscript. Do my part to make the history of books and print more public. Kind of taking a stand culturally, even though it is the total opposite direction of where my colleagues are going. They are all closing their doors to the public.

MM: It is really nice to walk in here, pick things up and see how the books relate to the broadsheets hanging on the wall. While looking around I noticed one of your bookseller cards sitting on the table. Can you tell me about the image on the back of it?

BK: That is a guy named Grimod de la Reynière. He had originally been a theater critic in the eighteenth century and had fallen in love with a star of the stage who then spurned him. On top of everything, he was born with a disability and had wooden hands. After the actress blew him off, he said forget the theater, I will no longer write about it, and instead he became the first food critic in history. He's the first man to ever write restaurant criticism. Here, he is sitting in front of his manuscript, and behind him is this bookcase filled with all the food the restaurateurs have brought to his apartment for him to write about. I always said that if I open a bookshop I want to recreate this bookshelf because it is so important and iconographic. So I calculated what the length of his shin would be in inches, to come up with the dimensions of the shelf, and then recreated it for the bookstore. We don't know if the bookcase ever really existed, or if it was just in the imagination of the engraver. But for me, it represents the birth of our current understanding of food, of criticism and taste.





The Antinomian Press, 15 March 2012
600 copies printed letterpress at
the shop of Patrick Reagh
Sebastopol, California

Sometimes a nicer sculpture
is to be able to provide
a living for your
family



MM: So Ben Kinmont Bookseller is different from Antinomian Press, and Antinomian Press publishes the catalogues for Ben Kinmont Bookseller.

BK: Exactly. So if you read the colophon page of the bookseller catalogue, you'll see the title of the piece, *Sometimes a nicer sculpture is to be able to provide a living for your family*. That was there from the very beginning of the project, but it was years before I ever told anybody in the art world that this art project was going on. In the history of book printing, the colophon page is the place where the printer, who in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was also the publisher, revealed something about who he was. And for the rare book world, they could look at my colophon page and understand what that form meant without getting freaked out about what it said. And from the art world, if they saw that, they would understand what it meant in the art discourse. The colophon page was the momentary link between the two value structures.

MM: When you're in the business of selling books are you always aware that it's an artwork?

BK: It comes and goes. Just like with the dishwashing project. Why are we washing so many dishes? It's a fucking boring project. I gotta wash more dishes now? It comes and goes for me and that's also interesting. Where the meaningfulness is located in the project.

MM: Where do you locate the art in some of these projects? Or is it even important?

BK: I think it is important if we're going to call ourselves artists. We're justifiably asked that question, and we should have an ability to answer. I think of art as basically being an awareness of a creation of meaning. Maybe, even more specifically, an experiential awareness of the creation of meaning. So the reason why things are called art in museums is because the museum creates an environment in which we are more observant of the creation of meaning, and we're more likely to have an experience of it. This is why when something which is hackneyed and overly utilized in media, like when Monet paintings become wallpaper or something, why it can be thought of as not being art anymore. Because there's no real experience of the creation of meaning. It is simply a given, a background noise.

I think that what happens with project art is that the experience of it is just more likely to be outside of the institutional space and connected to other things that are already going on in life. That's when it's at its best. When it's opening up how we can see things and understand things in our life.

MM: As I mentioned earlier, I work as a freelance photographer. The income from this provides the majority of what is needed to support my family. This type of work is not exactly what I am passionate about, but I find it very interesting most of the time and am constantly trying to hold on to what is good. Because of this, I really connect with your project *Sometimes a nicer sculpture is to provide a living for your family.* Can you tell me how you came to start this project?

BK: The initial thought for that project came out of my first project on the street, *I am for you*. This notion, this feeling that one of the most fundamental things in life is how do we



survive? How do we support ourselves? I had been interested in it for a while and had already done the show *Materialization of life into alternative economies.* So there's this issue of looking at different economic structures, looking at how one can sustain oneself in a practice. How important that ability or inability to sustain oneself is to the practice itself. But more than that, in the way that the *Waffles for an opening* piece was about trust as sculpture, this was about just the act of supporting oneself as a sculpture. That it could be thought of as a sculpture appealed to me.

So that's the main issue and idea behind the piece. But while doing research for the *Materialization of Life* show, I realized that most artists, when dealing with this idea of an alternative economic structure, do it on a very symbolic level. They get as far as doing the business card or issuing shares or creating some kind of ephemera related to this alternate economy. But then after a year it's done, and it's not really viable in our world or in our culture outside of the luxury market. So, Marcel Duchamp issues shares, but that's not on the same level as the New York Stock Exchange.

That's why I refused to let the art world know about the project until it had existed for at least four years and really was the means by which I was providing my share of the contribution to my family. So that was part of it. But on the other side it had something to do with my American studies background. One of the big premises behind American studies is changing the canon, so that when we study American history we also study social history. We study class relations and workers' conditions. We study minority groups, we study all these things which result in a decentralization of the canon of history. Oftentimes that involves looking at material culture, and oftentimes that includes looking at the history of private lives.

Sometimes a nicer sculpture is to be able to provide a living for your family.

I have started an antiquarian bookselling business to help support my family. The artwork is not the business itself, but the contribution to our cost of living. Because the business specializes in books about food and wine before 1840, it also provides a broader context in which to see domestic activity as meaningful. So far it has been successful.

Begun 1998. New York City. Books sold concern food, wine, domestic economy, and nutrition. Project on-going. In the collection of the artist.

The Materialization of life into alternative economies.

A curated project with people from the art world and showing different notions of economy and distribution: Paula Hayes/Wild Friends for collaborative economy, Joseph Grigely for information economy, On Kawara for gift economy, Gordon Matta-Clark for business economy, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles for maintenance economy. My reasons were to offer another reading of Lippard's idea of conceptual art as a dematerialization of the art object and, instead, suggest that perhaps, for some, it was actually not so much about the art object but about life, about a materialization of life.

1996. Printed Matter Bookstore, New York City. Paula gave away seed packets entitled "cats dig grass;" Carol Goodden (Gordon's collaborator) provided recipes from the restaurant Food, which we gave away photocopies of; and Mierle gave away copies of her *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* from 1969. In the collection of the artist. Exhibition can be repeated.

That's very much also an impetus behind the subject of the bookshop, which is looking at women in domestic economy, looking at the history of what people ate and rural economy. Looking at these things that were traditionally not covered in the history of kings and wars. Equally, in the art world, this was parallel to my interest in the work of people like Mierle Laderman Ukeles doing maintenance art, and the meaningfulness in our home and whether or not that can or cannot exist within the art discourse. So there's also a connection between the subject of the bookshop and what I had been doing in my practice as an artist. It has two parts: one is the idea of supporting one's self as an artwork, and the other is the subject of the shop itself.

MM: Can you tell me more about *Materialization of life into alternative economies*?

BK: That project had to do with looking at Lucy Lippard's book [*Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*] and thinking about that dematerialization. My dad was an artist working during the time her book covers, and I knew from talking with him that some of the artists Lippard included had thought that they were working outside of art, and that to see their work placed into a history book really took their breath away.

In Mierle Laderman Ukeles' project *Manifesto For Maintenance Art 1969!*, there is this image of her washing what I thought was a shower curtain, but it's not. It turns out in the '60s she had been making inflatable sculptures. The importance of these inflatable sculptures was that they would occupy space but then could be collapsed. She talked to me about how a lot of people have forgotten that during that time period, for some, materialization and objectness were parallel or connected to American imperialism in Vietnam. To dematerialize was also a political statement. Interestingly, Lippard doesn't really talk about that very much in the book.

But back to the curated show. I was realizing that maybe instead of focusing on the art object, we could talk about this as a materialization of life. I was then realizing that the work that was interesting to me could also be thought of as existing within an economy that was an alternative to the capitalist gallery system. And we could break down and introduce these six or seven artists as existing within a different economic structure.

MM: When working in the role of a curator, do you see it as a kind of redirection?

BK: Usually when I have curated or published things about other artists, it's been because I felt like it needed to be discussed and I wasn't hearing it. I would say that the ethics text is included in that as well.

When I arrive to an idea, it's important to me to try and know who else has worked on this idea, and to know the history, and what mistakes others made or didn't make. To be informed. When I was doing stuff that involved the gift economy or being out on the street, or maintenance stuff in New York, I wanted to feel like there were others who had done this. I wanted a sense of community if you will, and this community actually makes it easier to see and understand what you are doing.

MM: The documentation of your projects takes various forms. Some projects have images and others have none

at all. How do you think about documentation in relation to the archives?

BK: If it's going into the archive, it needs to be relevant to the archive and relevant to the subject. What does it mean? When does an archive begin? Issues of what's printed, what's published, what makes it into the archive? A lot of it is just based on material issues like, what can I afford? What are the opportunities for it to be done? For it to be made into something else, and is it something that adds to the project that wouldn't be there otherwise? That it's needed. I try to be as natural and unselfconscious about it as I can.

Project descriptions are another form of documentation. In the rare book world, some people are serious enough to collect the bibliographies of rare books that talk about the subjects they're interested in. Of those people who collect bibliographies, a smaller group within that group collect antiquarian bibliographies and are interested in the history of writing bibliographies. Within those people there's a tinier group, that's like the total crème de la crème of the bibliography guys, and they collect what are called *Bibliotheca Chimaerica.* These are library catalogues for imaginary libraries. So it's a catalogue that's been written for a library that doesn't exist, listing books which don't exist.

MM: Like a dream list of some librarian?

BK: More than that. It's not a *desiderata,* which is a list of books you want. This is a list of books that don't exist. Often times they're written as a form of political or social commentary. The first person who thought to do it is François Rabelais in the sixteenth century and it comes all the way



up to the present. I have two books in my collection of mid-seventeenth-century English radical literature that are the second and third such catalogues ever done in the English language. They are these things called *Bibliotheca Parliamenti.* During the English Civil War someone wrote a list of book titles commenting upon the events of the English Civil War. This idea of an imaginary library catalogue is something that has always fascinated me.

So I did this project once with my CCA students. When they arrived at class I said, "We're going to talk about issues around veracity and the fictional, non-fictional nature of project descriptions. What we're going to do today is you're each going to write a project description for an important piece or project in the history of conceptual art that never actually existed. But you're not going to write it revealing that it never existed. You're going to pretend that it existed. You can use real people, or not, real events or not, but you're going to write this description. We are then going to accumulate these together as an Antinomian Press publication, and I'm going to write an introduction in such a way that if you didn't know that they're fake, you wouldn't know while reading it." We put it together and it's called *Exhibitio Chimaerica.*

It was effective enough that Lucy Lippard wrote me a card saying that she hadn't realized that one of the artists had done such a piece during the '60s. I mean it really worked. Generally, I want the students to write truthfully about what they do; but I also wanted to show them how easy it is to make things up, and that no matter what we tell in a narrative about what we've done, it's somewhat fictional because we're telling a story. It's not the actual event.

That issue of veracity and of narrative also exists in the archives, because we're choosing what goes in and

what doesn't go in. I'm aware of that every time I reinstall or re-present an archive.

MM: Deciding what to include or exclude in project statements is sometimes challenging. I tend to start with less and rewrite over and over until I feel satisfied. Then, I continue to revise as the work changes over time. How do you approach your project descriptions?

BK: When I started to write them and put them together, I looked at Chris Burden, who had done a photocopy book during the late '70s of his project descriptions. I had seen that and been impressed. That influenced me, and I realized that I wanted my project descriptions to be succinct. I wanted them to be very personal and to have the nugget of information of why I had done that project. So, there's what I call the more poetic writing and then the general style with the facts: when, where, how many, who—that kind of thing. So there would be this kind of balance. I remember realizing, at around 1996 or so, that I wanted these project descriptions to function in the same way that an art piece or a performance work might have one particular photograph that was iconographic for that piece. I wanted these descriptions to become iconographic to the projects.

Before *Prospectus* was published it was like, "OK, here's the five project descriptions. You have all you need to know. If you have more questions just call me." That was opposed to sending slides or digital files. All of that traditional stuff doesn't do the project anywhere near justice because there is no one moment or event or object which is the piece. The project description could cover that. So that was why they became as important as they became.



MM: When I found *Towards a definition of project art* it was really helpful. A way of pointing at things. How did you come to the idea of using the term project art?

BK: That particular text was published in 2004, but we started talking about project art, we meaning artists and friends in New York, certainly in the mid-'90s, if not the early '90s. Parasite, which was a group of us interested in project art, was established around 1996 or '97, but talking about a thing as a project was certainly going on in the early '90s. Where it came from I don't really know. It was a way of referencing elements of what we were doing that went beyond one single object. I think that's why it was important for me. Writing the definition for project art and later about ethical issues partly arose because the term was being used more and more in common conversation within the art world and yet no one had really been willing to go to bat with a definition and put it in writing. I thought, especially through my teaching, it was needed. So I thought, let's try and make an effort here, and then people can say, "OK, this works," or "this is bullshit," and rewrite it. But it was important to at least take a position. It also enabled me to do what I really wanted to do, which was to then write about the ethics and ethical issues around project art practices. But first, if we were going to use the term project art, we needed to say what project art was.

MM: Tell me about the *Ethical considerations in project art* text that you wrote as part of the class at CCA in 2004.

BK: It arose out of my art practicum class that I taught as part of CCA's concentration in social practice. The text itself has gone through four different versions. You

## TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF PROJECT ART

Project art considers value structures outside of the art historical discourse. Project art involves the public and the artist in a dialogue that primarily occurs outside of the art world. Project art often involves artist and non-artist collaborations. Project art often requires research into the space in which the project is occurring. In project art the community influences the content and structure of the project as the project takes place in the community. Project art changes in response to particular environments and situations. Project art usually occurs on the street, on the move, or in your home and only rarely in exhibition spaces. Project art is often defined by its duration and interaction with others and is not limited by physical dimensions. Project art is often ephemeral or transitory. Project art often encompasses activities that are normally considered tangential to or in the service of the art-making process (e.g. the phone call, the letter, the research, the conversation, & the failed attempt). Project art does not set out to create an art object to be sold and resold. Project Art uses social structures to achieve relationships that are often unattainable in other art mediums.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PROJECT ART

Project art should carefully consider the context in which the project is occurring. When participants are involved in a project the participants' needs should also be considered. Projects should not harm participants physically or mentally. Projects should minimize personal risks and hazards to collaborators, the public, and the environment. The artist's intent and actions in a project should not contradict the known will of the participants. Information given to participants should be accurate. Participants should be treated with dignity and artists should try to express appreciation for the participation and contribution of the participants. Projects should respect confidentiality and privacy where applicable. When funds are changing hands in the project, establish a bookkeeping strategy ahead of time, open or closed, with clearly defined guidelines for allocation of funds and profits generated. Be clear with participants as to what can and cannot be provided as part of a project. Explain to participants how their material and contributions might be used afterwards (e.g. in a publication, archive, exhibition, or website) and obtain consent where necessary. When the abovementioned material is being used, make an effort to help the participant understand how their contribution will be viewed, understood, and used. When projects involve production and authorship, be clear with yourself and the participants about where the authorship lies. Honor commitments made through a project and don't make commitments that can't be fulfilled. When conducting a project that is engaged with a participant, whether long or short term, think ahead to how to end the project. Try to be aware of the long-term consequences of the project, if any. In cases of dispute, attempt to resolve the problem through dialogue before resorting to legal action. Do not abuse your authority as artist of the project.

have to realize, in the beginning, those of us that were doing project work had to work really hard to justify doing it. There weren't programs in social practice at that time. We had to define what it was and figure it out. When it's not a known thing that you're doing, you face situations where you have to use your judgment. That issue of using your judgment, and thinking about broader, more open social issues was easier in the beginning than later when it became almost like an *-ism*. Once it became something understood *a priori*, project art both gained and lost something.

Most of us in Parasite came to calling ourselves project artists because we had lack of a better term. And what was clear in Parasite was that we all thought about it differently. We all had different *modus operandi* by which to get involved in making project work to support ourselves, to maintain it. We were fiercely independent; and it was hard for us to do anything as a group because we had already been doing it for a long time and each of us had our idea of what that meant.

At CCA, as we moved towards coming up with a name of the program, Social Practice Workshop, and as students were coming in, it was clear that socially engaged work was becoming trendy. A lot of the students didn't have the judgment to look carefully at the ethical issues they were getting themselves involved in. It's fine that you're going to do an artwork with homeless people, but what does that mean on an ethical basis and in a broader social context? When a social worker is doing it, it's understood why they're there and they are probably even supported by some public tax money. It's understood that it's for the common good and there's a protocol and oversight. But when you go out there as an artist, there's nothing. We needed to have a discussion about this.



I was asked by the head of the MFA program to work with the students around this. They knew it was an issue of mine that I cared a lot about and they said, "we're going to set you up to teach the first semester seminar course in social practice, and we would like it if you would also cover ethics." I said, "OK great, I'd love to. I think it's needed." I broke the students into groups and assigned five different historical projects that I thought had ethical dilemmas. They all did research on those groups or artists and then did presentations around them. It was from those discussions that everyone made notes, and then at the end of the year we drew all the notes together and wrote the ethics text.

In the document, the term ethical considerations is used because it's like, "here are some things to consider if you're doing this. Not all of these are going to apply, but they might help you work through some issues."

MM: In social work we have a code of ethics that lays out the conduct that must be adhered to in the profession. While quite strict, I think it is very beneficial and for me served more as a reminder of my responsibilities. One thing I noticed in the different versions of your *Ethical considerations* is that the text changes a bit. In one, they are presented as questions.

BK: Yes. So I did it first with the CCA students and then with students in France. Then again with Laurel George, a cultural anthropologist at NYU who wrote the commentary where she compares it to the Anthropological Fieldwork Guidelines.

Then there's one that we did during *Performa*, where Laurel and I had a workshop with a small group of teachers and students at NYU. They rewrote it again and we presented it within the context of *Performa*. I could not believe how many

artists in the audience got furious with it. They were angered about the idea that they could be told what to do. They were like, "I became an artist so that I could do anything I want, and if that includes fucking with somebody else then it includes fucking with somebody else. You can't tell me what I can and can't do." Much of the problem, I think, was a confusion between morality and ethics, and the fact that many artists would rather not think of the implications of their practice in a larger social context.

After that, I realized that I'd like to rewrite it, but on a purely personal level, just for myself. So I took the text and I rewrote it again, and that's the version you just saw [see frontispiece].

MM: In preparing for our time together I read over your project descriptions and was drawn to *Bed service* because you specifically mention wanting to "avoid Sophie Calle." Why did you want to avoid her?

BK: Sophie Calle did a piece in a hotel where she pretended to work as a maid. She documented a hotel guest's personal life and then made a piece out of it. What I meant by "avoid Sophie Calle" is that I wanted to avoid what I consider to be a modernist definition of the artist who has freedom and license to do whatever he or she wants to, even if it's unethical. *Bed service* was during an art fair where the work was exhibited in the dealer's rooms. That's why I let the dealers know in advance that I would be cleaning the rooms and if they didn't want me to, I didn't have to. Part of the reason I was there was to be trained by the maid staff on how to make a bed and to see if I could actually be more helpful. Not getting in the way. I wanted to see if I could relocate the work to the maintenance of the fair itself. Even though there were real similarities to the Sophie Calle piece it was also the antithesis. With that historical precedent, I was looking to do it and not be Sophie Calle.



MM: Can you tell me about the piece that is going to the *Whitney Biennial*?

BK: It's the *Sshhh* project that started in 2002. It was really in response to the project I did for *Documenta 11*, which was called *Moveable type no Documenta.* In that project I spoke with strangers that I met on the street or in stores. I went to their homes and asked them a series of questions. What was the most meaningful thing in their lives? Could that be understood as art? Should it be understood as art? And what is the difference between that meaningful thing in their life and what they experience in the museum?

Notes were taken in both German and English. The conversation was then summarized by me in both German and in English, then proofread and OK'd by the participant. We then printed, published, and distributed it out on the street all on the same day. One participant, one conversation, one printing, one distribution in one day. There were ten participants in total.

One of the big questions that arose out of that project was what happened to our understanding of the text when it was displaced into the museum? In the *Documenta* museum context, the flyers were printed and then distributed for free as a group show of ten conversations. How was this different from when the words were spoken in someone's home?

What happened with the *Sshhh* project was that I was asked to do a project with CNEAI, the French National Museum of Artists Books and Engraving. They have an

Bed service.

Trying to relocate the artwork to the maintenance of a hotel, being trained by the housekeeping staff, and becoming invisible. Also, avoiding Sophie Calle, and through their intimacies, the process became anonymous, each room seeing if it was possible to actually assist.

Archive begun in 1994. Phoenix Hotel, San Francisco, during the time of an international art fair being held in the Hotel. Of the twenty-one dealers sleeping in their beds eighteen agreed to participate. Each housekeeper received a photograph. Project cannot be repeated. Archive in the collection of the artist.

Moveable type no documenta.

In my backpack I had reams of paper and a portable printer, scanner, and computer. Ten different people agreed to participate. With each person I spent a day, speaking about what was the most meaningful thing in their life; how that meaning was created; could that meaningful thing be understood as art; *should* it be understood as art; and, then, finally, what was the difference between that meaningful thing in their life and what they experienced in the museum. The sequence of the questions was important and even though they were all Kassel residents, only one had ever been to visit Documenta.

I took notes in German and English, transcribed them into a laptop, and then asked each participant to proofread what I'd written. Once corrected, I printed the text with a battery-operated printer and then distributed the flyers in the participant's neighborhood. One full day was devoted to each conversation and its distribution.

Archive begun 2002. Kassel, Germany. Ten people participated, including one middle school teacher who chose to include her 12-year old students. At each participant's location, approximately 200 flyers were distributed. Later, in the museum during the one hundred days of Documenta and using the same equipment and type of paper that we used on the street, we printed and distributed 15,000 sets of the flyers, each representing a group show of ten conversations in Kassel. Project can be repeated. Archive in the collection of the artist.

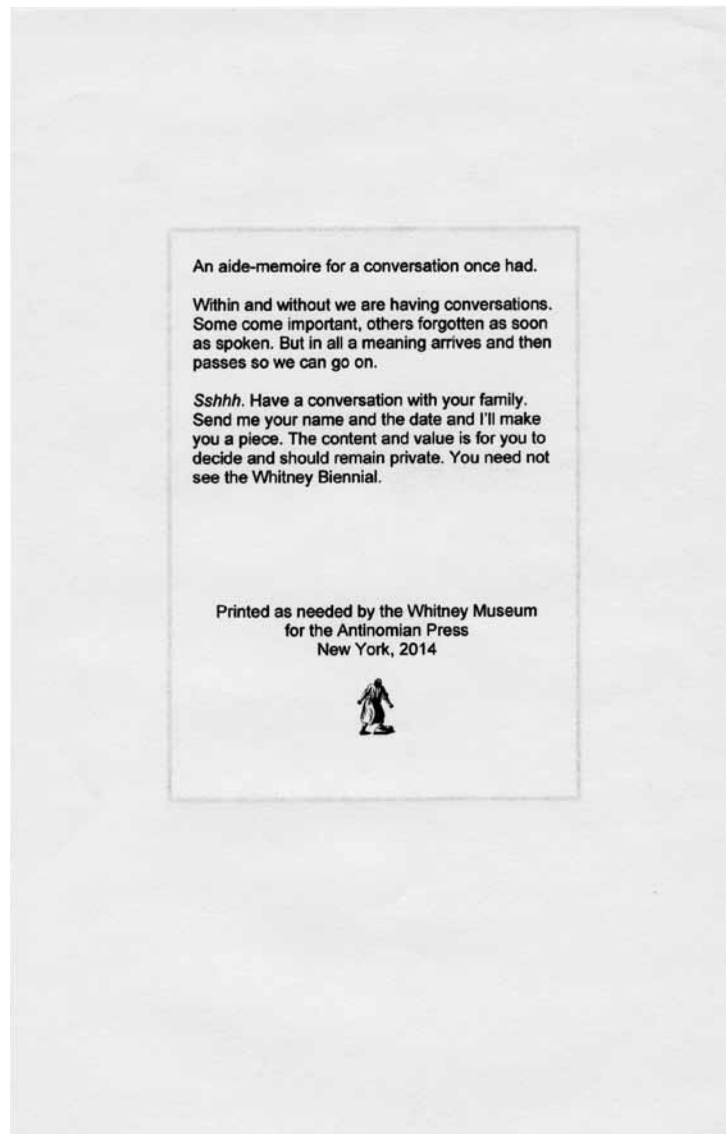
engraving press, and they asked if I would do a suite of engravings. I don't usually do engravings, but I was interested in this idea of meaningfulness being created at home, and its relationship to the art discourse and art institutional space. So I had this idea that I would invite families to participate in a project. I would give each family a presentation about my work so they would understand the context and the history of artists using conversation as sculpture, and I would invite them to have a conversation.

But I asked that they not tell me what the conversation was about. I did, however, ask that they pick the size of the engraving and the color of the ink used. After their conversation they gave me their family name and the conversation date. I then made them the engraving, the impression of which was blind except for their name and date.

The intention was that the engravings are straightforward art objects that can circulate within the art world, but to the art world they are also a closed door. We can know that this family had a conversation on that given day, but we don't know how meaningful the conversation was to them, we don't know what the content was or what happened. However, for the family living with the engraving, they can look at it and remember the conversation. So it is like an *aide memoir* to a conversation that they once had. That idea of an art project or a work that could function successfully from these two different value structures, or two different places, and have a use in two different discourses, was something that was interesting to me.

The *Whitney Biennial* is the first time the *Sshhh* archive has been presented. We are including one engraving, which is being framed, and the archive will be available for people to handle. I also got the Whitney to scan and photograph





An aide-memoire for a conversation once had.

Within and without we are having conversations. Some come important, others forgotten as soon as spoken. But in all a meaning arrives and then passes so we can go on.

*Sshhh*. Have a conversation with your family. Send me your name and the date and I'll make you a piece. The content and value is for you to decide and should remain private. You need not see the Whitney Biennial.

Printed as needed by the Whitney Museum
for the Antinomian Press
New York, 2014

everything in the archive and it will be available for free on the Museum website (http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/2014 Biennial/BenKinmont). If anybody wants to download any part of the archive, they can do that. This is to take advantage of a broader source of access for people who are not physically present. The *Whitney Biennial* gets 150,000 visitors, so we couldn't maintain a photocopy machine in the gallery space, which is what I've done in the past. The website is an experiment of an alternate way to make the archive more available.

MM: What are you working on now besides your project for the *Biennial*?

BK: I'm in the process of negotiating a contract with SFMOMA for the next stage of *On becoming something else.* What we are hoping to do is a series of films that will be interviews with people who have left the art world in pursuit of their art practice, probably from the history of California or the Bay Area. The goal though is to edit the films and have them in a form where they can be used by public high schools. They will come with curriculum that includes assignments, subjects for discussion, and texts by artists and art historians.

The idea is that art history is usually written by and about people who have stayed in the art world. But many people have left the art world for very good reasons. Sometimes that departure not only tells us about who those people are, but it also speaks to the art discourse by letting us know what it can't contain. I think it will be good for high school students who are in such a formative stage of their lives. And I am hoping that the project will be useful to people who are involved in educational policy and arts funding in general.

On becoming something else.

The difficulty lies in oneself, and its relation with the outside. A person can follow an idea, question and develop its course, and even though it will start in one place, it can easily end up somewhere else. But then how do we know it is elsewhere? Is the practice simply an extension of what had happened before, or has it become something else? In some art practices this process of identifying it as something else is necessary in order for the activity to be understood in the new place one finds oneself, perhaps by the people the activity is seeking to address, or assist. But always there is the question of what it has become and the points of reference we use to define it as such.

For this project, I wrote seven paragraphs to describe the work of seven different artists. Each of these artists had pursued an art practice that eventually led them out of the art world and into something else. In some cases it was permanent, in other cases temporary. But it was important to me that the new thing they were doing was an extension of their previous practice, not simply a decision to give up.

Cooking is the act of ingredients becoming something else, something to be eaten and shared. For the current project, I asked various chefs in Paris to write recipes to represent the paragraphs as well as be homage to the artist who made the decision to leave the art world. When speaking with the chefs we discussed the possibilities and impossibilities of recipes and representation as well as the history of its most flamboyant example, the *pièce montée*: sweet and savory edible sculptures created by chefs to represent past events and forms of architecture. Although the *pièce montée* began in the 17th century and continues today, it reached its apogee in the 19th century with the recipes of Antonin Carême and Urbain Dubois.

From the beginning, I had conceived of this project in two forms. In the first iteration, I would organize a private dinner for friends and with one chef only. For the second version, I would work with a museum, involve many different chefs and restaurants, and thereby be able to make the project available to a large number of people.

Maybe we can use these interviews as an opportunity to point out that we are misinterpreting the attrition rate in the arts. It is always assumed that the high rate at which artists leave the art world is a sign that art education isn't worth funding because it's not viable as a profession. But instead, maybe we can see these biographies as examples of the ways in which an arts education has enabled someone to become successful under another title, another name, to become something else in a richer way.

MM: How do you balance all the different things you do?

BK: Part of it is keeping my ambitions for what I see as successful to something that's reachable. I went for many years without a gallery and it was fine. Right now I have one gallery in Paris that I work with. If I continue to only have that one gallery till the end of my days, that's fine. If I have one project a year that I'm working on, that's fine. If my book business sales don't increase any more than they are now, that's fine. Just keeping it in scale and in scope of what's possible. I'd like to have a little bit more time surfing, but I think most surfers would. Maybe that's one thing I need to work on.

*Interview begun 10 January 2014. Sebastopol, CA: Ben Kinmont Bookseller, Woodfour Brewing Company, Joe's Coffee Shop, Kinmont Family Residence. 7 hours 35 minutes together. 3 hours 15 minutes recorded audio.*

Ben in his bookstore and project archives.
Photo by Mark Menjivar

Mark washing Ben's dishes.
Photo by Ben Kinmont

Ben Kinmont is an artist, publisher, and antiquarian bookseller living in Sebastopol, California. His work is concerned with the value structures surrounding an art practice and what happens when that practice is displaced into a non-art space. Since 1988, his work has involved an interest in archiving and blurring the boundaries between artistic production, publishing, and curatorial practices. In the past few years, he has taught courses in the Social Practice Workshop at the California College of Arts as well as organized various workshops with students from the École des Beaux-Arts in France (Angers, Bordeaux, Bourges, and Valence), Cranbrook Academy of Art, and the Rietveld Academy in Holland. His exhibitions include *Air de Paris* (Paris), ICA (London), CNEAI (Chatou), the *25th International Biennial of Graphic Arts* (Ljubljana), Frac Languedoc-Roussillon (Montpellier), *Documenta 11* (Kassel), Les Abattoirs (Toulouse), Centre Pompidou (Paris), and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. A traveling survey of Kinmont's work entitled *Prospectus* toured Amsterdam, Paris, New York, and San Francisco between 2009–2012. Kinmont was included in the *2014 Whitney Biennial*. He is represented by Galerie Air de Paris, Paris.

www.benkinmont.com

Mark Menjivar is an artist and photographer based in San Antonio, Texas. His work explores diverse subjects through photography, stories, and found objects while emphasizing dialogue and collaboration. His work has been shown at venues across the country including the San Antonio Museum of Art, the Houston Center for Photography, Museo Guadalupe, the Wignall Museum of Art, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Baylor University, the Southwest School of Art, and Central Michigan University. Menjivar has a BA in Social Work from Baylor University and an MFA in Art and Social Practice from Portland State University.

www.markmenjivar.com

PSU Art and Social Practice
Reference Points

Edited by Mark Menjivar

Developmental consultation by
Julie Ault

Design by Molly Sherman

Copyedited by Kathryn Osterndorff
and Julie Ault

Published and printed by
Publication Studio
in Portland, Oregon

The Reference Points book series
is generously sponsored by
the Platt Family and Dave and
Erika Cianciulli.

ISBN 978-1-62462-072-0
© Portland State University
Art and Social Practice Program
and the authors

psusocialpractice.org
publicationstudio.biz

This book is part of the Reference Points series published through Portland State University Art and Social Practice MFA Program. The series is an evolving pedagogical framework in which graduate students formulate and research a significant topic or practitioner(s) related to socially engaged art. The series is designed to shift and respond to the concerns of the program's current students and faculty; therefore mode, structure, and content are open-ended.

Notes
**21** Detail of *An Exhibition in your mouth* broadside, Antinomian Press, 2011; **39–47** This text from *I am for you* has been re-typeset; **53** Detail of *An Exhibition in your mouth*, Brooklyn: Antinomian Press, 2011; **69** Ben Kinmont Bookseller card; **71** Colophon page from *Gastronomy, Catalogue 13*, 2012; **84** *Towards a definition of project art*, published in *Flash Art*, November, 2011; **85** *Ethical considerations in project art*, published in *Flash Art*, November, 2011; **95** *Aide memoir* is a catalytic text inviting visitors to the *2014 Whitney Biennial* to participate in *Sshhh*; **97** *Sshhh*, 2002–present, *2014 Whitney Biennial*, fourth floor, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Photo by Sheldan C. Collins.

The project descriptions in this book were scanned from *Prospectus 1988–2010: Forty-two works* by Ben Kinmont (Zürich: JRP|Ringier, 2011).