

WHAT DOES *THE FOX* SAY: LOCALIZED COMMUNITY PRACTICE AND
HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE IN *THE FOX*

By

ELIZABETH MARIE THEBAN

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Thesis Approved:

Major Professor, Dr. Frances Colpitt, Professor & Deedie Rose Chair of Art History

Dr. Jessica Fripp, Assistant Professor of Art History

Alison Hearst, Associate Curator, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

Associate Dean for the College of Fine Arts

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Introduction

The Fox, a short-lived journal dedicated to conceptual art's issues and theories, was published from 1975 to 1976. The publication stemmed from the discussions and meetings of Art & Language New York, one branch of Art & Language, a collaborative group established in Great Britain in 1967. The group achieved international recognition for their conceptual work, including the publication of journals, organizing exhibitions, and hosting lectures and conversations.¹ The collective eventually split into different sections, with Art & Language New York forming in 1971. Helmed by editors associated with Art & Language New York, *The Fox* discussed local problems along with artistic critique. The local nature of their focus promoted what they called "community practice" as a means to instigate change politically. The community practice established in *The Fox*'s essays engages in institutional critique regarding the ideologies of and relationships between artists, institutions, and the market. The writers of *The Fox* use the term community practice to encompass all actions taken to engage with local and international issues through interpersonal communications and activism. In the magazine, the artists used historical institutional critique to analyze and promote change through the lens of Marxism.

The historical practice of institutional critique differs from recent practices, such as Hans Haacke's or Andrea Fraser's, that critique from inside the institution rather than critique from outside the institution using theory to provide judgments. The definitions of historical institutional critique as politicalized art in the late 1960s and early 1970s and recent, as those using the institution to criticize from the inside, comes from Alexander

¹ Scholars have noted that Art & Language produced some of the first analytical and

Alberro's introduction to *Art After Conceptual Art*.² Other practitioners of historical institutional critique include the Art Workers Coalition, the Guerrilla Art Action Group, and the Guerilla Girls. Unlike these examples, the editors of *The Fox* relied on Marxism and socialist theory for their critiques. The social theory centered on the analysis of capitalism based on the division of labor and class to determine value. They defined their critique through discussions about how social structures, bureaucracy, and the art market shaped the art world. As such, they used Marx's theories of the effect of capitalism on labor and productivity to create socioeconomic analyses of the art system. They used articles, reviews, or correspondence to engage their community in political thought and action, inviting readers to submit their thoughts on theory or practice.

I argue that *The Fox* emphasized localized community practice, exploring new modes of collaboration between artists and methods of institutional critique unlike previous artistic publications. Throughout this thesis I will discuss the context, production, and contents of *The Fox* and how the work done by the collective Art & Language New York addresses concerns specific to its members while also engaging with conversations and issues of the art world at large. *The Fox* as a magazine addressed a broader readership than its international counterpart, *Art-Language*. In engaging with their specialized community, *The Fox* invited those concerned with the same issues to participate in the journal. The journal defines their community as "those who are interested, curious, or have something to add (be it pro or con) to the editorial thrust . . . the revaluation of ideology . . . of this first issue are encouraged, even urged, to

² Alexander Alberro, "Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique," in *Art After Conceptual Art*, Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 8.

contribute to the following issues.”³ They elaborate on their invitation in the opening pages of the second issue with this statement:

If you are concerned with trying to reclaim art as an instrument of social and cultural transformation, in exposing the domination of the culture/administrative apparatus as well as art which indolently reflects that apparatus, you are urged to participate in this journal. It’s [sic] editorial thrust is ideological: it aims at a contribution to the wider movement of social criticism/transformation. (Our contribution will be on the art front but by no means limited to the fixed context-closure of ‘art’.) [sic] We need a broad social base in positive opposition to the ideological content and social relations reproduced by “official” culture.⁴

The journal addressed topics such as feminist art and art history, the cultural and administrative institutions of art, the nature of being an artist, pricing and economics of art, art education, the legacy of conceptual art, linguistics, art history and more. Art & Language New York viewed art as a means of transformation, and art as inherently political in both its content and institution. In this thesis, institution is used to mean the museums, galleries, publications, and other organizations that determine arts value and validity in the art world.

While previous artists’ publications covered the philosophies and movements within the art world, they lacked a focused community identity as portrayed in *The Fox*. Magazines such as *It Is* (1958-1965), *Possibilities* (1947-1948), and *The Blind Man* (1917) functioned as a location for the broad discussion of artistic ideas and practices. In the case of *It Is*, the magazine published work relating to the artists’ development of abstract expressionism. Artists in the New York Dada scene published their thoughts and reactions to works in *The Blind Man*. Earlier artists’ writing include manifestos published and distributed to further an artist’s work or movement. Other journals and magazines

³ Art & Language New York, “Prefatory Remarks,” *The Fox*, no. 1 (1975): iv.

⁴ Ibid.

produced content regarding the nature of art and commentary on the current art scene from outside the artists' viewpoint. These publications included *Artforum*, *Art International*, *Art in America*, *ARTnews*, *Artweek*, *Studio International*, and numerous others. However, the methodology of Art & Language and their publications differed from those examples: the artists' attempt to form a group interested in issues related to that community while directly engaging others to contribute stands out from the editorial practices of other magazines in the twentieth century. *The Fox* stands apart from the journal produced by Art & Language UK, *Art-Language*, which considered the contents of the journal art produced through language that centered on the discussion and examination of art.

Art & Language's work did not develop without predecessors or cause; instead, it added to the ongoing conversation of what art is and what purpose it serves. The artists involved in utilizing language as art point to the work of Marcel Duchamp as a key factor in their development as artists.⁵ Duchamp's work became better known and more influential in the mid-twentieth century than before. In particular, Duchamp's readymades (figure 1) reinforced the artists' ideas of what art is, providing a baseline for their explorations. The idea that art is determined by the artist's selection, and that therefore anything an artist presents as art is art, functions as the starting point for their assertion that the act of an artist is art itself.⁶ Duchamp's push to contextualize an idea as a medium of an artwork directly relates to the framing of writing and philosophy as art by Joseph Kosuth and Art & Language in the 1960s. Kosuth produced work that was

⁵ Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," in *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2002), 19.

⁶ Ibid.

information separated from individual editions of the work.⁷ In addition to this Duchampian influence, the continuing development of inexpensive means such as photocopying to publish and disseminate texts created a new medium to explore the limits of art. According to art historian Ruth Blacksell, publishing and framing act as a new model of the readymade.⁸ Work is typeset and distributed in the form of magazines and booklets, while framing it as art declares it so.⁹ The magazines and other artist-produced documents created a new location for art that new audiences accessed in an unusual way.¹⁰

In the 1960s and 1970s, magazines and other serial publications by artists were appearing and disappearing in fast succession, as political and artistic practices changed. Major essays about conceptual art and its production were featured in larger publications, such as *Studio International* and *Artforum*, and in catalogues published in conjunction with exhibitions. Prior to the formation and the dissolution of *The Fox*, other short-lived publications include *Landslide*, *Culture Hero*, *Mail Order Art*, *Provoke*, *The Balloon Newspaper*, and other magazines that were not widely circulated.¹¹ While some of the publications that lasted longer had a more stable production schedule, the publications were not being used in the same manner as Art & Language's journals. Well-known artists issued many of these magazines. Vito Acconci's and Bernadette Mayer's *0 to 9*

⁷ Liz Kotz, "Language between Performance and Photography," in *Words to be Looked at* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 199.

⁸ Ruth Blacksell, "From Looking to Reading: Text-Based Conceptual Art and Typographic Discourse," *Design Issues* 29, no. 2 (2013): 60-81.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. Seth Siegelaub's concept of primary information was central to the idea of dissemination of the art idea through reproductive media.

¹¹ Philip E. Aarons, Victor Brand, and Andrew Roth, *In Numbers: Serial Publications by Artists since 1955* (New York: Phaidon/PPP Editions, 2010) 19.

(1967-1969) printed and featured work that would now be considered part of the language and performance poetry movement, while artists in the 1980s wrote poetry for live performance rather than for publication.¹² Unlike other group publications, *Fluxus [Year Boxes]* and *Fluxus cc V TRE Fluxus* spoke directly to their specific community with a call to action through their work. George Maciunas sent out the Fluxus publications as a means to inspire work within the “loosely affiliated group” that received it.¹³ While this seems to be in the spirit of community practice, the viewpoint promoted by Art & Language New York was vastly different. The purpose of *Fluxus* was to organize people to create art based on the same instructions around the globe, unlike the political purposes discussed later in this thesis.

Magazines and journals were being founded to disseminate politicized art during this time across the world. Art & Language New York functioned partially as a means to explore political thought and its outcome in an artistic context and the manner in which institutions treated artists. The alternative art scene raised and addressed generally socialist issues; magazines in the Communist Block served a similar role. In these magazines during the 1960s and 1970s, many critiques applied Marxist and socialist theories to the capitalist structure of the art world.¹⁴ *The Fox* took this topic as a central issue in its publication, with the majority of articles linking back to the nature of art and the structure that surrounds it as fodder for critique and analysis. However, while general themes were shared throughout the alternative art world, each publication was created

¹² Ibid., 33.

¹³ Ibid., 185.

¹⁴ Géza Pernecky, *The Magazine Network: the Trends of Alternative Art in the Light of Their Periodicals, 1968-1988* (Köln: Soft Geometry, 1993).

with a specific need, audience, and context defined by Art & Language New York's local circumstances.

Local Focus: Situating Art & Language New York

Art & Language included different groups of artists depending on location, with each breaking off to work on local issues as they were established. The New York group defined itself as distinct from Art & Language United Kingdom, with many other out-postings not taking that formal step. For example, the artists working in Yugoslavia and Australia creating work under the Art & Language banner did not form a separate structure or create independent means of publication. The idea of a local group stemming from an original organization, sharing their philosophy and methods, is pivotal when discussing the work of Art & Language New York. The group cannot be separated from the political and geographic hub of New York City; their ideas, discussions, publications, and shows all drew on the ongoing changes and activism within the city. Unlike its New York counterpart, the United Kingdom branch made its home in the Coventry countryside, leading to a different focus and a distinctive voice when compared to those of the New York group.¹⁵

Art & Language's primary publication, *Art-Language*, which included New York and UK contributors, is not unlike the work that was done in *The Fox*. To understand the differences between the publications and their roles in the art world, both journals need to be contextualized in a broader discussion of the organization. Art & Language was a collaborative group founded in 1968 by Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin in Great Britain, where they taught at the Coventry School of Art.¹⁶ The group was largely British until the inception of the New York branch in 1969 with Joseph Kosuth as a foundational

¹⁵ Charles Harrison, "Art & Language Press," *Studio International* 183 (1972): 234.

¹⁶ Charles Harrison, *Essays on Art & Language*, (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1991), 2.

member.¹⁷ Kosuth's New York studio, along with the lofts and apartments of other members, was a location for meetings.¹⁸ The group achieved international recognition for their conceptual work, including publishing journals, organizing exhibitions, and hosting lectures and conversations. The main focus of the group during its early years revolved around the definition of an artwork. In a symposium on the history and legacy of conceptual art, Art & Language member Michael Corris noted that "one of Art & Language's great early conversation stoppers is 'Can this text be counted as a work of art?' Texts — the essays, transcripts, and annotations that Art & Language of the 1960s and 1970s considered to be their chief output as artists — were not to be viewed merely as 'material' on the wall or as aesthetic objects made of 'language.'"¹⁹

While this notion raised new ideas during the course of the 1970s, Art & Language developed into separate entities, geographically divided by the Atlantic. The group eventually split into different sections, with Art & Language New York forming in 1971. Many different articles and books have covered the break between the two factions, which can be summarized by differences in ideology, methodology, and personalities. The story of the separation and the surrounding infighting changes slightly depending on the author and the member of the organization used as a source. Overall, one of the major causes of the divide was the focus on local issues. Artists in the United Kingdom countryside raised different questions and avenues of exploration than those in New York City. Their locales differed between a more rural setting and fast-paced city life. The

¹⁷ Robert Bailey, *Art & Language International: Conceptual Art between Art Worlds*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 2.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Michael Corris, "Black and White Debates, Gray Matters, and Red Herrings, a conversation between Michael Corris and Matvei Yankelevich, moderated by Lucy Ives," published in *Corrected Slogans: "Poems for America"* (15 September 2012), 71.

publication of work as a collective rather than the attributions of individual authorship was also a point of contention, particularly with Kosuth. The New York branch sought to continue with individual authorship while the UK transitioned to a collective method at the division. Kosuth's staunch belief in individualism—even in the face of collective output — became an issue during the final year of Art & Language New York. Corris described the process of Art & Language, working across the ocean:

Collaboration in Art & Language at the time was the social form that supported their “essayistic practice” and involved the initiation and circulation of texts among the group’s participants. Since Ramsden and Burn were living and working in New York, collaboration with their trans-Atlantic partners meant a lively, sustained correspondence with Terry Atkinson, Baldwin, and others members of the group working in the UK. Alongside the essays, Burn and Ramsden initiated other critical projects for [an] exhibition that I contributed to, as well.²⁰

The collective still relied on communication as the method and platform for their work. However, the locales of these discussions were not bars, pubs, or available rooms, but rather paper. The conversations existed in a documented form, with notes from meetings, transcribed conversations, letters, and articles being sent between the groups. Within the local groups, conversations were also documented part of the time, but also existed as ephemeral memories that later became fuel for writing.

In a letter to Art & Language UK, Art & Language New York directly called out the issues they were having between the factions regarding a *Studio International* letter.²¹

²⁰ Michael Corris, “In the Belly of the Beast--Art and Language New York Project, 1972-1976,” interview by Sezgin Boynik, *RAB-RAB: Journal for Political and Formal Inquiries in Art* 4, no. 2 (February 23, 2017): 5.

²¹ Correspondence of Art & Language New York to Art & Language UK, 15 October 1976, 2003.M.32 Box 4, Folder 31, Michael Corris Papers of the Art & Language New York group, 1965-2002, Getty Special Collections, Los Angeles, California, United States of America.

The opening line of the letter “The Parable of the Shit and the Blanket. Chapter 2: ‘Whose shit, whose blanket?’” sets the tone for the remainder of the letter. They note that Art & Language UK holds a paternalistic attitude towards the New York branch and that they have been publicly feuding for a year. The animosity reaches its height in the valediction: “Yours with a bag full of arseholes, Art & Language.” By the time that the Art & Language New York published their first issue of *The Fox*, tensions were already high. In the second issue, Joseph Kosuth made distinctions between the groups: “I say ‘collective’ and not community, but one could say the collective consists of two communities—one in England and the other in New York.”²² Kosuth sought to clearly define these organizations as separate in the minds of the reader. He went on to say that the move away from Art & Language UK “has forced us into the real world, or to put it better, it has shown us that Art & Language spans two real worlds: and that the gulf between the two communities is, indeed, as wide as the Atlantic.”²³ While the conflict between the groups came to a head around 1975, both contingents continued to use the same methodology that formed the original basis of the group.

In 1969, they begin producing *Art-Language*, a journal to disseminate conceptual art after forming their own publishing company to produce it. The philosophy and language-based *Art-Language* publication from Art & Language presented the discourse of a specific group of artists to the world. They utilized the journal as a means of producing and distributing language-based artwork that focused on the nature of art and its conceptual underpinnings. The introduction to this first volume sets out their

²² Joseph Kosuth, “1975,” *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 93.

²³ *Ibid.*

objectives: to establish the discussion and philosophy of art as art itself.²⁴ In fact, the organization proposes that the theory and discussions they present are theoretical art.²⁵ In the introductory essay, they also set forth their ideas and preferences for the reception of the journal:

The pages are simply laid out flat in reading order behind glass within a frame. The spectator is intended to read the essay “straight,” like a notice might be read, but because the essay is mounted in an art ambience it is implied that the object (paper with print upon it) carries conventional visual art content. . . . The prime requirement in regard of this essay's appearance is that it is reasonably legible. . . . Secondary decisions are aimed at eliminating as many appearance similarities to established art-objects as possible.²⁶

The journal set out to look and function like other typeset journals of the time as a basic object, with its own proclamation the only thing distinguished it as art. They outline display for their publication within the gallery space, behind glass to imbue it with artistic weight. Art & Language purposefully created an anti-esthetic object (figure 2) as a work of art, but unlike other conceptual artists, it took the form of a mass-produced publication. They present a relatively plain and scientific-looking document with artistic merit. The majority of the articles written for the journal focused on the philosophy of art, referencing different philosophers and their theories and the work of the artists involved and their contemporaries.

In the journal, the members of Art & Language use language as a medium. In contrast to Kosuth, who sought to probe connections in his sophisticated art audience, Art & Language created complex literature for a universal audience. According to member

²⁴ Art & Language, “Introduction,” *Art-Language* 1 no. 1 (Oxford, England: Art & Language, 1969), 19-26.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 21.

Charles Harrison, they were creating for “an audience that was qualified only by its possession of language.”²⁷ Despite this claim that language is a universal that makes the readership qualified to consume the content of the journal, the essays necessitate knowledge of the English language, philosophy, and previous discussions in the journal. Their essays refer to prior essays in the journal, creating context-based arguments that require outside knowledge, and therefore are not universally available to the audience described by Harrison. In fact, the arguments presented in the journal often contradict themselves; even art historian Lucy Lippard found their work difficult to understand. She discussed the difficulty of comprehending their work in her book *Six Years*.

I don't understand quite a good deal of what is said by Art-Language, but I admire the investigatory energies, the tireless spade-work (not calling one one), the full commitment to the reestablishment of a valid language by which to discuss art and the occasional humour in their writings. The chaos in their reasons fascinates me, but it is also irritating to be unequipped to evaluate their work. I don't know how it is or if it is evaluated by adepts in philosophy as philosophy, but I find it infuriating to have to take them on faith.²⁸

If someone as intertwined with the theory and study of conceptual art as Lippard could not unfurl the language used by Art & Language into something coherent, most likely few can. Art & Language are replacing the critic by creating their own discussions of their work while also positioning their presumably art world audience as equal to the non-art public. Their position broadly supports dismantling the cultured elite in favor of social equality, positioning the art critic

²⁷ Charles Harrison, “Art & Language Paints a Landscape,” *Critical Inquiry* 21, no. 3 (1995): 611-39.

²⁸ Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: the Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2007), 151.

as equal to a blue-collar worker.²⁹ *The Fox* emphasized social leveling central to Art & Language's goals through their calls for community practice and their historical institutional critique.

Unlike *Art-Language*, Art & Language New York's *The Fox* does not define itself as a form of art in the first volume's opening pages, but rather establishes the journal as a "community practice" for artists. The journal existed as a part of the work of Art & Language New York. It was a part of their broader exhibition projects without the need to declare itself as art within the work itself.

It wasn't the case that we imagined that *The Fox* was a work of art, even though the big thing in Art & Language was creating ambiguity in whether printed text is a work of art or a text, collapsing the distinction between the two. At the same time, it did function as something alongside some of the exhibition projects we did, so it was always present.³⁰

The journal served to disseminate information and discuss ideas with a wider audience than the collective. That being said, it also served as a means to document interactions of the interwoven political groups of New York City. The meetings, shows, talks, and other means of creating content in Art & Language sat alongside each other as the final product of the collective.

The work being produced and exhibited by Art & Language New York existed separately but in concert with the making of the journal. One of their exhibitions, held at the University of Massachusetts, consisted of posters and scheduled discussions used to explain and promote their political ideas among their viewers. The University of Massachusetts *The Fox* poster (figure 3) consists of two black and white photographs and

²⁹ Frances Colpitt, "The Formalist Connection and Originary Myths of Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice*, ed. Michael Corris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 44.

³⁰ Michael Corris, interview with the author, Dallas, Texas, February 5, 2020.

red lettering. “The Fox” dominates the top of the poster, the red lettering overlaid on a black and white image of the capitol building in Washington, D.C. The contrast between the red of the words and the grey-scale image distinguishes the collective from the institution of the government. Below the building, texts with transcripts of conversations sit in columns. Two conversations are vertically divided by a long stripe consisting of two photographs of Art & Language events. These photographs show an event in Yugoslavia similar to the one taking place in Massachusetts; people gather around to listen to panels and discussions, paying rapt attention to the proceedings. The uppermost conversation between D. Blazevic, J. Breakston, J. Tijardovic, A. Menard, and M. Corris discusses the nature of the “woman problem” in America with comparison to circumstances in Yugoslavia. The transcript above the image centers on a conversation between J. Duncan, A. Menard, R. Wade, P. Heller, and M. Corris regarding the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act, a major issue that produced a series of videos and essays from Art & Language New York. The program gave the federal government authority to make indemnity acts for nonprofit and government organizations lending objects abroad. The poster gave primacy to the text as a method of transmitting meaning, even in a more traditionally visual form than that of a journal. The narrative addresses national issues in a local setting, creating the methodology of interpersonal communication central to Art & Language New York’s practice.

The aspect of location became a touchstone for the journal. Corris noted that “[they] channeled [their] energies into producing a new publication — ‘The Fox’ — and specifically addressed the conditions of the production, distribution and interpretation of

contemporary art as a problem relevant to all artists living and working in New York.”³¹

The journal form makes the work easily reproducible and accessible for their audience. The design of *The Fox* mimics that of the early issues of *Art-Language* in its purposeful use of anti-esthetic features. The language used in the articles, while still discussing philosophical issues and other academic topics, remains comprehensible to their audience. In fact, their encouragement of their audience’s participation and clarification of their viewpoints are in direct opposition to the intertextuality that saturated *Art-Language*. However, criticism regarding their style of writing and their potential logical fallacies surfaced within the journal itself.

Not only did the members of Art & Language participate in purposeful critique of their own institution, they also provided a means for their readership to submit their own contributions. These were published as articles or statements in the Notes & Correspondence section of the journal. Their audience had shifted with their publication. In an interview, Corris stated,

The issues that we raised were really mostly directed towards ourselves, I thought, [and to] artists, curators, and critics as well. Up until about ‘75 and ‘76 when we were involved with Artists Meeting for Cultural Change and then other organizations, obviously the sense of the audience broadened. And I think it's one of the reasons that conflict arose. There was tension between those who felt our job was to deal with artists and our other job was to deal with a wide undifferentiated mass of people.³²

The change of audience from the inner group to those who were also interested in the discussion is a major difference between the output of *Art-Language* and *The Fox*. The manner of taking discourse and refining it, and creating essays from the contents was not

³¹ Corris, “Black and White Debates,” 73.

³² Corris, interview with the author, February 5, 2020.

new for the group, but the broadening of the audience and how that shaped those conversations was.

The discourse between artists regarding artists and art systems was the primary production of Art & Language New York both in general and through their publication.³³ The discussions and critique that led to the publication began in meetings with artists.³⁴ The members of *The Fox* viewed discussion or “chatter” as a powerful tool in their practice.³⁵ Art & Language New York had been holding discussions and talks since its inception in 1971 due to their strong pedagogical focus. These conversations became the source material for many of the articles in the three issues, and these discussions have been saved and converted into transcripts that are now held in the Getty Special Collections in the Michael Corris Papers. The conversation served as both a means to organize the group, plan the journal, and create the content for upcoming shows and publications.

Over the course of artists’ discussion Art & Language’s impact on their practice, some artists created representations of the meetings and discussions that informed the publication and exhibition. In the artist’s book . . . *It’s Still Privileged Art*, Art & Language New York members Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge illustrate a fictionalized version of their lives, including meetings with the group (figure 4). In the image, five figures gather around a table filled with stacks of paper, mugs, and a coffee pot. They look towards each other or their red pieces of paper in their hands, engaged in the

³³ Alan Moore, *Art Gangs: Protest & Counterculture in New York City* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2011) 67.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Michael Corris, “Inside a New York City Art Gang: Selected Documents of Art & Language,” in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1999), 471.

discussion. The man in the front right nearly faces away from the viewer while the man seated behind him has his hand held up signifying his status as the current speaker. On the left wall of the room, a poster for *The Fox* hangs to identify the location of the conversation. A woman sits at the head of the table, her face framed by a poster reading “La Lutte Continue.” The translation, the struggle continues, along with muddled figures of workers references the socialist contingent in the May 1968 riots in Paris. The movement, which is credited with the beginning of post-structuralism, brought together students and blue-collar workers in opposition to the academic and government institutions. The poster seems similar to the style used by the Atelier Populaire, a student-run printing studio that produced posters covering Paris during the riots. The connection made between the only two posters featured in the illustration aligns Art & Language with the protesters of 1968. This is further enforced by the caption underneath the frame: “We attend meeting with other artists and discuss similar problems. A community is essential if we are to gain the ‘power’ to change our lives. The heated dialogue produces many ideas as well as new problems.”

The politics of *The Fox* were not unique to the artists in Art & Language New York, and various organizations with similar radical aims such as the Art Workers Coalition were a part of the cultural landscape of New York City. The work being done in the journal represents a younger generation of artists’ need to develop and disseminate an alternative agenda for the art world.³⁶ Art & Language’s process of discussion to initiate institutional reform was also the framework of the weekly Artists Meeting for

³⁶ Alexander Alberro, “One Year Under the Mast: Alexander Alberro on the Fox. (History of Periodical Devoted to Art-Related Practice),” *Artforum International* 41, no. 10 (2003): 162.

Cultural Change.³⁷ The Artists Meeting first met in 1975 to discuss potential political activity and continued throughout the run of *The Fox*. Key members included Rudolf Baranik and May Stevens (the initial hosts), Carl Andre, Lucy Lippard, Art & Language New York member and contributor Ian Burn, and *The Fox* editor Sarah Charlesworth. Charlesworth and Burn insisted that the name include the thrust of their purpose, adding “for Cultural Change” to Carl Andre’s initial suggestion of “Artists Meeting.”³⁸ At these meetings, members of numerous artists’ organizations expressed discontent with the status quo in the art institutions and the broader world. Terry Smith, an Australian member of Art & Language, described the situation as having “a new element of wildcat aggression yoked to a concern for revolutionary theory” that Art & Language New York set forth in *The Fox*.³⁹

The Artists Meeting for Cultural Change was a key organization in partnership with Art & Language New York. In fact, Sarah Charlesworth’s article titled “For Artists Meeting” promotes the group in the third issue of *The Fox*. She states that the “Artists Meeting for Cultural Change is a very loose 'coalition' of mostly artists and art workers who have been meeting regularly at Artists Space” and follows with information about dates and times to increase attendance at the meetings.⁴⁰ Unlike Art & Language, Artist Meeting publicized their meetings to gain membership in contrast to personal invitations. The purpose of the group is outlined by Charlesworth as follows: “The ‘art-world’ as we know it is not a permanent social category. The coming together of artists and art workers

³⁷ Moore, *Art Gangs*, 67.

³⁸ Nancy Marmer, “Art & Politics ’77,” *Art in America* 63, (July/August 1977): 64-66.

³⁹ Terry Smith, “Without Revolutionary Theory....,” *Studio International* 191, no. 980 (March/April 1976): 134.

⁴⁰ Sarah Charlesworth, “For Artists Meeting,” *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 42.

as a means to overcoming individual alienation cannot substitute in the long run for our determined struggle to overcome alienation as a manifestation of specific social and economic relations.”⁴¹

The remainder of the article consists of meeting notes, transcripts, and letters by Artists Meeting that explain their current projects. The major project surrounds the Bicentennial exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art entitled *Three Centuries of American Art* and the group’s protest of the propagandistic display of art as a means to politically manipulate and frame America in the show. Artists decried the America displayed in the exhibition due to the lack of diverse voices included given the absence of black artists and token inclusion of a single woman artist. A letter published within the article is signed by various political artists and organizations including Women in the Arts, *The Fox*, Guerrilla Art Action Group, Ad Hoc Women Artists Committee, and numerous others. In other ephemera produced for the Artists Meeting, the groups in agreement did not co-sign the message against the Whitney exhibition. Designs like the 1976 “Boycott This Show” flier (figure 5) emphasize the message of the Artists Meeting by using easily legible font and bullet points to organize the complaints with the show. There is no space reserved to list cosigners, but rather a large “AMCC” in block letters denotes the source of the complaints. The organization sought out opportunities to directly engage and change the status quo through protests. In contrast, *The Fox* kept its focus on the rhetorical dialogue surrounding issues of socialism and communism in the art world.

While the Artists Meeting was not the only group of its kind during the mid-1970s

⁴¹ Ibid., 41.

in New York City, the members of *The Fox* had an especially close connection to the radical group. Groups supporting women in the arts in particular flourished during this moment in time. Feminist art was at the forefront of radical political art movements. Many artists belonged to more than one organization, while larger groups encapsulated several smaller organizations and causes creating ideal environments for these groups to mix. As a result, advertisements and inserts for these groups ran in the last edition of *The Fox*. This indicates the working relationship between the socialist groups and the feminist groups within the broader counterculture community in New York City.

Community and Collective: Institutional Critique and Calls to Action

The opening pages of the first and second issues of *The Fox* begin with a call to community practice. These opening statements varied from issue to issue, with the last having nothing other than necessary public information. The statements were most likely written by Mel Ramsden and then sent through the editorial board for approval, along with Ian Burn, by the time they were typeset for the run.⁴² According to Corris, Ramsden “was very active in writing those things” and was the one who likely wrote the initial text.⁴³ By the third issue, *The Fox* was published sans prefatory comments with the philosophy that “we don’t need it, we already stated it, and the contents will speak for themselves,” along with the fact that the general consensus regarded it as the last publication of the journal.⁴⁴ In an article in the final issue, Corris stated, “the original benediction appearing on the frontpiece of *The Fox* now strikes [him] as simpleminded. Journals breed fairly unequivocal responses. What magazines with ‘wide’ circulations do best is generate more articles, not more ‘community practice.’”⁴⁵ The community practice at issue came in the form of additional stakeholders discussing matters, rather than concrete political revolution. The rhetorical methodology and intervention of *The Fox* produced ideological and philosophical change. Editorial text did not disappear, however; the poster produced for the third issue held additional commentary not featured within the magazine itself.

⁴² Corris, interview with the author, February 5, 2020.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Michael Corris, “Yet Another Palace Revolt in the Banana Republic?” *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 151.

The opening article in the first issue, Charlesworth's "A Declaration of Dependence," engages in both historical institutional critique and advocates for community practice. The use of both institutional critique and community practice seem to be at odds, as institutional critique is the systematic inquiry into institutions and community practice is based on the engagement of local people through social discourse. However, *The Fox* used historic institutional critique as a means to define the goals and issues central to their community practice. Both methods focus on the social structures that mold the art world, one defining the current situation and the other attempting to change it. Charlesworth defines art as a "phenomenon which exists in an integral relationship with the entire complex of human social and historic forces."⁴⁶ Artwork is therefore institutionally mediated in its meaning, function, and value. Charlesworth's inclusion of "we" directly calls upon community. She states: "I see myself as a participant in a real community. . . . I also . . . appeal to a larger community which is made up of . . . artists, critics, dealers, curators, professors, students and so on."⁴⁷ She goes on to address the choices made by these individuals, inviting them to analyze their choices and join the community practice, ending with a call to action, a call to criticism, and a call to community.

The community Charlesworth references exists separately from the collective, Art & Language New York, which she works within. Corris defines a collective as "a stable group of individuals who are trying to develop an index of their commonality and who are trying to build on that understanding in order to construct a common culture. To work as a collective is to question how this commonality is reshaped, reformed, negated, or

⁴⁶ Sarah Charlesworth, "A Declaration of Dependence," *The Fox*, no. 1 (1975): 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

intensified by the very act of carrying on a conversation.”⁴⁸ The manner of working in a collective differs greatly from the community practice espoused by the articles in *The Fox*. The collective exists as a subset, a predetermined group of artists working together. The community is the broader public that surrounds them in their daily lives. In the case of the members of Art & Language New York, the community is the art world of New York City, in particular those who share their views and wish to work to further their ideals.

The collective takes responsibility for the production of work attributed to Art & Language that interacts with their broader community, and exists as a form of community practice. Art critic Lizzie Borden notes that Art & Language “work[s] in collaboration with each other with positive results. You produce a substantial amount of work from the mutual transformations possible through your interactions. But the public knows you only through your public appearances: your work in galleries and museums, and your books (available primarily in art world places — Jaap Reitman’s, Weber Gallery).”⁴⁹ The means of production and distribution disseminated their message, furthering their political goals and creating radical art. In these contexts, the group presents itself as a collective under the name Art & Language, as seen in their John Weber Gallery exhibition in 1976 (figure 6). The use of the collective name for any and all individual production while a part of Art & Language New York became a point of contention in the group. Kosuth in particular had been producing work and showing under his own name; Charlesworth also continued to work as an individual.

⁴⁸ Corris, “Black and White Debates,” 95.

⁴⁹ Lizzie Borden, “Dear Fox...,” *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 24.

The tensions came to a head with the ratification of the points of unity for (Provisional) Art & Language, wherein it was established that artists within the subdivision would not produce artwork outside of the group for exhibition or sale. This subgroup broke away from Art & Language New York, essentially exiling those who refused to agree to the new rules and practice the points of unity. Kosuth and Charlesworth were effectively disassociated from the group through the adoption of articles of unity that decried individual shows and other issues of contention. This adoption led to the creation of (Provisional) Art & Language within the New York branch, separating them into factions. While (Provisional) Art & Language and Art & Language New York worked together on the final issue of *The Fox*, had there been a fourth issue it would likely have been under the purview of (Provisional) Art & Language.⁵⁰ By the third issue, it was known within the group that it would most likely be the last issue and the group dissolved shortly after. For a brief period of time, Art & Language UK, Art & Language New York, and (Provisional) Art & Language all existed as intermingled but distinct organizations. The continued delimitation of the group led to the dissolution of Art & Language New York later in 1976. The collective became more defined as the artists began to work with the community at large, through their publication and affiliation with political organizations.

The collective is defined in opposition to the general public. According to Corris, the rationale surrounding discussions of collectives included “the need to sustain our independence from the mainstream culture of art.”⁵¹ Art & Language New York viewed their collective as separate from their community. While espousing and engaging in

⁵⁰ Corris, interview with the author, February 5, 2020.

⁵¹ Corris, “Black and White Debates,” 73.

community practice, the collective kept themselves separated from the public in the journal while also relating to the community's needs. Their philosophy could be contradictory and confusing with internal differences creating diverse opinions within the collective. By inviting members and the general public, the collective associated with *The Fox*'s editorial board hoped to establish a larger community. In the article "Dear Fox," Borden notes that "To extend the community, you take public steps for creating a dialogue with others: you put out a magazine with an invitation in the beginning to contributors who 'are interested, curious, or have something to add (be it pro or con) to the editorial thrust.'"⁵² Her reference to the prefatory statement of the journal further engages readers in order to create a larger community around the ideals of *The Fox*.

In "Memo for the Fox," Charlesworth explores the community and purpose that the journal fills. She notes the work "has a life and momentum of its own but that objectified body Art & Language and *The Fox* must and need be specifically tied to the needs of the individuals, the community which it serves."⁵³ The local focus is a means that ties it to the community, and given that the topics for inclusion come from the discussion, the concerns of the collective create the focus. In publications they have referred to their ideal audience as themselves, hoping to work through ideas and create rhetoric that furthers the socialist movement.⁵⁴ Corris, however, stated that that was a slightly misleading way to frame their perspective; they are writing out of their own

⁵² Borden, "Dear Fox...", 23.

⁵³ Sarah Charlesworth, "Memo for the Fox," *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 37.

⁵⁴ In numerous publications, Art & Language is noted as saying their ideal audience is themselves. Corris stated in our interview that that was a slightly misleading way to put it, they are writing out of their own experience and moving towards a wider audience. Further discussion of the quote can be found in Art & Language, "Moti Memoria" in J. Roberts, ed., *The Impossible Document: Photography and Conceptual Art in Britain 1966-1976* (London: Camerawork, 1997).

experience and moving towards a wider audience.⁵⁵ While they claimed to be their own audience, they also, through their publication of *The Fox*, promote their socialist agenda to the public. As they create the content, they draw from their own internal discussions. In the words of Andrew Menard and Ron White, “*The Fox* is interesting because it is less a publication, a reified object, than the byproduct of a community of people.”⁵⁶ It existed as a medium to document the thoughts of a collective reaching out to their community.

While Art & Language New York was publishing *The Fox*, the manner of addressing issues within the art world through thorough analysis and criticism acted as form of institutional critique. The fodder for their publication was the art world and Art & Language New York’s socialist perspective, their interaction and publication pointing out issues within the system as a collective publishing an art journal. As noted earlier in this thesis, historical institutional critique is defined as the act of identifying the gallery and museum as politicized locations rather than neutral spaces to point out problematic systems by making them explicit to the viewer. This draws from the use of the term “institutional critique” by Mel Ramsden in “On Practice.”⁵⁷ Throughout Ramsden’s essay, he systematically critiques the art world through major themes: bureaucracy, the art market, and alternatives to the current state of the art world. According to Alexander Alberro, this is the first published use of the term “institutional critique.”⁵⁸ Historical practice differs from the recent institutional critique that uses the institutions to analyze its structures and biases from the inside, as practiced by Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren, and Andrea Fraser. Art & Language does not work to expose an organization’s hidden agenda

⁵⁵ Corris, interview with the author, February 5, 2020.

⁵⁶ Andrew Menard and Ron White, “Media Madness,” *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 114.

⁵⁷ Mel Ramsden, “On Practice,” *The Fox*, no. 1 (1975): 66-83.

⁵⁸ Alberro, “Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique,” 8.

and ideologies; instead, they use philosophical and socioeconomic arguments to outline the problems within the structure of the institution.

The contents of *The Fox* are inherently a part of historical institutional critique as they use the cultural institutions such as museums and galleries as the main focus for their publication. In a symposium, Corris noted that they work within their frame of reference and as a result “it was the world of institutions: critic, gallery, museum, collector, and so forth, and also, not incidentally, the art school” that became the subject of their writing.⁵⁹ Their methodology was a direct result of taking their interests as fodder and combining them with the systematic structures of early conceptual art. Corris spoke on the working definition that outlined the function of conceptual art: “some of us working during the 1970s understood the term ‘conceptual’ to signify an analysis of the framework of the production and distribution of art.”⁶⁰

When looking to establish what community practice means in terms of methodology, the praxis “as such . . . is not a model of a community transformed but a transformative activity/community which is (perhaps?) one model of art,” according to Charlesworth.⁶¹ The idea is that the act of being politically engaged in the community and seeking change is not a form of art, but just a method to enact an alternative society. This is further problematized by Ian Burn in his attempt to create a space outside the mainstream: “The first problem is . . . how do we make community, that is, ourselves, exist differently in the world?”⁶² By positioning themselves oppositionally, *The Fox* authors use its pages to create space that allows for a new avenue of thought, one driven

⁵⁹ Corris, “Black and White Debates,” 97.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 69-71.

⁶¹ Charlesworth, “Memo for the Fox,” 38.

⁶² Ian Burn, “Review: Art-Language Volume 2 Number 2,” *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 54.

by Marxist philosophy. As a result, the praxis allows Art & Language to engage in the “extremely important . . . implicit social critique in its methodology.”⁶³ *The Fox* creates more radicalized content than other contemporary magazines. As such, they are aware of their own place within the fabric of the counterculture, with Andrew Menard and Ron White stating that

The major difference between these journals and *The Fox* is that they have different political ramifications. When you get right down to it, New York needs *The Fox*, it welcomes it: if more journals like *The Fox* spring up in New York, New York will become not only the heart of market imperialism but in addition a major center of *opposition* to that market imperialism. In that case, the reified form of national/international exchange would remain intact: both New York-standardized art and its dissenting voice would emanate from New York.⁶⁴

While various communities and groups occupy New York at the same time, the art world can be small. The nature of the capitalist venture sets systemic biases in place that hold back artists. Given their radical politics, the artists behind *The Fox* sought to dismantle the capitalist agenda through cultural change brought on by their historical institutional critique.

The journal served to illuminate and explore issues within the counterculture that had specific ties to the artists. As they worked in New York City, this obviously affected the issues they addressed on a local level. Some issues spanned the nation, such as the Arts and Indemnities Act, and others address the working environment of the city. This was on purpose and by design; Corris states in the first issue that it is meant to be a local endeavor:

Surely we have no desire to constitute a community that is, in reality, a committee of correspondence, though national hook-ups with other artists and oppositional

⁶³ Joseph Kosuth, “1975,” *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 93.

⁶⁴ Andrew Menard and Ron White, “Media Madness,” *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975): 114.

art-media is something to work towards. *The Fox*, as a NY art magazine, has to deal with community forging measures in a more or less reinforcing way.⁶⁵

The aim was not to produce a national magazine, but to create a highly localized one.

This directly relates to the differences noted by Andrew Menard and Ron White in their comparison of *The Fox* to other similar magazines on the West Coast, such as *Left Curve* or *Intermedia*

One of the differences between *The Fox* and these journals is that they devote a certain amount of space to resource lists, trying to connect up the very horizontal, spread out community which exists in California, as well as Oregon and Washington. Consequently there's a certain emphasis on all kinds of artists working together, a cross-media approach.⁶⁶

The content produced and the additional items included in these magazines created a vastly different subject matter for a broader national audience. While *The Fox* essentially was created and published to further a specific small collaboration, the goals of the other journals included fostering community practice through collaboration rather than an overall political movement. They used their space as a posting space for a broader area, rather than the focused locale of a single city.

The idea of community as espoused by Art & Language recalls the labor unions and organizing necessary for a Marxist revolution. In regards to this, Peter Benchley described the political nature of the Art & Language organization in his article "The Lumpen-Headache." In his introduction, Art & Language is described as "a group (or, rather, according to some 'a party') in England and a group in the USA. In the USA, the 'group'—some of the members think of it as a 'political party,' still others 'as a kind of

⁶⁵ Corris, "Yet Another Palace Revolt in the Banana Republic?" 151.

⁶⁶ Andrew Menard and Ron White, "Media Madness," 114.

union,’ or even just ‘a looser collective.’”⁶⁷ Within the context of this social revolution, people in the broader New York City counterculture often invoked the year 1871 as a reference to the Paris Commune. They looked to the uprising and establishment of the radical socialist government and the participation of artists like Gustave Courbet in the movement. While the Paris Commune was referenced, it was never seen as the ideal outcome. The goal was the transformation of the current community and the art world.

The art world’s traditional market system is based on capitalism. It works to create power structures that assist those with privilege to make money. As a result, the artworks produced and placed in highly visible and prestigious venues cater to the taste of the wealthy benefactors. Their support is reinforced by the ideas conveyed by the work, which confirms their worldview. Political artists must radicalize or change that in order to produce confrontational work. The political landscape of the art world in the 1970s was generally dedicated to these goals by creating new spaces and decentralizing the control of capitalism. However, Corris holds that that is not enough to fully alter the course of the art world: “We have to organize much more specifically than that; we have to be aware of the implications of organization. In this context, using media differently is important now, because our relationship to media, for all of us in society, is inseparable from our relationship to power.”⁶⁸ This further reorganization of the power structure and emphasis on community practice acts to promote socialist ideals. Menard promotes “radical decentralisation through which we can arrive at a series of ad hoc programs to deal with

⁶⁷ Peter Benchley, “The Lumpen-Headache,” *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 1.

⁶⁸ Corris, “Yet Another Palace Revolt in the Banana Republic?” 116.

people's needs, community interests determining relations, rather than the reverse."⁶⁹ The journal promoted dramatic change through action, political protest, and artistic endeavors.

The very core of *The Fox* acts as a call to action for its readers; it promotes engagement with community politics and artistic practice through the lens of examination and critique. Art & Language New York existed as a collective within a wider community of political and artistic action. Their rhetorical intervention provided a place for discussion and exploration of potential dynamics between the capitalist art establishment and the social counterculture existing alongside it. By examining this relationship and the system, they engaged in historical institutional critique and then furthered that with alliances and partnerships with similar political groups in New York City. Much of the writing published under the masthead of *The Fox* spoke to the direct concerns of the collective, with local issues appearing alongside more general discussions of the nature of socialist artistic production.

⁶⁹ Within the "The Lumpen-Headache," each artist has a pseudonym for the transcript. Bellica denotes the speaker in the article, which stands in for Andrew Menard's name. In my research at the Getty, I found a list of names that corresponds to the noms-de-plume given by Benchley. "The Lumpen Heachache," Key to Dramatic Personae, 2003.M.32 Box 5, Folder 23, Michael Corris Papers of the Art & Language New York group, 1965-2002, Getty Special Collections, Los Angeles, California, United States of America. Quote from Peter Benchley, "The Lumpen-Headache," *The Fox*, no. 3 (1976): 7.

Conclusion

The community practice established in *The Fox* engages in political and social critique of the ideologies and relationships in the art world. *The Fox* created an emphasis on localized community practice, exploring new modes of collaboration between artists and methods of historical institutional critique in comparison to previous artists' publications. In *The Fox*, community practice and historical institutional critique both work together to create political and social change. The methods are brought together as a means of disrupting and interjecting into the capitalist system of the art world. Historical institutional critique outlined the problems and systems that needed to be addressed and then community practice promoted the protest and direct interaction with those institutions to change them.

Throughout this thesis, I noted the importance of the local context of the production of *The Fox*. The essays in the journal promoted community practice, specifically in the form of organizing and attending political meetings and protests. The authors sought to create a space for real change to develop out of rhetorical intervention. As Ian Burn noted, “the point (hope) of community is that we can and do socialize each other—and this is in contradistinction to how we are ‘socialized’ (or arbitrarily individualized) by the circumstances of commodified art production.”⁷⁰ The collective aspect of their work served as a means to disrupt the market focus on the individual, and some members disagreed with forgoing individual acclaim. While the work done by the collective Art & Language New York addresses concerns specific to its members, they

⁷⁰ Burn, “Review: Art-Language Volume 2 Number 2,” 54.

also engaged in larger conversations regarding the system of the art world and the critique of those institutions.

The historical institutional critique along with the political community practice espoused by *The Fox* did not end with its last issue in 1976. The legacy of *The Fox* can be seen in art magazines in the 1980s and the continued use of institutional critique. It can be seen in the work of the members' next projects and in the work of other radical artist publications. While some members of the collective continued working with Art & Language UK after the New York branch's closure, others went on to make other publications with similar thrusts. Corris, Burn, Conde, Menard, and Beveridge continued their work in the short-lived publication *Red-Herring* (1977-1978). Journals published politically engaged essays on art and institutions, such as the post-structuralist content of *October* (1976-present). Other local newspapers such as *Soho News* and the *Village Voice* advocated for local engagement and change within New York City. While not the only artists' magazine of its time, *The Fox* was innovative in its approach and its emphasis on the localized radicalization and political and social critique of the art world.

FIGURES



Figure 1. Marcel Duchamp, *Bottle Rack*, 1958–1959, Galvanized iron, 59.1 × 36.8 cm. Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago (artwork © Marcel Duchamp, Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York).

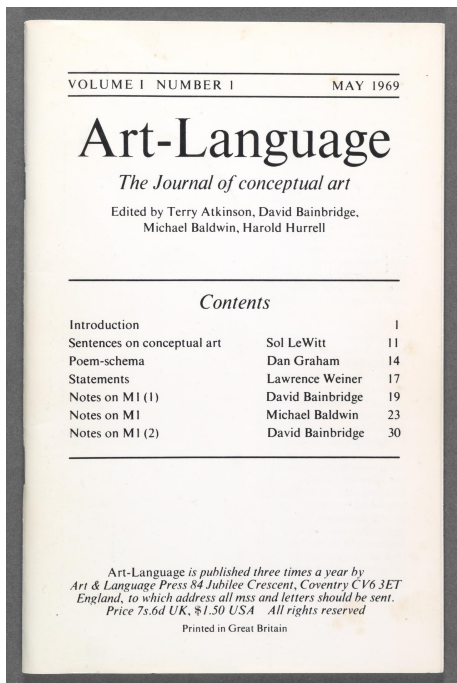


Figure 2. Cover for *Art-Language* Volume 1, Number 1, published by Art & Language Press, Coventry, England, May 1969. National Gallery of Victoria Melbourne ©Courtesy of the artists.



Figure 3. Art & Language, Poster for seminar at University of Massachusetts, 1975. The Getty Special Collections.



We attend meeting with other artists and discuss similar problems. A community is essential if we are to gain the 'power' to change our lives. The heated dialogue produces many ideas as well as new problems.

Figure 4. Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge, . . . *It's Still Privileged Art*, 1976, originally in black and white and colored at the request of Michael Corris. Photo, the collection of Michael Corris.

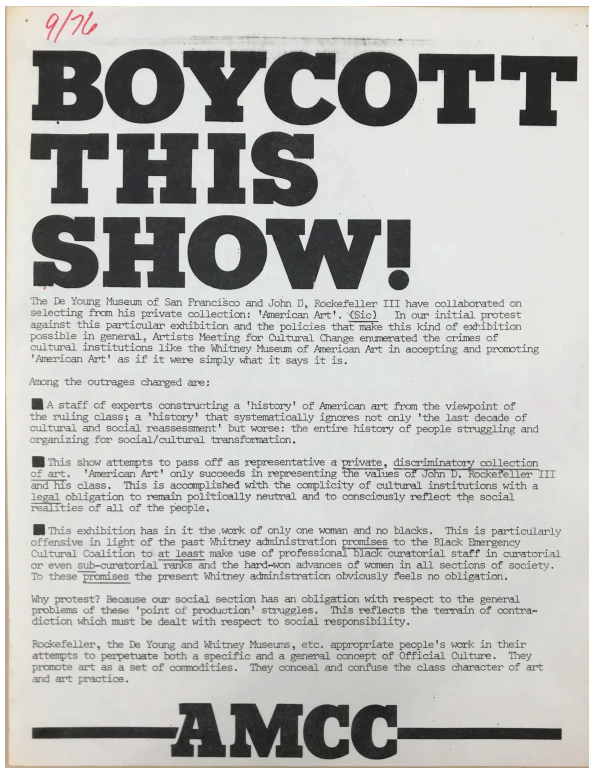


Figure 5. Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, "Boycott This Show" flier, September 1976. The Getty Special Collections.



Figure 6. Art & Language, Gallery view of *Music-Language*, 1975. Courtesy of Michael Corris.

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VITA

Personal Background	Elizabeth Marie Theban Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma – October 2, 1995 Daughter of Theodore Theban and Stephanie Theban
Education	Bachelor of Arts, Art History University of Oklahoma, 2018 Master of Arts, Art History Texas Christian University, 2020
Fellowships and Awards	Tuition Stipend Award Texas Christian University, 2018-2020 Stipends to Attract Remarkable Students (STARS) Texas Christian University, 2018- 2020 Victor Koshkin-Youritzin Scholarship in Art History University of Oklahoma, 2017-2018 Helen C. Lottinville Prize University of Oklahoma, 2016-2017 Ben Barnett Memorial Scholarship University of Oklahoma, 2015-2016, 2017-2018 Oklahoma State Regents' Academic Scholars University of Oklahoma, 2014-2018
Internships	Graduate Intern The Warehouse, Rachofsky Collection, 2019 Social Media and Audience Engagement Intern The Art Galleries at TCU, 2019 Curatorial Intern Fred Jones Jr., Museum of Art, 2017 Intern Museo Archeologico Gaio Cilnio Mecenate, 2016 Ethnology Department Intern Sam Noble Museum of Natural History, 2016

ABSTRACT

Art & Language was a collaborative group established in Great Britain in 1967. The group achieved international recognition for their conceptual work. *The Fox* was a short-lived journal dedicated to conceptual art, its issues and theories, published from 1975 to 1976. Helmed by editors associated with Art & Language New York, *The Fox* discussed local problems along with artistic critique. The local nature of their focus promoted what they called “community practice” as a means to instigate change politically. Within the magazine, the artists use historical institutional critique to analyze and promote change through the lens of Marxism. They defined their critique through discussions of the way social structures, bureaucracy, and the art market shaped the art world. As such, they used Marx’s theories of the effect of capitalism on labor and productivity to create socioeconomic analyses of the art system. They wrote articles, reviews, or correspondence to engage their community in political thought and action, inviting readers to submit their thoughts on theory or practice. I argue that *The Fox* - created an emphasis on localized community practice, exploring new modes of collaboration between artists and methods of institutional critique unlike previous artistic publications. In engaging with their smaller community, *The Fox* invited those concerned with the same issues to participate. Art & Language New York viewed art as a means of transformation, and inherently political in both its content and institution.