Chapter Fourteen

Narrate

...AS YOU TELL A PERSON IN A POSITION OF POWER ABOUT YOUR PROJECT.

PRACTICE ENGAGING & PERSISTING...


DON'T FORGET
TO EAT.

Narrate: how your project is represented.

Examples of narration can include: you or others giving a presentation about your project, you or others telling people about your project, and you or others writing about your project.

What if narration were integral to your practice or project?

☀

We suggest that the following section be shared with the group as best suits your context, either read aloud—in whole or in part—or assigned to be discussed in your space of learning. Before you begin to read, we invite you to ground yourself in the space: notice the air on your skin and your feet on the ground. What are your feelings and sensations at this moment? What are you bringing to this text? Take a moment to become aware of this. We invite you to notice what comes up for you, as you are reading this chapter. We will ask you to reflect upon this at the end of this chapter.


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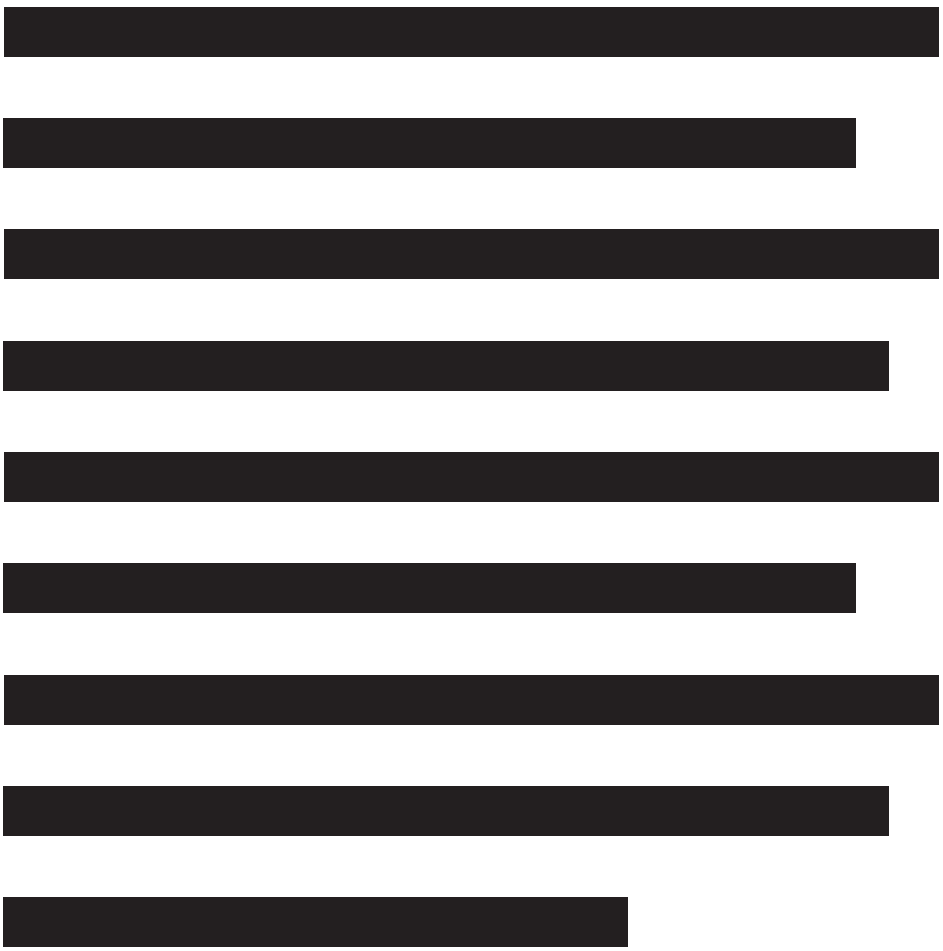


Introduction

The phase of the lifecycle that we refer to as "narrate" considers how a project is represented. For example, when you create a website, show documentation, give a lecture, or talk to friends, you are narrating your own projects. When you read about projects online and in books and hear how they are recounted in lecture halls and podcasts, someone besides you is likely narrating the project. If you then describe a project in conversations with friends and colleagues, you are also narrating.

Story

We will begin by addressing what is said or written in any narration, and then continue with a discussion about whose voices can be heard. We will share stories from the artist Sharon Louden who includes labor in her narrations on gallery and museum wall labels and co-author Susan Jahoda who provides a story about encountering a narration at an exhibition that helped situate her conditions of existence. *See Chapter 6: Historical Consciousness.*↗

Many artists work directly with curators to determine how their projects will be narrated. For example, the New York based artist Sharon Louden speaks about why she believes it is important to carefully determine the narration of her work in wall labels, to include the labors of all the people who worked on her projects. Louden writes:

> Fellow artists: here is yet another awesome thing we can do, especially when we work with artists who run institutions. I just completed a site-specific installation at the Philbrook Museum thanks to many people, a lot to the awesome artist/preparators who installed the work. Artist/Museum Director of the Philbrook Scott Stulen agreed with me that the names of those who installed the work and the curator Sienna Brown should be included on the museum label. This was literally a 30 second conversation and the first time in the museum's history people are included as they should be. Every museum should do this and every artist can insist upon it. It's a small thing but it's important validation and a form of gratitude as well as transparency as to who is really behind the way art is displayed in public places. Many thanks to everyone who participated in this project and most to Andy DuCett, another artist, for introducing me to Scott Stulen.[1]

Sharon decided to narrate the phase that we call labor, naming the preparators as artists and giving their names on the wall label. This ensured

that their names will travel with the project, and that the museum might do this with other texts, in the future. What information should travel with your projects? *See Chapter 13: Labor for a further discussion about the organization of labor in any project.*↗

Imagine if every wall label and public artist's talk included forms of labor, support, and transfer that were used to bring a project to completion. How would knowing about the forms of support used to facilitate a project's completion change your understanding of its meaning? You might pay tribute to the support structures that allow you to make your projects, including friends and family members and networks of mutual aid. You might reproduce and normalize rituals of "dedication" or "acknowledgement" as seen in books, thanking the people who have made your project possible.[2]

We talk a lot about narration and whose voices are heard. For example, forty years ago Sharon Louden would not have been able to makethe intervention that she was able to make today. Susan Jahoda, an artist and co-author of this book, shared the following story about a narration that impacted her with Caroline Woolard, an artist and the other co-author of this book:

> When I was in my early 30's, I saw Mary Kelly's installation *Interim*, at the New Museum of Contemporary Art.[3] The visual and textual strategies that Kelly used to narrate the different ways in which women's bodies are regulated had a profound impact on my own practice as an artist. I understood how I was recognized and affirmed by the male gaze, by patriarchy. I felt so much rage at this. I realized that rather than seeing myself as a victim, or blaming myself for some purported inadequacies, I could explore the conditions that had made me think I wanted to appear in a certain way. I began to seek out more readings to help me understand my experience. *Interim* gave me a context to understand my feelings about my own body.

Susan's story highlights the power of narration. She was able to understand her own lived experience in relationship to Mary Kelley's project and to connect this to a broader social, political, historical context. *See Chapter 6: Historical Consciousness for more.*↗ Susan also recalled the first time she was taught by a female faculty member was in graduate school. This was the first time that she saw women artists as examples and role models in a space of learning. Susan was rarely given the opportunity to hear women narrating their own projects. Again, who speaks is as important as what is said.

Discussion

We consider the narration of projects to be equally important to the encounter with any project because narration is what allows projects to circulate. *Narration is the interface between your projects and the rest of the world. This interface has a politics: What is said? Who is speaking? Where is the narration heard?*

Your project could be narrated in the following ways:

- A review or critique of your project
- An artist's statement
- A project statement
- Your website
- Social media
- Email
- Conversations with peers
- Photographs documenting your work
- Videos documenting your work
- An artist talk
- Wall labels
- An application
- A grant proposal
- A self-authored publication
- A curatorial statement
- Your project re-posted on social media
- Your project in an article/book/syllabus
- A recommendation letter
- Your work in a class's syllabus
- People who have seen your work and talk to other people about it
- What else?

Current tensions in spaces of learning over narration

In many ways, your ability to imagine yourself as an artist is determined by the stories you hear about artists and projects. Words make worlds, as words become the material of your imagination. For example, when you imagine how an art project is made, and you read Sharon Louden's wall label, you might envision yourself working with many artists as you install your project. This impacts how you go about making your own work.[4] If you are a student in a traditional art program, you likely get mixed messages about whether to remain silent or to speak and write about your projects. On the one hand, if you take professional practice courses,

you are required to write an artist's statement in preparation for grants, residencies, and fellowship applications. The idea is that you will be able to describe your project in a way that will shape public reception. On the other hand, in "cold read" critiques you might be asked to remain silent and take notes as viewers encounter your work, and you are asked to allow your projects to speak for themselves.

The critique is the place where the confusions about narration become most evident—should you speak for your work, or should your work speak for itself? Assumptions are made by both students and teachers in critiques about the "correct" way to represent—to narrate—projects. We will focus on the critique setting in this section because critique is the site where you learn to narrate projects: how to speak about your work and the work of your peers. A lack of explained and agreed upon criteria for narration and judgement can profoundly impact the wellbeing of a learning community.[5] The critique can become a site of intimidation. We know people who have stopped making art or who have walked out of art school because they have been severely hurt by the critique itself.

How might a project "speak for itself"? If you have ever been in a "cold read" critique setting, you have experienced a practice of "reading" a project without any knowledge of the artists' research or reasons for making it. It is called a "cold" read because the viewers who encounter the project are not given any additional information about the artists' intentions. "Reading" a project means analyzing it, as you would a text. If the project is yours, then your peers will speak about their encounter with it, and you are often not allowed to say anything.[6] The idea is that an effective project will produce a series of individual "readings" or responses and interpretations that are aligned with the intentions that you had about what the project might communicate.

There is an assumption that the people doing the "cold read" are representative of future audiences or the intended audience for the project itself. We are concerned that this is not the case at all, as many projects emerge in relationship to local knowledges that are not understood by the people doing the cold read. Projects that engage social and historical context, for example, with specific events, identities, and heritages that have been marginalized, are often not well served by the cold read in spaces with predominantly eurocentric reference points.[7] Artist and theorist Billie Lee writes that:

> Reflecting on my experiences learning, teaching, and being in spaces of art, this hold around shared concerns for one another has been surprisingly rare and ambivalent. My experiences in elite/U.S./European art spaces have been characterized by affects of disenchantment, alienation, and numbness, particularly because these

> spaces—and spaces that front as being critical—fail to acknowledge the uncritical limits of their own frameworks. In my essay "On Performing the Critical," I specifically discuss the ways that art schools are not equipped (academically and culturally) to adequately address vectors of race, class, and gender that circulate unevenly throughout these scenes, eliciting varying degrees of disidentification, accommodation, and refusal. The ubiquitous "crits" are especially prone to unregulated wildflower commentary that is either explicitly or implicitly racist, sexist, or Western-centric, precisely in the name of critique. In many instances, critique is given a "free pass," where some epistemological or evaluative frameworks go unmarked, whereas, others are marked exhaustively. Considering how foundational "crits" are to art schools, they have been underconsidered as an important pedagogical tool for the reproduction of contemporary art discourse. In fact, the typical "crit" goes against all tenets of progressive education in privileging "expert voices" and disciplining obedient artists in a neutralized white-cube space that prefigures the commercial gallery context.[8]

Viewers' biases are foregrounded in the "cold read." For example, the color red might be understood as a symbol of danger or communism if it is being analyzed by a person using a eurocentric framework. The color red might be understood as a sign of luck, joy, and happiness if it is analyzed by a person using a diasporic framework. Depending on who is in the room, the people doing the "cold read" will determine that red is about danger or about happiness or all of the above. In this example, where viewers who have been schooled to use Eurocentric frameworks are in a cold read setting, the viewers will understand the artist's use of red as signifying danger, when really, the artist (who has a different framework) was expressing happiness. The artist's meaning and context is lost and is actively marginalized. How do you navigate this reality without asking people from minoritized or marginalized backgrounds to speak for entire demographics?

In our experience, the "cold read" method of feedback can function well if a group has some familiarity with the person sharing their project, or if there are shared cultural and art historical references. What happens when members of a group doing a cold reading are unfamiliar with ways to speak about their biases in relationship to the experiences, identities, or cultural heritage that the project is in dialog with? *In The Room of Silence*, a documentary by Eloise Sherrid and Black Artists and Designers at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), students "document the difficulties faced by students of color at predominantly white art schools" and share that they are often met with a silent critique, as students and faculty

alike lack multicultural literacies and are afraid to "say the wrong thing."[9] From the Antiracist Classroom at Art Center in California,[10] to Retooling Critique Working Group at Massachusetts College of Art and Design, to #letscritcrit at RISD, students around the country are rising up to organize critique practices that support student growth.

We wish to disrupt the widely held assumption that what happens in the classroom is a means to an end—a journey to someplace else. If the classroom is not a journey to someplace else, then the people around you are your audience. We invite you to consider how you show up in the space of learning while also thinking about the conditions that shape each member of the group. The critique can be a site in which you investigate your "blind spots" to become aware of what you do not know and to identify your biases. In order to learn continuously, you can become curious about and open to the knowledges that you do not currently have.

Here are three different practices that can create critique settings that foster a greater sense of equity:

WE ENCOURAGE WITNESSING. Before providing context to your viewers, we suggest that you ask them to fully experience a project and allow it to act upon your senses. You might ask your viewers: What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? If the project invites touch, then what does it feel like? It is sometimes hard to allow yourself to remain in a non-judgemental space. You might jump to analyzing and interpreting linguistically, which can foreclose a somatic experience. *See Chapter 2: Spaces of Learning for more.*↗ In the time between your experience and interpretation, before you begin to formulate thoughts and language, what is your somatic experience? We acknowledge that projects and their materials can be sentient and intelligent, that they act upon viewers.[11] *See Chapter 4: Teacher/Facilitator Guides for more.*↗ Witnessing helps to develop the capacity that we call "focused attention: I am able to practice lucid and attentive awareness, noticing distraction and returning to focused attention."[12]

WE SHARE 11 APPROACHES TO RETOOLING CRITIQUE. We offer these eleven approaches to give you a sense of the Retooling Critique Working Group's ongoing commitment to undoing racism, including in the performance of critique.[13] These approaches cannot be used as a list to check off, as they grow out of ongoing conversations and actions. The Retooling Critique Working Group was created to bring racial equity and inclusion into critique practices in art schools, and offers these approaches to critique:

1. Carve out space for study. Support others in carving out that space. Study side by side. Move apart and come together.
2. Recognize the past and present labor of students.
3. Devise tactics for ongoing work that is different from drawing conclusions.
4. Set your focus wider than your frame. Acknowledge the limits of the conditions that we operate within. What are the constraints of the institution that obstructs this labor? How can we set the focus of a class to include its own institutional conditions?
5. Invite witnessing. Invite testimony. Who are the witnesses, participants, influences and critics you welcome into your life? Do you trust them willingly or by default? What is that relationship doing to you, your art, your overall sense of being in a community?
6. Refuse generalization and essentialism. Move from tacit to explicit.
7. Consider critique as a tool and wield it as such. Use your tool responsibility.
8. Develop the will and ways to see what our habitual critique practices do. Ask. Listen.
9. Demonstrate to yourself the fact of a blind spot.
10. Develop reading practices. Study a few critical texts in depth and with others.
11. Build new literacies. Develop a conceptual toolkit. Borrow tools as you discover them useful. Do your homework.[14]

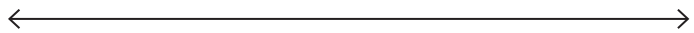
This list was presented at a public event that we (Susan and Caroline) organized as members of BFAMFAPhD. For a deeper understanding of the work of the Retooling Critique Working Group, we encourage you to listen to the recording of their conversation.[15]

WE ASK THE QUESTION: What do you need to know in order to understand this project more fully? What media (materials, techniques) and topics (themes, subjects) do you need to learn more about, in order to understand this project better? This allows the group and individuals to sense the encounter with a project as a moment that could direct further research, rather than a final reading or judgement. *See the Activities section in this chapter for ways to navigate this.*↗

Is it possible to *see* something that you do not know?

We believe that you cannot see and understand something that you do not have familiarity with.[16] You will not be able to see "red" as a sign of danger if you have no cultural reference point for that. For this reason, we encourage you to provide and ask for context in each critique. In the same

way that you are asked to write an artist's statement, in order to shape the public's understanding of your work, we believe that providing context allows the group that is encountering the project to begin a conversation about it with a deeper understanding. When you share references and research in advance of the critique, it can save time, help to avoid "blind spots," and can create shared vocabulary for critiques and reviews. This encourages your peers to see themselves as co-researchers who are learning about your research as well as their own. While some people may warn you that providing context to your peers will over-determine the "reading" of the project, we encourage you to see this in the same manner that you might a wall text or label. In "cold read" settings, providing written text to accompany your project might allow you to insert context where it might otherwise be disallowed.



"The work speaks for itself." Art is self contained and it is not the job of the artist to explain how it produces meaning.

"Let me give you some context..." Artists produce meaning in relationship to specific knowledges, people, and places.

Negation

"This is not new." / "Why are these white teachers teaching me a bad version of my own ancestral wisdom?"

The framework we use draws from Indigenous philosophies that account for matter and land as never separate from the body. While "new materialism"[17] and "cradle-to-cradle" theories are often spoken about as new in relationship to European philosophical traditions, Indigenous scholars Eve Tuck, Marcia McKenzie, and Kate McCoy remind readers that "scholars of the Indigenous will attest to the survival of alternative intellectual traditions in which the liveliness of matter is grasped as quite ordinary, both inside, and at the fringes of, European modernity."[18] European philosophical traditions' practiced ignorance regarding Indigenous philosophy goes hand in hand with the erasure of Indigenous bodies and land.[19] See Chapter 7: Lifecycle Phases and Framework for more.↗ As authors, we acknowledge the pain and trauma that is held as we present European philosophical traditions alongside Indigenous philosophical traditions. How is it possible that Indigenous traditions are being taught in institutions of higher education, when these very institutions occupy stolen Indigenous land and have historically produced the theories and justifications for the denial of Indigenous sovereignty and existence?[20] See Is

Art a Commodity?, Chapter 6: Historical Consciousness, and Chapter 9: Support for more about generative contradictions.↗

How might these contradictions lead to transformative action? Eve Tuck reminds readers that decolonization is not a metaphor;[21] it is an everyday practice of recognizing the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and struggling for Indigenous demands for repatriation. A commitment to decolonization includes active and ongoing struggles with Indigenous colleagues, artists, and activists. This is intersectional work which acknowledges that all suffering and all human dignity is interconnected. As artist Mindy Magyar writes, "given the continued threats to Indigenous cultures, I regard my practice itself as a contribution to the greater cultural revitalization efforts flourishing across Indian Country. And whether I am studying the quillwork of an ancestor, seeking guidance from an elder, or challenging design protocol, I consider it an act of decolonization, or rather Indigenous visual sovereignty."[22] See Chapter 8: Understanding the Lifecycle from Multiple Perspectives for more.↗

A focus on process, materials, and the life of projects may seem unconventional from the perspective of the Eurocentric art-making traditions which are privileged in most higher educational institutions, but this approach is entirely familiar to Indigenous artists. For example, the artist Jeffrey Gibson narrates that Indigenous crafts and designs have "historically been used to signify identity, tell stories, describe place, and mark cultural specificity," explaining, "I engage materials and techniques as strategies to describe a contemporary narrative that addresses the past in order to place oneself in the present and to begin new potential trajectories for the future."[23] When we focus on a reconnection between production process and intention, we hope that you will narrate your connection across generations: ancestral and historical knowledge. For example, Gibson connects the past to the present with his craft techniques. What craft techniques and materials might your elders have used? See the activity "Naming Who We Invite Into Our Space of Learning" to consider how we narrate our learning in Chapter 4: Teacher/Facilitator Guides for more.↗

As we wrote in Chapter 3: Who Do You Honor?, if you are a white facilitator, please note that white people will likely reveal their racism when you bring anti-racist dialogue into the room. This is because white people have so little experience with dialogue about race. White people's racial identity is affirmed daily by media, institutions, and rules. To prepare to facilitate conversations about race, we, Susan and Caroline, have joined and formed antiracist groups to support our ongoing transformation. Before preparing her syllabus, the white artist and educator Judith Leemann takes an implicit bias test.[24] Leemann says, "I am a better anti-racist educator if I have just done another implicit bias test,

remembering that I am racist, rather than thinking that I am anti-racist."[25] If we, Susan and Caroline, can accept and remember regularly that there are good reasons for People of Color to distrust white educators, including us, we are more able to be present with the racism that permeates our spaces of learning. If we allow ourselves to forget our racism, we are inclined toward a masked perception. See Chapter 6: How Are You in the World and How Is the World in You? for a Self-Reflection Assignment about Rank for more.↗

Discussion

Who?

You might sense the power that narration—language and imagery that represent your project—has in spaces of learning and in institutional contexts. Who gets to narrate, and what narrations are visible? Historically, many artists of color and women artists, along with trans artists, nonbinary artists, disabled artists, and artists who identify with intersectional minoritized groups, have been excluded from narration and therefore public recognition. For example, a 2019 study conducted by a group of mathematicians, statisticians, and art historians at Williams College found that 85.4 percent of the works in the collections of all major US museums belong to white artists, and 87.4 percent are by men. African American artists have the lowest share with just 1.2 percent of the works; the works of Asian artists total 9 percent; and the works of Hispanic and Latino artists constitute only 2.8 percent.[26] Even if all of the Latinx artists in major US museums decided to add labor to their wall labels like Sharon Louden, only 2.8 percent of additional wall labels would include labor. This is why who speaks is integral to what is said. *See Chapter 6: Historical Consciousness for more.↗* Artist-centric spaces in New York City like Just Above Midtown[27] (founded by Linda Goode Bryant and run from 1974–1986), WOW Café Theater, and El Museo del Barrio[28] were founded precisely because the art histories represented in elite museums and galleries have predominantly excluded women and all artists of color.[29] *See Chapter 15: Encounter ■ for more.↗*

Female partners of many collaborative pairs have historically remained invisible, although they were the actual, unattributed creators of the work. For example, Artemisia Gentileschi,[30] Camille Claudel,[31] Jeanne-Claude,[32] and Ray Eames[33] were barely recognized for the majority of their careers. Even after some of their male partners began to acknowledge their labors in public narrations, it took years for these women to be recognized. Once a narration gets into circulation, it is hard to undo the story that has become known.

For example, even the famous urinal, *The Fountain,* was likely not created by Duchamp. According to art historian Amelia Jones in her book *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada,* published fifteen years ago,[34] Duchamp wrote to his sister Suzanne in 1917, saying that "one of my women friends, using a masculine pseudonym, Richard Mutt, submitted a porcelain urinal [to the Society of Independents show] as a sculpture."[35] This letter continues to be disputed.[36] The Tate museum has another narration for the origin of The Fountain, claiming that:

> Duchamp later recalled that the idea for Fountain arose from a discussion with the collector Walter Arensberg (1878–1954) and the artist Joseph Stella (1877–1946) in New York. He purchased a urinal from a sanitary ware supplier and submitted it—or arranged for it to be submitted—as an artwork by 'R. Mutt' to the newly established Society of Independent Artists that Duchamp himself had helped found and promote on the lines of the Parisian Salon des Indépendants (Duchamp had moved from Paris to New York in 1915).[37]

The Tate lists Duchamp as the author of The Fountain and provides a history of the dispute online. We do know that Duchamp, running the publication *The Blind Man*, had Alfred Stieglitz photograph the project after it was removed (or disappeared) from the exhibition. Duchamp and the editors of *The Blind Man* had the power to narrate this project in any way that they liked in 1917, and some historians continue this narration today. When your projects are narrated by people and institutions without your consultation, for example in social media or in press releases or wall labels, you may have been deprived of control over the production of meaning.

Cultural theorist and philosopher Michel Foucault addresses the relationships between author and receiver, work and context, in his essay "What is an Author,"[38] calling into question the assumption that the maker determines the project's meaning. Discourse about a project can be produced by a wide range of people, including art historians, critics, artists, and institutions. In other words, you are not in full control of your project's narration. Foucault explores playwright Samuel Beckett's question, "What does it matter who is speaking?"[39] In other words, who might give your project legitimacy, in which art worlds, and why? Historians, perhaps in collusion with the editors of *The Blind Man*, erased public awareness of the true author of The Fountain. The artist and writer Mira Shor writes:

> What if instead of the wink-wink-nudge-nudge, know-what-I-mean anonymity accorded Duchamp's gesture, the work in fact masked another kind of anonymity, the one famously defined by Virginia Woolf as 'Anonymous Was a Woman'? … some of the most important artists are essentially anonymous artists who've fallen through the cracks of history; when misogyny and bigotry hold the spot light, the light shines brightest on men like Duchamp. Gendered value hierarchies in the 20th century informed every movement's historicization, and Dada is no exception. So, here we are, to shed some light on the incredibly innovative, prolific, and captivating person, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven.[40]

Was Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven the person that Duchamp mentioned to his sister in the letter that he wrote? Historians continue to debate the authorship in their narrations. The urinal was removed from the exhibition, and it circulated only as an image in the publication *The Blind Man*. If you have seen The Fountain in person, it is a replica based upon this photograph. This is the power of narration. Foucault asks: "What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for [themselves]? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions?"[41] For example, the discourse surrounding Duchamp and The Fountain has circulated in major museums, art history textbooks, and student seminars. For nearly a century, Duchamp was seen as the unchallenged author of the project. This is the power of narration.

There are projects that you might not have seen in person (like the *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre), that you feel that you have encountered in person because they have been so widely represented. As the artist Cameron Rowland said about a work by Zoe Leonard, "It's one I've thought about for a long time and I've only known through documentation."[42] It has been argued that the history of art is the history of that which could be photographed and written about.[43] As we recognize the power of narration to make practices visible and open to contestation, we also recognize the challenges in narrating the lifecycles of projects. As we have seen in the story of *The Fountain*, narrations change in relationship to the listener, based upon geography, identity, and professional norms.

Where?

Narration is also what distinguishes a work of art from a weird thing. For example, when and how does a urinal become a work of art? A project becomes an "artwork" when it is legitimized through narrations that

circulate within elite institutions in the field of art. Institutional theories of art state that an artwork cannot be understood as "Art" without existing alongside organizations and people who share established, pre-existing knowledges, customs, and norms about what "Art" might be. *See Chapter 7: Lifecycle Phases and Framework for more.*↗ As curator Christophe Lemaitre writes in the foreword to *The Life and Death of Works of Art*, philosopher George Dickie's institutional theory of art began to consider the work of art as a system of relationships that would always include

- An artist (a person understanding and taking part in the development of the artwork),
- An artifact (to be presented to an artworld public),
- A public (namely a group of people ready to understand what is presented to them),
- A system in the artwork (a structure allowing for the work to be presented),
- And the world of art (all of the artworld systems).[44]

In the next chapter, we will focus on the structures that provide contexts for projects to be presented, or the phase that we call "encounter." It is the combination of narration and encounter that legitimizes projects in the field of art. If artists are unable to, or do not wish to circulate their projects in existing art institutions, many artists create their own publications and spaces in order to achieve legitimacy.

Jon Hendricks, an artist and Fluxus Consulting Curator at MoMA, spoke with us about the power of narration and encounter in shaping the public understanding of Fluxus. He ran an independent bookstore in New York City in the 1970s that sold artists books and Fluxus ephemera. As someone who made a site of encounter for Fluxus ephemera and objects, Jon played a central role in the formation of the Fluxus collection that was acquired by MoMA in 2008.[45] In an interview with us, describing how so few Fluxus projects were cataloged in the Periodicals Contents Index at the time of the acquisition by MoMA, Hendricks said:

> "I looked up Fluxus in the Periodicals Contents Index and there was one tiny little mention in all these magazines on Fluxus … why? Because they only indexed the standard 28 art magazines—*Arts*, *Art News*, *Art Forum*, *Kunst*, whatever it is, and they didn't archive *Décollage* or *Fuck You Magazine of the Arts,* or whatever it might be, because those were considered to be, who knows, naughty or just of no importance. Of course those are the most important things. Those were publications made by artists."[46]

Jon is pointing to the importance of narration, or the representation of projects. Before 2008, according to Jon, well-known magazines had only "one tiny little mention" of Fluxus. With the support of Jon, Fluxus gained institutional visibility and a higher level of circulation because he mandated the narration and acquisition of Fluxus material at MoMA. *See Chapter 18: Acquire for more.*

Artists often call attention to the conventions of narration by:

- Creating performance lectures that reflect upon the act of narration; and
- Refusing to speak alone, presenting multiple perspectives, speaking as a group.

We are interested in borrowing from outside of the field of fine art to narrate the labors of others. For example:

- "Dedication" and "acknowledgement" sections as seen in books;
- "Credits" in film that include the "producer," "director," "actors," and more roles;
- The printed "program" with a list of roles and biographies in the performing arts;
- Supply chain diagrams in service design;[47]
- Reports with "principal investigators" and "research assistants" in the sciences;
- Project descriptions with "creative directors," "typographers," and "designers" listed in graphic design; and
- Videos of construction labor in architecture.[48]
- How new work stories might be visualized, narrated, and represented is itself a creative act needing critical thought.[49]

Quotations

"Since 2007 I've been experimenting with crafting wordless explanations, in which hands manipulating objects on a small stage are asked to take on the work of explanation that usually rests with language. Over time, I've come to be most curious about the way in which language permits certain kinds of sense to come forward while actively preventing other kinds of sense from being made. Can this play of hands and objects do the work of foregrounding relations such that the relation itself becomes the subject? Is it helpful to have 'a something' in relation to another 'something' if we wish to temper our noun-heavy ways of thinking? And is this just an idiosyncratic

wish of my own to see telling take this form, or might this play of hands over and through objects do something useful within the larger project of systems thinking?" —Judith Leemann, 2007[50]

"I wish not to be visible on documented materials. If you would like to take pictures of the slideshow please feel free to but please make sure that I am not in the frame." —Julia Phillips, 2018[51]

"Was I a pedophile? I didn't understand what they were talking about. But when I did a bit of research, I discovered how culturally omnipresent this infatuation with child abuse was. Since everybody seemed to be so interested in my personal biography, I thought I should make some overtly biographical work-pseudo-biographical work." —Mike Kelley, 2008[52]

"I had no resources, so self-documentation became a way for me to express who I was and what I was dealing with, and have an immediate conversation with other people who, even if they weren't trans, were at least queer. It was so new, finding other trans people through Tumblr.... Tumblr was how I found myself and how I found my voice." —Juliana Huxtable, 2017[53]

"*[Official] Welcome* was about performing a field of possible positions that artists occupy within the art world. I started my research with certain positions in mind and with different kinds of artists who would fall into each category, such as the theoretically informed political artist, the society artist, the AbEx guy who really did struggle and then bought into the whole humanistic post-war ideology, or the bad girl. They're very identifiable positions that we could occupy as artists in 2001, and there were certain discourses and relationships that went along with each position." —Andrea Fraser, 2012[54]

"Story is the unit of social change.... While growing up as a Dalit American, there was no representation of my experience, neither as a woman-of-color nor as a member of the Dalit diaspora. The battle of the imaginary became part of my liberation process. I read different authors and creators who inspired me. As I saw my work in other women-of-color, writers and thinkers, I was able to create a path for myself and my community. Story helps build community, to build a sense of self, and a connection with other people. It creates the vision that otherwise might not be possible in the face of systemic discrimination." —Thenmozhi Soundararajan, 2017[55]

> "After being in dialog with your grandmother you re-conceptualize your entire project as a timeline that draws upon the social, personal, and political histories of your community. You recognize how much knowledge you can draw from your lived experience and how this can be shaped into a powerful project situating your family history within a larger cultural context." —Wendy Red Star, 2017[56]

Here are more artists, groups, and projects that come to mind when we think about narrate: Ala Plastica / American Artist / Art & Feminism / Peggy Buth and Futurefarmers / e-Flux / Huit Facettes / Nicholas Felton / Andrea Fraser / HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? / Bill T. Jones / Christine Sun Kim / Judith Leeman / Shaun Leonardo / Marie Lorenz / Los Angeles Poverty Department / MuF / Jeanine Oleson / Adrian Piper / Printed Matter / School of the Apocalypse / Antonio Serna / Temporary Services / Thenmozhi Soundararajan / Trans History Museum / UbuWeb / Mary Walling Blackburn. What artists, groups, and projects come to mind for you?

Reflection

1. How might you narrate your projects differently, based upon what you read in this chapter?
2. ☀ What feelings and sensations came up for you while you were reading this chapter? For example, did you feel surprise, frustration, or excitement? How did you hold these in your body? For example, did you sense these emotions in your shoulders, neck, and back while reading this chapter? *See the Social-Emotional Intelligence Project Reflection activity in Chapter 4: Teacher/ Facilitator Guides.*↗
3. What would it mean to understand artmaking as a site of interdependence, both locally and globally, rather than as a site of individual use and exchange? Remember, art is a system of relationships. We understand from the long history of economically oriented critical theory that behind any object exists a system of extraction, of production, and of circulation whose very histories are hidden at the moment in which the object appears as free-standing, as individual, as a thing, often a commodity. For us, in this book, that "thing" is the art object.

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2. See Sanja Lazic, "Artist Assistants—The World of Anonymous Helpers," *Widewalls*, November 4, 2014, http://www.widewalls.ch/the-world-of-artist-assistants-feature-november-2014/.

3. Mary Kelly, *Interim*, artist's book, 1990, New Museum, https://archive.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/874.

4. Magnus Bärtås, "You Told Me: Work Stories and Video Essays," PhD diss., University of Gothenburg, *Art Monitor,* 2010, 46, http://konst.gu.se/english/ArtMonitor/dissertations/magnus-bartas.

5. See Judith Leeman, "Pragmatics of Studio Critique" in *Beyond Critique: Contemporary Art in Theory, Practice, and Instruction*, eds. Pamela Fraser and Roger Rothman (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

6. See Kendall Buster and Paula Crawford, *The Critique Handbook: The Art Student's Sourcebook and Survival Guide* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010).

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8. Billie Lee, "Art School in a Moment of Danger," https://www.leebillie.com/art-school-in-a-moment-of-danger-art-pedagogy-and-otherness-1. These remarks were presented on a panel titled "Beyond Critique: Contemporary Art in Theory, Practice, and Instruction" at the College Art Association Conference in New York, NY on February 17, 2017.

9. *The Room of Silence*, directed by Eloise Sherrid in collaboration with Black Artists and Designers of Rhode Island School of Design (2016), available, http://www.eloisesherrid.com/the-room-of-silence.

10. Antiracist Classroom, "About," Art Center College of Design, https://antiracist-classroom.com/.

11. See Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2013).

12. Capacity from Daniel P. Barbezat and Mirabai Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014). Adapted in dialogue with Maia Duerr and Carrie Bergman of The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. *See Chapter 5: Capacities for more.*

13. For further reading, see Billie Lee, "On Performing the Critical," in *Beyond Critique: Contemporary Art in Theory, Practice, and Instruction*, ed. Roger Rothman and Pamela Fraser (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2017), 143–152.

14. The Retooling Critique Working Group is organized by Judith Leemann and was initially funded by a Massachusetts College of Art and Design President's Curriculum Development Grant. Members include Judith Leemann, Billie Lee, Adelheid Mers, Anthony Romero, Kenneth Bailey, and Caroline Woolard. See Retooling Critique Working Group, "I. Retooling Technique," 2017, https://usefulpictures.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/9cd36-retoolingcritique_overview.pdf.

15. Billie Lee and Anthony Romero of the Retooling Critique Working Group, "Modes of Critique," (Making and Being program series, Hauser & Wirth, New York, NY, January 18, 2019), audio accessible on *Bad at Sports*, http://badatsports.com/2019/episode-676-bfamfaphd-critique/.

16. See Oliver Sacks "To See and Not to See," in *An Anthropologist on Mars*, 108–152 (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1995; New York, NY: Vintage 1996). Citation refers to the Vintage edition.

17. "New materialism" is a term coined in the 1990s to describe a theoretical turn away from the persistent dualisms in modern and humanist traditions whose influences are present in much of cultural theory. See Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, eds., "Interview with Karen Barad," in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, 48–70 (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012), 48.

18. Jessica L.Horton and Janet Catherine Berlo, "Beyond the Mirror Indigenous Ecologies and 'New Materialisms' in Contemporary Art," in *Third Text* 27, no. 1 (January 2013): 17–28, 18, available, https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/sites.ucsc.edu/dist/0/196/files/2015/09/Third-Text-120-.pdf; Horton and Berlo reference: Vine Deloria, Jr, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (New York, NY: Putnam, 1972); Jolene Rickard, "Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, 2 (Spring 2011) 465–486; Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University 1998); Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Perspectivism and Multinaturalism in Indigenous America," in *The Land Within: Indigenous Territory and the Perception of the Environment*, ed. Pedro García Hierro and Alexandre Surrallés (Copenhagen, Denmark: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2005).

19. Amherst College is named after Jeffery Amherst, a British general in North America during the French & Indian war from 1754–1763. Amherst conducted germ warfare against the Indigenous population of the area Norwottuck, later renamed as Amherst, by giving out smallpox-infected blankets to the local population. See Peter d'Errico, "Jeffery Amherst and Smallpox Blankets Lord Jeffery Amherst's letters discussing germ warfare against American Indians," University of Massachusetts, 2001, https://people.umass.edu/derrico/amherst/lord_jeff.html.

20. For further reading, see Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1990).

21. Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012) 1–40.

22. Mindy Magyar, "Studio—MINDY MAGYAR," https://www.mindymagyar.com/studio.

23. Jeffrey Gibson quoted in exhibition description, "The Anthropophagic Effect," Johanna Burton, Keith Haring Director and Curator of Education and Public Engagement, and Sara O'Keeffe, Associate Curator, New Museum, New York, NY, February 13, 2019–June 6, 2019, https://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/jeffrey-gibson.

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25. Judith Leeman, personal correspondence with Susan Jahoda and Caroline Woolard, June 23, 2019.

26. Christopher M. Danforth, ed., "Diversity of Artists in Major U.S. Museums," *PLoS One* 14, no. 3 (March 20, 2019), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6426178/.

27. Mimi Poser in discussion with Linda Goode Bryant and David Hammons, "Just Above Midtown Gallery, 1975," Guggenheim Museum, 2015, audio, 23:55, https://soundcloud.com/guggenheimmuseum/just-above-midtown-gallery.

28. For further information, visit El Museo del Barrio, "El Museo del Barrio," http://www.elmuseo.org.

29. See interview with Herb Tam, in *Alternative Histories: New York Art Spaces 1960–2010*, eds. Lauren Rosati and Mary Anne Staniszweski (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

30. See Jonathan Jones, "More Savage than Caravaggio: The Woman Who Took Revenge in Oil," *The Guardian*, October 5, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/oct/05/artemisia-gentileshi-painter-beyond-caravaggio; Marina Lorenzini, "10 Facts You May Not Know About Artemisia Gentileschi," *Hyperallergic*, July 15, 2013, https://hyperallergic.com/75376/10-facts-you-may-not-know-about-artemisia-gentileschi/.

31. For further information, see Musée Camille Claudel, Nogent-sur-Seine, France, http://www.museecamilleclaudel.fr/en.

32. Christo and Jeanne-Claude decided to attribute their work to both artists after 33 years of collaboration. "In April 1994, married artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude fielded a question during an art-college lecture that forever altered their artistic practice. According to Wolfgang Volz, the couple's friend and photographer, a man in the audience inquired after 'the young poet Cyril, Christo's son.' Jeanne-Claude, Cyril's mother, wasn't mentioned. A discussion the artists, born Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon and Christo Javacheff, had been having for some time about fully attributing their collaborative works to the both of them, and what that might mean economically and aesthetically, was foregrounded by an innocuous question about the couple's most intimate collaboration. From that point forward—and in revision, as far back as 1961—the works of Christo became the works of Christo and Jeanne-Claude," from Kriston Crapps, "Recognizing Jeanne-Claude," *The American Prospect*, November 23, 2009, https://prospect.org/article/recognizing-jeanne-claude-0.

33. Alissa Walker, "A Glimpse Into the Life of Midcentury Design Legend Ray Eames," *Gizmodo*, May 1, 2014, https://gizmodo.com/a-glimpse-into-the-life-of-midcentury-design-legend-ray-1546759663.

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35. Duchamp's letter published in "War / Equivocal Masculinities," in *Irrational Modernism*, by Amelia Jones (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 42.; Earlier published in *Affect/ Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp,* eds., Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk (London, UK: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 46; Quote from letter also published in "Duchamp Probably Didn't Make the 'Fountain' Urinal—A Look at the Dada Woman Who Likely Authored the First Readymade," Loney Abrams, *Artspace*, May 30, 2019, https://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/in_focus/duchamp-probably-didnt-make-the-fountain-urinala-look-at-the-dada-woman-who-likely-authored-the-56084.

36. See "Summary" for Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, replica 1964, porcelain, Tate, London, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-fountain-t07573.

37. Ibid.

38. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralism*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 141–160.

39. Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 141.

40. Mira Shor's review on *Irrational Modernism* in "Reviews," in *Art Journal*; also quoted in Abrams, "Duchamp Probably Didn't Make the 'Fountain' Urinal—A Look at the Dada Woman Who Likely Authored the First."

41. Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 160.

42. Cameron Rowland, "Zoe Leonard: Strange Fruit," (Panel at the Whitney Museum, New York, NY, March 24, 2018), video, 2:26:28, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfD8iWicHB4.

43. André Malraux, *Le Musée imaginaire (Museum without Walls)* (Paris, France: Gallimard, 1996), first published in 1947, quoted in Roxana Marcoci, "The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today," in *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today*, eds. Roxana Marcoci, Geoffrey Batchen, and Tobia Bezzola (New York, NY: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010), 13. Published in conjunction with the exhibition.

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