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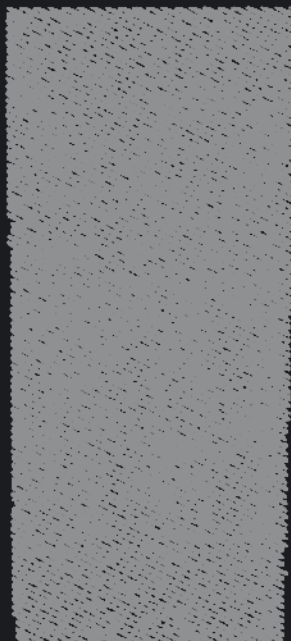
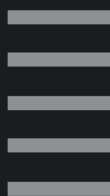
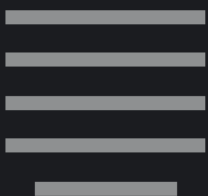
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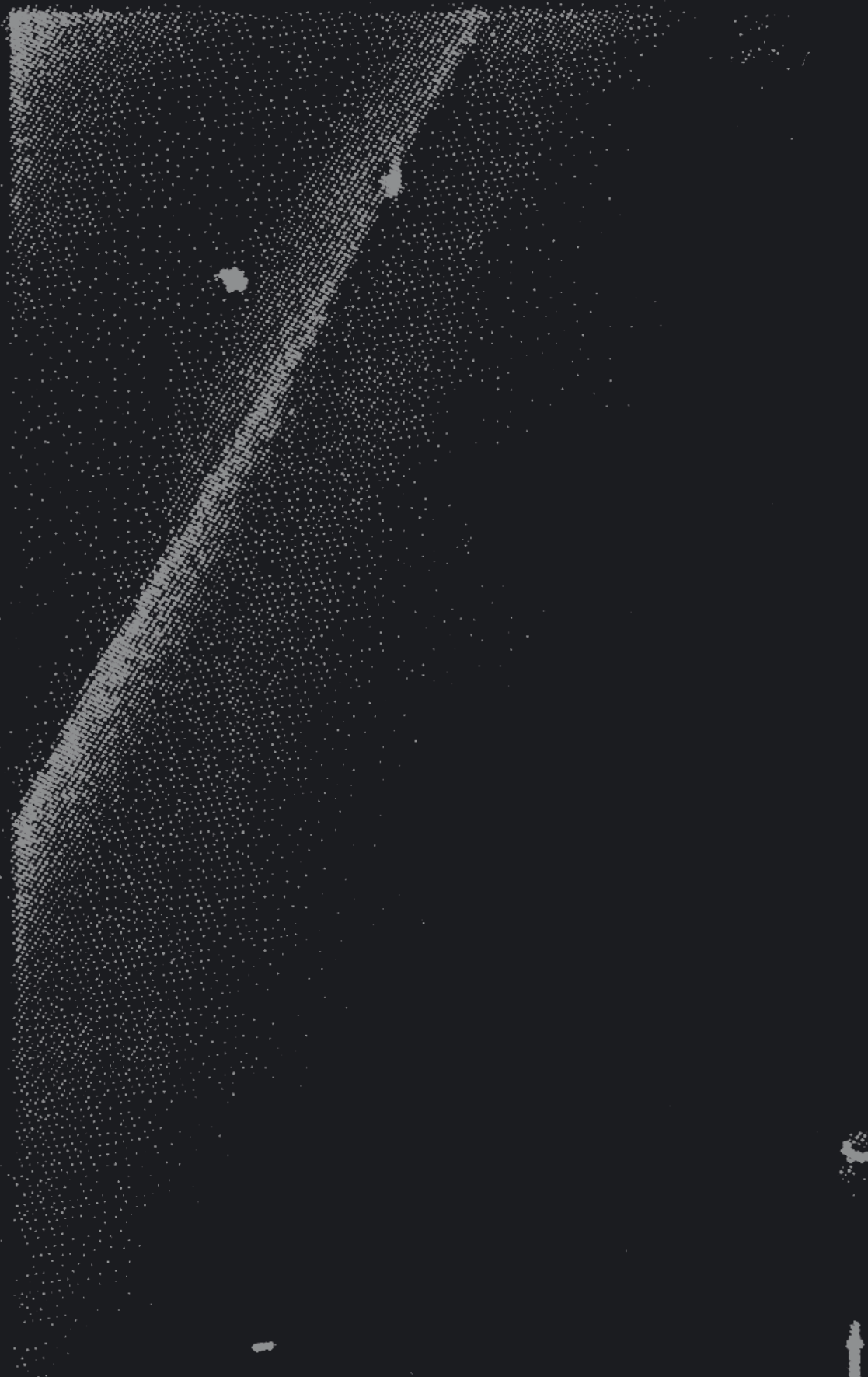
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Re: Invitation to contribute a text to the journal *Blackout*

Dear _____,

We are sitting here at ECAV in our current working place, which is the salle de réunion at the administration. Our fingers are typing this letter to invite you to contribute a text within the *Art Work(ers)* research project.

We are thinking about how closing factories and the use of industrial ruins have affected our ways of working in the arts, and of the promises of creative economies. What narratives have been created to tell stories of art and industrial production as well as of deindustrialisation. Besides looking at historical examples such as EAT, Artist Placement Group, Equipo 57 & Grupo Y, Solidarnos & Ryszard Wasko, or Agricola Cornelia, whose work emerges in between art and (industrial) production modes, we are thinking of perruques (homers) and strategies to “reinterpret” the Taylorist use of machines with Situationist strategies. The question that we have in mind is less “why X has happened” but rather “why the alternatives Y did not take place”.

Two sites have become particularly important during the research: Chippis (site of the former Aluminium factory, today Constellium) and Ivrea (site of the type-writing machine factory Olivetti). How differently two factories have shaped the cities, societies and cultural scenes in which they were situated with their idea of labour.

In our research, we observed the involvement of artists and writers in the production of experimental publishing within industrial projects. Among them, poets such as Leonardo Sinisgalli would start the monthly magazine *Civiltà delle macchine* (1953–79), while art historian Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti initiated *SeleARTE* (1952–65). They addressed the workers, the cultural scene and a wider audience through contributions by Italo Calvino, Nino Franchina, Umberto Eco and Eugenio Carmi among others. All of them workers, each one in their field, but more often in a trans-disciplinary setting. The Olivetti typing machine factory was deeply connected to its publishing house, the Edizioni di Comunità: books such as *La condition ouvrière* by Simone Weil were translated, not only for the sake of patronage or pedagogical emancipation of the workers, but rather to support the reflection on labour and production in social and cultural terms. It is also for these reasons that a wide number of novels, magazines and poems inscribed within the *letteratura industriale* trend, emerged around utopian factory projects in the 1950s and 1960s.

Among the gestures that we have thought of for the *Art Work(ers)* research project, we therefore decided to re-activate these forms of publishing. We have planned two issues of the *Blackout* magazine, and would like to invite you to contribute to the issue zero. Our idea would be to collect in *Blackout* zero writings on artists labour.

Blackout 0: Art Labour will be phrased around the following contents:

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For your contribution, we would like to propose the following conditions:

- The salary is 500 CHF.
- We wish to discuss further, through coffee or a skype, the general context of your contribution.

- We would be glad to contribute to your reflections with materials (texts, images, videos) from our research, if you wish so.
- We would like to receive from you an abstract of 250 words including the main points of your text, and a biography.
- We will discuss with you the timeline for your submission in accordance with our editorial process.

Let us know if you are interested in this collaboration and if you have the time to participate. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Warm wishes,

Petra Köhle, Robert Ireland, Federica Martini
For Art Work(ers)

Two Paradoxes, One Reversal and an Impasse: On Organizing the Labor of Artists

W.A.G.E

For close to ten years, WAGE has been agitating in the contemporary art field around a single demand: that non-profit art institutions pay artists for the work they contract us to do. While this could be perceived as an epic act of durational performance, it might likewise be written off as an inconsequential adjustment to an institutional field in need of total structural reform. It turns out to be neither, because WAGE is not an artwork and any truly inconsequential adjustment would not have taken a decade to make.

The very simple demand to be paid is as much an effort to recalibrate the art institution as it is an effort to recalibrate the labor of artists. Looking back, it has also been an effort to recalibrate the *institution of being an artist* because the call for compensation also called into question what artists do, why we do it, and whom we do it for. Out of these questions have arisen a series of incidental paradoxes, reversals, and impasses that have led us to WAGENCY – a forthcoming initiative by WAGE to organize artists and institutions, along with buyers and sellers of art, together around a shared politics of labor.

WAGE's focus on regulating the payment of artist fees by non-profits was critical to redefining the relation between artists and institutions as being one of labor and not charity, but WAGE emerges from a long tradition of artists organizing more broadly around the issue of remuneration for cultural work in the U.S. that dates back to the 1930s. We see the contemporary fight for artist compensation as being situated within a wider struggle for equity by all those who supply content without payment standards or an effective means to organize.

Today this might casually include anyone who navigates the Internet as a prosumer, and that includes most of its users – evading the simultaneous

consumption and production of media, social and otherwise now itself takes work. But beyond the data-driven participation baked into having a digital presence, a more narrowly defined understanding of a content provider might be anyone who produces that which can be read, watched, or listened to online.

The antiquated distribution mechanisms that used to generate revenue for hard-copy industries like music, publishing and journalism have been laid to waste by the reasonable expectation that we all have a right to free web-based content. But without consumers willing to pay for it, the struggle to re-establish profitable business models continues, and for content that behaves like a public good when it resists or is compromised by monetization, the public charity is looking like an increasingly viable option. Bookstores, newspapers, and magazines seem to be gravitating toward the very model that has so effectively exploited the labor of artists for years. And if the figure of the artist in the context of this model provided the blueprint for the perfectly exploitable creative subject – serving to normalize the expectation of free and underpaid labor – it is now incumbent upon this figure to direct content providers toward the exit.

But first, to understand WAGE's decision to stay focused so myopically on what seems relatively inconsequential given the many levels of structural inequity that characterize the contemporary art field, including and especially white supremacy and the underrepresentation of black people and people of color at all levels of institutional life, including and especially in exhibitions, we have to rewind back to 1969 and the formation of The Art Workers Coalition.

That's what WAGE did when it came together in 2008 by looking at the demands made by an open, multiracial coalition of artists, filmmakers, and writers over a period of three short years, 1969–1971. The Art Workers Coalition targeted museums with an insistence on their reclamation as something like a form of representative democracy, accountable to that era's civil rights, anti-war, and women's movements asserted through what we might now consider the moral rights of artists.

Their demands were many and they were interlocked. After three years of uncompromising action calling for a redress of the art institution in its totality, the coalition fractured in and around its multiplicity of demands. The end result was just one concrete policy change: admission-free days at museums now often reduced to a single corporately sponsored evening per week. Noting this, WAGE chose to work toward a single achievable goal instead and one that was germane to the historical moment it had formed around.

That historical moment was early 2008, just before the financial crisis, as the gross excesses of the art market were being concretely felt at all levels of the field; sales volumes had expanded by 55% in 2007 alone. WAGE asserted that artists were being paid in exposure instead of cash money and that despite our cultural affluence, many were living in relative material poverty – relative to the excess surrounding us and to how increasingly unliveable New York City was becoming. We demanded to be paid for cultural value in capital value. Without being paid we were being exploited. Exploited because we function as an unpaid labor force that supports a multi-billion dollar industry.

Many aspects of this industry are unregulated which means there are no mechanisms in place to

enforce compensation, so the only way to regulate the unregulated – to get institutions to pay artists – is by persuading them to. WAGE uses administrative direct action to remind them that unless they back up the moral and political claims they make through their programs with materially equitable institutional policy, then they are failing as institutions. But this is only half of WAGE's work. The other half is persuading artists that what they do is labor which is increasingly less a process of persuasion than one of coercion, engaging what appear to be two distinct constituencies, artists and institutions.

In addition to coercion, WAGE does the policy-based work the state has declined to do in its failure to recognize the value of artists' work as a public good and to support it as such. WAGE stepped in and produced guidelines and standards that delineate how much money institutions should pay us and what they should pay us for. We also made tools and resources available to help them better understand the non-payment of artists as a profound blind spot in their operations. Our primary activity on the policy level is a program that publicly "certifies" those non-profits that pay fees according to our guidelines and standards. WAGE Certification recognizes and defines equity on hyper-specific economic terms, the most important of which are how we define 'Artist' and what an 'Artist Fee' is compensation for.

Artist refers to all those who supply content and services in a non-profit visual arts presenting context, including visual artists, performers, dancers, poets, filmmakers, writers, and musicians among others. WAGE does not distinguish between individual and collective/collaborative providers of content and services. All are covered

under the term "Artist." WAGE does distinguish between the "Contracted Artist" who has been engaged by an organization to participate in programs, and the "Sub-Contracted Artist" who may be engaged by an artist to participate in a project or program.

An Artist Fee is the expected remuneration for an artist's temporary transactional relationship with an institution to provide content. An artist fee is not compensation for the labor or materials of making art and it is not intended as compensation for the content itself. Rather, it is for its provision. This includes and is the work of working with an institution.

Out of WAGE's effort to define the labor of artists relative to the closest thing we have to an employer has emerged a paradox. In articulating on hyper-specific economic terms what the figure of the artist is and what it does, we first had to empty out what has historically defined it. Hyper-definition wrought total evacuation. Redefining the artist as a paid economic subject also meant clearing away the unpaid and exploitable one. It required debunking the myth of the artist's work as non-labor and dispensing with the untruth that artists willfully place that non-labor outside of capital. This figure of the artist, which some of us might know as the neo-bohemian but equally the self-righteous social practitioner, is a construction of what the industry demands.

The industry profits from obfuscating what artists do and why we do it, particularly when we do it alone under conditions that cultivate even greater individuation. WAGE's approach to organizing artists under these conditions began with a call to de-exceptionalize our labor by naming it as such. We did this simply by claiming a stake in the profit made from our work. We demanded to

be paid for cultural value in capital value. Not so simple has been the process of rebuilding the compromised and contradictory figure of the artist with a sense of its own economic value.

WAGE asserts that an Artist is anyone who provides content for the programs of non-profit arts organizations. So where Artist had previously been a very specific someone defined by its exceptionality and willingness to work for free, that someone becomes anyone. Artist becomes content provider, Artist becomes contracted worker, Artist becomes just like everyone else so that Artist stops seeing itself as exceptional and expects to be paid – just like everyone else. This is part of the work of convincing artists that what they do is labor.

Defining artists as content providers is also a way of linking our work to other fields in which content is understood as one of the costs of doing business. We de-exceptionalize the art field by reminding all who participate in what is now a more than 56 billion dollar industry, that artists are part of a vast supply chain that supports it and as such we should be paid. We believe that it’s only once artists come to understand themselves as *not* exceptional in their support of and exploitation by this industry, that conditions of non-payment will start to change.

Since WAGE Certification’s launch in 2014, more than fifty non-profit institutions have been certified across the US. It might be fair to say we have succeeded in shifting the field, which is to say that after almost a decade of agitation we have finally arrived at a general consensus that artists should be paid and that compensation for content provided is indeed a reasonable expectation. Our success in moving from

1 The Art Market 2017 An Art Basel & UBS Report by Dr Clare McAndrew, page 218.

non-payment as a norm to some form of payment as an expectation introduced a reversal, the timing of which has been very poor.

At the precise moment of WAGE’s arrival at our goal of regulating the payment of artist fees, artist compensation becomes the least urgent ground for political engagement. Furthermore, just at the precise moment WAGE moves into organizing the labor of artists through WAGENCY, the nature of our work appears profoundly privileged relative to the dehumanizing conditions most of the world’s population labors under.

According to *The Art Market 2017*, “the top 1% of wealth holders in 2016 owned just over half of the world’s total household wealth, while the least wealthy half of the global adult population collectively owned less than 1% of global assets.”¹ It is undeniable and a fact of this report that artists work in dangerously close proximity to this elite. They consume the things we make as luxury goods and use them as financial instruments, so any labor campaign mounted on behalf of artists in the face of such inequity has to take a position relative to the chasm between working people and the global billionaires who are our customers, our funders, our patrons. The fundamental question then becomes, which side of the divide do we come down on? How can we identify as workers and still in good conscience service a billionaire class?

For WAGE this question is one of conscience. How to square the exploitation of our labor with the profound level of privilege we have relative to most other workers? Despite the simple truth of this question, the reality is that artists’ labor is already connected through the supply chain to many of these ‘other workers’. In fact, many artists themselves work secondary jobs within it, so the

question of where we come down also has to be asked in terms of where we come down relative to our peers and to ourselves.

And so we have to ask: what about interns and fellows? What about subcontracted low-wage service workers performing frontline and invisible labor, gendered administrative staff who are undervalued and overburdened, as well as contracted freelance art handlers and teaching artists without benefits, health insurance or workplace protections? In some cases, the field’s economic injustice includes everyone except the grossly overpaid director and sometimes also the self-exploiting underpaid director – but in all cases the division of labor is racialized. WAGE’s advocacy exclusively on behalf of artists has been necessary to establish our unique status as unpaid workers but it has induced another paradox. By excluding other supply chain workers from our campaign, we have effectively re-asserted our own exceptionality and called into question any commonality our labor might have with others.

This paradox is not as simple as it seems, since there are in fact differences between the work artists do and other forms of work. The chart below is a rudimentary sketch of the art field’s supply chain against which the labor of artists can be seen as both like and very much unlike other kinds of labor within it. Because WAGE believes that all labor is skilled, the differentiation of skilled and unskilled is meant to call attention to how our received understanding of the nature of work has led to outlandish and inequitable differences in rates of pay.

Position	Labor	Qualification/Type/ Pay
Director	Cognitive, administrative, emotional	Skilled, networked, salaried employee
Curator	Cognitive, administrative, emotional	Skilled, networked, salaried employee
Administrator	Administrative, emotional	Partially skilled, gendered, salaried employee
Web Programmer	Cognitive, technical	Skilled, often contingent part-time, existing extra-industry compensation standards
Teaching Artist	Emotional, administrative, physical	Skilled, gendered, contingent, part-time or independent contractors, unregulated
Public Facing	Emotional, service	Skilled, often contingent part-time, increasingly racialized, underpaid
Art Handler	Physical	Unskilled, often contingent, unregulated except when full-time unionized
Shipper	Physical	Unskilled, disciplinary, subject to surveillance, third party
Security Guard	Physical	Unskilled, disciplinary, racialized, subject to surveillance, often full-time unionized or outsourced non-unionized
Cleaner	Physical	Unskilled, disciplinary, racialized, subject to surveillance, outsourced third party, non-unionized

In the non-profit sector, the labor of artists is unwaged, unregulated and any pay is symbolic and entirely disconnected from what might be understood as necessary to our material survival. In other words, you cannot live on artist fees and WAGE’s campaign cannot claim to be for a minimum or living wage – it is at bottom a campaign to be compensated, period.

Meanwhile, in the commercial sector artists’ collective output represents the inversion of forced hyper-production. The

art market needs many artists to produce a lot of art all of the time but only in order to maintain the perception that there is a consistent scarcity of talent and 'good' work. Most of this work, whether good or not, will never be consumed and is essentially worth nothing beyond its material cost, but in its totality the field's voluntary valueless overproduction is fundamental to the market's functioning. The perception of quality as scarce, and the belief that only those with exceptional talent merit success, inflates prices and consolidates resources in the hands of a minority of artists.

And then there is the work of making art. It notably lacks the hallmarks of what might well be the baseline conditions for labor and life in the near future: discipline and surveillance. Conversely the hallmarks of creative work – privacy and freedom – are the preconditions for artist's labor as it has historically been defined.

While artistic work can be cognitive, emotional, immaterial, entrepreneurial, social, unpredictable, unstable, undisciplined, private, and self-directed, it might be fair to say that it also does at one time or another, for one artist or another, involve any and all of what other workers in the supply chain do that is listed above. This may include overseeing a staff, operating payroll, administration, fabrication, shipping, building, thinking, waiting, and watching, among other things. So, while the labor of artists is very fortunately not repetitive, disciplinary, dangerous, demeaning, or service-based it is however, unregulated, exploited, and unpaid.

If the nature of artists' labor often involves the same things that characterize other forms of contemporary work, the forces that determine its value are entirely different. These forces leave artists in a position of total confusion with regard to their own value. So even if

artists agree with WAGE that the demand to be paid is a political one, preceding the choice to make the demand and engage it as a politics is the lived experience of being an artist. And coursing through that experience are two fundamental yet unspoken questions that arise in the struggle to produce meaning as such, and they are inherently about value.

Is my work 'good'? Am I a 'good' artist?

These questions sometimes get answered in moments of validation or periods of clarity but they persist because they are in fact about something else. They are about value. Asking *is my work good* is the same as asking *does my work have value? Do I have value as an artist? Or just do I have value?*

There is a dangerous vulnerability in posing these questions to a field that generates value through the false assertion that good is in short supply. The perceived lack of career success and corresponding invisibility of all those artists whose work is relegated to the deep storage of the forgotten or the never seen is fundamental to making the success and visibility of a limited number of others possible. If this structural inequity is imperative to the functioning of the commercial market, then the transition from invisibility to visibility for most artists is not only unlikely, it is structurally impossible. According to its logic, too many successful artists at any given time would lead to decreased value and market collapse.

Our field also implies a great deal of value distortion. Observe how the industry devalues our labor while simultaneously overvaluing our work. As WAGE defines it, our "labor" is the work of supplying the content of exhibitions and programs – and because it goes unpaid it is apparently worth nothing – while our "work", the commodity version

of the content that has been supplied and not paid for is overvalued (or devalued entirely) in the commercial art market because its inflation serves the interests of those whose business it is to profit from the buying and selling of art.

Given that value in the art field is distorted, contingent, relational, and symbolic, there are no satisfactory answers to the question of whether or not my art is good or whether or not any of us as artists have value. In the eyes of the industry, most of us have value to the extent that our failure enables a few to succeed. For those artists who look to the industry, to the market, to awards, to curators, to historians, to critics, to gatekeepers of any kind for the answer, you are likely to be violently negated by it.

But what if you don't use the industry as a gauge. What if the question of your value as an artist is posed in the direction of other artists, not by "being in dialog with your peers," but in silent dialog with the capital 'a' art of your peers while doing the work of making art. Embedded deep in the labor process of artists is the presence of a third entity, the work of other artists, a prism through which we observe one another's practices and make adjustments to our own. Art as a third entity is also what we hope will be a more stable currency against which to more accurately measure the value of our own work, and in turn our own value, and even our own self-worth.

After all, if measuring ourselves against the standards of the industry yields nothing but unreliable distortion, then the artwork itself must be a more reliable point of comparison because it contains the content – the non-monetary value that the market can never fully own. Artist-to-artist through a third entity, a triangulation that should have the potential to yield less compromised social relations, more robust work, and clearer thinking. Art is or should be a

crypto-currency common to artists, its own black market. But unfortunately, and as always, art is indivisible from the industry that surrounds and enables it, whether we as individuals choose to participate in that industry or not. As a commodity and as a public, good art's value is only and always contingent and is therefore always unstable.

Compounding this problem is that if you don't also already have a stable sense of your own inherent value (who does?), when your peers' success causes the currency of their work to inflate or become overvalued you are likely to experience a corresponding sense of devaluation, whether real or imagined. You are in fact participating in your own devaluation.

Why does any of this matter? It matters because if as artists we determine our own internal value and artistic self-worth against a currency that is inherently unstable and subject to what the industry demands to extract from us, we will always and forever be bound to one another comparatively through objects whose value is determined by their potential to generate profit, including the social, cultural and political capital that builds value.

For this reason, we need to build our own standards based on a common understanding of our work as having inherent value in part because it is our collective work – and its common value is something that we must also collectively enforce. If we are all linked in this arbitrary system of valuation, then we are all doing the work of increasing or decreasing each other's value.

Once we acknowledge that my success is dependent on your failure, that my failure enables your success, and that most of it is class-based, racialized and about the reproduction of these conditions, it is only then that we will be able to effectively organize ourselves

together as a labor force and that means mobilizing politically.

The work of building a movement organized around labor in a field that lacks even the belief that there is labor involved has been the work of WAGE for many years. But if we're to continue this work and expand it to include the formation of a quasi-union, we must be sure that our work continues to reflect the historical moment we are in, as it did when WAGE was founded in 2008. Almost ten years later, the art field and the world that consumes it have changed, and those changes must be reflected in how we organize.

In the U.S. there has always been a lack of state support for culture, but in combination with accelerating privatization, the non-profit sector is its own hyper-competitive marketplace in which a multitude of organizations vie for a scarcity of resources, cultivating a heavy dependency on the market and private wealth.

A shift in WAGE's rhetoric over the years in how we describe the class position of artists within the industry reflects its near total neoliberalization. Back in 2008, we framed the relationship between artists and institutions as being one of stark disparity, with artists representing an unpaid sub-creative underclass marginalized and exploited by a thriving institutional field. Today, with its impossibly high barriers to entry, the entire field is undeniably elite, catering to a demand for luxury goods and unable to stop the financialization of its output.

Responding to this shift we now make the case for compensation not on the basis of our *distance* from a billionaire class, but on the basis of our *proximity* to it. How we put it to artists is this: if you're willingly going unpaid by an industry in which you and your work support a billionaire class, then not only are you being exploited, your exploitation is

supporting the consolidation of wealth by it. This is how we argue that the demand to be paid is a political one and we see WAGENCY – and our work in the long term – as being a container for resistance and the politics of labor.

We also believe that artists bear some responsibility in this process. This is the ground on which WAGE's work has begun to change as it has taken on a third task. In addition to coercing institutions to pay artists, and coerce artists that what they do is labor, we now must also insist that artists actively participate in WAGE by making the demand for compensation themselves, and to do it collectively.

And this brings up the earlier question about which side of the class divide we as artists might choose to come down on, since increasingly we are being called upon to take a position (relative to gentrification in LA's Boyle Heights or New York's Chinatown, for example, or the call by Hannah Black and others for artist Dana Schutz to take responsibility for "treating Black pain as raw material" in her work). Artists' claim to neutrality may have finally and necessarily exhausted itself – a sign that exceptionality on any level, not just the economic one, is now a liability.

Finally, if we have to choose, do we identify with all those workers whose labor makes the production and visibility of our work possible – the fabricators, the administrators, the art handlers, the cleaning staff, the guards? Or do we obediently, through our own claim to neutrality, align ourselves with those real estate developers, HNWI collectors, flippers, and money launderers whose monopoly on capital might, if we are lucky, enable us to continue being artists?

We have now arrived at what turns out to be a very productive impasse: the impossible choice between labor and capital. We have now also finally arrived at WAGENCY, our forthcoming

organizing model. WAGENCY takes up this impasse and neutralizes it by dealing equally with labor and capital so that artists don't have to choose. In fact, that choice won't be available to artists as long as they choose to participate. The question for WAGE is not, which side do we come down on but is *why should we have to choose?* Why should we have to pick labor over capital or conversely, dis-identify with what could be a working class art world in order to earn income? We shouldn't, but if that's what the industry commands then we must find a way to resist it and build power in the process.

First: WAGENCY and labor. What started in 2015 as a simple idea of board member Suhail Mailk's – to certify artists as well as institutions – has since evolved into something much larger and more inclusive. WAGENCY will certify individual artists, mirroring WAGE's existing institutional certification program in its continued focus on artist fees, but it will be part of a broader coalition encompassing both artists and institutions.

As a broad-based coalition and artist certification program, WAGENCY is intended to provide working artists with the necessary agency to negotiate compensation or withhold content and services from institutions that refuse to pay them fees according to WAGE standards. If WAGE Certification enables institutions to self-regulate by opting into a set of values and adhering to them, the role of artists within WAGENCY will be to self-regulate by making institutions' decision to opt in less of a choice and more of a necessity. Its purpose is threefold:

1. To build political and economic solidarity between artists.
2. To provide broad agency to artists of varying means.
3. To enlist artists in sharing

responsibility with institutions for the process of shifting the entire field toward something more sustainable.

WAGENCY's most powerful 'lever' will be operated by WAGE Certified artists. These artists must be prepared to withhold their labor when not paid according to WAGE standards, as well as pay equitably the subcontractors who contribute directly to producing the content of their artwork, namely their assistants. It's here that artists formally operate as institutions, where the studio becomes a factory, and where the equivalent of Just-in-Time (JIT) scheduling and zero-hour contracts are increasingly found.

But what about all those who can't afford to withhold labor? WAGENCY makes space for them to join as WAGENTS. These artists are the bulk of our constituency and their participation is fundamental to building power, but equally it's our responsibility to help empower them. As noted, because the perceived lack of 'success' of the many is necessary to building value for a select few, we believe that this imbalance needs to be understood and accounted for – especially by those who benefit from it. As such, WAGE Certified artists bear greater responsibility in applying pressure.

Instead of using a coordinated strike mechanism, WAGENCY takes the form of a matrix of individual boycotts that can and will happen at any given time. Its power lies in a large number of artists committing to withhold labor and demand fees, and on the pressure these acts apply to institutions over time.

At WAGENCY's core is what we've been calling the 'seeds of unionization'. This means that while WAGENCY has the potential to evolve into a union in the traditional or historical sense, there is nothing about how the art field functions to suggest that such a model would

work. Because artists rarely, if ever, share the same employer at the same time and work not for a low wage but for free, coordinating what are perhaps the most individuated of all contingent workers means that WAGENCY cannot be anything but a non-traditional organizing model.

Like a union, WAGENCY must be a worker-driven infrastructure that has the capacity to shift conditions in the field through collective mobilization, but it is also tasked with coordinating the atomized practices of content providers in a globalized economy comprised of non-profit and for-profit sectors that are entirely interdependent. For it to have real impact, WAGENCY must offer mechanisms for self-regulation in both sectors that have the capacity for international application. WAGENCY must also consider and account for artists' highly individuated practices and politics as well as the class stratification between us as workers.

If both artists and institutions are opting into an adherence to WAGE's payment standards and guidelines, then both are part of a coalition working toward the same goal. Under WAGENCY artists and institutions, or what we might have previously thought of as workers and bosses, will be collapsed together into a single coalition.

This development might have been unexpected but we've known for a long time that in the non-profit wing of the art field, the politics of labor aren't a one-way affair – it's never been as simple as artists vs. institutions or workers vs. bosses because institutions are made up of workers, many of whom are also artists. WAGE's efforts cannot be bifurcated into organizing artists on the one hand and institutions on the other. What we need to do is build a broad coalition of all those who voluntarily and publicly commit to adhering to

WAGE's compensation standards and guidelines, whether artists or institutions, thereby drawing attention toward the real obstacle to an equitable distribution of art's economy: state deregulation, privatization, and the disinvestment in art as a shared public good.

Second: WAGENCY and capital. For WAGE, resistance has never meant denying the existence or necessity of commerce and art's subsumption under capital. It has always been a matter of developing tactics and tools that block, divert and redistribute its flow. At best this means transforming art's economy into something equitable, and at bare minimum shifting it toward something more sustainable. To this end and as part of WAGENCY, we're working on an updated, digitized, and modular version of Seth Siegelaub and Robert Projansky's 1971 The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sales Agreement.

Also known as The Artist's Contract, it was intended to give artists control over the conditions of the sale of their work as well as the conditions of its exhibition, resale, and other concerns beyond artists' oversight once it has been transferred; it may be best known for introducing the resale royalty – an artist's right to 15% of any increase in value after the first sale. WAGE's update will be built on blockchain using a so-called 'Smart Contract'. Blockchain is a decentralized ledger that can record each transaction or transfer of an artwork by tracking its movement through the marketplace in a way that is transparent, accessible, and unalterable. It also has the potential to manifest the highly individuated politics of artists' practices by controlling the conditions of exhibition and circulation through the enforcement of moral rights. The Artist's Contract on Blockchain is intended to:

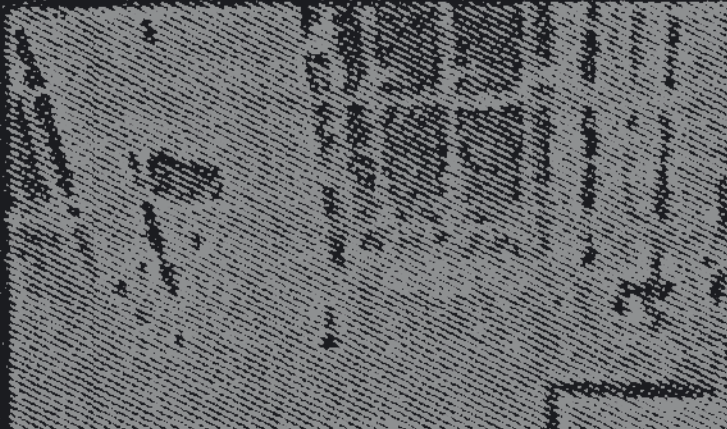
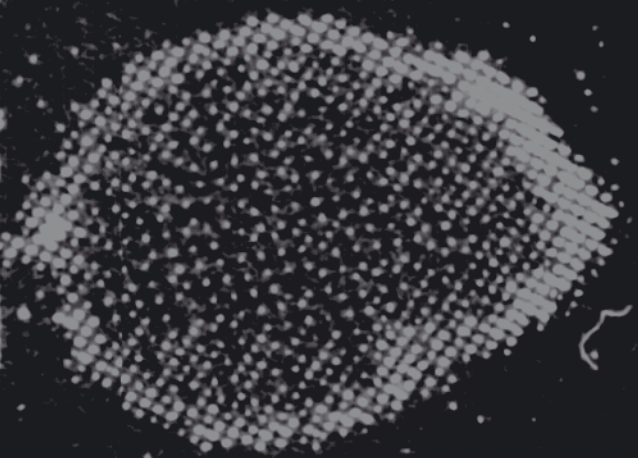
1. Reclaim a portion of the surplus of wealth generated by speculation on the unpaid labor of artists.

2. Redistribute this surplus to bring about a more equitable distribution of art's economy.
3. Control the conditions under which artists' work is used.

A core principle is the assertion that moral and property rights are indivisible. Given the increasing use of art as a financial instrument, it is – or should be – an artist's right on moral grounds to resist or block its use as such. It is only through claiming a continued interest in our work as property that we can exercise the moral right to choose how our work is used when it is transformed into an asset class.

WAGENCY's success in fundamentally altering conditions of non-payment depends on building a substantial coalition by mobilizing artists from across the class spectrum – the larger and broader collective engagement is, the greater an individual's leverage with institutions will be. The same logic applies to redeploying The Artist's Contract. If our purpose is to alter the terms of sale in order to redistribute the surplus of wealth generated by unpaid labor and to address art's use as a financial instrument, then denial of the market and the refusal to participate are not forms of resistance within WAGENCY. Resistance for WAGE has always meant building critical mass through mass usage. The more we use it, the greater our resistance.

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Issue n.0: Art Labour