

“Pole Position” Game: Theory and Context
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This study provides some of the theoretical background and context for the development of the “follow-the-leader”/“leapfrog” performance game of “Pole Position,” developed in collaboration between Manuel Alejandro Rodríguez, Luis A. Vega, and myself (<http://sicklyseason.com/poleposition/>). This framework functions not so much as an analytical document that examines the other documents and performances produced in this project, but in tandem with those other documents and performances. The effect I seek is of collage and juxtaposition, not a separation of analysis and object into discrete realms. One of the key arguments that I wish to make about the project is that the performance game that we developed and implemented constitutes a kind of live, *in situ* performance montage and collage, a concept drawn heavily from the Surrealists and the Situationist International. In *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, Ben Highmore points out that the initial development of collage and montage by the Surrealists reflected their effort to find and create forms suitable to expressing the everyday under modern conditions (46). As with the Surrealists, our project seeks to express the fragmented, disenchanting, and alienated conditions of the everyday, but also, to develop and

put into practice ways of transforming them through a re-enchanting, interactive, dis-alienating participatory activation of space that attends to the marvelous in the everyday as well. Like the Surrealists, we seek ways to “take to the street, working to find and create the marvelousness of the everyday” (Highmore 47). In terms of this theoretical and contextual framework, then, what I wish to put into play here is one part (theory and context) of a matrix of integrated elements (abstract, performance, documentation). At the same time, this study’s fragmented, somewhat nonlinear form comprises collaged and juxtaposed elements itself. I begin with a discussion of Brechtian street performance, frauds, slippages, and freaks, which I develop in part through brief literary analyses of works by Franz Kafka and Knut Hamsen that function as useful lenses through which to view key issues of performance around these topics. I then focus on compulsive repetition and ritual in the “functional” dysfunction of everyday life, relying heavily on analyses of everyday life by Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. I conclude with an inquiry into Allan Kaprow’s discussion of “lifelike art,” and the proposal of an even more fully integrated “art-as-life/life-as-art” model of art and everyday life, as articulated by Gloria Anzaldúa and Paula Gunn Allen.

1. Sensory slippages/Mimetic realities: Freaks, frauds, and forgetting the performance/self

In his description of the street scene demonstrator/performer, Bertolt Brecht touches on the issue of performative double-consciousness. During the spontaneous street performance—in which one might engage in performance for a police officer and other “audience” members by describing an accident that has just occurred—the demonstrator/performer takes on a “two-fold” position and “is always taking two situations into account” (“Street Scene” 125). What Brecht focuses on here, in what he sees as the perfect model for his “epic theater” form of performance, is a kind of double-conscious performance in which the performer performs and yet maintains an explicit detachment from/disavowal of the performance. Performance occurs, but it is never an attempt to fully convince the audience of its “reality.” The performer maintains an explicit, self-conscious distance from the performance even as s/he carries it out, and never makes an attempt to hide or forget it (or to convince the audience to do so, either).

Beyond the implications for Brecht’s epic theater, what this model of the street scene demonstrator points to are implications for subverting a more general blurring of performance and modern everyday life (through that very blurring itself)—how

the performance of everyday life paradoxically functions through both an actively engaged performance, and a detached “forgetting” of that performance. In other words, we are constantly performing in everyday life, but in order for the performance to function, it must include the performance of forgetting that we are performing. But what the street scene demonstrator suggests is another mode of performance, in which a blur can occur in everyday life performance between self-consciousness and unconsciousness, demonstration and subjecthood.

Michael Taussig teases out a similar inquiry into self-consciously deployed performance in everyday life in *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. He asks: “[W]hat would happen if we didn’t in daily practice...conspire to actively forget what Saussure called ‘the arbitrariness of the sign’?” (xviii). Here, Taussig is looking not just at how we forget the semiotic, but specifically, at how we do so in a performance context—how we forget the *performance of/within* a semiotic matrix, in order to go about our lives. The question itself is interesting here, but it is on the context of it that I wish to focus for a moment, for asking such a question signals a certain level of privilege that complicates Taussig’s inquiry in revealing ways that are particularly relevant to our project. The privilege that Taussig’s question implies

is of not having to live a situation in which one is *never* allowed to “forget” the performance. For the colonized, there is no choice; it is survival; one never just “turns it off” in order to go about her/his daily life. Double-consciousness performance *is* one’s daily life. Going about one’s daily life means being conscious of being “on” at all times.

Franz Kafka’s “civilized” (colonized) and academically institutionalized former ape, “Rotpeter,” in the story, “A Report to an Academy,” provides an especially useful literary example of this state of being and its direct connection to performance. Here, in a sharply satiric, absurdist critique of colonialism, the former ape and newly minted academic delivers an elaborate, multilayered performance for human academy members, in which he reports on his process of capture, colonization, and institutionalization. Through this performance, Rotpeter demonstrates how his canny, mimetic ability to perform for them as (academic) “human” with full, constant awareness and observation through “the most profound inward calm” (254) is what allows him to survive, and to “get out” of, colonial captivity, even while remaining within its inescapability. To return to the street demonstrator, Brecht makes a related point about how the demonstrator “never forgets, nor does he allow it to be forgotten, that he is not the subject but the demonstrator” (“The Street Scene” 125). While

each example points to a different sense of exterior performativity and relation between performed self and subjecthood, what interests me most in both is the potential for subversion and resistance in being “on” all the time. We see this potential in Rotpeter’s detached, hyperconscious, perpetual multi-nested performance, and in Brecht’s actor who develops the “complex technique to detach himself from the character portrayed” (“The Street Scene” 121) in order to “jar” the audience not through his acting, “but he himself. He would grate on them” (“A Dialogue About Acting” 28). To tease out the implications of this subversive potential and this key point of “constant performance” in contextualizing our project, I shift again to another brief literary analysis of another highly (compulsively) performative character—in this case, the main character, Nagel, in Knut Hamsen’s novel, *Mysteries*.

In Hamsen’s *Mysteries*, Nagel is just such a Brechtian “actor” who is always jarring, and grating on, those around him, exactly because he constantly performs in a detached way from the “character” of himself, even as he paradoxically loses himself in that character through its persistent deployment in his everyday life. (On a side note, a very similar, compulsively performative character appears in André Gide’s *Lafcadio’s Adventures*; the connection between the two is worth exploring in more detail, but is outside

the scope of this study.) However, Nagel does not perform in a Brechtian “epic theatre” production, nor is he a street scene demonstrator performing a scenario that is explicit to everyone. Instead, in every social situation and interaction that arises during Nagel’s prolonged visit in a small village where he has arrived as a complete stranger, he expends his energy concocting elaborate, strange stories and shaping situations that adapt to given social contexts, apparently simply for the fun of it, and unbeknownst to his “audience.” The result is a kind of mutative warping of formal, expected (bourgeois) relations and social dynamics that others find at times surprising, charming, and enchanting, but at other times, strange, bizarre, and disturbing. This is a performance that, like Nagel’s own bipolar personality, bounces from one pole to the other—from seamless concealment of the performance to a blatant foregrounding in which he makes uncomfortably and disturbingly explicit his performance and deceit. Oftentimes, he “reveals” himself immediately after he has performed or “lied,” with jarringly frank declarations of his deceit. As Dagny, the object of his unrequited desire, expresses in confused consternation at one point when he tells her he has just lied to her, “Why do you plan your moves so carefully and then fail to realize that you are exposing yourself—your own lies?” (107). Later, she tells him, “You’re always amazingly frank with me...

Now you’re trying to make me believe that everything is false” (165). But as she wonders if he is “rational,” and notes how he has “upset [her] equilibrium” (165), we begin to get a clearer sense of what Nagel’s spontaneous, irrational, compulsive performances aim at. As he explains at one point: “I force you to notice me; I arouse your curiosity and make you pay attention to me” (107).

This is not a narcissistic impulse, however; what Nagel is getting at, through his fantastic, elaborate stories and impromptu performances, is a re-enchantment of everyday life that is based on the awareness that *everyone* is performing, because all of everyday life is a kind of performance. He purposefully fascinates others with his performance of unexpected situations, behaviors, and actions, and with strange, fantastic, enchanting stories that he seems to construct on the spot, but all of it seems to be part of a general, playful awareness of, and approach to, everyone’s performance. “One kind of fraud is as good as another” (164), he proclaims, and when his mediocre violin playing impresses the whole village, he argues that he is “only an amateur”—as is everyone (250–52). When Dagny loses patience and gets angry with him, accusing him of being a fraud, Nagel explains to her his “fraudulence”:

“No, I won’t even bother to defend myself. Call it fraud if you like. Why not? That’s the word for it. To put it stronger still, it’s the lowest kind of deception. All right, I don’t deny it. I am a phony. But we’re all phony to a greater or lesser extent; since that is a fact, one form of deceit is no worse than another.” (214)

Robert Bogdan’s “The Social Construction of Freaks” makes a point about the fraudulent nature of circus and carnival “freaks” that echoes and expands Nagel’s argument here:

In a strict sense of the word, every exhibit was a fraud. This is not to say that freaks were without physical, mental, and behavioral abnormalities.... but, with very few exceptions, every person exhibited was misrepresented.... The accurate story of the life and conditions of those being exhibited was replaced by purposeful distortion...to produce a more appealing freak. (25).

Later, Bogdan notes how original, earlier freak shows were played by the showmen—and interpreted by the audience—in earnest, while toward the end of the freak show tradition, the lecturer would straddle a

blurred line between “straight” and “farce.” The result was that for some, part of the entertainment resided in their being “in” on the joke, while for others—the naïve—their entertainment derived from traditional belief in the constructed image of the freaks, while at the same time, they provided entertainment value to the savvy audience members by unwittingly “performing” as rubes (32). It is this same kind of semiotic and performative “slippage” that Nagel exemplifies as he straddles a destabilized—and destabilizing—position between and across showman, savvy audience, naïve audience, and, of course, freak.

The slippage is a mutative one that affects not just one’s identities and roles, but reality itself. Michael Taussig’s descriptions of the “slippage” that occurs between levels of “reality” in the South American Cuna cosmology of world origin provides an understanding of how this slippage functions paradoxically to simultaneously transform and maintain elements (115). Taussig’s primary Hegelian concern with the paradox of how the Cuna people absorb outside influence and “change” while still remaining the same (129) highlights how such performative slippage might function as a subversive force, particularly within contexts of coloniality and postcoloniality (and thus, in a *decolonial* mode). In terms of one’s identity, the “slippage” between appearance and realities arises

from one adaptively “performing” within a given social context while struggling to remain the “same.” Of course, the slippages in levels of reality that occur in these multiple performances always signal, on one level, the ever-present danger of *becoming* our performance, of shifting irrevocably into another state or level of reality and identity, and finding ourselves unable to shift or morph back. In the example of Kafka’s ape Rotpeter, for example, levels of irony, appearance, and performance meld to the point where he seems (on the surface) no longer able to distinguish them in a meaningful, resistant way, and he truly “becomes” not just “human,” but a bona fide member of the oppressive human academy that he addresses. However, as with the unstable, ambiguous world of the incantatory narrative of the Cuna, and the ambiguously constructed identities of Bogden’s freaks, the lines between Rotpeter’s performed identities—and the assimilative surface stability that they seem to reflect—are neither so clear-cut, nor so stable. In all three cases, as well as in the case of Hamsen’s Nagel, the performative trick here is one of maintaining a simultaneously conscious and unconscious performance of identity that is always unstable because it is, as Elizabeth Grosz points out in “Intolerable Ambiguity: Freaks as/at the Limit,” always based in the liminal between binary oppositions (57). Just as “[f]reaks cross the borders

that divide the subject from all ambiguities” (57), the decolonial performer must enact a similar, playful set of border-crossing personas that is always unstable.

In other words, the slippage—the inability to fully distinguish levels of performance—is, paradoxically, not a danger to avoid, but rather, is *precisely* that danger into which we must, like Hamsen’s Nagel (and Kafka’s Rotpeter, and Gide’s Lafcadio), *abandon* ourselves. We must learn to be, at once, the freak show lecturer, the savvy audience, the naïve audience, and, of course, the freak. We must be “comfortable” with the discomfort of the world, and our identities, being constantly in flux and in process, and in fluid interaction. This flux and process arise in the tension and energy of the unstable liminal between binary oppositions, and in the fluidity of performance in everyday city life; they function through an oscillation that we must embrace as “identity” and “reality” even as we realize that there is nothing stable enough to actually embrace. Along a similar vein, Georg Simmel suggests in “The Ruin” that we are, all of us, always already caught up in the process of entropy. We cannot escape the laws of thermodynamics—everything is always already in process of decay. But of course, what this means is that we are also always already caught up in the process of creation, as well, for no characteristic exists outside of its binary opposite. Decay / Creation.

Destruction / Construction: We become—we *live*—through everyday life performance on the stage of oscillating force between them.

2. Consumption junction—What's your function?

In developing our “follow-the-leader”/“leapfrog” game of “Pole Position,” we attend to the issue of repetition through an aesthetics of rehearsal and mimicry. The aim is to put into play a game that functions in some ways like the machine of Michel de Certeau’s train, “producing changes in the relationships between immobile elements” (113). It is not the “players” themselves (and here, I mean all participants—everyone in everyday life), but the *functions* between them, on which we focus. The immobile elements are more properly seen as *immobilized* and *self-immobilizing*—elements in the fabric of urban everyday life caught up in the snags of Henri Lefebvre’s loops of linear repetition, divorced from the natural, organic repetition of cyclical time by the performance of pre-formed, pre-programmed “repetitive gestures of work and consumption” (10). According to Lefebvre, these “repetitive gestures tend to mask and crush the [organic, natural] cycles” through the monotony of the everyday (10). As Highmore notes, the concept of recurrence is central to Lefebvre’s analysis of the everyday. In fact, it is not simply recurrence, but “continual recurrence,” and this

“insistent repetition” is “crucial to Lefebvre’s meaning of the term ‘everyday life’” (128).

Lefebvre’s “repetitive gestures” are included in the “immobile(ized/izing) elements” that I invoke here, but more generally, they are part of the wider field of programmed interactional functions between “players.” The snags of repeated interaction and gesture, of obsessive-compulsive ritual, are the functional loops of everyday life’s interactional monotony on which we snag and catch in our contact with one another and our experience of everyday life. The functions are the primary “elements” that I speak of here, both immobile and immobilizing. They are the pre-programmed scenarios through which we constitute everyday life, and through which everyday life constitutes us.

But these snags are also sites of potentiality. Snags can be pulled and tugged at, picked at—repeatedly—loosened, undone. They hold within them the potential of an entire unraveling. And it is on this unraveling that our game plays.

We seek, then, to deploy a playful mode of approaching these repetitive loops through a “rehearsal” repetition that mirrors what Taussig identifies as the “capitalist mimetics” of the everyday (*Nervous* 147). We function not as the contemplative, idle “man about town” detached *flâneur* in Hannah Arendt’s misreading and misinterpretation of Walter

Benjamin (McDonough 102–104), but rather, as actively engaged, constitutive elements of what Taussig calls “a distracted collective reading with a tactile eye” (147). We function as anti-functions—rehearsing functions, rehearsing ourselves, *détourning* the functions between us, and therefore *détourning* our selves. Our game both identifies/manipulates, and creates, snags, as we follow each other through the city, weaving ephemeral, warping patterns through (slightly) repeated interactions with others. The movement reflects and deploys a peripheral perception of Taussig’s “tactile optics” (*Nervous* 143–44) through which new habitual functions of the everyday emerge and dissolve themselves in the same peripheral gesture, a narrative poetics of unconscious, dreamlike irruption into the *non-consciousness* of everyday life’s somnambulant dreamwalk (Highmore 164–65). We follow each other through the city, re-placing each other in mimicked, repetitive interactional performances with others that weave a poetic narrative. Our flâneurist activity here is a reiteration and reinvention of both Harry Gamboa, Jr.’s angst-ridden “anti-flâneur,” and Vito Acconci’s reinvention of the *flâneur* through the libidinal and the criminal in the relationship of pursuer and pursued in his *Following Piece* (1969; cited in McDonough). In relation to the latter, we seek to invoke a similar aesthetics of Acconci’s public theater works in which

he “preferred to keep his actions discreet, barely distinguishable from the everyday world around them” (McDonough 112). As an “anti-flâneurist” approach that grows directly out of Gamboa’s work and our own participation in it, our project seeks to put into play a reiteration of what C. Ondine Chavoya identifies as the “new character” of “the anti-flâneur” in Gamboa’s work, who,

[i]nterpelled by the panoptical space of urbanity...can not escape from the phantasmagoria of the ‘urban desert in ruins.’ Distance can not be established and alienation can not be overcome. Accordingly, different, often conflicting, perceptions of urban space are inextricably related to uneven positions of power within the city. In Gamboa’s work the cognitive ordering and perceptions of space are neither submerged nor disavowed in order to create aesthetic space. Such a strategic separation and distance is not possible for those who directly experience the increasing socioeconomic inequality and political unrest of the heteropolis. (“Social Unwest”)

Like the tactics that we seek to develop and deploy in this rehearsal, we “insinuate [ourselves] in the other’s

place” (de Certeau qtd. in Highmore 165) in an ephemeral performance that dissolves at its point of coalescence. To further invoke Acconci’s public theater, in such works, as McDonough notes, “[t]he artist would...disappear into the crowd, his activities rejecting the ostentatious or theatrical aspects of their antecedents so that they could now almost seamlessly blend in with the life of the city” (112–13). Through “repeated” and mimicked interactions, verbal cues, images, incantatory narrative elements, physical gestures, and facial expressions, we seek ways of invoking a magic that is both “imitative or homeopathic” and “contagious” (Taussig *Nervous* 145), in order to warp the monotony of the urban everyday as we “seamlessly blend in” with it. We tug at the DNA strands of neo-capitalism’s everyday, warp its code, twisting it, unraveling it, inserting deviations, exponentially proliferating mutations. Rather than reflecting perfect, digital copies, the mimesis of our repetitions within the game constitutes an internally mutative, tactile, analogue structure, as the ritual incantation that we construct together is always already imperfect, slightly “off” through our always being “on.” An intentional mutation precedes—is built into—the mimesis of these sculpted moments of tactile interaction.

This engaged, participatory tactility necessarily defines our anti-flâneurist praxical mode of

interpretation and analysis, for while it is true that capitalism “thoroughly penetrat[es] the details of daily life” (Lefebvre qtd. in Highmore 113), contrary to Lefebvre, the “deep structure” constituted by modernity and everydayness *cannot* be uncovered by a critical analysis (11). Such an analysis presupposes the possibility of distance. As Gamboa’s anti-flâneur demonstrates, we are not just always already caught up in this “inescapable” deep structure; we *are* this structure. This is what makes it inescapable: We may replicate, we may undo, but the concept of “escape” simply does not apply when we are the structure, when the complete colonization of everyday life “functions” through us—as us. Thus, de Certeau demonstrates a similar blindspot as Lefebvre when he writes, “If it is true that the grid of ‘discipline’ is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures ... manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them” (qtd. in Highmore 149), for “to discover” suggests the same ability to establish critical distance.

Here, Lefebvre’s Brechtian notion of dis-alienation through more alienation is helpful in figuring a way through this limitation and impasse. As Highmore notes,

Everyday life in modernity evidences an all-pervasive alienation: the alienation from the recognition of alienation. In other words, alienation is the condition of being alienated from our alienation. Here, in a dialectical twist, the route to dis-alienation must start out from *more* alienation: it is only by defamiliarizing the everyday that the everyday can be recognized as alienation. (143)

Lefebvre and de Certeau are both correct in identifying the everyday as the key site of engagement, for it contains the possibilities and potentials of its own transformation, its own undoing (Highmore 113). Its loops on which we catch and snag are the very irregularities by which it potentially unravels. As Kaplan and Ross point out, “It is in the midst of the utterly ordinary, in the space where the dominant relations of production are tirelessly and relentlessly reproduced, that we must look for utopian and political aspirations to crystallize” (78). Our game seeks, then, to put into play a framework through which we may discover, as well as engage, amplify, mutate, and—most importantly—*create*, de Certeauian “procedures,” or functions. This involves not an analysis, nor an ethnography, nor simply a “performance,” but a praxical poetics in which different registers, rational and nonrational, conscious and

unconscious, “performance” and “non-performance,” “rub along together” (Highmore 165).

As Highmore’s contention about alienation suggests, however (and as Hamsen’s Nagel demonstrates through the dizzying neurotic state of bipolarity underlying his performances, and Kafka’s Rotpeter through his own edgy psychological and emotional instability), this transformation must occur through an engagement that specifically foregrounds, and functions through, *neurotic, alienated* conditions. In a de Certeauian meta-move of “mobilizing [binary] terms” against themselves (Highmore 154–55), our game explores and puts into play, then, the specific dynamic of bipolar neurosis. Apart from personal recent experience of this kind of psychological dynamic in myself and in several close friends, I see this particular neurotic manifestation as symptomatic of a more general mode of binary thinking and of the semiotic shift from symbol to signal-based communication and interaction that Highmore argues as distinguishing Lefebvre’s analysis from a Jamesonian critique of postmodernism (134). According to Highmore, Lefebvre’s notion of signal signification points to a movement from a symbol-based, narratological construction of meaning to a binary, signal-based “instrumentally reduced form of meaning” (134). This movement results in “a kind of on/off communication exemplified by the traffic light,”

and is one that “closes down the possibilities of meaning” (134). For Lefebvre, this closure of meaning through imposed binary terms is the basis of the “systems of compulsion” in “a society that is becoming more and more based around prohibitions and commands” (135). As we function through the habits of these binary-termed systems of on/off compulsion, we *become* these obsessive-compulsive habits built into spectacle existence, spectacle consumption, spectacle desire and manufactured desire, false desire, false emotion. All of us bouncing back and forth between these walls / freeways / traffic lights / surveillance cams, caught up in the crossfire of (others’) desires at odds with our own, unaware of our own, bouncing from manic highs to depressive lows, from one illusory representation of desire to another—we mimic excitement, creativity, joy, desire; sadness, pain, loss, anger.

But through this looped, bipolar snag of binary terms, our game seeks the (re)generation of movement through oscillation, through the same kind of oscillation that keeps us locked into this bipolarity. I ask: How can we take the movement and force of this destructive, debilitating psychological and emotional energy, and use it against itself? This bipolar movement, this back-and-forth loop, this wobbly oscillation? Not an escape—there is no escape for the “anti-flâneur”—but a push through / beyond, a spiral

up and through the loop, through its own binary terms, a spiral into multidimensional movement beyond the two-dimensional static of the binary loop. This is the deployment of a kind of back-and-forth bipolar social relational mode, in which we might help each other, through such movement, to engage in a propulsive, creative social dynamic.

In a more general sense, we seek to develop similar modes of play around a poetics of “rehearsal aesthetics” that are permanently (self-)deployed, that ripple outward, perpetually proliferating and mutating, the everyday warping itself from within through spontaneously generated “rehearsals” based on scenario sketches and cues. Through the games, we rehearse other functions, habits, behaviors, and rituals, and thus, *become* those other functions. Through the games, through these “dazzling moments” in which “the possibility of living otherwise is glimpsed,” we “function” as the rehearsal for permanent festival and carnival, for that “transformation of everyday life...when the festival...has penetrated life and transformed it” (Highmore 124).

3. Life-as-art/Art-as-life: Putting the “fun” back in dysfunction through the ceremony of everyday life

As the previous section explores, Henri Lefebvre identifies a “general law of functionalism” in

which the everyday emerges as a “product” of functions (9). The general system of these functions under capitalism is a controlled consumerism that permeates all relations. As I argued, Gamboa’s anti-flâneur articulates the issue of general inescapability involved in such a situation in which all aspects of everyday life, including our internal, psychological and emotional terrain, have been colonized. Part of my argument rests on the idea that the concept of “escape” does not apply when speaking about the transformation of everyday life. Here, I wish to develop this concept further along two different but intersecting lines. On one hand, I argue for a Brechtian push for increased alienation (neurosis) as a way toward dis-alienation. On the other hand, I turn to Jerry Rojo’s interview on environmental theater as an opening toward another paradoxical strand of inquiry. Here, Rojo identifies the fear of his form of theater (environmental), and of involvement in life in general, as being one of *participation*. He states: “There is an element of immediacy and involvement, the implication being that you’re involved in life as opposed to escaping from it. That to me is one of the most important axioms of environmental theatre” (392). Two points of apparent paradox emerge with regard to performance and everyday life around these notions of participation and fear: Fully lived life involves *involvement*—immediate participation and

overcoming both the fear of that participation, and the impulse toward escape. But if the everyday comprises a fully colonizing, consumer-control system of alienating, neurotic functions that compel us to participate, then both participation, and the fear and dread that we feel about it, must be problematized further. This must occur specifically in relation to the everyday, and in relation to insistently participatory performative art practices like the “Pole Position” game, that operate within and through the everyday. In what exactly are we participating and/or not participating? What does it mean to “escape?” What exactly do we fear? Our general fear, dread, anxiety, angst—all of these are both cause and effect as functional elements in the production process of consumer control, spectacle society. All are bound up in the forced participation of a dysfunctional “functioning.”

On one level, then, our game seeks to problematize the notion of “function” through an embracing of *dysfunction*, a purposeful, homeopathic “*dysfunctioning*” of everyday life that operates therapeutically through the underlying dysfunction that defines consumer control’s “functionality.” Allan Kaprow’s notion of “lifelike art” offers a useful model with which to initially approach some of these questions around (dys)functionality and connections between art and the everyday. But while such art—

which he sees as “continuous with that life”—indeed presents a therapeutic possibility “to reintegrate the piecemeal reality we take for granted...as experience” (206), it nevertheless negates and undermines itself, to a certain extent, by its very terminology and description. After all, this art is “lifelike”—and thus, while theoretically “continuous with *that* life” (my emphasis), is still something *other than* “that” life. This framework maintains separate ontological realms mediated by a mimetic dynamic, rather than the kind of multivalent, slippery ontology based on mimesis that Taussig explores in Cuna society. Kaprow points to the limitations that emerged in the previous generation’s performance work of “lifelike art” through explicit framing—for example, with his own Happenings and other works, which, as McDonough notes, “inscribed [themselves] only too readily into the consumer spectacle of [their] setting[s]” as “melodramatic, scripted” “events” (112). However, these limitations persist in residual form when Kaprow asks, “[I]f lifelike art doesn’t resemble art as we’ve known it, but resembles real life, what then makes it art?” (216).

Here, Kaprow is on the right track in pointing out how “[I]f lifelike art can mean a way...of sharing responsibility for what may be the world’s most pressing problem”—namely, finding a way to reintegrate and “try to make sense out of the

countless disconnected, and sometimes very dangerous, pieces of our culture and to rediscover the whole” (216). According to this concept of art as playing various integrative roles, “art is a weaving of meaning-making activity with any or all parts of our lives” through “purposive and interpretive acts instead of mere routine behavior” (216). Kaprow argues that art’s key integrative role along these lines is in helping us toward self-knowledge (217). I agree with his notion of living art through “purposive and interpretive acts instead of mere routine behavior,” and with the potential for self-knowledge; these ideas are at the heart of our game’s play with repetition, rehearsal, and ritual. However, what Kaprow gestures toward and briefly touches on in this essay, but doesn’t quite seem to reach here, is an even more radical notion of interwoven (performance) art and everyday life, one that we find more clearly articulated in writings on Indigenous American art forms. I am thinking of some of Michael Taussig’s anthropological work, of course—particularly his examination of mimetic magic in wood carvings and other objects, as well as in storytelling—but I am also thinking more specifically of Gloria Anzaldúa and Paula Gunn Allen, who make explicit the radical difference between Western notions, and Indigenous American, tribal notions, of art and the everyday, in relation to performance. In the latter, according to Anzaldúa’s analysis, art and life

are not simply separate conceptual and physical spheres that are interwoven, but are actually one and the same thing. Here, there is no “lifelike art,” nor is life “art-like” or lived “artfully.” Here, the concept is something more like a symbiosis of “life-as-art” and “art-as-life.”

The notion of an interweaving of aesthetics and functionality in tribal societies plays a key role in this model, as with the obvious, perhaps overused examples of forms like basket-weaving and pottery. But oftentimes, Western analyses of tribal models of integrated art and everyday life reduce them to this interweaving of aesthetics and functionality in objects used in everyday life, while maintaining a binary division between the two realms. According to this kind of analysis, aesthetics and function may be interwoven in these objects, but they are still separate realms—brought together in a particular object that, while it might be used in everyday life, is not seen as both a reflection, and constitutive element, of the integrated aesthetic functionality underlying *all* of everyday life itself. Such analyses are the result of the compartmentalizing and objectifying “totalitarianism” that Adorno and Horkheimer point to as central to the Enlightenment project. Under this totalitarian impulse, “Myth turns into enlightenment, and nature into mere objectivity. Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their

power. Enlightenment behaves toward things as a dictator toward men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them” (9).

By contrast, the vision of tribal life and art painted by Anzaldúa and Allen is one of a full, constant integration of art and function, art and everyday life. As Anzaldúa explains in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, “In the ethno-poetics and performance of the shaman, my people, the Indians, did not split the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life. The religious, social and aesthetic purposes of art were all intertwined” (88). According to Anzaldúa, this integration rests on a specifically performative dynamic of “invoked art.” Through ritual enactment and ceremony, an art object’s power is invoked. The result is that “[s]ome works exist forever invoked, always in performance.... Invoked art is communal and speaks of everyday life” (89). This relationship between a work, performative invocation/enactment, and everyday life, is reflected in how art works are treated. As Anzaldúa notes, “Tribal cultures keep art works in honored and sacred places in the home and elsewhere... The works are treated not just as objects, but also as persons. The ‘witness’ is a participant in the enactment of the work in a ritual” (90).

Paula Gunn Allen similarly examines the integration of art and everyday life in *The Sacred*

Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions. Here, she looks more specifically at how Native American ceremony, ritual social function and aesthetic expression, and everyday life, are bound up in the same process of maintaining harmonious and healthy *function* (here I use the word purposefully, to invoke an entirely different set of connotations from that which Lefebvre points to in relation to the controlled consumerism of capitalist society's "general law of functionalism"). As Gunn points out, there are certainly delimitations in terms of separating out the time, space, and activities and behaviors for a particular ceremony, but what is often overlooked is that these delimitations occur within the matrix of a multitude of ceremonies through which the everyday life of communal relations remains in, or re-establishes, harmonious balance (62). The foregrounded, more obvious delineation of a particular ceremony's parameters serves as much to demarcate a separate sphere of experience as it does to highlight the constant blurring of delineation between aesthetic and functional experiences (to the point that they are one and the same) in the everyday. It is through this blurring that everyday communal life functions, and on which all social structures and relations are based. Allen explains that such an integration of art and life reflects a more general attempt at balance and harmony through a healing "restoration of wholeness,

for disease is a condition of division and separation from the harmony of the whole" (60). Without ceremony, everyday life cannot function. Tribal life depends on ceremony, which "create[s] and support[s] the sense of community" (63). As Allen explains, "The purpose of ceremony is to integrate: to fuse the individual with his or her fellows, the community of people with that of the other kingdoms, and this larger communal group with the worlds beyond this one. A raising or expansion of individual consciousness naturally accompanies this process" (62). Key here is the connection to Allen's notion that part of the ceremonial function is to maintain the "metaphysical sense of reality" in which "all that exists [is] symbolic...the earth is alive in the same sense that human beings are alive" (70). In other words, in contrast to the disenchantment of everyday life that Adorno and Horkheimer attribute to the Enlightenment's rationalist totalitarianism, ceremony is not just another realm of integrated art and function in everyday life through which communal structures are maintained; rather, ceremony is the perpetual re-enchantment of everyday life because ceremony *is* life, and life is ceremony. This is a model not of "lifelike art," but of life-as-art and art-as-life.

4. Conclusion

A more general mode of compulsive consumptive existence? The (neo)colonial experience? The same old/new colonial wound? A 21st century blues?

The result of repeating the obsessive-compulsive compulsory habits built into spectacle existence, spectacle consumption, spectacle desire and manufactured desire, false desire, false emotion? Built into the inescapable desert of the hyperreal urban everyday?

All of us wobbly, fragmented, all of us bouncing back and forth between these walls / freeways / traffic lights / surveillance cams, caught up in the crossfire of (others') desires at odds with our own, often unaware of our own, bouncing from manic highs to depressive lows, from one illusory representation of desire to another, we mimic excitement, creativity, joy, desire; sadness, pain, loss, anger.

Mimicking excitement, creativity, joy, desire?

Mimicking sadness, pain, loss, anger?

All emotions mimicked, all interaction pre-scripted performance mimicry, the preformed performance of everyday life as a repetition of what we think "happy" and "sad" look/feel like (media representation, regulation, panoptic surveillance, ubiquitous economic relations, permeation, a

seamless suturing, digital "interaction," socially networked isolation, twit-tered templates, LOL!!!!, hi!!!!, texting, sexting, emoticon identities—

8-P <3 (-:

—slippages between digital (self) and (digital) avatar, rhetoric of exclamation point pointlessness,

omg—

u c how happy I am!!!!

u c how excited we all r!!!!

u c how much u mean 2 me!!!!!!! !!! !)—

?

—Meanwhile, real emotions, real desire, real needs, real hunger, real pain,

loss?—

Must go somewhere, must channel, must make self known, expressed, explicit.

Authentic? "Real"?

—How to take the movement and force of this destructive, debilitating psychological and emotional energy, and use it against itself?

—How to help one another, through such movement. How to engage in a propulsive, creative social dynamic built on/through this inescapable pathological, binary, bipolar oscillation?

—How to re-enchant the everyday?

How to have some fun.

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