

University of London, Goldsmiths

Oliver Palmer

MFA Fine Art

2012-06-06

Fidelity and the Minimalist Event

2893 words

What if in Jacques Rancière's conception of the part-of-no-part (Rancière, 2010) – and even more with Jean-Luc Nancy's Being-in-common etc. – we find nothing more than a reiteration of good old-fashioned Social-Democracy?¹ We already know from experience that Monopoly Capitalism functions just fine with social-democracy and is therefore a sign of its dependence upon it.² If we are to view the separation of politics and economics (standard in social-democracy)³ as a precondition for the subordination of the political to the economic sphere (through its standardisation etc.

– in short, through its taming) then through its reduction of political actions/forms/demands into that of mere demands for recognition of difference (with the aim/assumption that those differences will be reincorporated into the societal whole) then do not, as Ben Seymour⁴ suggested, these conceptions of the part-of-no-part/multitude etc. simply initiate/continue a (logically) never-ending cycle?⁵

The main difference in form between these parts-of no-part are, as was noted at the end of my previous essay, that Rancière's the People (and Chantal Mouffe's agonisms

¹ With the effective end of the age of Monopoly Capital, the advent of multinational capitalism, (Foster 1996, 206) and the ending of the social contract identified with the form of the welfare state, we find ourselves in a crisis of social-democracy. This is not to say that social-democracy (in its welfare state form) is to blame for the current financial crisis (as the rightist narrative runs) but that the welfare state (Curtis 1992) has come to be replaced by a much more naked form of technocratic rule – one that more *openly* places the prerogatives of (the owners of) capital before the (formal) democratic processes of individual states – though it seems clear that this is not merely an external threat since the very form of the state itself is changing to the needs of international capital. Is it possible that the current crisis of confidence that is causing the seizure (in both senses of the word) of many industrial economies, having followed on from a period of boom built on credit default swaps, and derivatives, points to a crisis of production in the sense that production is possible as a mode only insofar that it also creates the conditions for its *re*production? Clearly the ideology of free markets is alive and kicking and the widespread take the money and run tactic of the last decade(s) was something slightly different.

² Slavoj Žižek speaks about a similar logic at work in the shared rules of civil society (2009, from 29').

³ ...and standard in capitalism more generally. I do, of course, by this observation mean to imply that, beyond (or through?) art and philosophy, the ultimate aim for anti-capitalists should be the politicisation of the economy; obviously it always already is political but I mean in the sense of democratising it, of a reinstitutionalisation of the commons that might 'un-Enclosure Acts' it.

⁴ This was during my last CS tutorial – 23/04/12

⁵ This being a never-ending cycle of: a) existing identity or new identity comes into conflict with power/capital, b) bearers of said identity demand recognition/incorporation, c) after a short stand-off, the claimants are recognised/incorporated, d) and then everyone's happy, with much self-congratulation all round, e) somewhere else the merry-go-round starts again, leaving the movements of capital unshaken

(Mouffe 2009)) are negatively defined (Rancière, 2011), through exceptionality whilst Nancy's Being-in-common (Nancy, 2000)⁶ – that there is no singular being) is an ontological claim (Rancière 2011, 84) that presupposes that all being, being plural, and only graspable in relation to all other being(s), is always already reconciled to itself (their-self/selves).⁷

Rancière is useful insofar that he enables what seems like the possibility of political art practice – but what if he makes it too easy? With his (and Mouffe's) subject thought through agonisms we seem almost to be left with a (collective) subject resembling an always incomplete version of the collective subject we find in Nancy. Perhaps then his (Rancière's) conception of aesthetic practice seems too easy, too convenient, *because* it fits so well with the societal model with which we on the Left still take for granted as a standard. From this perspective Rancière might be seen as a conservative (progressive) resigned to shoring-up the best of what is quickly disappearing...

But, let's consider, briefly, that perhaps I have been too harsh on Messrs Rancière, Nancy et al.⁸ That Rancière's approach may seem to protect what was best in social-democracy (protection of the other, some degree of self-determination etc.) is commendable⁹ but on the other hand leaves us the equivalent of a theoretical bucket with which to bail out our socio-economic ship. Nancy's ontology¹⁰ aims at a

⁶ Could this also be the case to some extent with Alain Badiou's insistence on Being as being only plural (Badiou 2012)?

⁷ ...with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Multitudes* (Hardt and Negri 2009) probably fitting somewhere between these 'extremes'

⁸ Note: I am not presuming to throw out all parts of a thinker's ideas because they don't seem to fit at a given point in time – parts of a conceptual framework or certain notions within it may be adapted to good use elsewhere.

⁹ I too seek to recapture and reassess what was best in the (neo) avant-garde – but not to preserve it but to see which – if any – of its promises and aims can still be rehabilitated.

¹⁰ I don't see the break between epistemology and ontology as having a great deal of 'substance' – for any ontology to hold 'true' it would have to 'exist' prior to epistemological inquiries into it though those inquiries can only take place through the development and expansion of existing epistemes. Perhaps we should inquire as to the ontological basis of an episteme?

reorienting of our understanding/experiencing of ourselves, of our very mode of being, for the purpose of a new solidarity. But without distinctions and antagonisms this view that what is in common is always already in common seems to leave us with no viable political agency. Hegel said that “The individual in his *individual* work already *unconsciously* performs a universal work” (Butler et al 2000, 20). It would seem that if this holds true then capitalism itself is already a bastion of universality – but this would be a universal individualism (that still operates collectively). Returning to Nancy perhaps some form of anti-individualism is needed afterall...

As with the separation between politics and economics, the individual subject (Althusser 2008, 135)¹¹ as developed in our (bourgeois) society, reducible to legal construct¹² (as are the collective subjects mentioned above), is, through its normalisation (limitation), more easily interpellated by the ISA¹³ (and, I think, this goes for the (collective) subject in the writings of Rancière which is seen as being in a state prior to its normalisation (and with the implicit assumption that this is the outcome of its demands for recognition).

Louis Althusser saw the subject not as a concept (which he would label scientific) but as a notion and therefore ideological – and, more specifically, originating in bourgeois ideology. It was through its pinning-down that the subject could provide a point of (relative) stability, allowing it to more easily be interpellated – indeed, he saw the

¹¹ I shall actually be prioritising Badiou’s (slightly extreme) reading of Althusser over my own from here on insofar that his use of Althusser’s terms are adjusted to fit his (Badiou’s) conceptions of Politics and Philosophy – which is more useful as far as this enterprise is concerned: “The subject, in Althusser’s sense, is a function of the State. Thus, there will be no political subject, because revolutionary politics cannot be a function of the State.” Badiou 2005, 63

¹² For Althusser the subject, constructed in ideology, only gives us access to recognition and not knowledge: the “rituals of ideological recognition , including the ‘obviousness’ [of] the ‘truth’ or ‘error’ of my reflections [that] may [seem to be] impose[d upon you] only gives us the ‘consciousness’ of our incessant (eternal) practice of ideological recognition [...] but in no sense [...] give[s] us [...] (scientific) knowledge of the mechanism of this recognition.” (2008, 47)

¹³ Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser, 2008, 22, 44-49)

very notion of subject as “a function of the State” (Badiou, 2005, 63).¹⁴ This consideration in conjunction with the fact that he saw the notion of the subject as having no grounding in science (which for him indicates the science of history, i.e. historical materialism (Badiou, 2005, 60)) led to the ejection of the subject from his inquiries and, according to Badiou (2005, 59), led to the very impossibility of establishing a subject in his (Althusser’s) thought. From this he developed the *concept* of subjectivity without a subject, that is, all that remains is subjectivity as a *process*: “there are only processes without a subject” (Badiou, 2005, 60).¹⁵ Badiou recovers the subject¹⁶ insofar that the subject is subject only in an active *process* – that the subject is *specifically* the subject of militant Truth: and that the (uncovering of) (militant) Truth is the aim of politics (Badiou 2005).

Let us take from Althusser some of those processes: the idea of philosophy as a “separating activity” (Badiou 2005, 62), that is, it is an activity which attempts to rethink, redefine, and renegotiate its terms. Philosophy is not politics but is a truth procedure that can act upon politics’ self-understanding¹⁷ insofar that the effects of politics are recorded in philosophy, immanently: it is ‘political’ in the sense that it

¹⁴ We see this in the current crisis in sovereignty in countries like Greece. At first sight it would appear that the state as a political form is getting weaker but I’m in agreement with Žižek (2010) in saying that on the contrary the state is, if anything, getting stronger! He doesn’t elaborate on this point but I just briefly attempt to do so here. The state (as a general form) is not weakening but getting stronger – it is the *particular form* of the state known as the welfare state that is ‘withering’ (the apparent dismantling through cuts, changes in the law etc. merely put into action what has already been made (seemingly) necessary through the movement of the markets – the general direction of policy is already out of the hands of the politicians (was it ever really in their hands?); they are simply administering the coup de grace). Marx and Engels (1985, 82) showed that the state was the collective form best suited to the domination of the general population: and the purpose of the state has changed with the changing needs of the ruling class.

¹⁵ By my reading I would hazard the risk of saying that perhaps Althusser doesn’t truly manage to banish the subject and the object (thus showing the extent to which Badiou bent the reading to his purposes?) but merely displaces their function to the realm of science (history). If history (science in his parlance) becomes the place of objective truths could this not risk becoming just as stultifying as any reification? Does it not risk masking the contingent nature of events, trapping them in a necessary appearance? (Žižek 2008, 316)

¹⁶ Not that Althusser really completely abandoned the notion of subject though (Althusser 2008)

¹⁷ Use of the pathetic fallacy here is purely rhetorical.

approaches (Badiou 2005, 63) its own immanent conditions (and therefore uncovers the political conditions in which it exists). With this perhaps we can attempt to rescue Rancière. Politics, understood as a process of uncovering subjective truths (as opposed to science's objective truths) might be (partially) reconcilable with Rancière's concept of Dissensus (2011, 63). The concept of Dissensus is the process through which that which is thinkable (in his words, sensible) is contested; that which is assumed or taken for granted – that which appears almost objective – is, through the opening up of alternative understandings, once again understood as subjective and recognised as contingent again.¹⁸ Perhaps here is the manner in which aesthetics also can be affective politically since Badiou, influenced by Althusser, marks art out as another kind of truth procedure...

If aesthetics and philosophy are both forms of thought that, through the testing of their immanent conditions, are able to contest meanings and forms, to what extent can they be said to resemble one another? Philosophy contests thought in what would seem to be a pure sense using the very terms of language itself as its medium¹⁹ whereas aesthetics contests the material and social incarnations of thought through either actual material or through treating its 'objects' as objects, that is, as signs.²⁰

Philosophy and aesthetics, both being forms of thought (and therefore able to contest meaning/open space for new meaning), are going to share some similarities – but because they are different forms of thought with different modes of operation they

¹⁸ For Rancière aesthetics is understood to be an area of human activity/thought that also contests received meanings by renegotiating what he calls the distribution of the sensible. The distribution of the sensible can be understood as the extent to which shared meaning can be influenced or contested by any given member – or non-member – of a society (Rancière 2010)

¹⁹ Perhaps we should almost be careful that this idea does not slip over into once again treating objects of thought as objects.

²⁰ I wonder to what extent is there a split in aesthetic practice between treating material as signs and signs as material?

will also have differences.²¹

For Althusser, “Philosophy is guarded [from] confusing history and politics [...] on account of itself lacking history” (Badiou 2005, 63), that is, history understood as science (economy). But aesthetics is absolutely in history (economy): art – even that which claims to break with the past – is always in reply to what has gone before (Foster 1996). It would also seem not too preemptive to claim that art – that is, insofar that it is recognised and circulated as such in our culture – is the product of an evaluation. The initial guise of this evaluation may take a number of forms (any number of which could fall under the heading of cultural capital) but, in order to gain any ‘currency’²² in the longer term and, in part, *because* of a recognition of its cultural value, the art (or some token sign indexical to it (Buskirk 2005, 34)) is given a financial value.²³ But, these cultural and financial values are (awarded) in relation to the art work’s relation to what has gone before it.

²¹ I’m thinking in terms of limits of engagement and not the more obvious differences of appearance and form.

²² We should be aware of the manner in which financial metaphors affect meaning more generally (Poole 2012)

²³ Of course, art cannot be reduced to pure exchange-value: insofar that it has the ability to intervene in the distribution of the sensible it always signifies more than just its commodity status. But its status as not just a commodity but a luxury commodity, excluding the bulk of the population from having a significant effect on deciding what is held up as fine art, might suggest that the artistic canons of any given period reflects the views (amalgamated and averaged out) of the ruling class (and those just underneath them who also have enough resources to participate). Does this mean that attempts by aesthetic practitioners at subversion are ineffectual – that, knowing better, the owners of capital are able to shrug-off what must appear as games? Or are the high-end collectors too dumb to recognise the risks involved in accepting the recommendations of (occasionally) radical critics and academics? Neither option here seems particularly plausible. And yet it would seem that a focus on its (art’s) material conditions as a means of subverting capital is a dead end (we only need consider how easily art’s ‘dematerialisation’ was absorbed) – though maybe we shouldn’t rush to rule out a possibility for its affective use (in the form of institutional critique for example) against the state (the state’s juridico-political norms are essential to the running of capital) (Žižek 2009). The ability of cultural capital to attract capital (to an area, company etc. through its association, improved reputation etc.) suggests that, as Jean Baudrillard (1975) pointed out, symbolic-value is also already easily absorbed by capital as sign-exchange-value. It seems probable that if capital or the state (as entities) could be collapsed in one fell swoop through attacking them as Master Signifiers (as concepts) then they would already have fallen. Obviously, the contestation of the distribution of the sensible is an unending war of attrition – indeed, to recreate a projected historical endpoint could very well lead us back to the logic upon which Stalinism was built (though it would by no means necessarily contribute to a similar outcome) (Žižek 2008, 316).

Is it the case that Aesthetics as a form of thought (made material either literally or conceptually) but as one that, unlike philosophy, is beholden to history (both in the Althusserian sense of economy and in the more general sense), bears the trace of history (economics) in a manner akin to the trace of politics left in the configuration of philosophical problems? What advantage for progressive politics would that leave art? Politics in the Althusserian sense (which, minus the political subject and concentrating on the process, can be conflated with Rancière's concept of politics) is the contestation of (subjective) truth, of what is held to be true (Rancière 2010). The movements and shifts in what is held to be truth at any given time will leave its traces in the use and understandings of an array of meanings and forms examined by philosophy – the task of which is to expand these and understand them through its own immanent operations. But if it were the case that aesthetics was to history (economy) as philosophy is to politics then²⁴ would aesthetics (necessarily) carry the undemocratic tendencies of economics? Or perhaps if (Modern, PoMo, contemporary) art seems predominantly undemocratic in its modes of functioning then it is *because it does indeed bear the traces of the economic* – that is, of the economic form it currently inhabits (which is to say the historically contingent mode it inhabits).

To some extent, however, we can't take the meaning of this (that art-economy / philosophy-politics are somehow neatly parallel) as the direct implication otherwise it would imply that philosophy (of the Althusserian variety) would have to be in some way democratic – but then again this is only as absurd as it sounds if by democratic (and therefore by politics) we only recognise a very narrow interpretation that implies some form of direct participation. A more accurate interpretation would be one that

²⁴

...in addition to snidely remarking that LSE might have an aesthetics department!

recognises the common ground of philosophy and politics as being that of search for and interpretation of truths.²⁵

If (progressive) philosophy bears the mark of politics and in its renegotiation of meaning is able (indirectly) to contribute to the identification of truth in politics then perhaps progressive (if it still exists) aesthetics (the manipulation of signs), despite bearing the hallmarks of bourgeois economy, can, in its renegotiation of (reified) meaning, contribute to a (gradual) change in economy... I think this is a nice model but that it doesn't seem to be the whole story. This surely shows that, as a mode of thought, aesthetics, like philosophy, also bears the trace of the political conditions in which it is produced and is therefore also able to renegotiate meaning associated with it. This point of view would seem to up-hold Rancière's theory of the distribution of the sensible with or without recourse to a subject: process seems sufficient for the analysis. So, like philosophy, art, as a truth procedure, bears the traces of politics. Unlike philosophy however it also bears the traces of history (of the Althusserian kind – that of economic determinations) and it much more openly bears the traces of (social) history and art history more generally. It is my contention therefore that art – either immanently (like philosophy) or in actuality (like politics) – might be able to not only reveal the potential routes of progress (or lack thereof) in the economic sphere (routes that are just as likely, due to the current separation of the political and economic, to be (mis)recognised as social and/or political) but that it may also renegotiate the possibilities of meaning with regards to truth and truth-events.

The Event, as defined by Alain Badiou (Badiou and Žižek 2010, 31) is the point where a truth in a situation is revealed. It is the point at which the Real of the

²⁵ “Only politics is intrinsically required to declare that the thought that it is is the thought of all. [...] Science, art and love are aristocratic truth procedures. Of course, they are addressed to all and universalise their own singularity. But their regime is not that of the collective.” Badiou 2005, 142-3

economic/social order, either covered up, denied or unrecognised, is revealed in a new way that opens the possibility of something which was previously either thought impossible or was impossible to think. How can aesthetics participate in this? Through an immanent critique the aesthetic should, if it's one searching for a (universal) truth, reveal one or more of those structuring influences. An important characteristic of Rancière's concept of the Distribution of the Sensible is that the sensible is comprised of that which we are able to garner from (the affects of) the Real. The sensible is essentially the Real as interpreted through the ideological fictions we form around it (though that is not to say that all reality is fictional but that reality can only be known *through* fictions – through its assimilation to language and meaning).²⁶ The Event can be seen as an intrusion of the Real insofar that it represents a moment, a choice, which changes the parameters of all other meanings and choices (in accordance with the idea of communism/democracy) – that is, it's an intrusion into what might rhetorically be referred to the collective psyche.²⁷ In addition to this the/an Event must, according to Badiou (2005), be fictionalised (like the Real) if it is to be recognised.

The method I discussed in the last essay focussed on how art history can be seen as being another of these fictions; an immanent fiction which, if read diachronically, through Nicolas Bourriaud's *Radicant* (2009), potentially opens up Art History to both recovery of parts and reconfiguration of others through the contesting of its standard readings. Bourriaud however is not sufficient on his own for this task since it

²⁶ ...although we must remember that use of the word Real is normally applied to those parts of reality which either can't be assimilated to meaning or the assimilation of which disrupts the functioning of the structure of meaning as it stands

²⁷ Not that I intend to too strongly compare the collective with the individual – this very well may re-reify the process in the form of subject again (though can I make such a separation when just over the next page I will be importing so much from Hal Foster, who does directly talk of the collective in psychoanalytical terms...?).

is possible for radican art to be reduced to the communitarian and/or to the postmodern orgy of styles. Perhaps if we turn to Fredric Jameson's concept of the 'ideology of form' (1986, 76) we will see that form is itself a content, that the (co)existence of different (previously conflicting?) sign systems bear "traces or anticipations of modes of production"; in recognising this, we can also see how returns to particular formal languages should, even if intended to replicate an origin,²⁸ will even in their minor differences bear traces of how the prevailing ideology (and economy, more general cultural attitudes etc.) has altered in the intervening period.²⁹ Bearing this in mind, how might we distinguish between use of style for style's sake and use of style as particular inquiry into its changing meanings? I think that specific enquiry into those parts of art history that constitute its *equivalent* of truth-events present the most pressing concern for art seeking to *contribute* to politics. But what would constitute an aesthetic Event?

In *The Crux of Minimalism* (1996), Hal Foster describes Minimalism³⁰ as a neo-avant-garde that was both the fulfilment of the logic of High Modernism and its breaking (Foster 1996, 54)³¹ which, through its 'theatricality' (Foster 1996, 54)³², moved art

²⁸ Is this to suggest that this process is somehow unconscious? Accepting that some level of a text will be generated unconsciously, to what extent can conscious intervention be made? And would the ability to engage with something on a (semi)conscious level suggest that that element engaged with is already openly admitted by the prevailing ideology and therefore 'common sense'? – according to Foster (1996) the reassessment of earlier avant-gardes by Minimalism was more than just a repeat – it was understanding becoming self-conscious

²⁹ Žižek (2010, 61-66) on tracing ideological changes in film remakes makes a remark that, in the light of footnote 28, calls into the question the desirability to participate in something in a fully conscious way: in describing the change of a character's act between two versions of *3:10 to Yuma*, Žižek says that the switch from "a momentary decision, an act of 'something in me more than myself,' now becom[ing] a fully conscious changing of sides which no longer transforms the subjective identity of the agent involved, [...] thereby los[ing] its character as an act." (2010, 66)

³⁰ In my previous essay I wrote of how I was interested in the liberatory utopian narrative that was interwoven with many of the avant-gardes.

³¹ "[R]hetorically at least, minimalism is inaugurated when Judd reads late modernism so literally that he answers its call for self-critical objectivity perversely with specific *objects*. Morris seeks to reconcile [...] minimalist literalism with the old modernist autonomy by means of the gestalt, only thereby to shift the focus from the object to its perception, to its *situation*." (Foster 1996, 54)

away from an insular medium specificity, opened aesthetics up to an interrogation of a wider variety of its conditions for being and moved it away from the creation of transcendental spaces. This opened the way for subsequent art to move away from the temporal, diachronic enquiries of Modernism (Foster 1996, 68) to the primarily spatial, synchronic enquiries of (early) post-modern practices (Foster 1996, xi).³³ He saw these two points of focus as axes that neo-avant-garde movements like Minimalism was still able to hold together in a creative tension (Foster 1996, xi).

I think that this split constitutes a Truth-Event. But what part of it constitutes the (Meta-)Event? Firstly, in the terminology of Foster, the neo-avant-garde (of the Minimalists and post-minimalists) works through a process of deferred action (or *Nachträglichkeit*³⁴) that is, “avant-garde work is never historically effective [...] in its initial moments”, it is “a continual process of pretension and retention [...] of anticipated futures and reconstructed pasts” (Foster 1996, 29)³⁵ and that this process represents a kind of fidelity to earlier points of reveal of that Truth-Event: these earlier Events only became a self-conscious understanding with their repeat by Minimalism. Secondly, there was the point of opening up, an awakening of possibilities that came in its wake. And thirdly, there was, according to Foster, a balance between the vertical axis of the diachronic and the horizontal axis of the synchronic (Foster 1996, xi) (represented by the first two points) which not only allows work to be made that responds to the particulars of a situation but also enables

³² This refers to Fried, Michael 1967: *Art and Objecthood* in Harrison and Wood (ed.) 2001, 826.

³³ Adam Curtis (2011) on the difficulty of creating new knowledge with existing forms.

³⁴ Foster borrowed from term from Freud (Foster 1996, 29).

³⁵ This is not to say that a historical moment can only be understood as it was later/couldn't be understood by the people of that time, in its unchanging truth, but that the truth of it understood at any given time is a reflection of the moment from which it is viewed – that it is viewed in parallax to the 'original' moment. Also, does not the phrase in the quote remind us of Jameson's definition of the ideology of form? I think that these ideas could be combined even more intimately.

reassessment of what has gone before.

But what would constitute a fidelity to this Truth-Event? And is reference to the event through its forms, hoping that the tweaks it is given today reveal something of art's political, economic etc. conditions, sufficient? Is a more general combination of the vertical and horizontal axis as described above sufficient to prevent the reinvigoration of the vertical (art historical) lapsing (as one could accuse Bourriaud's *Radicant* and *Post-production*) into to a quoting of styles that ultimately empties them? Can we even be sure that the forms are not always already empty? That forms have no inherent meaning seems clear³⁶ but they *do* have that vital link to their history that is only missing insofar that the viewer is ignorant of that history.³⁷

Dipping into past forms – particularly those that might be able to be associated with past moments of avant-garde truth-event, whilst still expanding upon the specificities of the present could be one way of following an immanent critique of art. But is there a way of expanding upon the horizontal axis, without ignoring the vertical axis that would somehow allow aesthetic practice to intervene more directly in to politics. Of course, the pushing of aesthetics (just one form of critical thought), should never be a substitute for politics (Foster 1996) (except in the most regressive of ways³⁸). To what extent can art, whilst still exercising its immanent critique, go further into politics without becoming yet another band-aid for economic and social inequalities?

³⁶ ...at this historical juncture, at least.

³⁷ But do the attempts to renegotiate these histories undermine or refine the very possibilities of shared (across time) meaning in general? I think that this points to meaning always being contingent upon its historical conditions and that despite the appearance of necessity as it accretes through time, those meanings never become truly necessary. Likewise it indicates that whilst meanings change and are not fixed, they can't be emptied completely... so long as there is some remainder of cultural memory linked to it.

³⁸ see Jameson 1986, 79

Bibliography

- Agamben, Giorgio 1999: *The Man Without Content*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Althusser, Louis 2008: *On Ideology*, London and New York: Verso
- Badiou, Alain 2012: *Being and Event*, London and New York: Continuum
- Badiou, Alain and Žižek, Slavoj 2010: *Philosophy in the Present*, Malden, MA: Polity Press
- Badiou, Alain 2005: *Metapolitics*, London and New York: Verso
- Badiou, Alain 2004: *Theoretical Writings*, London and New York: Continuum
- Baudrillard, Jean 1975: *The Mirror of Production*, St. Louis: Telos Press
- Benjamin, Walter 2008: *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press
- Bourriaud, Nicolas 2010: *Liam Gillick*, Köln: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft mbH
- Bourriaud, Nicolas 2002: *Postproduction*, New York: Lukas & Sternberg
- Bourriaud, Nicolas 2009: *The Radicant*, New York: Lukas & Sternberg
- Bourriaud, Nicolas 1998/2002: *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les Presses Du Réel
- Buchloh, Benjamin H. D., Gingeras, Alison M., Basualdo, Carlos 2004: *Thomas Hirschhorn*, London and New York: Phaidon Press Limited
- Buskirk, Martha 2005: *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*, Cambridge, MA and London, England: The MIT Press
- Butler, Judith, Laclau, Ernesto, and Žižek, Slavoj 2000: *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, London and New York: Verso
- Cesarco, Alejandro (ed.) 2006: *Between Artists: Liam Gillick, Lawrence Weiner*, Canada: A.R.T. Press
- Cooke, L and Karen, K. with Funcke, B. (eds.) 2004: *Robert Lehman Lectures on Contemporary Art No. 2*, New York: Dia Art Foundation
- Curtis, Adam 1992: *Pandora's Box Part 3: The League of Gentlemen*,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRu4SnBz7TY&feature=relmfu>, accessed 04/2012

Curtis, Adam 2011: *Adam Curtis speaking at Frieze on storytelling*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKb5ninbyWE>, accessed 05/2012

Dell, Simon (ed.) 2008: *On Location: Siting Robert Smithson and His Contemporaries*, London: Black Dog Publishing

Deller, Jeremy and Kane, Alan 2008: *Folk Archive: Contemporary Popular Art from the UK*, Opus Projects

Evans, David (ed.) 2009: *Appropriation: Documents in Contemporary Art*, London and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press.

Fisher, Mark 2009: *Capitalist Realism*, Winchester, UK and Washington, USA: Zero Books

Flam, Jack (ed.) 1996: *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press

Foster, John Bellamy and Magdoff, Fred 2009: *The Great Financial Crisis: Causes and Consequences*, New York: Monthly review Press

Foster, Hal (ed.) 1993: *Postmodern Culture*, London: Pluto Press

Foster, Hal 1996: *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, MA and London, England: The MIT Press

Gray, John 2002: *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals*, London: Granta Books

Gross, David 1992: *The Past in Ruins: Tradition and the Critique of Modernity*, Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press

Douzinas, Costas and Žižek, Slavoj (ed.) 2010: *The Idea of Communism*, London and New York: Verso

Guattari, Félix 2009: *Soft Subversions: Texts and Interviews 1977-1985*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e)

Hallward, Peter 2009: *Radical Politics and Political Will*, <http://www.spaceofdemocracy.org/word%20docs%20linked%20to/Uploaded%20May%202009/Hallward/Radical%20Politics%20Today,%20Peter%20Hallward,%20May%202009.pdf>, accessed: 03/2011

Hardt, Micheal, and Negri, Antonio 2009: *Common Wealth*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press

- Harrison, C. and Wood, P. (eds.) 2001: *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, Oxford (UK) and Cambridge (USA): Blackwell
- Hatherley, Owen 2008: *Militant Modernism*, Winchester, UK and Washington, USA: Zero Books
- Hirsch, Nikolaus 2007: *On Boundaries*, New York: Lukas & Sternberg
- Hobsbawm, Eric 2009: *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875*, London: Abacus
- Hobsbawm, Eric 2010: *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914*, London: Abacus
- Hobsbawm, Eric 2003: *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848*, London: Abacus
- Holmes, Brian 2004: *Liar's Poker*,
<http://www.16beavergroup.org/mtarchive/archives/000943.php>, accessed: 03/11
- Jameson, Fredric 2009: *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*, London: Verso
- Jameson, Fredric 1986: *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Cambridge: Methuen & Co. Ltd
- Klein, Naomi 2001: *No Logo*, London: Flamingo
- Krauss, Rosalind E. 1981: *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge, MA and London, England: The MIT Press
- Lee, Pamela M. 2001: *Object To Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press
- Leitch, V. B., Cain, W. E., Finke, L., Johnson B., McGowan J. and Williams, J. J. (eds.) 2001: *The Norton Critical Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company
- Lenin, V. I. 2000: *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, New York: International Publishers
- Lenin, V. I. 1992: *The State and Revolution*, London: Penguin Books
- Lippard, Lucy 1973: *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, London: Studio Vista
- Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich 1985: *The Communist Manifesto*, London: Penguin Books
- Marx, Karl 1990: *Capital Volume 1*, London: Penguin Books
- Meyer, James (ed.) 2000: *Minimalism*, London: Phaidon
- Morgan, Jessica (ed.) 2003: *Common Wealth*, London: Tate Publishing

- Mouffe, Chantal 2009: *The Democratic Paradox*, London and New York: Verso
- Nancy, Jean-Luc 2000: *Being Singular Plural*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press
- Nelson, Mike 2004: *Triple Bluff Canyon*, Oxford: Modern Art Oxford
- Noble, Richard (ed.) 2009: *Utopias: Documents in Contemporary Art*, London and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press.
- Poole, Steven 2012: *Cash Value: The Stealth Ideology of Financial Metaphor in Everyday Speech*, (a lecture at the *Ideology Now* conference at Birkbeck College, London, 28/04/2012)
- Rancière, Jacques 2011: *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, London and New York: Continuum
- Rancière, Jacques 2006: *Hatred of Democracy*, London and New York: Verso
- Rancière, Jacques 2007: *On The Shores of Politics*, London and New York: Verso
- Rancière, Jacques 2010: *The Politics of Aesthetics*, London and New York: Continuum
- Robespierre, Maximilien, 2007: *Slavoj Žižek Presents: Robespierre: Virtue and Terror*, London and New York: Verso
- Serra, Richard 1994: *Writings Interviews*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Shapiro, Gary 1995: *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art after Babel*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press
- Szewczyk, Monika (ed.) 2009: *Meaning Liam Gillick*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press
- Wood, P., Frascina, F., Harris, J. and Harrison, C. 1994: *Modernism in Dispute: Art Since the Forties*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press in association with The Open University
- Žižek, Slavoj 2001: *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, London and New York: Routledge
- Žižek, Slavoj (ed.) 2002 *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan (But Were Afraid To Ask Hitchcock)*, London and New York: Verso
- Žižek, Slavoj 2009: *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce: The Double Death of Neoliberalism and the Idea of Communism*, LSE Public Lectures and Events, Winter 2009, available on iTunes U (for free)
- Žižek, Slavoj 2008: *In Defense of Lost Causes*, London and New York: Verso

Žižek, Slavoj 2010: *Living In The End Times*, London and New York: Verso

Žižek, Slavoj 2008: *Violence*, London: Profile Books