S C O P E

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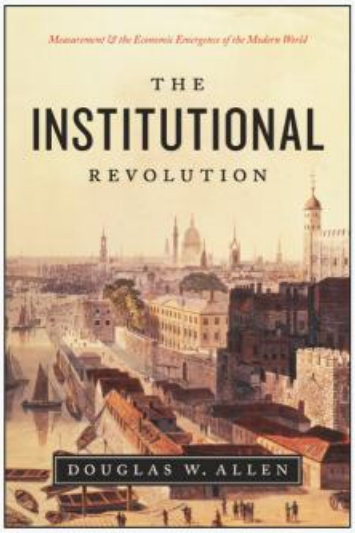

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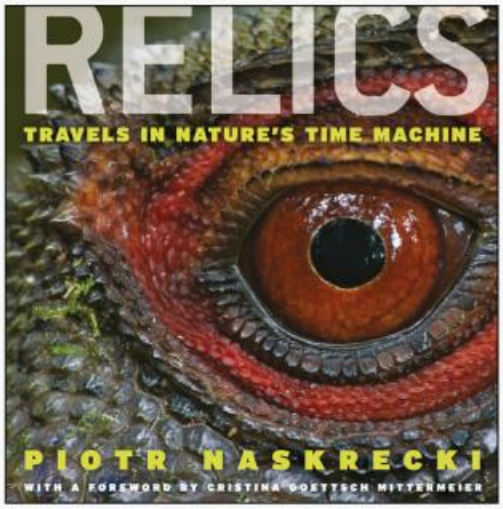

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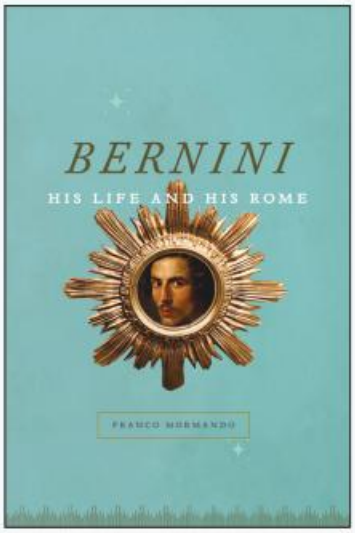

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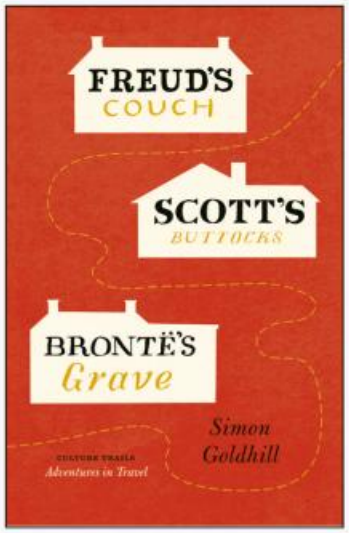

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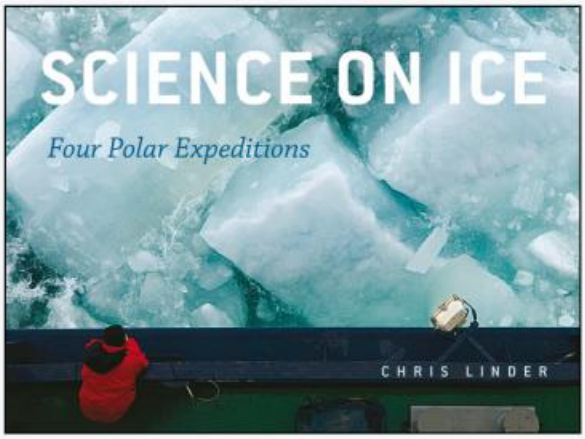

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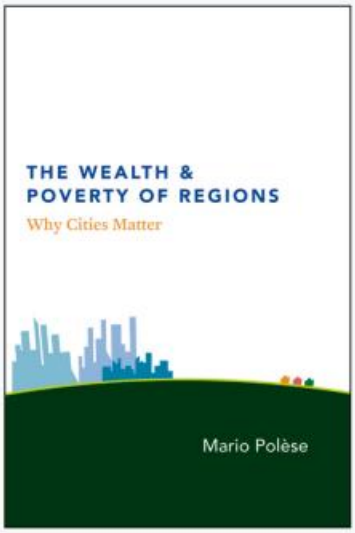

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S C O P E

Art by Isabelle Menin

Once a natural part of everyday life,
it is now a carefully-targeted attribute of countless
tangible and intangible products,
each backed by millions of dollars in marketing.

No longer a thing we have,
it is increasingly a thing we must buy.

The question is very simple.

Who stole fun?

by Lisa Meekison, *page 20*

S C O P E

Also...

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Front cover:
"Release" (2011), by Peju Alatise
http://www.pejualatise.com

We are in space camp

Says She's Ms. Blat, the Brooklyn duo formed in 2008 by Lottie Leymarie and Bret Puchir, comes on like a sudden thunderstorm, all mad-fast piano work urged along by drums and vocals. SCOPE learns about where they came from —and where they're headed

http://www.saysshesmsblat.com


New Yo
Says She's Ms. Blat

Says She's Ms. Blat, self-titled debut album, released September 2009

I Made This One Up 03:21
Not Sorry 04:28
Crazy Little Eyelids 02:10
So Long! (If I Had More Money!) 02:38
Poseurs 03:13
All These People 02:26
In Stride 02:25
Back, Again 03:23

New album due out in the first half 2012

SCOPE: *Which musicians most influenced you growing up?*

Lottie Leymarie: That is always such a hard question. I grew up with parents that had a large vinyl collection. My mom liked harder 70s rock, soul, and hippie-era Neil Young type stuff. My dad listened to southern rock and country. I was also influenced as a piano student by the music I played. I loved Scott Joplin and Thelonious Monk, Bach and Beethoven. I spent most of the 90's listening to grunge and Courtney Love mixed with hip hop and hardcore from that era. Speaking for Bret, he's a blues and soul guy.

SCOPE: *Who do you listen to now?*

Leymarie: So much. It's ridiculous the amount of stuff that is out there. The new Tom Waits and Richard Swift albums have been on rotation. I love Man Man and Two Gallants and Beirut. I am also addicted to Eastern European Roma music and Balkan brass stuff.

SCOPE: *Do you and Bret have the same musical taste?*

Leymarie: We both grew up in the 90's, so we have a love of the pop music from those days. As I said before, he likes a lot of the old, dead blues guitar dudes. Somehow I think that it helps we don't have identical tastes. It helps us bring different elements of style together.

SCOPE: *How did you meet Bret?*

Leymarie: We both came to New York in 2000 to go to school. We lived in the Bronx and went to Fordham University. I think we had bigger goals than just going to school in New York City. We both wanted to take over the world, musically speaking.

SCOPE: *Why did you decide to put a band together?*

Leymarie: I had been writing so much music on my own, and had a whole backlog of songs. I

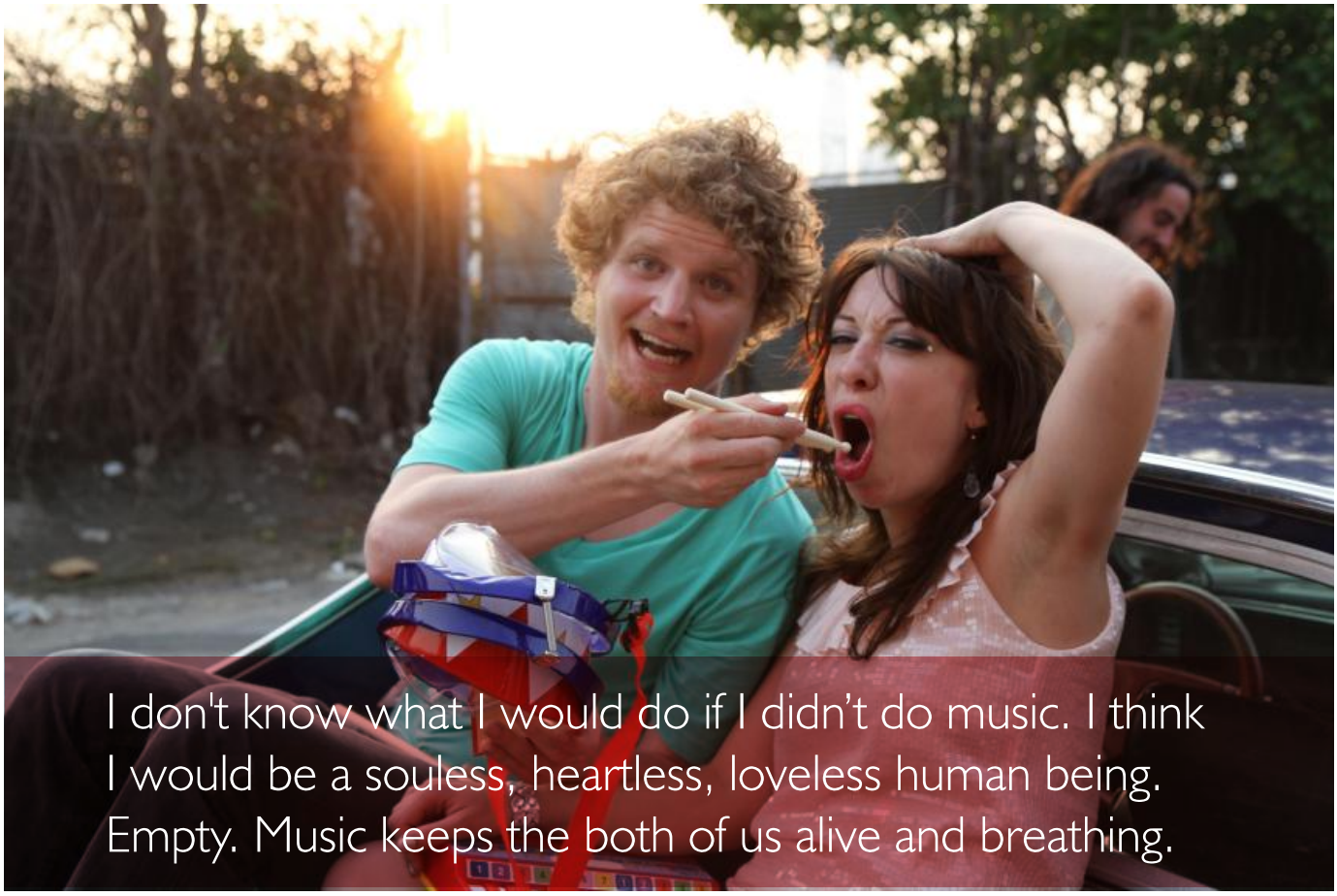


Photo: Aileen Abercrombie *http://www.noordinaryperson.com*

was sick of playing by myself and wanted to get my music out there. But I didn't want to be labeled a singer-songwriter. I really hate that shit. It makes me shiver. So I contacted Bret. It just felt natural. I knew I wanted to work with him. We were friends, but we always worked well together.

We started recording my music and Bret was tracking and mixing everything. Although he is a guitar player, he decided to do the drums on my first album. At that point, we realized it wasn't just me, it was the two of us, and he was now a drummer. I guess I roped him in, but he liked it. He was behind it one hundred percent.

SCOPE: *Are you part of a particular music scene in Brooklyn?*

Leymarie: We definitely play with some cool bands in Brooklyn, but we aren't part of a particular scene. I personally don't think we sound like anyone, and I am very happy about that.

SCOPE: *Where are you two going with this whole Says She's Ms. Blat thing?*

Leymarie: To the moon. As far as we can go. We are in space camp as we speak.

SCOPE: *Is it driven by an insatiable curiosity about music?*

Leymarie: An insatiable *love* for music. I don't know what I would do if I didn't do music. I think I would be a souless, heartless, loveless human being. Empty. Music keeps the both of us alive and breathing.

SCOPE: *What happens next?*

Leymarie: We are finishing our album. It should be ready by late winter or early spring. We are doing it all ourselves, except for the mastering. Then we shall be gearing up for a world tour, several more albums, and more music videos. Just watch out for us. We will take over, very soon. :-)

Spectacle I

Photographs by Maurizio Strippoli

Maurizio Strippoli was born in Milan, where he lives and works as a graphic designer. He has been devoted to artistic photography for some years; he prints his pictures by himself in small formats on high-quality cotton paper. Strippoli's images are clean and without frills, making use of very soft and quiet colours. He has taken part in several projects and exhibitions.

www.mauriziostrippoli.com

"Zones with(out) people #05" (2010)

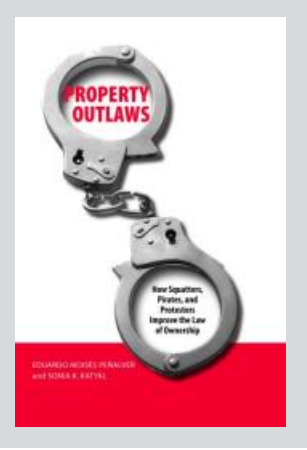
Top: "Zones with(out) people #04" (2010)
Bottom: "Sub-Human #04" (2010)

Mark Chadwick, "Abstract Circle Fluid Painting 32", 2009

Between disobedience and deception

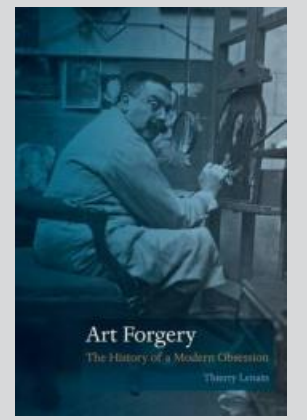
With the controversy over the United States' proposed Stop Online Piracy Act still ringing in our collective ears, it is a good time to ask ourselves what we really believe about intellectual property. In this installment of Interloc, legal scholar **Sonia Katyal** and art historian **Thierry Lenain** discuss art forgers, property outlaws, and Danger Mouse.

Art by Mark Chadwick



Sonia Katyal is a law professor at Fordham University in New York City, focusing on intellectual property, civil rights, and new media. Her current projects study the relationship between copyright enforcement and privacy as applied to peer-to-peer technology, and the impact of artistic expression and parody on corporate identity, advertising, and brand equity. Her 2010 book (with Eduardo M. Peñalver), *Property Outlaws: How Squatters, Pirates, and Protesters Improve the Law of Ownership*, investigated the positive impact that some types of disobedience can have on the legal regulation of property and intellectual property. Her new book, *Contrabrand: Art, Advertising and Property in the Age of Corporate Identity*, is forthcoming from Yale University Press.

http://law.fordham.edu/faculty/1112.htm



Thierry Lenain is an art historian and a philosopher. He is a professor in aesthetics and art theory at the University of Brussels (ULB), in charge of the research unit "Image and visual culture". Besides *Art Forgery*, his main publications in English are : *Monkey Painting* (Reaktion Books, 1997), and *Bernar Venet, A Path Along the Edge of Art* (Flammarion, 2007). He also wrote and edited a number a books in French on various topics pertaining to art and art theory—especially those involving the borders of the field of art itself.

http://urimage.ulb.ac.be/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52&Itemid=63

Thierry Lenain: Sonia, let me first point out just how relevant your theme is in terms of my own everyday academic practice—in other words, how much people like me so frequently feel hindered by the daunting barriers of copyright, how concretely and regularly their freedom of thought, speech, and critical investigation is limited, if not radically annihilated. This may seem anecdotal, since it is based on my personal experience, but I know I speak for the majority of my colleagues as well; I know of many who feel no less exasperated than I do.

As an art historian and a specialist of visual culture, I very often work on images which, almost always, are copyrighted material. Works of art are a case in point, since even when the works themselves are in the public domain, one still has to ask for permission to reproduce them from the owner (typically a museum) and from the "author" of the photograph, even when the specific photo is a purely technical product absolutely devoid of any expressive value of its own. Even well-known public monuments are now copyrighted in a way that the "fair use" exception is not enough to let scholars work with them. Publishing has become a nightmare because of all this, and I very much doubt that the general public is aware of the difficulties we routinely have to face. Owners may charge whatever they want, and some famous public museums—despite their self-proclaimed commitment to promoting research—ask prohibitive prices. By the way, my recent experience with the set of illustrations for my book *Art Forgery* has taught me that private American museums (such as the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City) sometimes reveal themselves to be much more accommodating in that respect than great public ones. French museums, by

contrast, asked the highest prices of all, and were not willing even to negotiate. Such was the situation that I sent a letter of protest to one of them, and never received a reply, of course. This from one of the pinnacles of high culture in a country advocating so loudly for *l'exception culturelle* (meaning: the protection of cultural goods from commercial free practice or VAT law)…

To me there is little doubt that papers and books never appear (or never come to be written in the first place) because of these constraints. No one will ever know the amount of light lost on the dark side of the planet copyright. Planning a critical inquiry into the iconography of Elvis Presley? Better choose another topic. Returning from a visit to the Universal Studios theme park in Hollywood several years ago, I had the idea of writing a paper based on the photos I took there—and, as you perhaps know, everything is done in such parks to encourage the picture-taking behavior of the average tourist. I never dared to write it, and I'm still struggling to find a path through the legal pitfalls awaiting me if I did. So, Sonia, thank you very, very much for having raised a general issue that resonates so strongly with the everyday life of the average visual-culture scholar.

Mark Chadwick, "Abstract Fluid Painting 39", 2010

Despite the differences between our respective topics and approaches, I find it striking that you and I ultimately reached very similar conclusions. Your inquiry belongs to the domain of law studies, deals almost exclusively with the contemporary, and includes a wide variety of "objects" within the broad category of what you call "semiotic disobedience" and the acts of property outlaws. Further, besides being of interest with respect to the understanding of today's culture, your work has a view on how things ought to be (and so involves a fair dose of ideological responsibility) since your thesis about the expressive value and utility of illegal acts belonging to that category has direct consequences in terms of how to deal with certain kinds of transgression.

My work, on the contrary, pertains to a narrowly-defined kind of cultural behavior—deceptive stylistic mimicry in the visual arts—considered in a historical perspective stretching from Antiquity to the present; and it does so within the framework of cultural history, which means that I am sitting comfortably in the armchair of non-judgmental discourse: my book is in a way purely descriptive, insofar as all I attempt to do is to show how art forgery has appeared and evolved as a cultural phenomenon, and to understand the reactions it triggered. No knowledge is ever purely neutral, of course, and the simple decision to treat art forgery as a fully-fledged cultural phenomenon certainly may have practical consequences. But I did not choose to take

Mark Chadwick, "Abstract Fluid Painting 45", 2011

responsibility before society at large for what I wanted to bring forth, a theoretical comfort largely the result of the historical-anthropological perspective, which assumes that one has to deal with cultural contexts very different from our own, in which our concepts of legal and moral legitimacy do not apply.

At the end of the day, though, we both come to the conclusion that the type of conduct that we submitted to critical scrutiny, while widely considered to be illegal if not plain criminal, can in no way be reduced to being just that.

For example, infringements on property rights, copyright included, are sometimes committed in a remarkably disinterested way by people willing to accept the risk of punishment in order to draw public attention to an unfair situation produced by the current legal system. In some instances, such people can almost be hailed as heroes in a struggle against what you fittingly call "the specter of property rights" which increasingly fosters self-censorship. In a similar vein, you rightly stress that some contemporary artists show great creativity in presenting finely-pointed transgressions as artistic statements aimed at highlighting interesting legal-philosophical problems. Maybe one of the best examples of that kind of artistic intervention is the work of American artist J.S.G. Boggs, who in the 1980s drew rough, one-side imitations of banknotes using color pencils. The notes could never ever have fooled anyone and thus hardly qualified as counterfeit money. But Boggs had a truly bright idea to complicate the matter and set lawyers to work: instead of selling his handmade imitations for an arbitrary amount of money, he "spent" them on goods whose value corresponded to the face-value of the bank note he had drawn, and then later sold those same goods and a receipt for the original transaction to art collectors (who would typically use the receipt to track down the holder of the Boggs bill). All of which resulted in famous lawsuits in which the artist's lawyers argued that there is in fact a difference between a thing and its graphic representation.

Art forgery, for its part, has been regarded since the nineteenth century as crime, or at least as a major nuisance completely deprived of artistic relevance. But this rejection was never formulated in a culturally consistent way—if only because of the prestige lent to stylistic deception in the "golden age" of Renaissance and early-modern art (but for other reasons as well). In fact, the late-modern observers who insisted on condemning art forgery threw themselves into argumentative contortions which appear now to pivot around a core of denial, and, for that matter, to verge on the neurotic. For that very reason, semiotic disobedience and art forgery both fall into a

category of acts which, while illegal, must be seen as strongly pertinent in terms of cultural consciousness; vandalism, whose case was studied by Dario Gamboni in *The Destruction of Art*, calls for exactly the same distanced understanding, open to the wide range of cultural meanings that the act is susceptible of conveying.

Maybe a good starting point for this discussion would be to point out that the cultural relevance of semiotic disobedience on the one hand and of art forgery on the other probably can't be recognized exactly in the same way. To put it differently, it seems to me that these two kinds of trespassing cannot in fact claim the same sort of cultural value. As I have tried to demonstrate (after other authors), art forgery is definitely part and parcel of post-medieval art history. Reducing it to a type of legal offense, as has often been the case since the end of nineteenth century, just doesn't make sense from an art-historical viewpoint. Connoisseurship, the direct ancestor of academic art sciences, arose in part from the need to distinguish between original works and copies (or fakes), and as an area of knowledge it continued to develop and evolve as forgers adapted their techniques to outwit the newest means of detection.

This dynamic also appears in art history as such and in the scientific examination of art objects. Our mythology of art is enlivened by deeply resounding anecdotes about great masters who, as Michelangelo did on at least two occasions, produced skilled pastiches which passed for genuine works from other masters or times. There is no denying that art forgery is woven into the very fabric of our artistic culture. Suppose that someone with supernatural powers erased all references to it in the art literature: the whole texture of what we call "art" would be torn apart. And yet, unlike acts of semiotic disobedience, art forgery appears to be lacking essential features in which claims of cultural legitimacy can be grounded. Not only are forgers typically driven by profit at the expense of their dupes but, more importantly, they exclude themselves from the very possibility of making a point as long as their deceptions are effective, because this requires a complete obliteration of authorial responsibility and expression. Art forgery is intrinsically alien to the sphere of semiotics, if by that we mean the sphere of statements and symbolic gestures: only when fakes are discovered can the forger parade as a master of artistic mystification—and eventually try to make a point about the art world. So while art forgery indisputably is relevant to artistic culture at large because of the effects it triggers, it nevertheless amounts to a type of cultural perversion and, in that measure, cannot legitimate itself as acts of semiotic disobedience can.

Sonia Katyal: Thank you, Thierry. It is true that there are multiple areas of overlap between our work, and one significant point of agreement concerns your observation that certain kinds of criminality, especially those that occur at the intersection of art and law, are often multi-layered and far more complicated than the law often recognizes. As you point out, so much of what has captured the public's attention involves the "spotting" of fakes, rather than a deeper investigation of the phenomenon itself. The desire to reduce art forgery to a simple, banal act of criminality is tempting, and yet far too reductive to really take into account all of the different layers that it involves. And then there is the added variable of history—as your book beautifully describes, art forgery has moved from being a phenomenon considered without "particular nervousness" between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries to an "immediate danger" and "object of virulent detestation" in more contemporary times. The question of why and how this transformation occurred, I think, has a great deal to do with the intricacies of how the forces of law have responded across time and geographies, and your work nicely touches on these influences.

On a deeper level, however, the

Our mythology of art is enlivened by anecdotes about great masters who, as Michelangelo occasionally did, produced skilled pastiches which passed for genuine works

phenomenon of art forgery and, to a comparable extent, the phenomenon of "semiotic disobedience" as I describe it, are both critiques of the assumption of "romantic authorship" that has animated much of the architecture of intellectual property. Yet art forgery, it can also be said, is often motivated by reasons that are not purely expressive in nature, even though it is also true that some types of forgery raise complex critiques of copyright and ownership (Boggs being a perfect example of this latter phenomenon). In my book co-authored with Eduardo M. Peñalver, *Property Outlaws*, we drew a distinction between property disobedience that was "acquisitive" (meaning that it was motivated by selfishness, and to acquire property) and disobedience that was "expressive" (meaning that it was motivated, in greater part, out of a desire to share or articulate a particular message). Interestingly, criminal law often fails to distinguish between these two parameters, even though they often diverge in enlightening ways. Classifying art forgery as "deprived of artistic relevance," as you point out, has a similar trajectory. By ignoring any potential expressive value, the law misses some of the more interesting questions that the practice raises.

One thing that strikes me, however, about the breadth of your exploration of art forgery is that it not only identifies the cultural domains that fed the phenomenon throughout history, but also uncovers reasons why forgery turns out to be so omnipresent across time. In the same way that the law needs the "outlaw" to maintain its legitimacy, it might also be argued that art needs certain types of transgressions for the same reason. Certainly the problem of art forgery created the necessary conditions for the entrance of the "connoisseur," the expert, who plays the role of redeeming certain types of art by first discovering and then denigrating its forgeries. The moment at which a forgery is discovered by the connoisseur, the work changes from being an emblem of "high" art to almost nothingness, a readymade object that lacks the soul of its original. And as a result, the law needs to step in, pushing the forgery out of the realm of art and into the realm of crime instead. The way that this is done, however, is by drawing a thin and very fragile line around art forgery, classifying it as a type of "identity theft." A forgery, as you write in your book, is "meant to actually steal the identity, place, and status of the original it emulates." In contrast, a copy, replica, or pastiche, as you also point out, might imitate another work, but it does not actually attempt to seize the very "being" of the underlying work itself.

That The Grey Album was not masquerading as the original gave it status as a work of art

I found this fascinating distinction deeply salient to my own work. For example, the artists that I study do not want their works to appear as masquerades for the original. Instead, since many of those projects seek to appropriate and also transform the original, the original is still necessary for their critiques to operate successfully. In other words, just as "high" art might arguably need "low" art to maintain its credibility, appropriation artists need—and desperately rely upon—the presence of the original to complete their discursive offering.

Like the relationship between the outlaw and her counterpart the obedient citizen, this dynamic usually operates successfully in the realm of appropriation art, but with one significant difference from the forgery tales you offer. The transgressive nature of the appropriative work itself changes the "illegal" implications that would normally attach to it, at times making the work seem even more legitimate as a piece of art, rather than just an example of illegality, devoid of expression. In *Property Outlaws*, we explored the case of The Grey Album, an unlicensed mashup that consisted of The Beatles' White Album mixed with an a cappella version of Jay-Z's The Black Album. Although it was released to critical acclaim, the fact that the mashup was entirely unlicensed drew ire from the recording industry, which served an array of cease-and-desist letters to web sites celebrating the work. The firestorm eventually led to a day of

coordinated electronic civil disobedience, otherwise known as Grey Tuesday, where a variety of web sites offered the work for download despite facing legal threats. In this sense, the fact that The Grey Album transformed earlier works, and the fact that it was not masquerading as the original, gave it a status that transformed it from a mere transgression of copyright to a legitimate work of art, despite its unauthorized nature.

In that case, we saw how musical appropriation can offer a powerful critique of authorship. Yet visual art is also an attractive medium in which to explore the dynamic between outlaw, art critic, and copyright lawyer. A somewhat similar trajectory takes place in certain types of public art that play with the construct of legality: graffiti, for example, has long straddled the boundaries of the expressive and the criminal, often with remarkable results. Consider, as another example, the case of Shepard Fairey, long known for his illegal public art projects ("Andre the Giant" stickers and the like), who attained a memorable status in our political cultural history by creating the iconic "Hope" poster of Barack Obama. To be sure, it is reasonable to suggest that Fairey was motivated in his earlier public art projects by a desire for self-expression, as well as perhaps to commodify his renegade brand on the streets of Los Angeles. Yet it was the "Hope" poster that really garnered him a great deal of fame as not just an artist, but as an appropriation artist who offered the law the opportunity to explore how much transformativeness is required to satisfy a fair use claim. And even though Fairey admitted his shortcomings before a court in the eventual copyright drama that ensued over the unlicensed photograph, nothing changes the fact that the "Hope" poster itself is deserving of artistic praise and attention, if only for its indirect critique of the idea of authorship. (The fact that it, and not the photograph upon which it is based, hangs in the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian is a perfect footnote to this observation).

Mark Chadwick, "Abstract Fluid Painting 48", 2011

In the end, your attempt to reconstruct the history of art forgery and situate it within the history of art is a laudable endeavour. It parallels, in some ways, the ideas manifest in the semiotic disobedience piece you describe: an attempt to tell a deeper story about outlaws, and public artists, and to show that the expressive motivation behind their activities deserves mention, and even, as in cases like Fairey's, a place worthy of recognition and consideration—if only for the complexity of the questions they raise.

Lenain: Certainly a key notion in your inquiry is the opposition between "acquisitive" and "expressive" transgressions of the property law—a distinction which, as you point out, criminal law often fails to make "even though

they often diverge in enlightening ways." I certainly do not want to question this distinction as such, because it obviously captures a very important aspect of the matter, and because anyone can see (now that you have introduced the idea) that it fully applies in a majority of cases. But I am intrigued by possible borderline cases or examples which might complicate things—as art forgery probably does in a number of instances.

The definition you give of "acquisitive" disobedience, for example, involves two different ideas: selfishness, and the intended acquisition of property. Should we consider whether both of these criteria need be necessary components of the definition? One could act in a selfish way though not in order to acquire goods: for example, by trying to boost one's image in the face of society. In the case of forgers, some might defend themselves by saying that their talent as practitioners of style conceived as a sort of language should be duly rewarded; or they might maintain that asking a high price for a forgery was just a necessary condition for its success (this is what the forger Han van Meegeren did during his 1947 trial).

Another issue that I'd like to raise is the complex relationships between four different things: legality, legitimacy (moral versus social-political), cultural significance, and anthropological relevance. One can act illegally but in a socially legitimate way, and the act may or may not be culturally significant. Pedophiles or sadists, meanwhile, adopt illegal and illegitimate kinds of behavior with no cultural significance of their own, but their acts are intrinsically anthropologically relevant. What art forgers do, as a general rule, is both illegal and illegitimate, but also highly significant from a cultural point of view (though not at all in the same way as art). Saying that art forgery is illegitimate in this context means, among other things, that it could not be reasonably converted into legally acceptable actions even with a change in property law. So long as the four concepts remain aligned, everything is fine. When the legal and the legitimate diverge, we have a problem. When the legitimate and the culturally significant diverge, we have a bigger problem. And when the discrepancy is between the legitimate and the anthropological, it's called horror.

Katyal: Thierry, you have hit on some really interesting points. Let me begin by saying a bit more about "acquisitive" outlaws. I think that Eduardo Peñalver and I defined this term principally because we wanted to distinguish between selfish and selfless acts of appropriation. So in the book we speak about squatters as one example, but we also touch on intellectual-property-related disobedience that does involve acts of both self-motivated appropriation and expression—and sometimes it's hard to tell the difference. For example, we talk a bit about patent disobedience by the Treatment Action Campaign (which imported HIV drugs into South Africa in clear violation of patent restrictions), or Downhill Battle's defense of the Danger Mouse-created Grey Album, or even a group of college students at Swarthmore who chose to circulate confidential information about electronic voting and risked being sued under copyright laws. Nevertheless, I agree that both acquisitive and expressive disobedience can well offer us shades of grey, and that neither category has a list of necessary variables. Instead, they are just areas for us to consider.

The ultimate question, I think our points raise, involves the question of how intellectual property outlaws—copyright violators, forgers, and so on—affect the modes of creation and distribution. I definitely think that intellectual property protections are necessary and sufficient in many cases, but at times, when they grow overly strong and restrictive, a little expressive rebellion now and then helps to illustrate their draconian potential. And over time, as our work has shown, the law sometimes shifts to embrace the outlaws' goals in ways that often insightfully improve and strengthen, rather than weaken, the laws of ownership.

Lenain: Thank you for clarifying. In regard to this last question, I can offer some reflections on it from the vantage point of my topic. Forgers affect the practices of art culture in several ways. One is that the sheer existence of the possibility of forgery as such makes the purchase of artworks an intrinsically risky business. Knowing that acts of forgery may occur, the market for authentic objects has had to adapt: hence the appearance of the

professional expert, the guarantees that dealers offer to their clients (whatever the reliability of these guarantees may be), the role of specialized laboratories, and so on. All of these adaptations converge on a single document, one that is deeply characteristic of the modern way of distributing "autographic" artworks: the certificate, without which an artwork is virtually worthless. One could almost say that an artwork without a certificate is not an artwork at all, commercially speaking. Pushing this to the extreme, we could even come to the conclusion that, marketwise, the artwork itself is less important than its certificate, which implies a very curious inversion of the initial situation in which the certificate was supposed to be nothing more than an appendix to the object. Indeed, for some forgers, the fake art object is but an appendix to the certificate. The certificate can itself be genuine (such as when the forger manages to obtain one from a fooled expert) or it can be a fake in its own right—a fake whose manufacture may require even more attention than the art object being forged. It might be worth noting that these certificate-oriented adaptations of the art market are the consequences of the risk of art forgery—in other words, it is not even necessary that the risk become real for these considerable effects to be triggered.

Another way in which forgery affects the art culture is the fact that it undermines the very concept of "authoriality"—or, at least, it forces us to apply the concept in a much thinner way than the version inherited from the romantic period. If art forgery is possible, then it cannot be possible to conceive the artistic form as being essentially the unique expression of an artist, revealing his or her mind through the aesthetic appearance of the work.

These changes were bound to interest contemporary artists criticizing the concepts of the artwork and of the artist. Some have indeed found inspiration in observing the phenomenon of art forgery; the painter Yves Klein, for instance, had been fascinated by the Van Meegeren affair. In some ways, forgers pre-dated salient aspects of contemporary art, such as the shifting of attention to documents accompanying the objects as opposed to the object themselves (the artists parodying the practice of the certificate, for example), or the structuralist critique of the "author" as no more than a myth.

Another effect still is that successful forgeries may alter the mental image we have formed of the stylistic personality of an artist or even a period. The power and duration of this influence is of course extremely difficult to assess, but real it certainly is. Realizing that part of our inner image of the paintings of Jan van Eyck has been determined to some extent by the forgeries perpetrated by the Belgian restorer Josef van der Veken is a profoundly disturbing experience. Such influence has often been stigmatized as a kind of aesthetic pollution, or infection, by the defenders of authenticity. If we can manage to see it without prejudice, however, it might perhaps help us to recognize that "styles" are indeed something mental too, meaning they cannot be reduced to sets of objective formal properties.

Having said that, it is always of the utmost importance to realize that forgers trigger these changes mostly as indirect consequences of what they do: unlike the "property outlaws" who act openly, forgers usually pursue much more narrowly-focused goals (material profit, taking revenge on the establishment, or even just making fun of someone). The considerable cultural impact of what the forger creates with such goals on his mind is probably one of the most philosophically fascinating, and uncomfortable, aspects of this phenomenon.

About the artist

Mark Chadwick studied MA Fine Art and graduated from Birmingham City University in 2008. His practice in mainly contemporary abstract painting investigates the production of an artwork. In his current series of fluid paintings, the paint is manipulated in a number of different ways, each driven by ideas surrounding process, materiality, and chance encounters. The paintings are built up of many layers of paint, each creating its own flowing abstract surface left open to interpretation by the viewer.
http://www.markchadwick.co.uk

Spectacle II

Paintings by Peju Alatise

Two paintings from the series "Lest I forget" (2011)

Peju Alatise is a story teller, painter, sculptor, architect, and furniture-designer. Her recent work attempts to combine these disciplines, producing paintings with three-dimensional qualities and sculptures with painterly finishes. Nigerian by birth, Alatise has lived most of her life on the African continent. "I am deeply moved by my encounters here and I have recently fallen in love with Yoruba mythology; but still I feel a strong disconnect with my place of birth. My artworks tell stories of my social, cultural, political, and environmental experiences, concerns, and this disconnect. Everything (all the experiences and stories) comes back to me in my dreams in forms that sometimes haunt me until I recreate them."

www.pejualatise.com

Top: "Back of Eden" (2011)
Bottom: "Blue monkey" (2011)

In the long sweep of history, we have never been richer or healthier. We have never had so many consumer goods to buy, at such high quality and such low prices. Our boredom can be alleviated at the touch of a button—yet much of the time we feel disengaged and hollow, our highest-intensity experiences somehow inauthentic and lacking in comparison with the simpler enjoyments of our youth.

Maybe we should be asking the obvious question (even if it does sound a bit conspiratorial):

Who stole fun?

By Lisa Meekison

Art by Isabelle Menin

Isabelle Menin, "Outlaw Numbers" (series), 2010

This story starts on a summer afternoon, with an egg flying through the sky in the northern Canadian wilderness. It was on a trajectory across the roof of my uncle's cottage. He, standing on one side of the house, had vaulted it up into the air with one of his elegant overhead throws. On the other side of the house, a dozen or so of his family members waited in the ready-position, tense and expectant. The competition was fierce. The assorted forty-something cousins were the worst: we had decades of crazy rivalries under our belts. But the little kids were right into it too. They kept running into us because they were too excited to stand still, and too focused on watching for the egg to look where they were going. The sun warmed our backs, the tough grass tickled our feet, and our calls and laughter rang out across the lake. We'd gathered at this place for the first family reunion in twenty years, but at that moment, we were only interested in one thing: catching the egg.

Winking in the slanting sunlight, it cleared the cottage's low roof and hurtled towards my brother. "I've got it!" he yelled triumphantly. My cousin, a businesswoman and mother of three, shamelessly threw herself in front of him, but he was taller so the egg was his. He raised his hands and smiled, relishing his victory. But as he caught it, it exploded in a sticky, streaky, gelatinous mess. Raw egg dripped from his hair onto his face, and all over his clothes.

We doubled over, weeping with laughter. The children screamed with excitement: my eighteen-month-old nephew threw himself down on the ground and pounded his plump little fists into the grass with uncontainable glee.

The egg-toss provided pure, exhilarating fun: a taste of the good life. It energized us, and made us feel connected, happy, and alive. It also created a vivid memory that provided an experiential snapshot of the family reunion: this is what it was, this is what we did, this is who we are as a family. But, by very virtue of how much fun it was, it also raised unsettling questions: what made that simple game so transcendent, and why do most of us seem to experience such joyful, visceral fun so rarely?

A human birthright has been embezzled and sold back to us in diminished form

The answer to these questions involves a journey into the nature of fun and a recognition that something that seems so much a part of life, so inalienable to human experience, has changed profoundly. Fun has become commodified. It's as if a human birthright has been quietly embezzled, only to be sold back to us in diminished form. And this loss is hurting us because it turns out that fun *does* matter, both personally and socially.

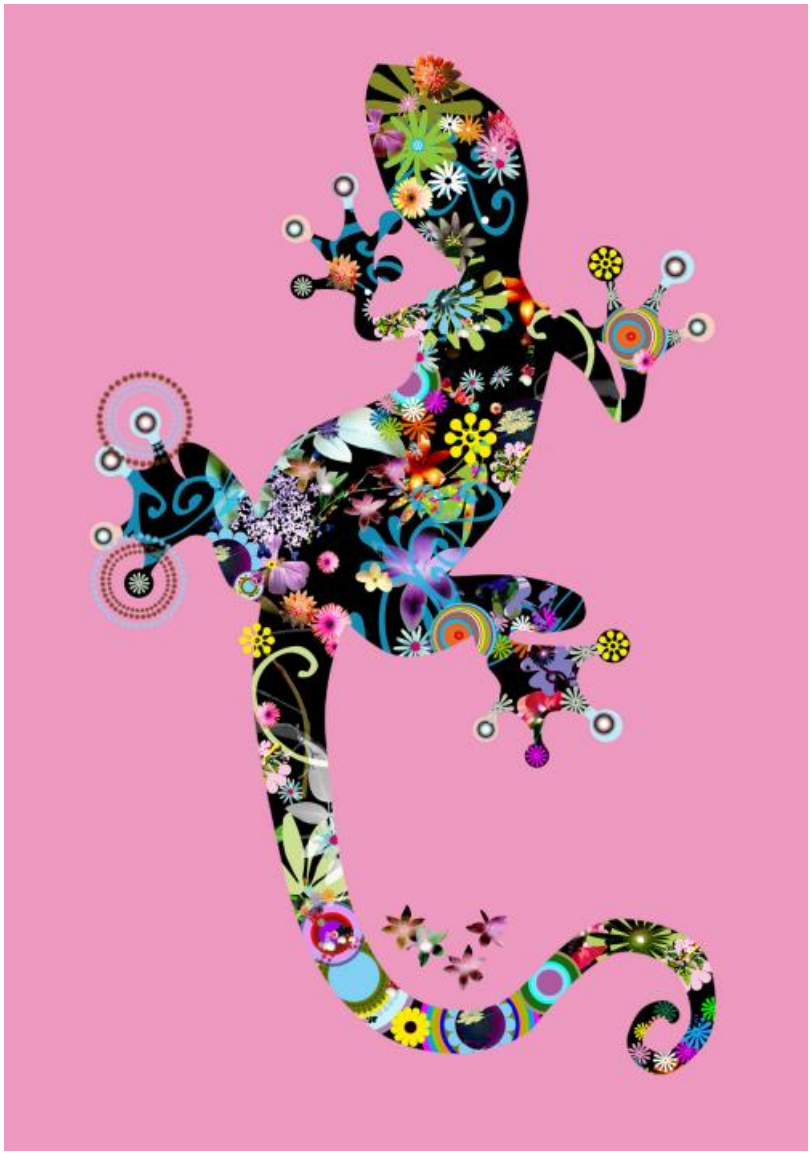
Most dictionary definitions will describe fun as something that is enjoyable, and this is probably the baseline for how most of us think of it. Although it is difficult to know precisely when the notion of "fun" came into common usage, its appearance in works such as Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice*, written in 1813, suggest that the term has been with us for at least two hundred years. *Anne of Green Gables*, written in 1908, sparkles with references to fun. For example, Anne and her friends have "fun" making taffy while trying to prepare a grown-up tea, attending a concert to raise money for a school flag, and naughtily jumping on the bed in the guest bedroom. It's worth noting that, in each of these scenes, the fun is embedded in activities that are simultaneously part of their daily lives and symbolic of their *total* way of life, one defined by connection to place, strong community ties, and a keen sense of one's social role.

However, while this baseline of enjoyment is a useful starting place, fun is a funny topic and there's more to it than any given dictionary definition. This is because enjoyment, pleasure, and fun are not value-neutral terms in Western culture. As anthropologist Lionel Tiger has pointed out in relation to pleasure, depending on any given religious-political-social climate, fun has been promoted or abhorred, facilitated or banned. In other words, our culturally-rooted attitudes layer meanings on to fun that affect our experience of it. In North America, this has resulted in a paradox in which fun—thanks to an enduring Puritan inheritance

—is sniffily dismissed as trivial or juvenile. We also typically see it as too self-evident and nonsensical to discuss seriously, as even Oprah Winfrey found out when her fun-themed issue of *O Magazine* bombed at the newsstands. This has led to a situation in which there has been virtually no public discourse about fun in the way there has been about happiness and well-being, both of which have become perennial stars in the social sciences and popular culture alike.

In this vacuum, "fun" has come to mean almost anything, depending on the context. It is perfectly possible to think of cross-country skiing, lip balm, going to a restaurant, cross-dressing, beer, watching a movie, cars, surprises, a holiday in Venice, novelty tea towels, sex, a good brainstorm, and Facebook as "fun", even though they are vastly different things. Perhaps more strangely, it is equally possible to think of these things as fun whether we perceive the experience as a not unpleasant distraction, mildly amusing, highly engaging, or profoundly uplifting. This is problematic because it makes it harder for us to notice, let alone to discuss, the qualities of fun that might be missing from our lives, why they are missing, and the effects that missing them produces, including adverse impacts on our health and happiness.

It is worth, then, giving shape to this discussion: we need to understand what forces are moulding our expectations of fun in order to restore it to its proper place in our lives. This endeavour starts by recognizing a recent inflection point in our relationship with fun that profoundly changed our view of it: the dawn of the era of technology. The philosopher Albert Borgmann has pointed out that the ostensible promise of technology has been with us since the Enlightenment, but where the original focus had been on lifting humanity out of material vulnerabilities such as starvation and disease, from the 1950s it also started to promise more time and opportunity for leisure. Housewives were to be liberated by washing machines; labourers and office workers were to be freed by efficient and automated workplaces; cars and roads were to open up new vistas for exploration, and of course there was to be boundless prosperity for all to take advantage of these benefits. In this brave and



Isabelle Menin, "Miss Sally 02", 2010

beautiful new world, "fun" took flight, changing from something that was specifically demarcated social time (such as Anne's fundraising concert) or unselfconsciously embedded in day-to-day life (such as Anne's tea party), to being a self-conscious project.

The increasingly self-conscious pursuit of fun started to reshape the ethos of what life was all about. As early as 1958, the psychoanalyst and writer Martha Wolfenstein suggested that society was seeing the rise of a new "fun morality": an explicit social imperative to have fun all the time, in all areas of life. However, far from being positive, Wolfenstein saw this fun morality as problematic. First, it created a source of anxiety in which one felt "ashamed" and "secretly

Isabelle Menin, "Mister Carotte", 2010

worried" that one wasn't having as much fun as one ought to be. Second, it triggered a strange new pressure for parents, educators, and even employers to ensure that the people around them were always enjoying themselves; it was also their duty to demonstrate that life was supposed to be pleasurable, with boredom to be avoided at all costs. Finally, Wolfenstein worried that in attempting to make *everything* fun, we were diluting its impact, a point Shakespeare's Prince Henry elegantly espoused when he said, "If all the year were playing holidays; To sport would be as tedious as to work."

This was the trigger for the commodification of fun. The rising imperative to have fun, and the anxiety that Wolfenstein argues it produced, created a whole new suite of material and emotional needs: not only did we need to have fun, but we also needed to help others have fun, to record our fun, to demonstrate to others that we were having fun, and to receive emotional assurance that we were having the right amounts and the right kinds of fun. Marketers sell products by promising to meet needs we may or may not even be conscious of, and they lost little time in making us comforting promises that they could satisfy them all. We listened. And this was the second inflection point in our relationship with fun: the dawn of the *consumption* of fun.

To be fair, this has taken place in an environment in which, since the 1950s, consumption itself has been an integral part of how we understood and pursued leisure in the first place, and the unlimited opportunity to consume vaunted as the quintessence of the good life. If there ever had been a dream of using an increase in available leisure to enhance civic participation, develop the arts, and so on, that quickly gave way to an orientation in which more time and prosperity meant more opportunities to consume. Indeed, consumption itself tends to be viewed as "fun", possibly because of a lingering polarity with its apparent opposites, production and work, possibly because it is dazzling and glamorous, and possibly because we quickly lost site of the fact that fun in the context of daily tasks, social life, and even work often involves more effort than laying down a credit card. The most exquisite examples of consumption itself being vaunted as fun are the world's sparkling super-malls such as the West Edmonton Mall, the Mall of America in Bloomington, the Dubai Mall, and the new Golden Resources Mall in Beijing, which overtly bill themselves as "family fun" and promote shopping-as-experience. But more intimate and close-to-home examples abound too, perhaps one of the most poignant of which is the design trend to make over formal dining rooms into home theatres, where we consume entertainment someone else has made, instead of nourishment we've made ourselves.

Beyond this, however, is the reality that marketers frequently promote specific products and services as "fun", irrespective of their actual natures and functions. Marketers make

implicit and explicit promises about fun. Implicit promises rely on consumers recognizing and responding to shared cultural referents. For example, alcohol marketers implicitly promise fun when they show people consuming their products at parties or in fantasy leisure spaces, such as ski resorts and cottages. It's also possible to suggest fun through the use of symbols such as, for example, McDonald's Ronald McDonald clown, or even more subtly, Coca-Cola's use of the colour red, which conjures the jolliness of the Big Top. The inevitable joyful smiles in advertisements about everything from yogurt sticks to jewellery are similarly offered as irrefutable evidence of fun and happiness.

Lest these suggestions be too subtle, however, other advertising campaigns spell it right out for us. At the time of writing, for example, Pop Tarts is running a campaign called "Joylicious", in which they claim that Pop Tarts are "sprinkled with joy, frosted with fun". Their online advertisement shows sad, bored little figures, yawning in a barren black and white world, until, suddenly, they catch the scent of Pop Tarts brought by a colourful, dancing messenger. The voice-over claims that "on a dull, dull day, in a ho-hum world, something wonderful is as near as your nose." The black and white figures themselves become colourful as they eat the Pop Tarts, and we are left with the promise that any day can be "joylicious".

But let's be straight: Pop Tarts are sugary toast-like snacks, and while eating sweet things will bring a fleeting flicker of pleasure to the palate, there is nothing in them to suggest they will deliver actual fun and joy. Pop Tarts are targeted at children, of course, but there is no doubt that advertisers see adults as equally susceptible to fun's appeal. Last summer, for example, two separate campaigns used fun as a way to sell fuel-efficient cars. In New York, Toyota 4Runner billboards promised, "Less Fuel, More Fun"; in Toronto, colourful signs proclaimed that the Chevrolet Cruise, "Craves Fun, Not Fuel". Indeed, Chevrolet seems to be employing fun as an overarching brand attribute, perhaps as part of an attempt to revitalize its place within the American car market. It is advertising a vehicle called the "Orlando" (a name no doubt meant to conjure Disney, that archetypal signifier of fun in America) in advertisements that use a balloon shop as the background, and also a subcompact car called the "Sonic", which claims that "It's Fun. Turbocharged".

Fun's movement from something we once understood as experiential and embedded in daily life to something descriptive of products and services is the essence of its commodification. While commodification can mean different things depending on whether you are talking to an economist, anthropologist or philosopher, I am thinking of it in two related ways here. The first is that commodification occurs when we assign economic value to something that we previously did not think of in economic terms. This is a trend in our culture, as more and more domains that we used to think of as largely outside the economic sphere, such as childcare and healthcare, are reconfigured to fit patterns of economic exchange. This is not to say that there were no economic aspects to these areas of life before now, but rather that the economic aspect has grown to the point that it has substantially affected our understanding of the thing itself. The commodification of higher education, for example, has led to our current perception of universities and colleges as service providers that need to deliver value for money, rather than as institutions that provide students with opportunities for learning and intellectual growth—a change that has affected all the relationships that take place within them.

A second relevant aspect of commodification is the idea that one can parse out and sell individual elements of a thing formerly understood to be whole and inalienable from its original context. This parsing takes many forms. For example, at one time elder-care would simply have been an intrinsic part of family life. Now, it exists squarely in the economic realm, and one can pay for all or any number of its aspects, from housing, to nursing, to meals. Anthropologist Alexis Bunten's work on cultural tourism in Sitka, Alaska illustrates how this process can

Once embedded in daily life, fun is now a product description

We need fun to develop as individuals, to have participatory societies, and to be healthy

also extend to comparatively intangible domains as well. For example, she describes how Tlingit tour guides effectively "sell" tourists historical stories that fulfil their fantasies of encounters with exotic Natives. These stories, such as the Battle of 1802 in which the Tlingit (temporarily) drove Russian colonists out of Sitka, are an important part of Tlingit cultural history, and of how the Tlingit know themselves, but they can nonetheless be detached from customary modes of transmission and meaning-making and retailed to tourists as part of an authentic Alaskan experience, like so many boxes of candied salmon.

Marketers have fostered the commodification of fun by doing essentially three things. First, as discussed above, they've claimed fun as a brand attribute, either by making explicit promises to deliver it, or by signalling it through playful brand icons or an irreverent tone of voice. Second, they're increasingly trying to sell us fun *experiences*. These might be fairly modest, like Virgin Atlantic (a fun, irreverent brand) giving out ice cream when flights are delayed, using something "fun" to pre-empt passengers' irritation. At the extreme end, there are brands that create and sell total environments designed for fun and pleasure, such as theme parks and cruise ships. David Foster Wallace gives us a literary and hilarious view of this sort of fun—and its coerciveness—in his essay "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again", which documents his experience on a Celebrity Cruises ship, carrying out an *incognito* assignment for *Harpers* magazine:

> The pretty setting and glittering ship and dashing staff and sedulous servants and solicitous fun-managers all want something from me, and it's not just the price of my ticket—they've already got that. Just what it is that they want is hard to pin down, but by early in the week I can feel it, and building: it circles the ship like a fin.

The third way in which marketers have brought about a commoditization of fun lies not in what brands promise or create, but in the way they have intruded into our culture's existing collective forms of engagement and fun. At one time, religious, civic, and national events created shared symbols of identity and collective forms of engagement that gathered and radiated meaning for participants, much like the humble egg toss did for my family. First of July picnics, Stanley Cup playoffs, school festivals, summer fireworks, and street festivals: these events still mark highlights in our year and provide fun and engagement for us. Now, however, they typically require funding and sponsorship, and brands have become our not-so-silent partners. But there is a cost when brands participate, because the symbolic value of these events, and of the community they collect within them, becomes less clear. When I hand my daughter a balloon emblazoned with the Bank of Montreal logo at our neighbourhood street party, who is the "we" that we are celebrating? And to what do we owe the excitement and positive feelings generated by our fun: the brand or the community? To ask these questions is not to ignore that fun has an instrumental role: community leaders would have employed all that pre-branded community fun to reinforce particular social values (the most appalling example of which must surely be the Nazis "Strength through Joy" program in the 1930s). It is, however, to ask whether we accept brands, with their vested interests and the paradigm of consumption that sustains them, as legitimate members of our community with a role to play in shaping our collective experience and identity.

All this said, the commodification of fun would be no cause for concern if fun itself didn't matter in the scheme of things. If, as Pop Tarts tells us, fun's job is just to add a little colour to a black and white world, why not try to buy it?

But it turns out that fun does matter. In a recent conversation with me about the role of fun in mental health, the eminent psychiatrist

David Goldbloom emphasized that it's "profoundly adaptive" to have fun. At minimum, a capacity for fun helps us endure. But, like a magnet, it also draws us to things that are good for us. Consider the kinds of things that humans tend to find fun: pursuit, movement, play, social engagement, exploration, collective effervescence, and creative expression. These activities are part and parcel of our humanness. We need to engage in them to develop fully as individuals, to have participatory and inventive societies, and to be healthy. Evolution has ensured that we find these things enjoyable: we do them because we experience them as fun, but in turn, they yield extraordinary results. Even ostensibly darker aspects to fun, such as breaking rules or subverting quotidian social order, can have important roles to play in terms of helping us test personal and social limits, providing psychological outlets, and adding bursts of creative energy to culture.

This is why the commodification of fun is so troubling. Consider just several possible effects. First, commodification changes the meaning of things. Elementally, we've experienced a shift in consciousness in which it is now normal for us to expect to buy fun rather than to experience it as naturally embedded in both mundane and celebratory aspects of human life. And this fundamental change has been exacerbated by competing marketing claims that make the idea of fun simultaneously ubiquitous but so polyvalent that it's nonsensical. If anything can be fun, then what does fun actually mean? Does it mean childlike? Colourful? Naughty? Luxurious? Entertaining? Surprising? Flavourful? Exciting? All of these things? None of them?

The inevitable disconnects between marketing claims and our own experience of fun distort its meaning even further. We live in an era in which we are accustomed (and encouraged) to rely on the claims of others rather than on our embodied experience to render our reality for us: for example, we frequently trust GPS systems more than our innate sense of orientation, and medical tests more than our own sense of well-being. While marketing claims lack the imprimatur of science and technology that a GPS system possesses, their ubiquity and sheer volume give them a powerful role in shaping our reality. But to be promised fun is not necessarily to experience it. For example, if we visit a McDonald's, do we actually have fun? The experience might be convenient, even pleasurable, but it is probably not truly fun in the sense of producing positive emotions, being highly engaging, connecting people over meaningful activities, and so on. And yet we are unlikely to say, "That was false advertising!", as we would if the restaurant had served us pork instead of beef. Instead, the very meaning of fun is quietly, unconsciously assaulted.

Isabelle Menin, "Dear Baby Deer", 2010

The commodification of fun also fosters a kind of radical individualism. In a world where

it is normal to seek decontextualized fun, and competing claims tell us how to get it, one ultimately concludes that fun is somehow deeply mysterious and subject only to individual taste. For example, happiness-guru Gretchen Rubin defines one of her "secrets of adulthood" as "What's fun for other people may not be fun for you—and vice versa", and discussion boards on her website confirm that her readers share this perspective. It is reasonable to want to account for individual taste: there is no doubt that, say, a day at the horse races is a treat for some and a bore for others, just as online gaming is irresistible to some and a waste of time to others. However, it's important also to search for the commonalities in what we find fun because they teach us about fun's adaptive role. In my own ethnographic research into fun, I found that people are actually remarkably consistent in what they find fun, and that differences of taste exist only at a comparatively superficial level. Thus, for example, we see that horse racing and online gaming both provide a kind of managed uncertainty, something that everyone seems to find fun, and this finding hints at the importance of psychological solace in an uncertain world.

Finally, however, the worst thing about commoditized fun is that it enfeebles us: we get used to viewing fun simply as something one buys, and we see creating fun (or creating the spaces in which fun can happen) as work. The results of this are potentially even more serious than ending up with a lacklustre life and hefty credit card debt. For example, in a recent *New York Times* op-ed piece, the writer Mark Bittman challenged the belief that North Americans eat junk food because it's cheap, positing instead that we eat it because food manufacturers have convinced us that it's fun—and that cooking isn't. Bittman suggests that the solution to our continent's junk food addiction, and to the health problems that go with it, is therefore not a campaign to get McDonald's to serve healthier food: it's convincing people that the "work" of cooking can be fun, even more fun than the unhealthy and addictive fast food we eat so much of.

Bittman's suggestion is also a reminder that fun doesn't necessarily require expensive equipment, exotic destinations, or even leisure: fun lives in real life, and real life can be the good life. Similarly, re-creating fun as part of our lives does not require an overzealous earnestness. Fun should be fun, and our pursuit of it joyful and playful. We must, however, maintain an awareness of the ways in which commodification creates competing visions of fun. The images are alluring, but they are pale facsimiles of the real thing. And the real thing is something we already know. We must trust our own experience of fun. Surely all of us have our own equivalent of the egg-toss: moments of deep, embodied, uplifting fun that made us feel alive. These experiences are our touchstone, our reminder of what we are seeking and of what the good life feels like.

Perhaps ironically, pursuing fun asks us self-consciously to make space in our lives for the kinds of everyday activities in which unselfconscious engagement can happen. Albert Borgmann has developed the idea of "focal practices" to talk about just these sorts of activities. On the one hand, they are mundane, the stuff of daily life: cooking, long-distance running, reading aloud to a loved one, making music. On the other, focal practices are special because they provide a sort of compass point in our lives: they tell us who we are and what really matters to us. They also generate meanings and feelings that are "unprocurable". The key is that focal practices create a space for fun, and when we have fun in the context of an activity that is meaningful to us, our lives our illuminated. We're transported and engaged. Fully alive.

Activist Laurie David's recent book *The Family Dinner: Great Ways to Connect with Your Kids, One Meal at a Time* illustrates how to cultivate family dinners as a focal practice. There's nothing nostalgic about David's advocacy for the family dinner: she recognises that realities such as two-income or split families and busy schedules make sitting down to regular family meals challenging. The goal, she argues, is not to attempt to live up to an unattainable ideal, it's simply to collect family members together—daily—in a way that maximizes their engagement with each other and with the food they are consuming. She sees fun as the engine of this engagement and puts forward a variety of creative tactics, such as themed dinners, to draw family members

together into the meal. In David's words, the engagement provided by family dinners is "emotional nourishment" that gives family members a tangible sense of connection to each other, and a sense of their place in the world. To David, this sense of interconnectivity is every bit as fundamental to health and happiness as the physical nourishment provided by the actual food.

Play presents another means for inviting more fun into our lives. We tend to think of fun and play synonymously, but really play is a precursor to fun: as with focal practices, it creates the space and time for fun. While there is no single definition of play, we can think of it as genres of activities in which participants implicitly agree to "pretend", that is, to create a situation in which the normal rules and goals of life are supplanted, for a time, by those of the game, be it in the context of a corporate role-playing exercise, a high-school rugby game or a children's tea party. Play can be formal or informal, rule-bound or free, gentle or rough, but in all cases, it offers us a sense of a time out-of-time, where we test ourselves, each other and the environment in a spirit of absorption, engagement and fun.

It's worth noting that, as with fun, play was long dismissed as something "for children", but new research within the emerging field of play studies, which includes input from psychology, anthropology and neuroscience, highlights that it's actually critical for optimal human development and happiness. For example, it has been shown to improve cognitive functioning, boost mood and strengthen social ties. This is creating play-advocates across a spectrum of contexts. Just to take two examples, writer Daniel Pink makes a case for play in his bestseller, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*, and the non-profit organization Right to Play uses play to transform individuals and communities in societies coping with war, poverty and disease. Play and fun both produce positive benefits, and, if it's not yet possible to isolate which benefits come from the play itself versus the fun we experience as we play, well, it also may not really matter. The key is to start playing. Sports and board games, creative expression, imaginary play, outdoor play, social play—our culture offers many opportunities to play, and we are required only to make room and time for them. If we do, the fun will follow.

The ways in which we choose to understand and pursue fun are important. Culture and commodification shape our desires and behaviour, but in turn, we also have a role in shaping culture. We are agents in our own right, and as such, it's time to take fun back. The conversations that we have, the daily choices that we make, the things that we buy or don't buy, the fun that we have: all of these contribute to shaping shared understandings and experiences, and to our health and happiness. Knowing this, what vision of the good life do we want to create? How do we want to create the energy that fuels us as human beings? And how do we want to live? Do we want a life based on production and consumption, one in which we outsource fun because it's easy and modestly pleasurable to do so? Or do we want engagement and vivacity, bright moments of being that give us the experiences and memories of who we are and what our world is about?

Most of us yearn to be fully alive. Having fun is a means to do it.

Lisa Meekison is an anthropologist, writer, and consultant. She has a PhD in anthropology from Oxford University and has worked extensively in healthcare, studying the ways in which culture shapes experiences of illness. She has published fiction and non-fiction internationally, and is currently writing a book on the behaviors that drive health and happiness. *http://lisameekison.wordpress.com @lisameekison*

About the artist

Isabelle Menin studied art at the Ecole de Recherche Graphique (ERG). After ten years of oil painting and several exhibitions, she decided to quit painting to explore digital work, though maintaining her recurring focus on nature. She lives in Brussels, dividing her time between graphic and web design and personal creation. *http://www.isabellemenin.com*

On January 12th 2010, a massive earthquake struck
the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere,
killing an estimated 300,000 people
and consigning over 600,000 to displacement camps.

Two years on, Haiti has hardly begun to recover.

Pwomes

by Stephanie Anderson

Art by Kirsty O'Leary-Leeson

Kirsty O'Leary-Leeson, "Evening", 2009

She's screaming at us, hands slicing the air and eyes rolling heaven-ward like a hurting animal. I bow my head—I can't meet those eyes, or those of her silent sons and daughter, statues behind her. I catch words like *anyen* and *timoun* in her frantic speech. I can't even begin to decipher her Creole. My childish vocabulary slows me down, plus her crying sends her words hiccupping out in jerks, splashes of words broken by sobs. But I understand nonetheless: she's at the end of her life's rope.

I stand there and wonder what caused this breakdown before us white strangers—if it's the leaky shack she lives in, or the putrid stench wafting up from the green water of the latrine in her backyard, or the rags drooping from her stick-figure body, or the dim hunger-drawn face of her youngest boy.

Or maybe it's her drunk of a husband who won't support her, or her recently-deceased sister, or the orphaned nieces and nephews she now has to feed on less than a dollar a day. Maybe it's the child she sent away from her home in Les Cayes to Port-au-Prince to be a *restavek*, a "stay with" child destined to servitude and, God forbid but more likely than not, no education and lots of sexual abuse.

I wonder if she sees my white face and blonde hair and blames me for her life.

The translator, who has lived in Haiti for large chunks of his life, tells her why we're here: to conduct interviews with people in the area about their housing situations and take photos so we can use the information to raise money from American donors and come back to build houses. It sounds fishy even to me. After she calms down, she invites us into her one-room shanty that leaks when it rains. She explains how the floor turns to mud and everyone sleeps together on one bed or stands through the night while the thunderstorms rage.

Sitting with me in the rickety house on the outskirts of Les Cayes, her life story spills from her like a cup of tea knocked over on a table. I sop it up with my notebook and pencil, greedy for words that I can use to craft donor appeals. But I know—and she doesn't—that she is already on the list to receive a house. We can't tell her right now because of Haiti. We can't tell

Kirsty O'Leary-Leeson, "All at Sea", 2011

her because they might kill her.

I soak up all of her tragic life with my paper until I'm fat with words, saturated with the enormity of her personal story, unable to absorb another word.

The sun submerges itself behind the hills of Pétion-Ville, leaving humidity behind that clings to my skin and sinks into my clothes. Light from inside the apartment glitters off the pool—otherwise I'm surrounded by the darkness of night in a city where electricity is a luxury. I smear brie on a slice of bread and listen to their stories, Peace Corps stories, recounted under the umbrella-topped table. They are older than I am, in their forties compared to me in my twenties. I'm their exact age when most of these stories happened, before everyone had a cell phone, a computer and an iPod. But I'm captivated by the Haiti of their time, before U.S. influence began diluting the island culture. I'm envious of their bravery as the country boiled with civil conflict, murderous regimes, and even deeper poverty.

I feel the Haitian rum swirling in my veins and I cram bread and cashews into my mouth, something to soak it up so I can keep pace with both their stories and the tipping of their glasses. I'm no newbie, I tell myself. It's still early, only ten o'clock, but 105 pounds of me is no match for Rhum Barbancourt. I'm beginning to float like a dead fish.

My mind swims back to one of my interviews from the day, a 63-year-old woman whose age had already put her one year past the average life expectancy in Haiti. Gray hair, leathery face, husky voice—time had aged her, but she was living the day-to-day life of a young woman. Instead of relaxing in an easy chair, she runs after her grandchildren, cooks for them, and takes them to church. But judging by her broad (though half-toothless) smile, she wouldn't have it any other way.

With her three-year-old grandson perched in her arms, she recounted what happened during and after the quake in a voice calm enough to be describing something mundane, like the mangoes growing on the nearby trees. She tells me how her cement-block house began crumbling while the family was still inside. By the time she realized what was happening, she couldn't see the door and had to feel her way out instead, groping at walls that were falling around her. A wall toppled onto one of her sons and pinned him, breaking his back. He went a week without medical care.

They found the three-year-old sitting on what was left of the roof—he'd been inside with them, but he miraculously appeared unharmed on top of the rubble, as if the hand of God had reached in and plucked him out of the chaos. Now the woman, her two sons, three grandchildren, and one daughter-in-law live in the shell of their broken home with a tarp slung across what's left of the walls.

"The first thing I did was praise God," she said.

That sentence replays in my head. Her grateful reaction didn't match the horror she beheld that day. Offering praise moments after her house had collapsed into rubble, trapping her son underneath and breaking his back, was something I probably wouldn't have done. Maybe it's the rum, but I feel sad my faith isn't that strong.

"We're leaving," my colleague says, bringing me back to the party. We bounce in the car over the cobblestone streets that the earthquake thrust upward and split open. We arrive at an open-air restaurant with a live Haitian band and sit at a long table. Strings of Christmas lights snake around the patio and mosquitoes bite my ankles under the table. I don't remember what food I ordered—I only remember the rums mixed with bitter orange juice and poured into sugar-rimmed singles. Other former Peace Corps volunteers and a couple of people within the Haitian government show up, and now we have a party.

Though I'm fascinated by their stories, I have little to contribute to their shared history and I've only been in Haiti a few days. I drink and study their faces—faces with eyes that have seen so much—while they talk. They recall the bloodshed of the early 1990s during their volunteer days. Because of a coup, the Peace Corps had to pull them and its other volunteers out of Haiti, but not before they'd narrowly avoided several bullets, bandaged gunshot wounds on children, and counseled rape victims. Their service had woven their lives into one of Haiti's most violent moments. Sometimes it's difficult to tell whether they are

glad to have been part of such a history.

Because history, in Haiti, hasn't been kind. There has always been some force keeping the Haitian people down, whether French plantation owners during colonial days, the country's own regimes, or international trade regulations that have caused prices for Haitian-grown commodities like rice to plummet, creating even more poverty. I get the sense that Haiti's earthquake was just another violent attempt to keep the people down, this time by the land itself.

The conversation turns to current matters: corruption in a post-earthquake world, the then-upcoming presidential elections, and the government's flaccid response to the 1.5 million homeless survivors in the tent camps. They slip into Creole when they don't want me to hear. Half-listening, I swallow more rum drinks with sugary rims and imagine that all the dark Haitian boys are fixated on my blonde hair, that it's beaming like an angel's halo, and that my Midwestern feet could, if they wanted to, dance to this island music. I imagine that I, too, live here among the tarantulas and starving children and voodoo and earthquake rubble and *preske* and Barbancourt and beans and rice and Roman Catholicism.

Later, we bounce across the rat-infested streets and I throw up out the passenger side window of the car in front of an earthquake survivor's blue plastic tent.

I'm on the moon. I swear to God I'm on the moon. The land lies flat and white, stretching in each direction as far as I can see like Euclid's never-ending line. Heat waves rise from the earth, making the people in the distance dance before my eyes. Even concrete homes are too luxurious for this part of Haiti—here at the edge of Gonaives it's sticks and mud, maybe scraps of tin for the lucky few. Not a single plant risks the sun's wrath in this neighborhood. Instead of gazing at lush farmland, I watch people lug wheelbarrows of salt across the barrenness. The only sign of modernity is an aluminum-sided square building glinting in the sun not far away, and surrounding it like landscaping are black dots of naked children.

Mothers my age adjust sleeping two-year-olds and gaze at the locked doorway. They're waiting for it to open so they can thrust their babies into the sky in hopes the child will get some food

We pull up and they swarm our vehicle. Dirty fingerprints smear across the glass and grimy hands motion for me to roll down my window, open my door. I don't want to climb out—I can smell them from here—but I force myself outside of the Jeep. I walk into the crowd of children and I've never felt smaller. Little girls with ratty beaded hair grasp my hands and search me—I feel their hands against my thighs digging in the pockets of my khaki pants. Naked boys with dirt-crusted penises beg me to take their photo. Older boys of twelve or thirteen grab my arm a little too close to my breasts and say in English "my love" and "sexy" with not-so-innocent adolescent grins. I tell myself they're not storing mental images of me for later pleasures, but it doesn't work.

Mothers my age adjust sleeping two- and three-year-olds in their arms and gaze at the building's locked doorway, oblivious to the screams, laughter, and cries around them. They're waiting for the door to open so they can thrust their babies into the sky in hopes the child will get some food. I can't tell if the babies are listless from starvation, heat, or both. From my taller perspective, it's a sea of orange heads—the children are so hungry their vital organs are greedily sucking up all nutrients and leaving none for their hair.

And then the door opens. Little hands abandon my pockets and naked boys dash toward the door, little genitals flapping. The mass of human bodies presses around the opening like cattle crowding into a gate. Screaming, pleading, begging—they jostle each other out of the way as I watch from behind. A little girl falls and shrieks when four or more pairs of feet trample over her before she can clamber up again.

A Haitian man stands at the door and

Kirsty O'Leary-Leeson, "Reflecting On", 2011

bellows words I can't understand. He snatches a child here and a baby there, shoving them behind him into the tin building and into the waiting arms of the white volunteers, who will feed them a meal of beans, rice, and sauce. This man is the gatekeeper, the one who decides who eats today and who doesn't.

"It must be hard," I say to our translator.

"Must be hard to do what?" he asks.

"It must be hard to decide who gets to go in and who doesn't."

"It's not as innocent as you think."

At that moment, a colleague approaches me and says, "You'll never guess what just happened. A little girl came up to me and she pulled at my shirt, like she wanted something. Then she opened her hand and showed me some crumpled up money. Isn't that strange?"

It comes together in slow motion, like a math problem in which you have to read graphs and study charts before the pieces of information congeal into a single fact: the man at the door is accepting money from the children in exchange for letting them into the feeding program sponsored by American missionaries. When you think of corruption, you think of shady deals behind closed doors, but here it is happening before my eyes. I envision the missionaries reciting Matthew 25:35 as they watched the meals being served in Christ's name. *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink...*

After ten minutes, it's over. About two hundred get inside, maybe another two hundred or more don't—the missionaries can't solicit enough funds from American benefactors to feed more children than that each day. The level of hunger in Gonaives is shocking, even sickening. One of the missionaries told us earlier that it's worse since the earthquake. Families that lived in Port-au-Prince but grew up in Gonaives fled to their hometown after their houses and businesses in Port were destroyed, only to find their parents or other relatives were too poor to take them in. These families became homeless wanderers of the slums.

The leftover children press themselves against the building and yell at their friends, presumably asking them to save them some food. And that man at the door, maybe he had

a son or daughter and a wife to feed at home who were every bit as hungry as the children he turned away. Maybe he's surviving the only way he can—maybe he feels blessed to have this job because he can feed his family, however dishonorable his methods are. God works in mysterious ways, especially when he works through white people.

I will tell you a story, a true story, that was told to me by the translator over breakfast in Haiti. A Haitian woman once sold warm cakes and other baked delicacies at a village open-air market located along a busy road. She arrived every day at the same time as the other village women who sold goods there, and she made ordinary profits.

One day, the woman had an idea: what if she arrived at the market earlier than all the other women to catch the travelers along the road before everyone else and, since she would be the only vendor at that hour, charge more for her goods?

The woman did so. She made twice the money and became popular with the many travelers of the road. She expanded her business. Her children had enough to eat every day for the first time in their lives. She could even afford to pay the fees to send them to school.

The woman's strategy might appear enterprising, a commendable "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" effort. In America, she might be applauded for her initiative. But she broke an unspoken rule in Haiti, one that I can't put into words. You'll understand when I continue the story. The other market women saw the profits the woman made by opening her shop early, and they gathered together and commiserated because they thought she was cheating them out of their own profits. One day, they arrived at the market at the same time she did. But instead of opening their shops early, they surrounded her, bound her up with ropes, and murdered her.

If the woman took part of their already-meager profits, the women reasoned, then they wouldn't earn enough to feed their families. In their eyes, the woman had essentially stolen from them. In a country where medical care, clean water, proper housing, and enough food every day are mere dreams for the majority of people, what is worse—killing a market woman or allowing hunger to kill your child? The woman who screamed at us in Les Cayes, the one at the end of her rope—I finally see why we couldn't tell her that she'll receive a house until the work crew arrives to build it. If the neighbors, who are equally poor, hungry and sick, were to find out the white people are building her a house…

That is the story I tell people when they ask why Haitians can't just "get over it and get a job."

• • • • •

The car lurches to a stop. It seems all one does in Haiti is lurch forward and back, side to side, better to worse and back again. I drop my boots to the ground and sling my backpack, big enough only for my camera, notebooks, and voice recorder, over my shoulder. The sun blazes down. The interpreter's eyes narrow at the young men loitering nearby, then he says, "Walk in the middle of the group. Not at the end, not along the side. We'll surround you."

I'm in Carrefour, west of Port-au-Prince, in the middle of an earthquake-shattered neighborhood. It wasn't a nice area to begin with, but now more than half of the houses lie in shambles on the ground. Narrow alleyways, sometimes no bigger than the width of two people, crisscross the neighborhood, a dizzying maze of broken cement and plastic blue tarps I'd hate to be lost in. Makeshift shelters line these passageways—they're nothing more than tarps or blankets draped across remnants of walls where a house once stood.

We descend into the maze with a Haitian pastor leading the way to the home of a parishioner. Young men, women, and teenage boys sit on overturned buckets and lean against walls. It's here you see statistics in play, particularly the one that says about two-thirds of Haiti's labor force has no formal job and about half of Haitians can't read or write. There were few jobs in Haiti before the quake, and now there are virtually none to be had with so many businesses destroyed. From the interviews I've done with young people, most of them want work but can't find any, or their haphazard educational history means they aren't

Kirsty O'Leary-Leeson, "Never a Forever Thing", 2011

qualified for anything more than physical labor.

Of course, others have accepted life in the tents or have turned to crime to get by. The same goes for some adults. My uneasiness in these passages might be completely unfounded, but it feels like I'm walking by those looking for a quick buck off a white woman instead of a job. Their eyes follow me, the only blonde head for miles. I get the feeling that if one of them grabbed me and dragged me into the maze, I'd simply dissolve into rubble just like all the houses and disappear.

We snake through tight passages until we reach a small square clearing in the midst of collapsed homes and sagging tents. Cement pieces blanket the square plot, but someone has cleared away most of the wreckage until only pieces soccer-ball-sized or smaller remain. A wheelbarrow track leads away from the plot—someone has cleaned up an entire home by hand.

A man appears, not much taller than me, and begins speaking to our interpreter in Creole. I study him. He's probably in his 50s, but I have a hard time guessing a Haitian's age because their poverty-stricken lives make them look older than they really are. I notice wrinkles around his eyes, but a Santa Claus-like grin and effortless laugh tell me most are smile lines instead. A younger version of him arrives and stands next to him—I don't need a translation to know it's the man's son.

The man disappears and returns dragging three plastic lawn chairs. The backrests are cracked and the legs wobbly. He places them in the shade of a neighboring wall and insists my colleagues and I sit in them. Soon his son reappears carrying bottles of cold 7-Up and Coca-Cola purchased from nearby street vendors. He pops the bottle caps off, and wisps of steam rise from the lips of the bottles as the coldness inside mixes with the hot air outside. It's clear that the pair barely has enough to eat each day and they've lost their home, but they're offering me a cold soda as if I were family.

I interview the man and his son, and I learn their house fell in the quake but that no one in the family died. His wife and other children live in a different village far from Carrefour, too fearful to return. The man and his eldest son live with a family next door whose house survived the quake. After calloused hands and aching muscles, they have achieved what many in Port-au-Prince have yet do: prepare their tiny plot of land for rebuilding.

They've come to an obstacle more insurmountable than piles of cement: they have no money to rebuild. Yet they keep clearing, day by day. I find this remarkable because I've heard anecdotally and through interviews that most Haitians feel that even if they cleared away their fallen homes, then what? There's no money to rebuild and no jobs that will allow them to save the needed money. All the faith in God, neighborliness, and desire for dignity in the world can't miraculously produce cash. I ask the man what gives him the strength to continue.

"You can't even be discouraged when God is in your life. What happened did so for a reason that only God knows," the man says. "And only God knows what will happen tomorrow."

In the last few days, I've interviewed children who lost their parents in the quake and lived for days alone in tent camps; a 23-year-old mother of a newborn who lost her husband and twin daughters in the disaster; and an elderly woman struggling to feed and clothe half a dozen grandchildren because her adult children died. These are just a few stories—and I cried in my hotel room as their words replayed in my head.

But something about this man and his son keeping their dignity in the midst of the tents, and clinging to faith when I could barely see a reason for it, struck me somewhere deeper than pain could. Though most Haitians have strong faith, this was something else. They're vessels adrift on a sea of destruction with nothing to anchor to but God. They realize that. And they accept that. They're not waiting for a relief organization. They're waiting for God.

We visit the apartment of a white man working and living full-time in Haiti. He invites us for supper on our last night in the country at his apartment in Pétion-Ville, which is up the hill above Port-au-Prince and known as one of the rich quarters of the city. It's where all the white people from the non-government organizations (NGOs) live who are working in Haiti. I guess it's where I would have to live if I worked here.

The neighborhood sits on the mountainside and blooms furiously in pink, red, and purple flowers. His apartment is nicer than my own in Florida. The split-level has two walls of floor-to-ceiling glass and a cobbled patio overlooking Port-au-Prince, with most of the amenities of an American flat at a fraction of the price per month. I picture my apartment back home and cringe inwardly at my jealousy when, from the patio, I see the lights of the city below sparkling like a reflection of the starry sky above.

Pa gen pwoblem. I can do this, too. Maybe someday I won't be just a visitor in Haiti—by the last few days of the trip, I'm thinking maybe this is where I should devote my life. I've also discovered that the only way people who know anything about Haiti will take you seriously is if you've lived there. I haven't—I've only been in country two weeks. So I, in fact, know nothing, or about as much as the representatives from the other NGOs.

Two weeks and I'm beginning to understand how a slave revolt that ended French rule on a Caribbean island could give birth to a country that has never known prosperity, but also has never lost faith in God. I wonder what pleases God more: a country like the U.S. where there's little suffering but also little faith, or a country like Haiti where there's daily suffering and overflowing faith. I see that no matter how poor you are, the only thing you can do in the face of disaster is sacrifice for your neighbor. From the streets of Port to the rural villages of Haiti's Central Plateau, I see the only way to greet a stranger is with a smile, an offer to rest in a chair, and an expression of thanks to God.

Two weeks and I've only seen thousands of families living in decomposing tents. (By the way, I parted the flaps of several tents and they were all empty inside. The quake buried all their residents' possessions and they can't afford to buy more.) I've only seen the faces of hundreds of children who'll never venture inside a school for more than a few years. I've only talked to mothers who sent their daughters away to be *restaveks* rather than starve. I only listened as widows cried because their husbands and children were crushed under tons of concrete, their bodies never to be found but their ghosts whispering to them all the night long.

The fissure between normalcy and horror in Haitian life gapes at me, and I'm almost too scared to explore it.

But through the sadness and the joy, I'm

learning. Nothing is shocking in Haiti after awhile. It's just life. I see the white people like me and my colleagues, the USAID workers, the people of Catholic Relief Services, the UNICEFs of the world—we'll never fully understand Haiti. All the outsiders in Haiti before and since the earthquake are like tiny ants marching up a mountain whose summit is continually climbing higher into the sky, a peak that rises instead of erodes. The more they scurry around Haiti trying to put Band-Aids on poverty, the more poverty Haiti creates.

When I return from Haiti, I enroll in a Creole class offered through a community college and taught by a Haitian woman. She's a few years older than me, probably in her late 20s, and three languages brighter. When I meet her, she is pregnant with her and her Wisconsin-born husband's first child and is working as a science teacher at a Florida public school. Some days she wears her black hair in neat, tight braids against her head; other days she wears it down but carefully styled so that it lies in smooth curls bobbing around her face. Her skin is like coffee grounds left over in the filter: dark, fragrant, glistening with health and youth.

She is what all of Haiti's young people might look like if Haiti wasn't Haiti.

I come to her class once a week to learn the language of her homeland. When I arrived in Haiti, I knew only a few phrases and words, plus whatever I could glean from having learned French. Now I'm aching to understand this language that sounds like French chopped up, tossed with a West African dialect, and smoothed out again. Creole is beautiful and ugly at the same time. If you see it as bastardized French, then it's ugly. If you see it as the language of slaves who had the courage to overthrow their masters, then it's beautiful.

She writes the words with felt-tipped markers on the dry erase board and rounds out their hollow sounds by saying them aloud. My college French classes give me the nasal sounds that make up the Creole language. The words feel natural on my tongue, like the taste of my fiancé's kiss. We talk about simple things like food and days of the week. My speech comes out like drips of water from a leaky spigot—word, pause, word, pause, word, pause.

My teacher grew up in Haiti. As a child she bathed using buckets of water from a hand-pump well, rode the tap-taps (*merci* Jesus) and ate goat meat in sauce with *diri* and *banann ak pikliz*. I don't know how or when she came to be in the United States (I'm guessing by her lack of a vowel-y Haitian accent when she speaks English that she came in her teens). I don't know why she isn't sweating and suffering her life away in Haiti, even if she came from a well-off family by Haiti's standards. I don't know whether it was God, fate, or luck that melded our life paths, each a polar opposite of the other, so that we can be in the same classroom as teacher and student, a white girl learning from a Haitian woman in America.

Maybe it wasn't any of those three. Maybe Haiti itself brought us together. Because I don't think of Haiti as a place anymore—I think of it as a living land with an actual soul. It allows people to exist in its mountainous bosom or cavernous cities, but not without anguish. Not without poverty, death and fear, but also not without love for one's neighbor in both word and deed, a hunger for a better future, and the sense that God is here, right beside you. Not without a troubled past, but not without tomorrow's promise.

Pwomes. I write the Creole word in my notebook. I promise, Haiti, if you will.

Stephanie Anderson works as a writer and photographer for a South Florida-based international humanitarian aid and development organization, where her primary job is traveling to developing countries in search of compelling stories. She has served as special sections editor at an agricultural newspaper and holds a bachelor's degree in English from Augustana College in South Dakota, her home state.

About the artist

Kirsty O'Leary-Leeson recently graduated from Norwich University College of the Arts with a first class degree in Fine Art. As an artist she explores the spaces we exist in both physically and mentally, using drawing as a dialogue between her thoughts and her experience of the real. Kirsty will be exhibiting at The Norwich Playhouse in April and at The Nicholson Gallery, Holt, May 4-10. *http://www.kirstyoleary.co.uk*

Spectacle III

Sculpture by Krištof Kintera

From the series "My Light is Your Light" (2008)

From the series "My Light is Your Life (Shiva Samurai)" (2009)

Above and below: photographs from the series "Of One's Own Volition - Memento Mori" (2009-2011)

A sculptor in Prague, Krištof Kintera frequently works with everyday objects, which he combines and modifies in order to refresh their meaning and generate new perspectives. "I am trying to bend and warp the reality, sometimes using minimum effort, sometimes with a lot of effort. After such a process of modulation a new strange item starts its unnecessary existence. It is about having its own and new (dis)logic and that is very exciting for me." Kintera is currently exhibiting at City Gallery Prague until May 13.

kristofkintera.com

atelier olschinsky, "Cities IV" series, 2011

"What gets measured gets managed," goes the old business saying. And so it was that the Industrial Revolution we know was pre-dated by and built upon a quieter revolution of institutions, made possible by our growing ability to distinguish between man's work and nature's

When we lived with labours lost

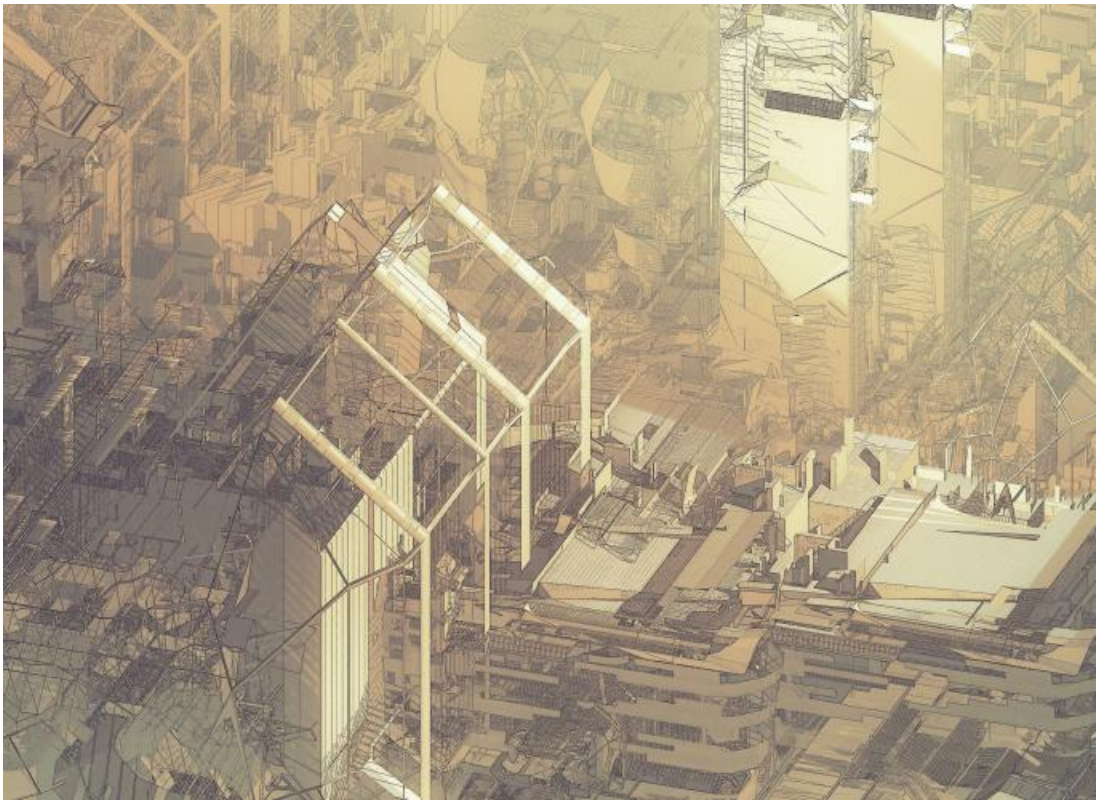
by Douglas W. Allen

Art by Peter Olschinsky & Verena Weiss

To my Lords in the morning, where I met with Captain Cuttance, but my Lord not being up I went out to Charing Cross, to see Major-general Harrison hanged, drawn, and quartered; which was done there, he looking as cheerful as any man could do in that condition. He was presently cut down, and his head and heart shown to the people, at which there was great shouts of joy.

—Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, October 13, 1660

If it were not for his remarkable diary and detailed records, Samuel Pepys would hardly rate a footnote in history as an able naval administrator. But he did write a literary gem of a diary, in which his personal accounts and keen observations of life in seventeenth-century London enjoyably take us back in time to a world much different than our own. Today many (though perhaps not that many) read the diary for a firsthand account of the Great Plague of 1665 or the Great Fire of London in 1666, or simply to feel nostalgia for days gone by in freshman English. But even a casual reader cannot overlook some outlandish curiosities . . . like how it came to pass that a major-general was hanged, drawn, and



atelier olschinsky, "Cities III" series, 2011

quartered in public, much to the thrill of onlookers. Some readers are old enough to remember hanging as a capital punishment, but no one today has any experience with a public drawing and quartering.

There is more to Pepys's diary than gory dismemberment. By any account, Pepys was a successful man: chief secretary to the Admiralty, justice of the peace, member of Parliament, fellow and president of the Royal Society, and brother and master of Trinity House, to name only a few posts. Some of these positions ring familiar, others less so, but a closer inspection of any single office reveals many strange things.

For example, Pepys got his start in the navy when his first cousin once removed, Sir Edward Montagu, was willing to act as his patron. A patron in Pepys's day was a person of influence who, with a word, could make or break a career. A patron was almost always necessary for any advancement in what we would now call the "public service," and Sir Edward had his own—a well-known character named King Charles II. Charles granted Montagu a number of titles, offices, and honors—including the 1st Earl of Sandwich—for his loyal service during the restoration of his Crown in 1660, and his positions allowed Montagu to influence the Admiralty to grant Pepys his first office, the clerk of the acts. Pepys had no administrative experience or formal knowledge of the navy, but this hardly mattered at the time. Patronage appointments were given to people whom the patron could trust; ability was a distinctly secondary matter. What was also strange about Pepys's office, along with most others of the age, was that it became a matter of (mostly) private property once received. When Pepys became the clerk of the acts, he owned the office the way we now own our homes: he could sell, borrow against, and earn an income from it.

As a member of Trinity House, Pepys was part of an ancient monopoly organization that built lighthouses and actually charged ships for the service. When he was elected to Parliament, very few of his countrymen were allowed to

Adapted from *The Institutional Revolution: Measurement and the Economic Emergence of the Modern World* by Douglas W. Allen (University of Chicago Press, 2011)

Pepys' life was as ordinary as a human life could be, but it took place within a context of social rules, norms, and organizations quite alien to us today

vote—perhaps none of them freely, given the lack of secret ballots, the influence of sheriffs, and the ownership of many boroughs by high nobility. Though a justice of the peace, he received no salary for his efforts, and he openly accepted bribes at his naval office. His day-to-day life was commonplace for a gentleman, but he also lived in quiet fear that someone might challenge him to a duel.

Pepys provides a nice example of the paradox of life between the modern and the pre-modern world. On the one hand, his life was as ordinary as a human life could be: he worried about his supper and his gold, he was proud that his home had a spare bed for visitors, he pursued his mistresses, and he gossiped about his friends and coworkers. And yet, on the other hand, his life took place within the context of social rules, norms, and organizations quite alien to us today. In the West, patronage and bribes now imply corruption, duels are long gone, and universal suffrage with a secret ballot is a fundamental right. Indeed, it is this contrast in institutional context between the past and present that rivets students of history to the Pepys narrative.

In general, what often attracts us to history is the exotic within the context of the ordinary. We marvel at the spectacular military leader in an otherwise common battle. We are drawn to understand polygamy and arranged marriage among almost universal monogamous heterosexual marriage. Although we relate to, and sympathize with, the complaints of the eighteenth-century shipowner over excessive port taxes, we are more curious about the private "tax farmer" who paid the Crown for the right to collect the dues. And, of course, we are flabbergasted at the seventeenth-century diarist who unabashedly traded naval contracts for every form of payment from cow's tongue to sexual favors. If history did not have these exotic episodes, if the organization of life never changed, or if we could not relate to the individuals of the past, then history would make an unattractive study indeed. Fortunately, history has the common thread of humanity that makes it relevant. Doubly good is that its organizational detail changes over time and is therefore compelling and interesting.

Economics provides a useful tool for understanding the past because the human experience, over time, is connected through a common economic reality. At the most fundamental level, all people at all times have dealt with the problem of scarcity. There has never been enough, there will never be enough, and as a result people always have been driven to find better ways to increase their wealth and consumption. Scarcity has several universal implications: choices always have had to be made, actions always have had costs, and there always have been winners and losers. Humans have always used innovations to reduce the level of scarcity; thus technology, which is ever-present in one form or another, has improved over time. Markets have also existed since antiquity, and life throughout history is a continuous attempt to get and produce more through exchange. The Romans had capital markets and interest rates. In many ways the baker of antiquity was similar to our baker on the corner because all bakers are simply trying to make a living.

What then, in a broad sense, is different? What captures our attention when we see a historical society different from our own? Economists naturally tend to focus on measures of well-being such as technology, incomes, height, or the absence of violence. This is an economic history of quantifiable averages. Output has increased over time, along with population and per capita incomes—on average. Health is better, people are taller, transportation is faster—on average. This is all well and good, but it often fails to capture what many sense to

These institutions had an economic logic, being designed to solve incentive problems that arose in the pre-modern world

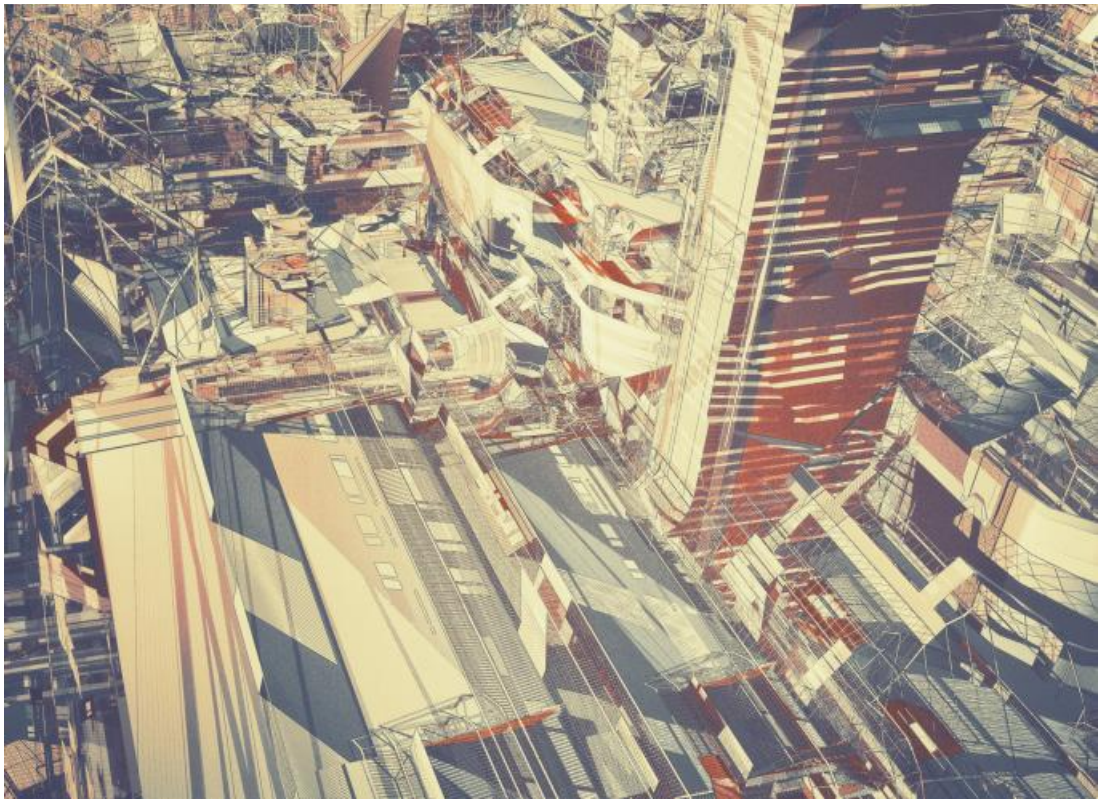
be a greater difference. Armies today are not just more deadly on average; they look different. They wear camouflage, do not fight in tight formations, are not composed of foreign mercenaries, and do not receive compensation through the spoils of battle. If we go back to our friend Samuel Pepys, we see that a middle-class administrator in the British navy today would have more possessions and would live longer, but we are also aware that no one in the West today nonchalantly watches a man's heart get ripped out in a public square. So we realize that there is more to change over time than just a difference in averages.

Nevertheless, it is unfair to accuse economists of being completely focused on averages. Many have recognized that a major component of what differs over time are the rules we live by and how life is organized. For the moment, call these rules "institutions." The more institutions differ over time, the more different the past appears. Today, in the West, the world is considered "modern." By that is meant a world governed by a series of secular institutions: the rule of law; well-enforced property rights; elected democratic governments; human rights; public provision of courts, health care, national defense, and education; professional services; regulated markets; concerns over social welfare and income distributions; and the concept of individual liberty within a modern state. We are comfortable with corporations producing food, with public police investigating our stolen automobiles, with money used as a unit of account for everything, with wage labor, with free mobility, and with individuals determining who they will marry and what occupation they will have. Perhaps above all, we expect to have equal social standing among our neighbors. Ours is a society based on a concept of merit, and those who work hard and produce much expect to be rewarded. The race may not always be to the swift, but the laborer is worthy of his hire, and we believe that, with effort and a little luck, anyone can reach the top of the social ladder. But it was not always so.

Not so long ago there was a strong social class structure where a large gulf separated ordinary people from the elite, and seldom did one cross over from one station to the other. Masters controlled servants, and both knew their place in the world. Merit was valued, but it was not the coin of the realm—personal connections, conduct, and birth mattered much more. Markets and prices existed for votes, state offices, and roads. There were jails where criminals were temporarily housed, but no penitentiaries for long-term incarceration and reform. There was money, but many payments were made in kind, with truck and barter, or through gleaning scraps off the workroom floor. There were watchmen but no police. The institutional landscape was shockingly different in the pre-modern world.

The reality is that around 1850 the modern world—the world containing the modern institutions we are accustomed to—emerged. This revolution was mostly centred on the changes that took place in the rules of public governance: the aristocrats, dueling, naval and army administration, lighthouses, private roads, taxation, factories, private police, and the evolution of criminal law. Other institutions changed as well, and some contemporary writers such as Marx and Engels noticed what was going on:

> The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self interest, than callous "cash payment". . . It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—Free Trade.



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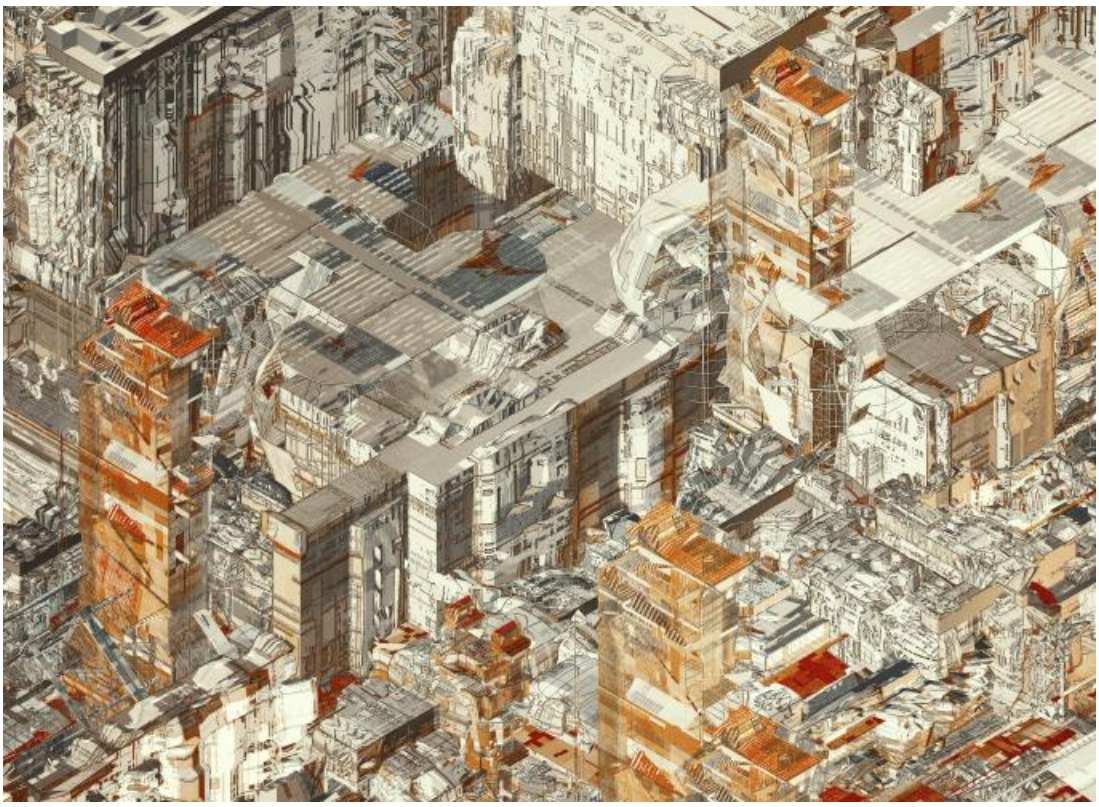
Although they clearly did not approve, Marx and Engels were on to something. They noticed a change was afoot; they recognized the past was not all bad; and they identified freedom to exchange as a key to the modern world.

My purpose here is to make the general claim that "measurement costs" are the common source behind the Institutional Revolution that troubled Marx and Engels. Free trade and the ability to socially interact with only "naked self-interest" and "callous cash payment", required the ability to measure what was being traded. Until this ability materialized, communities required "patriarchal relations," "feudal ties," and "chartered freedoms" to get many things done. Which is not to say there was only a single source of change. Several factors drive institutions to arise and develop; I wish to highlight an important one that has been ignored.

Many pre-modern institutions—at least the ones we find strange and fascinating—fell into two broad classes. In one class were those based on trust between a patron or master and his servant. In the other class were institutions designed to exploit the entrepreneurial spirit of private incentives; an office sold to its holder was known as a "venal" institution. Examples include the purchase of military commissions, the purchase of private offices, and private investigations of crime.

These strange institutions had an economic logic, being designed to solve incentive problems that arose in the pre-modern world; that is, to generate wealth by reducing shirking, pilfering, embezzlement, theft, dereliction of duty, cowardice, and the host of other bad behaviors that arise whenever people come together. The reason why the pre-modern world had institutions different from the modern world was simply because circumstances were different, and the reason why the Western world went through an Institutional Revolution was because those circumstances changed. And the most important circumstance to change was the ability to measure fundamentals such as time or distance.

Measurement is necessary because we want to know things, and when interacting with other people what we often want to know is who to blame. Who is responsible for the bad



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outcomes and for the good? Who is to be punished or rewarded? Choose any area of life and this problem is never far from the surface.

Part of the problem is that we lack the all-knowing powers of gods, but another part lies in the simple reality that nature plays an active role in life. A car breaks down. Did it break down because the manufacturer was negligent in its making, because the owner failed to maintain the car properly, because the owner's teenage son sneaked out of the house four nights a week for wild joyrides, because car parts eventually wear out, or because some cars are simply less well assembled than others? A football player rushes for 1,500 yards in an exceptional season and demands to renegotiate his contract. Is this a permanent change in the player's ability, or was the opposition especially disorganized this season? Whenever there is an outcome, there are almost always two potential sources—man and nature—and we often cannot separate and measure their relative contributions.

As much as this is a problem today, it was an enormous problem three hundred years ago and reached into areas of life unimaginable now. Let us go back to Mr. Pepys and read about one of the mundane things that happened to him numerous times: the "loss of labour."

> . . . Back to White Hall . . . I by and by found that the Committee of Tangier met at the Duke of Albemarle's, and so I have lost my labour. (Ibid., 5:107 [April 1, 1664])

> . . . to the office, where a while, and then by agreement to the Excise Office, where I waited all the morning for the Cofferer and Sir St. Foxe's coming, but they did not, so I and the Commissioners lost their labour and expectation of doing the business we intended. (Ibid., 7:134 [May 28, 1666])

> Up, and with Sir W. Pen to White Hall . . . yet the Duke of York is gone a-hunting. We therefore lost our labours, and so back again . . . (Ibid., 7:388 [November 28, 1666])

And on and on it went. Poor Pepys would show up for an appointment to do naval business and the other party would not be

there. No doubt such a miss would mean an inconvenience for some other party that Pepys had to deal with. Perhaps one of the other parties might be Pepys's patron. "Why are these contracts not signed?" he might ask. "Well," Pepys may have replied, "the Duke was out 'a-hunting' when I dropped by." What could Sandwich say? The Duke, and others, might just go hunting at the spur of the moment if fowl or fancy suited them. And who would question York, the future king?

But there is more to these episodes than just a series of missed opportunities. Though it was a source of frustration, what the modern reader picks up in the diary reporting is how resigned Pepys was to the matter. Failure to appear was just part of daily life in the seventeenth century, and there was no point getting flustered over it. Weather, sickness, stubborn animals, poor roads, disease, or any number of matters could hinder anyone or anything in the long chain of events that came together in the meeting of two people. Today we get upset when a single meeting is missed, and if it happens a second time, then we find someone else to work with. We know who to blame. But prior to our modern world of reliable machines and communication, it was difficult to know who was to be held responsible for tardiness: nature or the appointee.

Here is the important economic implication: the inability to identify who or what is to blame leads to an unfortunate type of behavior on the part of those involved. Because nature's role was so large, many meetings could be missed on purpose and blamed on nature. And here we come face to face with the problem for a patron such as Sandwich. He gave Pepys his position with the intention he would act in the earl's interests, but how could he know that the clerk would work toward such a goal when so many other factors out of either's control could get in the way? How many meetings did Pepys miss because he was off fishing? Confusion over responsibility for an outcome creates an incentive for what we'll call "bad behavior" on the part of a servant or agent.

A basic role of institutions is to control bad behavior by influencing the incentives individuals have to behave in various ways. Writ large, rules of life are chosen so that societies create as much wealth as possible, mindful that every set of rules creates incentives that lead to a certain amount of bad behavior. So it behooves any society to choose its institutions wisely.

Today judicial courts, public finance, sheriffs, notaries public, and military services are provided by various levels of government through a professional bureaucracy. In the pre-modern period these were provided either through trusting or venal institutions. These institutions solved the Crown's problem of how to administer the country without having its servants abscond with the wealth of the nation through the bad behaviors that were possible when nature played a large role. Merit, at least in the way we currently think of it, was not a primary consideration.

Patronage, in which individuals appoint, promote, and vouch for others they have a personal connection with, was common within the small, personal, and centralized governments of the pre-modern era. Under patronage, reputation and social standing were central, and an appointment was made to an office based on the desires of the patron. The appointee was expected to act in the interests of the patron, and the entire system depended on the goodwill of its members and their ability to trust one another.

Although acts of patronage could be made to many members of society, the most important cases were reserved for the nobility. Noble officeholders were often restricted in the ability to sell, bequeath, or otherwise transfer their offices. For example, an office might have only a tenure for life, and when the servant died the rights to the office reverted back to the Crown. Many offices (especially the great ones) held a tenure at the pleasure of the Crown—meaning the king had better be pleased with the service provided. Unlike an officeholder who had purchased a minor office, a patronage appointee could often be removed from office without being compensated. The most important state offices and the ones most easily manipulated against the Crown's interests were more likely to be given as patronage and less likely to be treated as pure private property.

Patronage, however, had three major costs to the Crown. First, the importance of loyalty

meant that an office granted by patronage was more likely to be held by an incompetent person than was one granted by purchase or merit. Second, patronage based on a system of trust required additional institutions for monitoring the trustworthiness of officeholders. As such, individuals in trust positions were required to make special types of investments that were used to police political exchanges. These ancillary institutions were sometimes general to society and other times specific to the class, but in all cases they were costly. Third, patronage tended to work only when the civil administration was relatively small. As a civil service grows, it becomes logistically impossible to use a system of patronage to any great extent, and just as impossible to police bad behavior through expulsion from the elite ruling group. How small is small is a moot question. Certainly, compared to today, the civil service during the pre-modern period was trivial. In 1727, the English judiciary consisted of only seventeen judges. That seems small enough.

The major alternative to patronage was to sell the office outright to a private individual. Such were the venal offices, though at that time "venal" did not have the negative connotation it has today. When an office was sold it was generally treated as a form of property, no different from a landholding. The owner could manage the office as he saw fit, sell it, or leave it to an heir. When such an office was held, the owner could be absent and hire deputies to do the work. Most important, an office was a source of wealth, and remuneration was by fees, shares in revenues, gratuities, and perquisites rather than by salaries. Of course, there were costs to the sale of public offices too. Venality could create incentives that were incompatible with the Crown's goals, and could encourage officeholders to engage in activities that enhanced their own wealth at the expense of the Crown.

The third alternative for staffing the civil service, and the one that eventually won out, was to produce civil goods in-house through the employment of professional bureaucrats. Salaried workers require monitoring, but as the Crown's ability to monitor both the inputs and the outputs of public service improved, and as the profits provided by purchase and patronage increasingly acted as incentives for bad behaviour, the desire to move away from a decentralized administration to a professional bureaucracy increased.

In the end, it comes down to transaction costs: those costs necessary to establish and maintain any system of rules and rights. If institutions are bundles of rules, then transaction costs are the costs of establishing and maintaining institutions. Understand these costs, and an understanding of institutional detail follows almost automatically. The institutional details observed in the pre-modern era resulted from attempts to mitigate the transaction costs of the time, costs which were not only large, but ranged along dimensions that are irrelevant today. The major problem of the pre-modern world was the enormous role nature played in the ordinary business of life. Keeping time, measuring distances, and obtaining a reliable source of power were once problems of a first order. Once these problems were solved, the institutions that characterize our modern world adapted to and grew upon a new foundation of monitoring and measurement.

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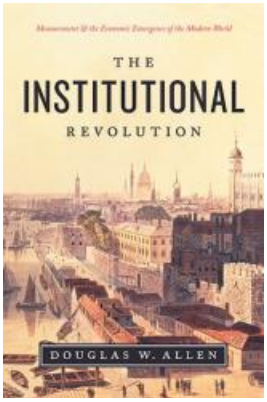
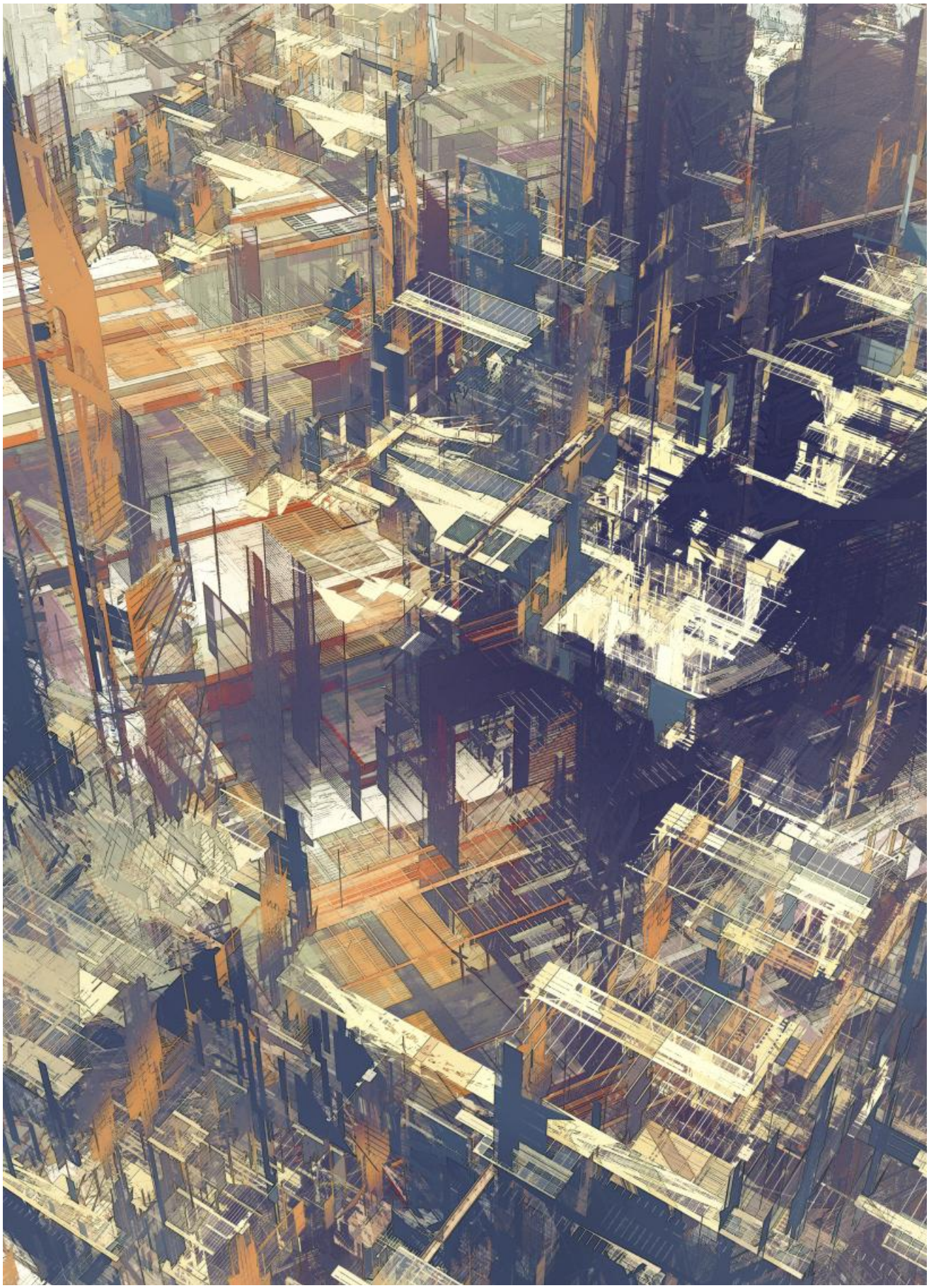


Doug Allen is the Burnaby Mountain Professor of Economics at Simon Fraser University. His research is in the field of New Institutional Economics and spans many specific topics: marriage, history, agriculture, and the church. He is the author of two popular undergraduate microeconomic theory textbooks, several other academic books, and over sixty articles.

About the artists

atelier olschinsky, founded in 2002, is a small creative studio based in Vienna. Peter Olschinsky and Verena Weiss operate in various fields such as graphic design, illustration, photography, and art direction. In addition to their client mandates they also run several independent projects, always trying to develop and refine their work. *www.olschinsky.at*



Ariel Garten

Ariel Garten is CEO of InteraXon (*interaxon.ca*), a Toronto-based company specializing in thought-controlled computing. Ariel's career also includes a research position at the Krembil Neuroscience Centre, years of experience as a practicing psychotherapist, and a stint as a fashion designer featured at Toronto Fashion Week. Ariel talked with with *SCOPE*'s **Abby Plener**.

SCOPE: *What exactly do you mean by "thought-controlled" computing?*

Garten: Thought-controlled technology allows you to connect your mind to a device and interact with it in some way—either as control, "I'm controlling a cursor with my mind," or in a way that's responsive: once the computer knows something about my brain state, my emotional state, it can change in response.

SCOPE: *What inspires you about it?*

Garten: [*laughs*] So much of it! The idea that we can make visible these invisible processes inside of us is very inspiring, and the idea that you can connect yourself to the world in new ways is exciting.

SCOPE: *What is the hardest thing about promoting it? What are people most afraid of?*

Garten: The biggest challenge is just letting people know it exists. Most people are aware of this as part of a far-flung science fiction future and they don't realize that the future has arrived. Other people are concerned that this information might be used against them. At this point in the technology, I can't tell your PIN number. I don't think we ever will.

SCOPE: *Where will this technology be thirty years from now?*

Garten: That's an easy thing to say: thirty years from now this will be a ubiquitous way to interact with the world. Like voice-activated technology today, thought-control will be a normal and unobtrusive way to interact with the world.

SCOPE: *How will it affect how we relate to one another?*

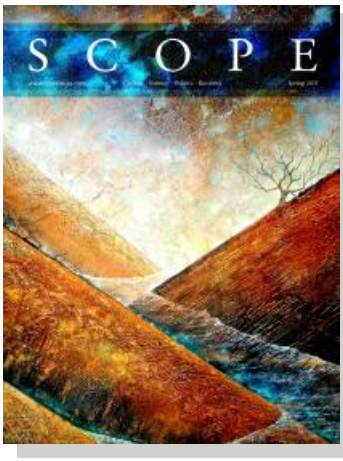
Garten: You're going to see applications that allow you to tag data with your emotional states. When you're looking at a picture from your sister's wedding and your mom looks at the same picture, she can see just how thrilled you were when you were looking at the picture. You're going to see things like brain-wave space match-making, or [how] your brainwaves are like a celebrity's brainwaves. Those are going to be the earlier sort of gimmickier stuff but they point to the sort of meaningful social interaction layers that will be added.

SCOPE: *How do you apply your expertise as a psychotherapist to your work at InteraXon?*

Garten: As a psychotherapist I get to learn a whole lot about how humans interact. Our goal is to create a technology that is humanized—a technology that gets out of the way so that you can be your best human self. Technology can be an imposition in our lives and our goal is to make technology that allows the experience of being human to flourish.

SCOPE: *As a neuroscientist, do you think your awareness of your internal processes has shaped the way that you create?*

Garten: That's interesting. As I was becoming a neuroscientist and understanding the chemical interactions that create the way that we see the world, it was slightly terrifying because at a certain point everything became very reductionist. Our knowledge of neuroscience is far from complete and will never truly be reductionist because humans create variables well beyond the floating of chemicals within our brains. Understanding neuroscience gives another angle of insight into humans and becomes something to be celebrated, decoded, disambiguated, and re-ambiguated within us.



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"I'm on the moon. I swear to God I'm on the moon. The land lies flat and white, stretching in each direction as far as I can see like Euclid's never-ending line. Heat waves rise from the earth, making the people in the distance dance before my eyes. Even concrete homes are too luxurious for this part of Haiti—here at the edge of Gonaives it's sticks and mud, maybe scraps of tin for the lucky few. Not a single plant risks the sun's wrath in this neighborhood. Instead of gazing at lush farmland, I watch people lug wheelbarrows of salt across the barrenness. The only sign of modernity is an aluminum-sided square building glinting in the sun not far away, and surrounding it like landscaping are black dots of naked children."*

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