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DIALOGUE

Knowledge as Production: A Dialogue with Liam Gillick

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Dialogue between Liam Gillick and Lucy Cotter, sketching out a topography of artistic research in relation to issues of art production, knowledge work and labour.

Liam Gillick: I've almost willfully avoided looking at the emerging discussion or discourse around artistic research until now. I don't know why I'm resistant to it, because it is something I'm clearly interested in, and I'm interested in it structurally. I think it has to do with the connection with potentially academic associations of the idea of research that distresses me a bit. I am aware that young curators thinking about exhibitions and curating in institutional structures sometimes talk about research when they mean looking something up or reading. That's not research, that's reading. The whole idea of research opens up a lot of potential problems for me and anxieties, which is odd because research is not supposed to make you anxious. Why would it make you anxious?

Lucy Cotter: I find the term "artistic research" unhelpful in this respect. I prefer to think about knowledge production – within the artistic, outside the artistic and across the artistic/non-artistic. Within this publication I've avoided elaborate discussions about the term "research", what that means or how it might be defined exactly, because such discussions often seem to miss the point of the potential of what artistic research *could* mean. This oversight partly lies in this focus on the term "research", with the almost inevitable relapse into academic ways of thinking. The notion of "knowledge production" is also problematic, of course. I prefer the term "non-knowledge" production, as Sarat Maharaj calls it, which is more useful in relation to art because "knowledge production" again pushes towards some kind of a defined outcome, pushes back to academia indirectly somehow.

LG: Or good social work. Who would be against that? The idea of "knowledge production" as a phrase seems to work quite well when you look at certain structures for grant applications or institutional missions. It gets close to this idea of knowledge production as always being a good thing. It would always imply some form of social good and that's also difficult because it seems to limit the potential of art, even if there's nothing inherent about the idea of knowledge production that means it should be more friendly or progressive.

LC: Acknowledging the pitfalls of terms like "artistic research" and "knowledge production" and how they influence the emerging field, I still want to work with the potential of taking art seriously as a field that thinks differently. What happens when art has a more direct dialogue with other disciplines and non-artistic discourses? There is a widening of the frame in artistic research discourse that I find important. It's a different shift than the emergence of Visual Studies as an expanded frame of reference, although it also resonates with wider socio-economic and cultural shifts. In your practice you often address the division of labor as well as shifts in historic concepts of work and production within and outside of the artistic, drawing parallels between them. Coming from that angle, why do you think artistic research discourse has been emerged over the past 10–15 years? We can put it down to the Bologna Accord, but although it's a factor, that seems too limited a view to me.

LG: Well, here in America, the Bologna Accord is not something that is part of the consciousness at all. Yet some of the aspects we're talking about are also happening here, so it's more than just some sort of process

instrumentalization or a kind of reimagined set of educational procedures. I think that some of it is technological and some of it is, as it were, cultural. The technological aspects are so obvious that many of us can't bear to even talk about it. Yet it clearly has to do with the relative ease of communicating and exchanging ideas or information. It has to do with the different speeds at which various professional or institutional or professional frameworks adopt those things. In the early 1990s when I started showing at Galerie Esther Schipper there was a great deal of communication between the various artists and curators involved. There weren't many other people doing it then. We were operating in a kind of sphere of communication that was quite limited but seemed to have shared ideals at some level. As more and more people join this way of communicating or become part of it, it affects the way people respond to and deal with flows of information and ideas. It's hard to say exactly what happens, but something changes, I think.

LC: That makes me think about speed also being a protagonist in producing the discursive turn in art. Because things don't have to be physical, the image is at the same level as the text. Even in the physical presentation of work, there is often no difference materially between a corporate report and an artistic project. Most young artists I know make their work on their laptop and it pretty much stays there. Perhaps the call for artistic research is also a fight for something that isn't working at the same speed, although in a way it is moving faster than it. Maybe the notion of research is a carving out of something that is not quickly produced for the market and presented. That's perhaps too romantic a notion of research, but there is something in there that resists that speed. On the other hand, the very expectation of the production of text and so on seems to also speed discourse up. It creates the demand for constant references and being in touch with existing discourses that are changing rapidly.

LG: Yes, I think from my perspective, from say 1994 onwards, there was a new form of exchange that was being fought over. It was being gently fought over, not being wrenched apart, but there was still a kind of struggle for power and dominance. Also with more and more people using it, it was growing and shifting. I think some forms of artistic research or non-knowledge production are connected to this. They have two distinct pulls or stresses. One is that, at some level, they do somewhat mimic this idea of open thought, of thinking without goals, which is so much part of the origin of the Internet and the origin of new technology. During that period, the technological world stole all the words, like "creativity", and even "curate." So I think a lot of artists have been using complicated strategies to dump more information on you than you could ever use, in order to change the forms of exchange from virtual to one-to-one, to undermine moments of judgment and to play with the way identity is directed — think of Thomas Hirschhorn or Hito Steyerl and many others.

But also at some level what's happened is the problem of the artwork, which seems to be a very pre-Internet problem. The problem of the authority of the discrete artwork also becomes less of a problem at the same time, because concurrent with this you get a return to a desire to avoid all forms of research. There's a return to a sort of abstraction or the artwork is a thing in itself that tries to suggest some autonomy or some resistance by its "artness". So you'll get this phenomenon where there are products or side elements or backdrop elements to research or to research as artwork, which end up being or having this resistant quality. The thing that traditionally was held by the optimistic modernist artwork, this kind of autonomous quality, is now held by the stage or the setting or the framework of the book or the design of the location of where the event takes place, whether it is public, private or semi-open. These became the issues, I think, in the last twenty years for a lot of artists — Rirkrit Tiravanija and Philippe Parreno have both pioneered this.

LC: Is this why you dealt with the notion of "outside of any given context" in *A Syntax of Dependency* (2011), your collaborative work with Lawrence Weiner at M HKA in Antwerp? Was it a strategy?

LG: Yeah, to a point. The people who have been most difficult to deal with in the last twenty years have been the ones that would expect you to be excited about the fact that they've set up a lab or a knowledge production environment or a "researchy" sounding sponsored-type think tank. The very first time I came across this as a very concrete thing was at least fifteen years ago in London Westminster's Council, which has traditionally been a liberal Tory entity. Being responsible for a number of artworks, plus having the responsibility to put some percentage of their budget into public art, they decided to change their policy on public art. They called a meeting where they invited a couple of artists plus a whole bunch of other people to consider the idea that instead of dealing with public artworks, they should give money towards people who want to

do research projects as art. They thought I'd be really happy to hear this, but I remember saying that I was dreaming of putting great big artworks in the street that were in the way and bothering people. Of course this was when everyone started stumbling back and saying, "Well, hang on a second, the reason you want to do this is to avoid having to take responsibility for physical things in space that are not the same as development and so on". In the semi-public area there would still be things, but those things would all come from private developers or the few people who are temporarily given the ability to take over some space. In the meantime, they were going to be using artists like parallel institutions to kind of think about it, but not do it. I don't think they really understood that research is not limited to making reports on things. This is why it is quite interesting when you talk about this terminology, because we know that it's not quite the right term because the idea of art research implies that there's actually some research being done.

LC: Perhaps we have to go back to the notion of what research is and in particular to its relationship to materiality. I'm interested in both how material and how immaterial your practice has been over a long time and I really like the tension between the two. You've made a point of producing and creating a certain awareness for it, also putting a certain history of labor to the fore, which has largely been kept outside of the gallery space but is actually manifest in the production of objects. There have been publications like Richard Sennet's *The Craftsman* emerging recently in this discourse, and at times a move towards a fetish for the hands-on connection, but setting that mindset aside, can we consider the non-knowledge that comes out of material production? I don't want to be nostalgic about it, but I do want to question the extent to which materiality is present in current art production. Working in a virtual or a digital way isn't entirely non-material, of course. But I started out as an artist making sculpture and artists books. I used printmaking techniques and made physical structures in space. Different kinds of knowledge came through those processes that I've never been able to access using a computer, even when I used it to make artist's books. I'm interested in that knowledge being present in artistic research and also in its articulation for people who are not privy to it, without it being a fetishization.

LG: Yes, sometimes I forget to say simple things about stuff. To a certain extent, I also use the computer all the time, but I started using it in 1987, the year I left art school. I've pretty much used it consistently since then, which sounds unremarkable now, but it was remarkable then to use the computer as your main repository of ideas and also your site of planning production and commentary on your own work, without making computer or digital art. I guess a notebook could potentially be the same thing, but it always has this quality of a notebook. With the exception of Richard Hamilton, who I'm interested in, transliterating, as it were, Duchamp's notebooks, deciphering and re-laying them out, notebook always has this quality of "notebookness," whereas the computer can expand itself in different ways. So I deliberately used it as a point where you could shift the level of expansion and contraction, or privacy or "publicness" of an idea easily through the sorting and organizing and thinking and working process of how you use the computer.

LC: There's a natural shift to the public.

LG: Exactly. A good example would be what was I doing yesterday, organizing photographs that document an event that happened last summer in France, *To the Moon via the Beach* at LUMA Arles. The XIF data tells you exactly to the second when each photograph was taken and I'm trying to organize a book that can reconstruct an event from every angle, from every photographer. Six or seven people documented that event and through the data on the images I can construct a timeline of the event viewed from different perspectives. This is a very "computery" type thing to do, but I have a problem with it because some of the cameras were not set to the right time zone, so I have to guess which time zone they were on. So I try to find a way to adjust that metadata and then re-sort everything with the new metadata without going through the 3,000 images and re-writing it by hand. It becomes a kind of computer-internal, computer-type problem. On the other hand, I'm also editing a text, wittily enough, on research — the idea of research as an idea — which actually ended up talking about curating more than about making art. It talks about curating as research. So that's using the computer like a typewriter. Then the third thing I'm doing at the same time is flipping screens and working on a big public artwork which is going on in Sweden in the city of Lund, which is a set of benches and shelving systems that run through a park and through the new city hall offices and out through the building into the park again, so it draws a line of places to sit and places to keep things, but inside a public building and outside in the park.

LC: It's interesting that it cuts across the knowledge production space into the social space of the same structures, with this idea of the benches and the storage.

LG: Exactly. You've got these different articulations, coming back to what you were saying about how other things materialize themselves and what is this quality of art. How do these things find their place in the world? How do they manifest themselves? For me it's about deciding, a bit like when you have that EQ thing that we used to have for the hi-fi systems where you have little sliders that change all of the frequencies. It can often be divided into thirty different sets of frequencies. I turn up some of them and turn some down depending on how I feel or what I'm addressing at any given moment.

LC: Do you mean that it acts like a kind of sliding scale, from material to immaterial production?

LG: Exactly. But I'll suddenly realize that this problem, of trying to work out how to alter the metadata from these photographs in order to reconstruct an event from many perspectives, has something to do with something else. So it's a kind of coming back to Sarat's idea of non-knowledge production. It's a form of non-knowledge production because these things feed each other, but they don't feed each other acritically and uncritically. You're seeing the limits of a procedure and it affects your thinking about something else. So even though the benches and shelving systems for Sweden appear to be fairly straightforward and have a kind of simple, straightforward aspect to them, they are somehow affected by trying to address the problem of how to shift time zones and metadata for photographs without having to do all this work myself by hand.

LC: Isn't this really about material resistance? When I moved from working as an artist into writing and other things, one of the things that happened, which was positive at the outset, was the absence of material resistance. You were talking about the computer and computer-type problems. The "cut and paste" option did a lot for me on a mental level, the fact that I could pull things from many sites and bring them together in writing with no material resistance made a lot possible creatively. But on the other hand, I can also see that the interesting, creative problems that came out of material resistance do not arise in the same way as a result and therefore I do not address them in my work. There are bodies of work that are not made because I don't have those problems.

LG: I agree with you completely. Because of course why should art be a struggle of any sort whatsoever, let alone an issue about material resistance, the main requirement for it? So, of course, there's something very attractive and seductive about finding new, smooth ways through something, and certainly in the 90s that was exactly what I did. I was asking myself, how can I work? How can I function? How can I exist? What should I value and what should be important? I would start to write the scripts for *McNamara*, for example, because I could use the computer and carry it with me. It was the time of the first laptops that you could actually afford. I could carry the script on a floppy disc in my pocket and that's my art. So it had something to do with the idea that art should be easy in a way. I don't see why I can't carry this thing and work on it and add to it all the time. Now you could say you could do that with a manuscript, but it's not the same as the copy-paste thing and the aspect of smoothness. Of course what happens is that as the technology advances or develops, the smoothness becomes overly complicated by a facility to do be able to do something. It starts to make the smoothness so fast and so "slidey" that you kind of run away with yourself.

LC: You slide past things.

LG: You slide past everything. So then you sort of have to double back a little bit. This idea of resistance becomes something that you have to address as an idea as much as actually experiencing it. I don't think you necessarily have to experience it, but you have to deal with it or think about it. Of course some people get around that by literally dealing with the manipulation of objects in space and the placement of the object in space. Other people do it by working on settings and the designed component of their research, as it were, the formal aspects of it. And other people do it by trying to find new routes through modes of research and communication that are not smooth. It's a bit like trying to get from one place to another by riding on a highway or going on a horse across the highway and over a railroad track through a stream.

LC: It's potentially still going from A to B, but it's more likely that the horse will need water halfway across the road and have to turn left and take another corner or get hit by a car.

LG: Yes, and part of this aspect of research which is analogous to taking a route across many terrains is about going to something without going to do the thing it's there for, like going to the library without reading books. Of course that's the most literal, kind of negative aspect of research, but one component of art as research has to do with not using a pen to stir your coffee with but looking at the relationships between the pen and the coffee and the hierarchy between the pen and the coffee and the piece of paper or something odd, and then maybe going to thinking about where the pen is made. And, you see, it starts to generate connections that either evade standard, sort of rationalized forms of exchange or add to new ones that people hadn't really noticed before, and that the generalized kinds of forms of exchange in society can't be bothered to finance.

LC: I'm picturing it as a diagram where you have the pen and the cup and normally the arrows point inwards to think across the relationship between those objects. The fact that they exist is a given and the relationship between them is taken as obvious. But when the artist deals with the same set-up, the arrows are as likely to point outwards.

LG: Something like that, but I think what we're dealing with here, which is why it's such a problem, is also a whole set of art that deals with a new awareness of these directions that are being indicated or pointed out and therefore includes a consciousness of which direction things are pointing in some of the work or the critical work. This doesn't mean that everything has become formalistic and disappears in a kind of infinite reflection of itself. Within this apparent terrain, it's not all just about good works; there are strong elements of difference within the work itself. There's an enormous difference between my *McNamara* work from 1994 and Danh Vo's recent *McNamara* work for example. I write some films, he bought some artifacts. They're complementary, but they're extremely different forms of research, as it were, and they point in different directions. They invite you to stand beside the artist and look in different ways. They suggest different levels of engagement, I would say.

LC: It makes me think of a very old-fashioned idea of uniqueness. There is space in art for both forms of individuality, which, if the outcomes were produced differently, might collapse into each other because the links are so direct and apparent, they would appear to deal with the same thing. They would seem somehow to be having a conversation, but the individuality of the artist and how they deal with this may actually produce a situation where there's almost no correlation even if the topic is the same.

LG: Exactly, but you've got to remember also that for some people some aspect of the research component or art in relation to research and vice-versa has to do with making things so complicated that people can't follow what's going on completely. Thereby it's either protecting the artist, by creating this kind of series of buffers and this mass of information and ideas around a work and, on the other hand, also making it more difficult to see where's the art moment in any given work, right? And this, I think, is deliberate. It is the aspect of art research that resists the instrumentalisation of art where it's used only for good social work, which is that some of that work is done in order to be deliberately confusing.

LC: I see your point, but can we think a little further about protection and the need for a buffer? I think this goes back to our earlier conversation about shifts in technology and the impossibility of the placement of the artist somehow.

LG: Yes, I've actually been trying to experiment with not doing it for a year to see what happens. Not having a research component, as it were. Like not having a topic or a project or a prototype on the horizon or whatever other analogy you could use.

LC: Do you mean shifting into just doing or shifting into non-action? Or do you know yet?

LG: Well, what I've been doing is basically doing lots of different things that are not compatible with each other. This culminated in the exhibition I did at Taro Nasu gallery in Tokyo called *Vertical Disintegration*, which is when a product is produced by a company where all of the component products are produced by autonomous companies that have been shared by the main company. A close example would be Airbus, for example, where the wings are made in France and the fuselage is made by another company in the U.S. and so on. But it's not quite that simple, because vertical disintegration is usually willed by a company or a corporation or an organisation. It's a slightly more complicated idea of organisation of management.

LC: Is it about *not* locating power outside of the ownership?

LG: Yes, the component manufacturers are completely separate entities that are not ruled or controlled by the central organisation.

LC: So you're doing various things means taking no responsibility?

LG: Exactly. I started to do these component productions of components, i.e. exhibitions or works or modes of thought or ways of functioning that were disintegrated, literally vertically disintegrated. No one notices any difference, but I know it because I feel it. I'm closer to the event or closer to the moment of exchange because I've removed the bit to talk about that is the research component.

Let me give an example. I did a three-person show in Paris at the beginning of the year with two artists I'd never worked with who are both younger, Benoit Maire and Falke Pisano, where I went and spent time living above a bookshop and we came up with the work while we were there. So this was the first gesture. The second one was to go to Korea and work with two outside curators. We took over a private gallery and we did our own show within someone else's gallery. The third gesture was to do a residency in the north of Scotland at The Highland Institute of Contemporary Art — where I didn't actually go, but I stayed in New York and did it here, as it were, as if I was there. I researched forms of courtyard housing, but it wasn't so much research. In a sense there was more production than research. And then going to Tokyo and doing a show that brings together all these fragments.

LC: You just made the distinction between production and research, but isn't that production as research?

LG: It actually very quickly turned into a form of production, the research I was doing.

LC: Your research sounds to me like some of the things you talked about in your writings on the shift from planning to speculation. It almost implies planning, but it doesn't necessarily have to.

LG: No, but for years, I've tended to think, "Okay, I'm basically working on this; I have this area I'm interested in. Everything I'm doing is surrounded by this. I can protect myself by pushing that apparent topic, as it were, further away from myself and by extension the border between me and everyone else. That can be the moat within which people can swim while I get on with what I'm doing". I decided for a year just to abandon doing that or to abandon thinking that way. What happens is that the "artistness" of your existence becomes more important. It's been really fascinating to have a glimpse of what it feels like to be an artist in the raw, as it were, but I don't like it. I realize now that I need a topic, I need a problem. I need an area of research. It's a bit sad maybe, but it's important. I am in the middle of writing a text about research that maybe touches on this. There's only one decent line in it, unfortunately, which is a shame.

LC: Well, let's recycle it at least. What is it?

LG: It says, "Research is at the basis of certain artistic practices and some methodologies deployed by the complete curator" – I won't go into what that term means. "However, research cannot be independently verified unless enacted within the frame of the exhibition. Research may suggest lengthy engagement while the actual intensity of finding out is impossible to gauge." Right? "The gathering of material without judgment may be research, as could the detailed investigation of one minor object. Research carries scientific authority, research implies an evacuation from zones of commodified exchange and directs us toward the apparent authority of the institutional library or laboratory. Alone it cannot build better systems or structures, yet it can point out how far away they still appear to be." The bit that was important was the thing about not being independently verified. If you say or you imply that you're involved in research, you don't really mean sitting around all day staring out the window or going carefully through a whole large number of things. It does something very important historically to the notion of what an artist is doing, in a strange way.

LC: I have been thinking that one of the disturbances and maybe one of the things to fight for within the emerging field of artistic research is the right to inactivity. The productivity of inactivity has always been key to artistic practice and the proximity of the academic system imposes some kind of expectations, criteria, which do not necessarily recognize inactivity as a mode of production.

LG: Well, a good example would be my ex father-in-law, who's a scientist. He researches chemistry, so he spends a lot of time just thinking and diddling around and then most of the rest of the time writing research papers which accrete knowledge, adding another little component to this enormous picture. Of course the problem with the term "research" is that it implies those two things might be taking place in a way.

LC: Can we pause here for a second to talk about the differences and the overlap between the artist who's diddling around, thinking or trying not to think and the scientist who's diddling around?

LG: Peer review is what I would say, because as a scientist reviewing and being reviewed constantly is essentially what you're doing. You're reviewing other people's papers and then they're reviewing your papers, essentially. But you're also playing with hierarchy, because you're battling for authorship all the time. You're including and excluding certain people in a kind of hierarchy all the time.

LC: Don't you think that exists in the art world too?

LG: It absolutely exists, but it exists in ways that are different. The people who are the junior authors of a paper are also potentially your future peers. When you're an architect, you're a junior because you'll become a senior, whereas that's not the same usually with the hierarchies of art. Let's say that I work with a fabricator in Berlin. Unless he decides to stop being a fabricator and make his own art, even if he appears to be doing the same thing he's been doing for me, he is not a peer. In terms of a hierarchical relationship, he's also not an apprentice. Do you see what I mean?

What I tried to set up was this kind of relationship between discourse and research, because they're intentionally each other as far as I'm concerned. Discourse is excessively verifiable, but it becomes a partner of research and they feed into each other. There's a push and pull between discourse and research, because of course the discursive component of art, when it's done publically, is verifiable. You can see the use of these people talking. You can witness what they're saying, whereas research is double, which is not necessarily witnessable, like the predicament for the Highlands of Scotland. You have to believe me that I went to Scotland and I researched what's called courtyard housing, which is low-rise, high-density housing. But I didn't go there and the research I did didn't involve looking very deeply into the idea of existing forms of courtyard housing, even though that's what I said I was doing. I got caught up in a completely different thing, which was examining ground plans of the kind of architectural sublime, which is the ultimate kind of expression of early modernist architecture, the private villa. Then I took fragments of the ground plans of iconic private villas and used them as the basis to design new forms of low-rise, high-density housing based on my components from important private houses. So that's a good example of me using research as a form of production that doesn't involve directly examining in detail the thing I said I'm researching. What I did was that I produced a new set of plans.

LC: It's like there's a war in our brains because on the one hand, we have the legacy of what research has meant, and on the other hand, there's the potential for it to be something else. You try and embrace the potential, but on the other hand, you are fighting the demons all the way along.

LG: But I've noticed a tendency in the last ten years with the maturing of the kind of the new curatorial model for people to start saying to certain types of artists like me, "What is this work derived from?" or, "Where is this work derived from?" So there's an assumption that it has to do with reiteration and recuperation of something.

LC: Isn't that part of the problem of the shift of the discursive away from the material? Because you have a generation of curators that have possibly never dealt with the work materially, or at least to a very limited extent.

LG: Right. But they're saying this in nice ways. They're implying that as a good artist that you are probably involved in research, which involves things that can be independently verified. And rather than this weird process where the root often involves traversing flows, which require specific tools, like in the case of the eight-lane highway it might involve speed or luck. In another case, it might involve going into the water and being just swept downstream until you can get to the other side, or it might involve sending out a decoy to take the hit for you, as it were, or to check the way or using a stick to see what the ground is made of. Instead of choosing a route where you can see potentially what the result is going to be.

LC: When I think about artists' ways of thinking, I also think about the space to be associative instead of analytical. Certainly, the analysis may come later at some point, but as we were saying earlier, there are different components that don't necessarily relate to each other even if they appear to. From an external point of view, you look for some kind of framework of references that explain the production or presence of an element. But artistic thinking often works through chains that are more associative than analytical.

LG: I agree with you and I like this term "associative". The problem is that when you work like that, what happens is that you get certain types of artists...

LC: Yes, but the term "associative thinking" sounds more random than it is in practice. Looking back on what we talked about much earlier – about you working on three projects at the one time – associative thinking has paths that engage with this production of problems that comes through the material, among other things. Therefore, the elements that are produced do come from somewhere. I think it may be partly about intuition, but not in the standard understanding of the term. Henri Bergson's understanding of the notion of intuition as method is perhaps closer to what's actually going on, not a fluffy understanding of intuition. There are tracks being laid across — I liked your term "traversing" — there's an act of traversing going on, that is the difference between a post-modern anything-goes and a not anything goes.

LG: Right.

LC: It goes back to what I was thinking about non-action and inactivity. I see it like a mechanism, with things clogging the works in different directions both when artistic research opens up a link to academia and in terms of wider market forces on the art market. But it's very hard to keep that space open without romanticizing it.

LG: Yes. It's a bit like years ago when John Baldessari wrote these kind of slightly truism-type artworks and he would say a certain type of work, conceptual work, doesn't reach the highest prices at auction or whatever it would be. One thing that's for sure is that when people feel something you've produced is related to something that has some research component that's not entirely apparent in every component of the work that they're viewing, they believe that there may be a trick that they're not seeing. Therefore it reduces the surface price of the work in a way, which is actually true.

People want to know what is absent and this is of course a conscious thing, right? When you work in research as a methodology, when you use research as a sort of method, you deliberately do it in order to potentially withhold a certain aspect or component of the work. People will want to know what's missing. Why am I getting this? What's all the other stuff that I'm not getting? It creates both an allure and an interest in what that other stuff is, but it also creates an anxiety about the status of the thing that you exchange with someone.

LC: The alternative is to go for the earlier model of art as research work, like with Art and Language.

LG: Yes, what happens then is that the artist starts presenting the entire product of the research because of a distrust of transparency, because transparency starts to become a mainstream, a neo-liberal New Social Democrat kind of model. Artists decided they didn't want to do that because research is inherently not verifiable and you're not necessarily seeing people doing it. Of course there are artists who literally do it and enact it in public. That's where you get the edges of participation and relational aesthetics and the confusion about what these things are, but generally speaking there's always an absence. It implies that when you see a work, you're seeing something that's partial. Now that's true about Ellsworth Kelly too. When you see one painting, you're also not seeing all the other paintings that Kelly has done, but frankly, the not seeing is something that you can imagine and it's not a problem.

LC: So artistic research inevitably brings up the question of the location of the work of art.

LG: Research as a method creates a troubling absence of the work. It may be an important component that can't find a form, and therefore there might be an anxiety about what is the nature of this kind of art that's being done here. What's the important bit? Now I think this would be true for Carey Young, for example. We're not really sure if her standing in the gallery doing something or having a conversation is the good art

bit or is it maybe that bit where she researched all the legal frameworks? Maybe that should come out in a different form? It creates also a potential for input to the artwork by other people because other people start to think and contribute to what they think would be useful.

LC: Art has always held a multiple position in terms of its relation to a public, because on the one hand there's the notion of the universal artwork that can speak to everybody, and on the other hand, there's a huge amount of information you have to access to be on top of the discourse. The field of artistic research becoming a discipline means that art may be allowed to be taken more seriously and may be conceived as possibly producing knowledge of some kind that may be interesting outside of a very narrow field. Yet the price of this acknowledgement seems to be transparency, with academics often expecting artists to make the inner workings of their practice publicly available. Rather than providing a practice-based perspective on art, they are asked to "tell all their secrets" so to speak. I see that as a significant problem. It's asking the wrong questions somehow.

LG: Yes. I was taught by Michael Craig Martin as well as by Mary Kelly and Susan Hiller, who both used forms of research as a way; the idea of working on a project or producing, researching something in its fairly original sense in terms of contemporary art. I learned from that and also from the fact that personal identity and post-colonialism often came out in terms of research. If you read the section in the book on *Magiciens de la Terre* about Alfredo Jarr, he talks very openly about deciding on a certain method of working, which involved research.[1] It's because he wanted to get into the art world—he's very open about it—and tell a certain set of stories and the way to do that would be to use research as a kind of model and then present the findings of the research as art. I think some of these kinds of methods influenced me, not him necessarily, as a straight, white man growing up in London, which is historically a position of privilege to a certain extent. It's not the work itself that was the thing to do, but the way of working.

LC: Previously one of the ways to be a good artist was to be a bad academic, but something like dealing with post-colonialism raised certain questions of responsibility and the possibility that the artist could be somebody who reads, who knows things and who may be up on all of the academic discourses and may choose to then work differently. That process may not be visible in the artwork and doesn't have to be, but that level of engagement of the work is something I find important in artistic research. This can, but does not necessarily have anything to do with the production of what artist WJM Kok calls "researchistic art" because — and here we go back to materiality — very often what happens in the work itself comes through the possibilities offered by a particular medium, what can be held in video, for example, that can't be held in a text.

LG: Right, right. Well, you've got multiple kinds of strands of production because you need to use these different methods. But of course some of it for me has a kind of politics because if Mary Kelly needs to use different research methods and different forms of output in order to tell a complex story about identity and where she stands in relation to power and representation and the child and the other and the mother and whatnot, maybe the way I should use a similar method, but not necessarily address those questions, is to use that as a way to examine where I stand. I am using similar methods to be conscious of how I am working as an artist. That's how I started doing it that way, when I made the decision to use "researchistic" kind of methods, as you called it, in order to examine some of these things. So it's very deliberate.

LC: It's like a self-consciousness of the division of labor in relation to your position, in relation to the world and art discourse.

LG: Exactly, but of course what's happened is that these practices have matured and shifted and altered and been affected also by the fact that advanced curatorial thinking has often been sympathetic to the idea of working closely alongside artists who are researching something. Like the curator Maria Lind's practice for example, which involves working with artists who are involved in research because you want to have proximity to someone who's producing ideas over a long period of time. There's also another component, an institutional component to this. When I started to work and encounter institutions — primarily smallish ones, but institutions nonetheless with a sense of education and a public role — directors didn't have any budget for this kind of thing, but they would have an education budget and an exhibition-building budget.

[1] Lucy Steeds et al, *Making Art Global (Part 2): "Magiciens de la Terre" 1989*, Afterall, 2013.

So Rikrit [Tiravanija] and I and various other people that we worked alongside deployed the education and exhibition-building budget to make our exhibitions. The exhibition would be a form of research in itself – *The Trial of Pol Pot* or *The Moral Maze* that I did with Philippe Parreno in Dijon, for example. The problem of course became what gets kept by the institution and what you find is that things are not kept. What they've kept is something else, so you have this weird sense that something happened, but the material record is actually a totally parallel history.

Liam Gillick's (Aylesbury, UK, 1964) work has been included in numerous important exhibitions including documenta and the Venice, Berlin and Istanbul Biennales, representing Germany in 2009 in Venice. Solo museum exhibitions have taken place at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Museum of Modern Art, New York and Tate, London. Gillick has been a prolific writer and critic of contemporary art, contributing to Artforum, October, Frieze and e-flux Journal. He is the author of a number of books including a volume of his selected critical writing. The book *Industry and Intelligence: Contemporary Art Since 1820* was published by Columbia University Press in 2016. Public works include the British Government Home Office (Interior Ministry) building, London and the Lufthansa Headquarters, Frankfurt. His recent short films address the construction of the creative persona in light of the enduring mutability of the contemporary artist as a cultural figure: Margin Time (2012) The Heavenly Lagoon (2013) and Hamilton: A Film by Liam Gillick (2014).

Lucy Cotter is an independent writer and curator whose practice explores contemporary art's relationship with aesthetics, politics and the unknown. She was curator of the Dutch pavilion of the 57th Venice Biennale 2017, presenting *Cinema Olanda* with artist Wendelien van Oldenborgh. www.lucycotter.org/.

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