

Amateur Craft: History and Theory

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The Practice of Everyday Life

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The artist  
in all of usAMATEUR CRAFT:  
HISTORY AND THEORY  
(EXCERPTS)

– Stephen Knott

**HISTORY OF A DEFINITION**

Amateur practice has not always required scholarly defence. From the Renaissance to well into the eighteenth century, European definitions of the word were consistent with its Latin root – 'amare' (to love) – and it was associated with virtuous activities undertaken for their own sake. The disassociation from need was particularly important as it rendered amateur practice a symbolic expression of a gentleman's ability to spare resources of time and money, as well as those of his female spouse and dependents. Cultural cachet was assigned to excellence within various activities, from husbandry, travel writing and scientific discovery for men, to the female 'accomplishments' of piano playing, foreign languages, embroidery, and even dairy management and other rural pastimes that became popular in the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The Industrial Revolution, often dated in Britain between 1750 and 1850 and later in Europe and America, disrupted these conventions. Commercial production of artistic supplies and tools, as well as guidance in how to use them through manuals and advice literature, meant greater access to the things needed for amateur craft. The culture of work shifted, reflecting the rise of what could be described as middle-class values: aristocratic idleness and autonomous pursuit of knowledge was viewed with greater suspicion in comparison with self-help and productivity. Nineteenth-century philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer represented the old order and privileged the autonomy of 'dilettanti' – those who 'pursue a branch of knowledge or art for the love and enjoyment thereof'. In his 1851 work *Parerga and Paralipomena* he stated that it was from dilettanti, and not from the professional ('paid servant'), 'that the greatest work has always come', lamenting the 'want, hunger or some other keen desire' of engaging in a task out of necessity.<sup>2</sup> Schopenhauer's 'dilettanti' was a configuration of amateur practice that chimed

with the values of gentlemanly society of the pre-industrial age where it was only the elites who could afford to pursue a task out of love alone. A more heterogeneous understanding of amateur practice emerged with economic growth and industrial progress, and from the late eighteenth century was defined, like the burgeoning middle classes, by diversity. The unpaid aristocratic virtuoso was joined by a vast array of amateur makers – women engaging in home arts, beginners learning a craft, tourists capturing a scene through watercolour, and throughout the nineteenth century an increasing number of middle-class workers wanting to fill spare time with useful and enjoyable practices. As a result, amateur practice increasingly became associated with conditions of making (labour), rather than mere curiosity or a love of acquiring knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

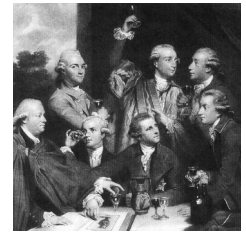
Equipped with newly available tools and materials, middle-class individuals could excel in voluntarily undertaken labour and were less concerned with being compared to artisans (even though many of them might have been artisans). Amateur activity offered the middle classes a chance to gain social and economic advantage from working in their free time in quasi-imitation of their aristocratic counterparts, yet with productivity as the cornerstone of what constituted moral virtue. This celebration of productivity was critical to the development of a middle-class mentality, which Karl Marx argued was a consequence of a totalizing understanding of work characterized by alienation, where both an individual's means of life, desires and activity were ruled over by an 'inhuman power'.<sup>4</sup> Marx perceptively recognized the shift in the culture of work that accompanied the Industrial Revolution and his thought influenced subsequent generations of scholars, including German sociologist Max Weber, who claimed that capitalism and its ideological bedfellow, economic rationalism, had pervaded all spheres of culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and curtailed the possibility of genuine freedom.<sup>5</sup> Industrialization and the alienation that it fostered challenged Schopenhauer's idealistic assessment that the amateur could achieve some kind of distinctive autonomy outside the grip of capital.

Another consequence of this expansion of amateur craft practice in the nineteenth century was the notional competition between the newly equipped amateur and the professional. Amateurs threatened to match the skills of professionals who were already struggling to defend the technical worth of their labour against the mechanical power of steam and the accelerating division of labour. The presumed threat of higher levels of skill among amateur craftspeople sowed the seeds for the dichotomization of amateur practice from professional practice as artisans, craftsmen and artists used the word amateur pejoratively to denote lack of commitment, poor skill and ineptitude rather than doing something for its own sake. Throughout the nineteenth century, expertise, skill and excellence were tied to monetary remuneration within a 'profession', with the amateur reduced to a dabbler, or feminized through an association with domestic handicraft that has proved pervasive. This division continues to live with us today.

A comprehensive treatment of amateur craft is impossible unless this oppositional split between professional and amateur is questioned. If Marx famously summed up the character of modernity whereby 'all that is solid melts into air',<sup>6</sup> my attempt is to show how the amateur craft practitioner attempted to make experience 'solid' once more through making, within this disruptive temporal environment.

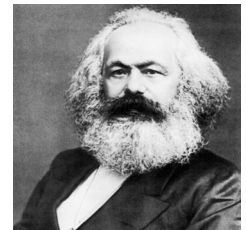
1 Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 111; Thorstein Veblen, *Conspicuous Consumption* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 26; Ann Bermingham, 'Aesthetics of Ignorance: The Accomplished Woman in the Culture of Connoisseurship' *The Oxford Art Journal* 16:2 (1993).

2 Arthur Schopenhauer, 'On Learning and the Learned' *Parerga and Paralipomena*: volume 2 trans. by E. F. J. Payne (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), p. 481.

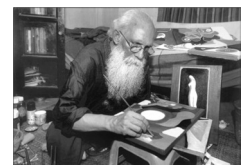


3 Sloan, *A Noble Art*, p. 7.

4 Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* in Erich Fromm (ed.) *Marx's Concept of Man* trans. by T. B. Bottomore (New York: Ungar Pub. Co., 1961), p. 151.



5 German sociologist Max Weber in his seminal work *The Spirit of Capitalism*, described capitalism as the 'vast cosmos into which a person is born. It simply exists, to each person, as a factually unalterable casing in which he or she must live'. Weber argues that capitalism in the modern world is transformed into a spirit (one to which he argued Protestantism was particularly attuned) and is not reduced to the description of economic forces but spreads into all aspects of life in which 'competence and proficiency in a vocational calling' is key. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism with Other Writings on the Rise of the West* trans. by Stephen Kalberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 73.



6 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* trans. by S. Moore (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 83.

7 The last chapter of Glenn Adamson's *Thinking Through Craft* – a book that re-assesses the basis of craft's inferiority in the context of modern art – entitled 'Amateur', is one of the few exceptions within material culture studies, art criticism and design history to explore this term. Adamson's focus is primarily on how various artists, including Tracey Emin, Judy Chicago and Mike Kelley, respond to the presumed abject status of amateur craft and its place in the discourse of feminism in the 1970s. I cover this subject in detail within Chapter 3. Glenn Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), pp. 139–63.

8 Ernest Dichter, *Handbook of Consumer Motivation. The Psychology of the World*

### A DEMOCRATIC ART FORM: PAINT-BY-NUMBER IN THE 1950S

As an accessible, commercially produced, inexpensive art kit, paint-by-number reflected a particularly American model of participatory consumerism of the 1950s, in which individuals were invited not just to exercise taste in the acquisition of goods but to use their free time to do-it-themselves. The social historian Karal Ann Marling describes the self-building practices as a means of negotiating the standardization of professional life through physical labour, describing how 'DIYism ... was the last refuge for the exercise of control and competence in a world run by the bosses and bureaucrats.' This do-it-yourself art chimed with notions of American self-reliance and productivity that was defined by a resistance to idleness, a refutation of passive consumerism and a need to counter-balance professional life with useful tasks. American psychologist and marketing expert, Ernest Dichter, both observed and harnessed the potential of products that left something for the consumer to do, stating in his 1964 *Handbook of Consumer Motivation* that: 'A sculpture, a painting, or a poster is better if it is somewhat incomplete, if the onlooker is invited to fill in, to do his own creative sentence completion.'<sup>8</sup>

The paint-by-number kit is a perfect example of a product that is left incomplete, encouraging the individual consumer to 'finish' the painting according to their whim. The role models for this new breed of artists, however, were not the representatives of the New York *avant garde* art scene but Sunday painters like Winston Churchill and the American president Dwight Eisenhower, as well as American 'folk' artists like Grandma Moses and the ever popular Norman Rockwell.<sup>9</sup> This was a popularization of art that did not disseminate the image of the romantic artist suffering for his work or the heady theoretical abstraction of much modern art, but instead positioned art as an engaging pastime. Eisenhower popularized the paint-by-number medium by giving canvases to his cabinet, and allegedly sought help from a professional artist in preparing the images he wanted to paint, providing an outline for him to 'fill in', paint-by-numbers style.<sup>10</sup> This philosophy of proactive amusement chimed with the broader context of American consumerism, amateur painting offering a cathartic 'safe' release of tension from one's everyday reality.

Although paint-by-number is similar to countless other consumer products of the 1950s that left some form of customization or labour for the individual to undertake – from self-fitted kitchens to convenience food – it invited the consumer into the more complex terrain of artistic production. The conveniently packaged tools and materials ceded enough productive power for the kit to become a pedagogic tool, especially for individuals who had little or no other means of artistic education. Many paint-by-number painters recall how this cheap, accessible art form constituted their chief experience of art in the 1950s, Carol Belland explaining how her father's painstaking labour on an Emmett Kelly portrait was the only 'art' to be found in her home.<sup>11</sup> Another paint-by-number practitioner describes the more desperate contexts of her paint-by-number education, recalling how her drug- and alcohol-dependent parents were initially unwilling to buy her a kit. After she had bought the kit herself they then refused to buy linseed oil for her to keep the paints from drying. Determined to finish, she glued on the dried pieces of paint to the canvas and gave the finished picture to her grandparents.<sup>12</sup>

This tale of courage is a heart-warming example of the broader educational impact of paint-by-number kits. The kit provided the first step to something greater. For this woman, her encounter with paint-by-number anticipated her eventual employment as an artist, a pathway to a career in art followed by many other paint-by-number painters of the 1950s. The story might be exceptional, conforming to the 'rags to riches' trope in American popular culture, but viewing paint-by-number as the 'first stage' in a teleological development of skill, leading to school, university education and success in the market, constitutes a defence of the medium – a way to refute claims of the medium's pointlessness and superficiality. When the kit was marketed in France, it was these pedagogic ideals that were emphasized.

Paint-by-number enticed the consumer through a simple promise: that he or she would be able to produce something that looked good hung up on the wall. Yet in the course of mimicking the labour of the artist in this miniaturized, constrained form, the consumer became familiar with painterly surface intervention, which had significant consequences for both the person engaged in such activity and wider artistic production. As Peter Skolnik observed, although the ability to purchase fine art remained difficult, 'now anyone could come home with a genuine DIY-ketchup-bottle-squirt-paint-cardboard creation'. And anything became art in the 'happening'.<sup>13</sup> Empowered through the interaction with the physicality (or craft) of artistic production, the paint-by-number practitioner has more ammunition to counter the aesthetic expectations of cultural elites and confuses established hierarchies of taste. For example, the businessman who boasts of his artistic success and empowerment through paint-by-number even though he is completely aware of the presumed 'philistinism' associated with the medium.<sup>14</sup> It is no surprise then that the democratic potential of the paint-by-number was described as an 'affront to elitism', as O'Donoghue states: its marginalization a symptom of an upper middle-class strategy to 'rough up the legitimate aspiration of middle to lower-class hobbyists'.<sup>15</sup>

### APPLYING THE OUTERMOST LAYER

Hostile critical reception often overlooked the material depth of the paint-by-number surface, associating its flatness with processes of mass printing. As Elizabeth Moeller Geiken of the Davenport Municipal Art Museum stated: 'Those numbered paintings evade artistic development completely ... A person might as well stamp a pattern on a canvas and call it their own piece of work.'<sup>16</sup> Geiken's association between paint-by-number and mechanical processes suggests equivalence between stamping and painting, a parity that is not manifest in practice because each kit was completed by hand. Yet the association with mass production is hard to avoid. Even the sympathetic O'Donoghue described paint-by-number as 'assembly-line French Impressionism' in his effort to ally its mechanical look with the artistic movements that brought painting into the industrial age.<sup>17</sup> I accept O'Donoghue's claim that paint-by-number effectively exposes modern realities of artistic production, but these realities are different from the classic view of assembly-line manufacture he sets out. Paint-by-number is not akin to Walter Benjamin's definition of mechanical reproduction (as defined by printing and photography), but closer to manual reproduction.<sup>18</sup> With the help of a readymade base, the individual can complete or modify the outermost surface layer and

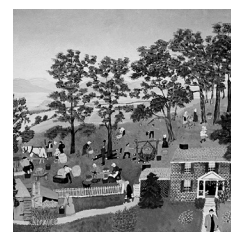
of Objects (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co, 1964), p. 449.



- 9 David Smith explains how for amateurs in the 1950s 'it was far more rewarding to imitate Norman Rockwell than Jackson Pollock'. David Smith, *Money For Art: The Tangled Web of Art and Politics in American Democracy* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008), p. 44.



- 10 O'Donoghue, 'Paint-by-Number', p. 172. Marling, *As Seen on TV*, p. 66.
- 11 Carol Belland, 'Post-a-Reminiscence' (15 May 2001). See other contributors to the Smithsonian's 'Post-a-Reminiscence' blog on the website set up to accompany William Bird's 2001–2 show, *By the Numbers: Accounting for Taste in the 1950s* for more tales of encounters with the kit. Shirley Bumbalough (14 June 2001), Barbara (22 April 2002), Carol W. Elliott (7 April 2001), Loren Blakeslee (23 April 2001), Reatha Wilkins (19 February 2002), and Betsy Holzgraf (24 August 2001).



- 12 Ibid. 17, (30 April 2001).
- 13 Peter Skolnik, *Fads: America's Craze, Fevers and Fancies, from the 1890s to the 1970s* (New York: Crowell, 1978), pp. 160–1.
- 14 Ibid. 17, (16 February 2005).
- 15 Bird, *Paint by Number*, p. 17.
- 16 'Art World Battles over Numbers Racket' *Sunday Democrat and Times* (28 March 1954).
- 17 O'Donoghue, 'Paint-by-Number', p. 172.
- 18 Walter Benjamin's definition of manual reproduction that he chiefly associates with forgery, is distinguished from processes of technical reproduction (photography and film). Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Walter Benjamin, Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), p. 214.
- 19 Robbins describes the process as 'a painstakingly arduous task'. Robbins, *Whatever Happened*, pp. 48–50.
- 20 Robbins recalls Willie's 'Finger system' that involved 'smooshing' together different colours of wet paint to achieve comparable colours to Robbins's samples. For more on the production process of early paint-by-number see Dan Robbins, chapter five, 'Getting



participate in, rather than be alienated by, mass production and homogeneity.

Geiken's claim of the paint-by-number's mechanistic nature can be contested from the point of view of its early commercial production, when manufacturing processes were particularly haphazard. The success of Palmer Paints relied on the ingenuity of the both the company boss, Max Klein, and the employees, including the young designer Dan Robbins, who first mooted the idea of making paint-by-number kits. Robbins describes the laborious process of making the first paint-by-number kit, which depended not on mechanical reproduction but on an arduous process that included making preliminary sketches, painting the subject from a limited range of paints, tracing its outline and numbering it on clear film, and finally testing the colour combinations on canvas.<sup>19</sup> Paints were mixed using a combination of shop floor science and human judgement. The first paint capsules were made out of plastic pill capsules and to produce the kits in larger quantities Klein invented a 'Rube Goldberg paint filling machine' to fill them, an improvised device that depended on the dexterity of the female workers in the factory to operate it.<sup>20</sup> On one occasion, in the haste to secure a large order from the retailer Kresge, palettes for one kit, *The Fisherman*, were put in *The Bullfighter* kit and vice versa, leading to a wide recall and losses for the company.<sup>21</sup> In the early years, the production of paint-by-number initially depended on the ingenuity and perseverance of its producers and was far from being a smooth, efficiently produced product.

The risk involved in the early production of paint-by-number kits contradicts the argument that it was mass-produced art, what craft theorist David Pye characterized as the workmanship of certainty. Pye draws a distinction between 'risk' and 'certainty', clearest in his comparison between handwriting and printing: the latter process removes risks associated with the former through the preparation of jigs that ensure a predictable output each time. There are continued risks in printing, as Pye argues, but 'the N's will never look like the U's'.<sup>22</sup> The paint-by-number kit might accord with our ideas about the workmanship of certainty, ensuring a predictable outcome each time, as Geiken claimed, but clearly the paint-by-number's readymade outline image, prepared paints and paintbrush constituted a permeable jig that is weak in its attempt to impose certainty. The individual who adds the final layer is free to contravene the kit's outline, which is only ever a loose suggestion.

Many of the paint-by-number practitioners of the 1950s did follow their own rules and William Bird suggests that it is the attitude to 'going over the lines' that marks the moment when amateur hobbyist becomes artist: 'The real art began at the moment the hobbyist ignored outlines to blend adjacent colours, added or dropped detail, or elaborated upon a theme.'<sup>23</sup> Raetha Wilkins was among the many paint-by-number painters who disobeyed the rules. Ain the 1950s: she was so despondent at the prospect of producing the equine subject as specified by the instructions that she decided to paint her own composition in the same 'horse colours'.<sup>24</sup> Bird describes such rebelliousness as the moment when 'real art began', conforming to longstanding codes of aesthetic judgement that prioritize autonomous decision-making as a barometer for creativity.

However, even if the rules are strictly adhered to, each paint-by-number cannot fail to be a unique copy due to the inherent idiosyncrasy of the hand. This claim

is substantiated by analysis of identical paint-by-number canvases. Two paint-by-number paintings of the same 1969 Craft Master kit *Old Sadface* demonstrate the diversity that arises even if individuals follow exactly the same rules. There is no attempt in these paintings to 'go over the lines', to obviously rebel against the constraints of the kit. Nevertheless, variety emerges: the colours are mixed differently, they are put into different places, and the upturned smile suggests different degrees of sadness. On perusing Trey Speegle's collection of paint-by-number in his Brooklyn house, art critic Lawrence Rinder also commented on the inherent uniqueness of each paint-by-number image: 'One version of the classic, full length portrait *Pinkie* possesses all the elegance and allure of Sir Thomas Lawrence's original, while in another, the poor maiden's lipstick looks as if it had been applied with an automobile buffer.'<sup>25</sup>

Instead of suppressing individuality, paint-by-number actually accentuates difference between one maker and the next. Signature is a self-conscious act of ownership, a *poncif* in imitation of conventions of artistic authorship as referred to earlier, an example of a person attempting to wrest authorial control from all the labour that took place underneath the outermost layer. We could stop at the conclusion that these marks merely reflect the behaviour of the creative capitalist consumer taking charge of his or her own 'sentence completion', as Dichter stated, an example of mass individualization. Yet the completed paint-by-number painting cannot help but reveal the labour of other authors, due to its fragmented quality, its reduction of painting into bite-size chunks, and its specific materiality. Signature is not only an act of personal authorship, it is the outermost surface layer of a complex readymade object – sharing the same qualities of Duchamp's own act of hastily marked authorship in *Fountain* (1917), albeit in a less self-conscious manner.

#### AMATEUR SPACE AND EVERYDAY LIFE

There is a dichotomous tradition in modern Western thought of dividing space between the phenomenological-social – the realm of the sensual, experienced and lived – and the conceptual-mental – where humans are able to abstract their ideas into realms that cannot be directly perceived. Each side of this dichotomy maps on to further stereotypical oppositions: the conceptual is male, public, rational and scientific; the phenomenological is female, private, irrational, poetic and closer to the everyday. Henri Lefebvre is one twentieth-century thinker who takes these bifurcations as the starting point of his attempt to construct a theory of social space that challenges the assumption of an 'abyss between the abstract mental sphere on the one side and the physical and social spheres on the other'.<sup>26</sup> For example, Lefebvre critiques the language and practice of town planning for the way it reduces the full complexity of social space to rational description through the use of scientific methodologies that create an extra-ideological space ('in an admirably unconscious manner'<sup>27</sup>). For Lefebvre this scientific interpretive framework offers only one potential 'reading' of a space among many others.

Lefebvre's sensitivity to plural readings of space was linked to his lifelong project to understand and conceptualize everyday life. Everyday life – the habitual, the ordinary, the mundane – contains within it registers of space entirely different from scientific measurement of the rationalization of bureaucracy. Whether poetic, psychological, sensual or irrational, everyday life is complex and highlights how space can be understood in

Ready', and chapter seven, 'First Test Run', in *Whatever Happened*, pp. 35–51 and 67–75.

*Dan Robbins*

21 Ibid., pp. 78–9.

22 David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* in Glenn Adamson (ed.) *The Craft Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), p. 342.

23 Bird, *Paint by Number*, p. 17.

24 Reatha Wilkins, 'Post-a-Reminiscence' (19 February 2002). For similar stories see Linda Beason (4 June 2001) and Kathryn L. Bergstrom (10 April 2001).



25 Lawrence Rinder, Introduction to 'Paint-by-Number' Nest: a Quarterly of Interiors (Spring 2001), p. 169.

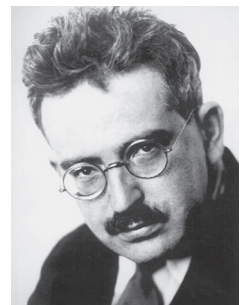


26 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* trans. by David Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), p. 6.

27 Ibid., p. 7.

28 Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 32.

29 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 517–21 and 568.



30 Joe Moran, *Reading the Everyday* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 12–13. See also Joe Moran, *Queuing For Beginners: The Story of Daily Life From Breakfast to Bedtime* (London: Profile, 2007).

31 Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, p. 21.

32 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Oregon: Beacon Press, 1994), xxxvii.

33 Ibid., p. 67, and see p. 81 for a description of boxes as reflecting a need for secrecy.

34 Freud's approach in the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* was to identify the common mundane slips, mistakes and forgetfulness of habitual human

many different ways beyond the rational. Lefebvre was not alone in this intellectual pursuit: Michel de Certeau, Sigmund Freud and Gaston Bachelard can all be grouped as theorists of the everyday that were sensitive to the alternative readings of space. In an effort to elucidate a theory of amateur space, this particular inter-disciplinary intellectual tradition proves invaluable.

The study of everyday life offers a departure from the meta-narratives common to the humanities and social sciences that often reduce multifarious experiences into recognizable social movements, canonical lineage or major events. Writing privileges the 'imaginative fiction' of everyday life,<sup>28</sup> the unexpected and the ignored, like Walter Benjamin's commentary on Parisian street names and gas lights in the *Passages des Panoramas* in the *Arcades Project*,<sup>29</sup> or, more recently, Joe Moran's study of how the British take breakfast, queue or experience office architecture.<sup>30</sup> Yet in creating a theory of amateur space, everyday life is not primarily useful for alerting us to the richness of ordinary experience. Instead, the sub-discipline provides solutions to the methodological challenge of how to write about the everyday. To throw light on the trivial, mundane, ignored and overlooked elements of everyday life requires a distinctive methodological approach. As cultural theorist Ben Highmore notes: 'the everyday might be more productively grasped if the propriety of discourses is refused'.<sup>31</sup>

Studies of everyday life face a dilemma. There is a tendency to position or describe the everyday within the humanities or social sciences as an 'object', making claims for it under the banner of 'gender', 'race', 'the domestic' or 'nation'. But by creating such narratives the very 'everydayness' of the subject is lost. The everyday, as a concept, offers its advocates the chance to bypass existing realms of discourse, but with the significant difficulty of not surrendering to the 'propriety of discourses' as Highmore states. Amateur space needs to be studied with the same sensitivity as everyday life. We cannot just describe amateur space and expect its full richness to be revealed; the goal is to develop a sensitive theory that encapsulates its essence.

The space of everyday life, like amateur space, is like old, dried paper that threatens to fragment as soon as it is touched. So what can be learnt from how established thinkers conceptualized this sensitive terrain, and in particular the methodologies they have used to study it? Gaston Bachelard's methodology involved abandoning scientific and rational analysis altogether in his famous 1958 work, *The Poetics of Space*. Bachelard advocates a geographic psychology that invests the concept of the home and its spaces with poetic potential: 'You don't live in houses positively but with all the partiality of the imagination'.<sup>32</sup> Bachelard constructs a philosophy of poetry that suggests coherence between the psyche of the human mind and the home. In the context of amateur space, which often (but not exclusively) overlaps domestic space, his work could be deployed to highlight the poetic power of amateur making: he infuses cleaning and waxing with poetic quality and talks of boxes as inherently signalling the 'need for secrecy'.<sup>33</sup> As an emancipatory framework that attributes poetry to domestic space, Bachelard draws attention to forgotten acts of the everyday; a research methodology that is particularly useful when empirical information is scarce.

Bachelard's work also references Sigmund Freud, who thinks about the everyday that lurks and murmurs underneath the civilized veneer.<sup>34</sup> Highmore, with reference to Freud, applies psychoanalytic models to the everyday: the unconscious, like the everyday, exists behind dominant discourses and derives from concrete

experience and is not 'made up'.<sup>35</sup> However, drawing a parallel between Freud's cryptology of dreams and the everyday results in countless possible narratives, which although creative, disturbing or beautiful, are overly elemental and do not reflect the totality of everyday life. In the case of Bachelard, is the happy household always a 'flourishing nest', is the wardrobe a 'centre of order', do locks always conceal something hidden? The poetical is present in the everyday but studying the rhetoric of the daydream is not enough to establish a comprehensive concept of amateur space. Each poetic image, as Bachelard admits, suggests no cultural past or future. To search for space purely in the poetic or in the literary text, Lefebvre states that you will 'find it everywhere, and in every guise, enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about'.<sup>36</sup>

Poetic articulations of space are valuable but are only part of the way towards an effective theory of amateur space. In addition, we need to pay attention to what Lefebvre terms the 'practico-social realm',<sup>37</sup> the socio-economic conditions that surround poetics, requisite infrastructure and, most importantly, how language and poetics are inextricable from production and materiality.

Like Lefebvre, De Certeau attempts to grasp the 'unreadable' of the everyday that forever eludes 'analysis or interpretation', and both draw attention to direct forms of practice.<sup>38</sup> De Certeau uses examples from everyday phenomenological experience; what he describes as strategies and tactics. The former is an expression of a definitive power structure, the latter constitutes the 'art of the weak', as epitomized by De Certeau's well-known phrase *la perruque*, the idea of working within work, such as 'a cabinetmaker's "borrowing" a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room'.<sup>39</sup> De Certeau's examples of 'antidiscipline' could feasibly be an example in Lefebvre's work as a space of everyday resistance, but De Certeau imbues such activity with a sense of conscious, overt political resistance: "putting one over" the established order on its home ground".<sup>40</sup> For De Certeau *la perruque* develops into a polemic, an underground network of diversionary practice against the bosses, which overlooks the closer links between the everyday and other less antagonistic experiences such as compliance (for example, borrowing the lathe after asking the boss). Moreover, his focus on tactics of resistance is primarily read through 'an inventive language that will register the inventiveness of the everyday'.<sup>41</sup> Again, as with Bachelard, rhetorical articulation of everyday experience is given primacy over its practice in a social and material world.

Lefebvre's argument that space is produced is a significant point of departure from other theorists of the everyday and is critical when constructing a theory of amateur space. For Lefebvre it was not language, logic or even the Hegelian notion of the spirit of history that amounted to a universal, abstract code lying behind all experience, but instead 'production' and 'the act of producing'.<sup>42</sup> Space had been perceived and conceived by thinkers for centuries, but Lefebvre, building on the ideas of Karl Marx, insisted that space 'cannot be detached from the material preconditions of individual and collective activity... whether the aim is to move a rock, to hunt game, or to make a simple or complex object'.<sup>43</sup>

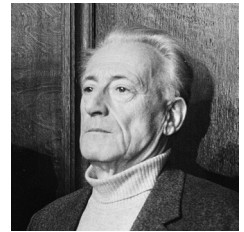
Amateur space possesses this illusive quality. It facilitates moments of individual production free of the constraints associated with capitalist production, yet it entirely depends on these systems for its survival. In this respect it shares the characteristics

behaviour that unearth layers of meaning underneath civilization's veil. Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* trans. by Anthea Bell (London: Penguin, 2002).

- 35 Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, p. 171.



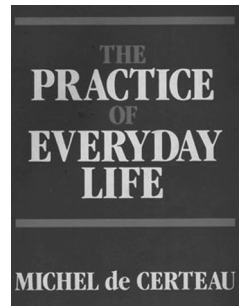
- 36 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 14.



- 37 Ibid., p. 17.

- 38 Moran, *Reading the Everyday*, p. 23.

- 39 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 25.



- 40 Ibid., p. 26.

- 41 Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, pp. 153-4.



- 42 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 15.

- 43 Ibid., p. 71.

- 44 Ibid., p. 354.

- 45 Ibid., p. 385.

- 46 Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*, p. 122.

- 47 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production* trans. by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), p. 209.



of Lefebvre's notion of 'differential space', the so-called 'enemy within its gates',<sup>44</sup> which is not an alternative to homogenous, techno-bureaucratic abstract space that Lefebvre identifies with state power, nor a mirror image of conventional modes of its production, but a space that tangentially relates to its norms. Lefebvre's examples include local resistance to central authorities, but primarily cluster around the act of leisure. He endows leisure with quasi-revolutionary potential, stating: 'The space of leisure *tends* – but is no more than a tendency, a tension, a transgression of users in search of a way forward – to surmount divisions: the divisions between the social and the mental, the divisions between sensory and intellectual, and also the divisions between the everyday and the out-of-the ordinary (festival).'<sup>45</sup> Lefebvre was aware of the inherent susceptibility of leisure to succumb to capitalist relationships of production – exemplified by package holidays, the commercialization of camping or the standardization of sport. However, lazing on a beach, organizing a carnival or manning the cake stall are examples of the diverse, self-directed activities that occupy the slack space of leisure, which have the potential to transgress conventions of production. Leisure is not openly revolutionary – it is managed and usually organized under the auspices of bourgeois power – but Lefebvre placed 'some hope' in the pluralism it facilitated.<sup>46</sup>

Discussion of Lefebvre's conceptualization of 'differential' space provides a way of understanding amateur space within everyday life – a means, drawn from everyday life, of bringing unity to that which abstract space partitions and breaks up. However, Lefebvre stops short of analysing the craft practices that take place within the slack space of leisure. Later on in the chapter I will recall the histories of various productive leisure-time activities, namely suburban chicken keeping, but for now it is important to establish a definition of amateur labour and see how it shares the 'differential' characteristics Lefebvre ascribed to his most radical of spatial categories.

## AMATEUR LABOUR

Amateur labour constitutes a productive inhabitation of Lefebvre's notion of differential space. It can be primarily characterized within Marxist theory by its 'non-necessity', corresponding with the notion of 'surplus labour': labour-power that produces more than is needed for basic subsistence 'which, for the capitalist, has all the charms of a creation out of nothing'.<sup>47</sup> Surplus labour existed in pre-modern societies but the division of labour that both Karl Marx and Adam Smith described exponentially increased the productivity of labour-power from the late eighteenth century onwards.<sup>48</sup> Marx and many of his followers have studied surplus labour extensively, interested in how it is channelled to ever more sophisticated means of capital accumulation, while labourers themselves are kept distant from the means of production.<sup>49</sup> This narrative is well known. However, less has been said about how excess productivity is channelled through amateur labour, certainly within Marxist theory at least.

Marx makes very few direct references to amateur labour. He used the word 'amateur' in an 1871 letter to New York socialist Friedrich Bolte to describe and condemn various socialist sects that were threatening the unity of the International, the body set up in 1864 to consolidate left-wing groups in a worldwide working class movement. Marx labelled these groups

as 'amateur experiments', as well as denouncing the Russian libertarian intellectual Mikhail Bakunin who opposed Marx's authoritarian political opinions, as 'a man devoid of theoretical knowledge'.<sup>50</sup> Marx aligned the word 'amateur' with disorganized, ramshackle political organization, using the term pejoratively and in contrast to his own professionalized doctrine, backed up by his scientific method of historical materialism. Marx's use of the word 'amateur' seems to confirm its unimportance in his wider theories of human labour – a distraction from the macro-level socio-economic convulsions of different classes and the destiny of world history.

Amateur labour did become a concern for twentieth-century Marxist scholarship, even if it was relegated to the sidelines. Scholars of the Frankfurt School subjected popular culture, art and many other realms of cultural experience to Marxist analysis, and on occasion this raised the spectre of amateur labour, albeit in a roundabout, indirect way. The negative characterization of amateur labour was most clear and comprehensive in Hannah Arendt's theories of work, as outlined in her book *The Human Condition* of 1958, a work that critiqued Marx's study of labour, work and productivity. Central to her theories of labour is the division between two categories of work: the *animale laborans* who is occupied with the endless satiation of everyday needs, or the labour of the body, and the *homo faber* the 'fabricator of the world' whose ideals are 'permanence, stability, and durability'.<sup>51</sup> It is no surprise that Arendt classified amateur labour, or 'hobbies' within the former category, claiming: 'The spare time of the *animale laborans* is never spent in anything but consumption, and the more time left to him, the greedier and more craving his appetites. That these appetites become more sophisticated, so that this consumption is no longer restricted to necessities but, on the contrary, mainly concentrates on the superfluities of life.'<sup>52</sup>

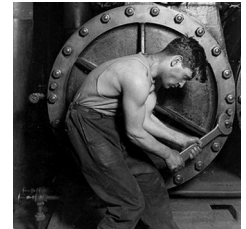
This characterization of the *animale laborans* is very different from the idealism of Marx expressed in *The German Ideology* whereby individuals freed from the necessity to work voluntarily opt to fish in the afternoon and criticize after dinner.<sup>53</sup> It is reflective of Arendt's belief that she was living in a 'labourer's society' where man was in thrall to the 'theoretical glorification of labour', unable to discern the difference between work – allied to the *homo faber* – and working – the biological repetition of the *animale laborans*. For Arendt, the *homo faber* added 'new objects to the human artifice', while the *animale laborans* 'produces objects only incidentally and is primarily concerned with the means of its own reproduction'.<sup>54</sup> Objects that result from amateur labour could not be considered genuine additions to the human artifice according to her schema, but were at best incidental, the unimportant detritus of an individual's cycle of perpetual consumption and production.<sup>55</sup>

Arendt's pejorative understanding of amateur labour within scholarly discourse is further exacerbated by an inter-connected intellectual discourse that has built up around the adulation of the *homo faber*. This positive estimation of the skilled maker who makes genuine additions to the human artifice has its roots in the Arts and Crafts romanticism of John Ruskin and William Morris. Ruskin's prescriptions on how to combat the degradation of work in the nineteenth century anticipate Arendt's later bifurcation between *animale laborans* and *homo faber*. Ruskin pronounced in *The Nature of the Gothic*: 'never' encourage manufacture beyond what

- 48 The division of labour is explained through the example of pin manufacture in Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London: Penguin, 1970), pp. 109–10.



- 49 Marx, *Capital*, p. 181.
- 50 Karl Marx, 'Marx to Friedrich Bolte in New York' (23 November 1871) trans. by Donna Torr in Marx and Engels Correspondence (International Publishers, 1968), [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/letters/71\\_11\\_23.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/letters/71_11_23.htm) (accessed 9 September 2011).
- 51 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 126.



- 52 Ibid., p. 133.
- 53 Karl Marx, 'The German Ideology' from Karl Marx: Selected Writings David McLellan (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 185.
- 54 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 88.



- 55 Ibid., pp. 117–18. See also Thorstein Veblen, *Conspicuous Consumption* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 22.
- 56 John Ruskin, *The Nature of the Gothic* (London: George Allen, 1892), p. 15.
- 57 Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing', originally delivered as a lecture to the Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste [1950] in Glenn Adamson (ed.) *The Craft Reader* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2010), p. 406.
- 58 Bernard Leach, *The Potter's Book* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), chapter one, 'Towards a Standard', pp. 1–27.
- 59 Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), p. 178.
- 60 George Osborne, '2011 Budget: Britain is open for business', <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2011-budget-britain-open-for-business> (accessed 31 May 2014).
- 61 Talia Schaffer, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft and Nineteenth Century Fiction* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 5. Jennifer Harris, *William Morris Revisited: Questioning the Legacy* (London: Crafts Council, 1996), p. 54.





*The Birches.* Circa. 1965





*The Birches*. Circa. 1965

is necessary, copy (except for the purposes of education), or 'demand an exact finish for its own sake'<sup>56</sup> – three stipulations that amateur labour often falls short of. In the twentieth century the veneration of the *homo faber* is further cemented: from Martin Heidegger's philosophy of 'thingness' that endows the maker with the power to 'bring forth' material presence<sup>57</sup> and Bernard Leach's veneration of the studio potter as the bearer of centuries-old skill, cultural tradition and tacit knowledge,<sup>58</sup> to Richard Sennett's recent praise of the *homo faber* (in his widely read book, *The Craftsman*) who combines head and hand to respectfully treat materials in the world.<sup>59</sup> The skilled maker is seen to possess all the characteristics that are lacking in fast-paced modern capitalist production: the consideration of material, appropriate and respectful use of tools, and working within a comfortable environment. The term has political clout too, the British Chancellor George Osborne recently invoking the values of the *homo faber* in his 2011 budget, when he expressed a desire to see Britain 'carried aloft by the march of the makers'.<sup>60</sup>

This elevation of the ideals of the *homo faber* that inherently marginalizes the imperfect configurations of amateur labour is largely dependent upon object analysis: whether the result of labour is considered an authentic addition to the material world or not. The celebration of the *homo faber* in dominant cultural discourse has served to marginalize amateur labour, ever since the nineteenth century when technologies of artistic supply broadened the base of amateur craft practice. Talia Schaffer and Jennifer Harris have written on the gendered dimension of this exclusion in the context of the late-nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts: William Morris and his circle did not much appreciate the dilution of their socialist message and hopes for craftsmanship when it spread to the messy realm of part-time, domestic, handicraft undertaken by women who posed a 'threat' to their 'fragile artistic insurgency'.<sup>61</sup> The seemingly innocuous results of amateur labour – whether it is nineteenth-century imitation coral made in wax (the example that starts Schaffer's book on domestic handicraft, *Novel Craft*), the perfect lasagne or a self-built spice rack – seem trivial when compared with other forms of production. Yet the differential qualities of amateur space are elucidated in their full richness when analysis focuses not on the final object but on the process of making. This is what has been overlooked.

I contest this marginalization of amateur space. I argue that the cyclical repetition of Arendt's *animale laborans* does have the potential to be productive and add to the human artifice: scholars have hitherto simply failed to register the non-conventional, differential forms of productivity and ways of working that take place. As Lefebvre stated, we might bemoan the 'poverty of vocabulary and a clumsiness of expression' that results from people's inhabitation of everyday life, but that does not preclude 'the relevance of the testimony'.<sup>62</sup> We must be alert to the characteristics of amateur labour – its idiosyncrasy, its uniqueness and how it stretches conventional notions of work, even if the final product contravenes notions of quality or seems unimportant. It is useful to heed the words of mid-twentieth-century Danish artist Henry Heerup, who wrote in 1944 as a part of his defence of folk expression in his country (anything from cake decoration to junk models): 'One Must Refrain From Judging Too Hard This Common Love of Labor'.<sup>63</sup>

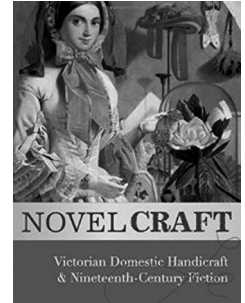
Framing amateur labour as differential helps us to move away from Arendt's clear-cut distinction between

the purity of the *homo faber* and the slavery of the *animale laborans*.<sup>64</sup> Amateur labour is certainly consumptive and dependent, yet crucially provides an opportunity for the unleashing of the *homo faber*, even if such interactions lack the purity that Ruskin, Arendt and Sennett would preserve for direct, 'honest' engagement with raw material. Fascinating configurations of labour result: amateur space is not just the clear opposite of 'professional' space, characterized by regularized and standardized systems of organization, there is a greater sense of 'mixture'.<sup>65</sup> Amateur space replicates and refracts these forms of organization in unexpected and unusual ways, and mimics and stretches its aesthetic codes. As shown throughout the chapter, the efficiency, portability, profitability and innovation of voluntarily undertaken labour feed into the structuring of professional spaces and broader socio-cultural notions of work. The entrenched polarity between amateur and professional space, dating from the early nineteenth century onwards, has served to mask these strong affiliations in everyday, practised reality.

One of the most striking manifestations of this mixture is the so-called professional-amateur hybrid. The term has been conceptualized in a myriad of different ways, but perhaps Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller's 'Pro-Am' is the most well-known recent characterization, describing in their publication *The Pro-Am Revolution* (2004) 'innovative, committed and networked amateurs working to professional standards'.<sup>66</sup> Leadbeater and Miller argue that Pro-Ams undertake activities for the love of it but with a 'professional standard' in mind, and they invest a great deal of power in this categorization, stating that Pro-Ams can destabilize 'large hierarchical organisations with professionals at the top' through 'distributed organisational models that will be innovative, adaptive and low-cost'.<sup>67</sup> Leadbeater and Miller do not critique the parameters of their categorization, or question how they infuse amateur space with a goal-orientated, competitive model of productivity. They do not emphasize the differential quality of amateur practice. Going back to an earlier moment of professional amateurism in the late nineteenth century when individuals were encouraged to engage in various tasks of home maintenance and construction, provides a compelling evidence of the differential status of amateur space: how it replicated and reified dominant notions of an emerging Victorian ethos of productive, honourable work, while offering various forms of departure from it.

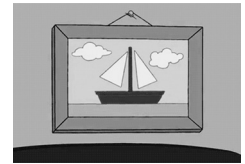
62 Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* vol. 3 trans. by John Moore (London: Verso, 2008), p. 21.

63 Henry Heerup, 'All Art Ought to be Folkelig' *Helhesten* 2 (5–6) trans. by Kristina Rapacki in *Primary Text* feature of *The Journal of Modern Craft* 7:2 (July 2014), p. 209.



64 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 7.

65 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's model mixture between 'smooth' and 'striated' space provides a conceptual precedent for the dialectical interaction amateur space and other spaces of everyday life. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 474–5.



66 Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller, *The Pro-Am Revolution: How Enthusiasts are Changing our Society* (Demos, 2004), p. 9, <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/proamrevolutionfinal.pdf> (accessed 13 June 2014).



67 Ibid., p. 12.





*I REMEMBERED  
LEONARDO*





## A DIVERSIONARY PRACTICE: "LA PERRUQUE"

– Michel de Certeau

The possibility is opened up of analyzing the immense field of an "art of practice" differing from the models that (in theory) reign from top to bottom in a culture certified by education, models that all postulate the constitution of a space of their own (a scientific space or a blank page to be written on), independent of speakers and circumstances, in which they can construct a system based on rules ensuring the system's production, repetition, and verification.

Take, for example, what in France is called *la perruque*, "the wig". *La perruque* is the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer. It differs from pilfering in that nothing of material value is stolen. It differs from absenteeism in that the worker is officially on the job. *La perruque* may be as simple a matter as a secretary's writing a love letter on "company time" or as complex as a cabinetmaker's "borrowing" a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room. Accused of stealing or turning material to his own ends and using the machines for his own profit, the worker who indulges in *la perruque* actually diverts time (not goods, since he uses only scraps) from the factory for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed towards profit.

In the very place where the machine he must serve reigns supreme, he cunningly takes pleasure in finding a way to create gratuitous products whose sole purpose is to signify his own capabilities through his work and to confirm his solidarity with other workers or his family through spending his time in this way. With the complicity of other workers (who thus defeat the competition the factory tries to install among them), he succeeds in "putting one over" on the established order on its home ground. Far from being a regression toward a mode of production organized around artisans or individuals, *la perruque* reintroduces "popular" techniques of other times and other places into the industrial space (that is, into the Present order).

Under different names in different countries, *la perruque* is infiltrating itself everywhere and becoming more and more common, in spite of measures taken to repress or conceal it. Sly as a fox and twice as quick: there are countless ways of "making do." From this point of view, the dividing line no longer falls between work and leisure. These two areas of activity flow together. They repeat and reinforce each other. A distinction is required other than the one that distributes behaviors according to their place (of work or leisure) and qualifies them thus by the fact that they are located on one or another square of the social checkerboard in the office,

in the workshop, or at the movies. There are differences of another type. They refer to the modalities of action, to the formalities of practices. They traverse the frontiers dividing time, place, and type of action into one part assigned for work and another for leisure. For example, *la perruque* grafts itself onto the system of the industrial assembly line (its counterpoint, in the same place), as a variant of the activity which, outside the factory (in another place), takes the form of bricolage, although they remain dependent upon the possibilities offered by circumstances, these transverse tactics do not obey the law of the place, for they are not defined or identified by it. But what distinguishes them at the same time concerns the types of operations and the role of spaces: strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces, when those operations take place, whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert these spaces.

Just as in literature one differentiates "styles" or ways of writing, one can distinguish "ways of operating" – ways of walking, reading, producing, speaking, etc. These "ways of operating" are similar to "instructions for use," and they create a certain play in the machine through a stratification of different and interfering kinds of functioning.

With variations, practices analogous to *la perruque* are proliferating in the most ordered spheres of modern life (governmental and commercial offices as well as in factories). Not only workshops and offices, but also museums and learned journals penalize such practices or ignore them. The resurgence of "popular" practices within industrial and scientific modernity indicates the paths that might be taken by a transformation of the object of our study and the place from which we study it. The operational models of popular culture cannot be confined to the past, the countryside, or primitive peoples. They exist in the heart of the strongholds of the contemporary economy.

Though elsewhere it is exploited by a dominant power or simply denied by an ideological discourse, here order is tricked by an art. Into the institution to be served are thus insinuated styles of social exchange, technical invention, and moral resistance, that is, an economy of the "gift" (generosities for which one expects a return), an esthetics of "tricks" (artists' operations) and an ethics of tenacity (countless ways of refusing to accord the established order the status of a law, a meaning, or a fatality).

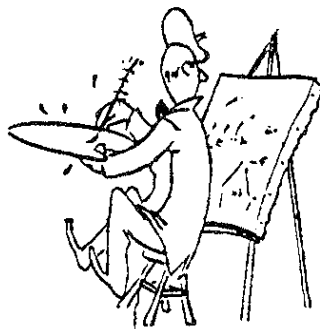
*La perruque*, relative to our economy, derives and compensates for it, even though it is illegal and (from this point of view) marginal. The same pathway allows investigations to take up a position that is no longer defined only by an acquired power and an observational knowledge, with the addition of a pinch of nostalgia. Melancholy is not enough. Certainly, with respect to

the sort of writing that separates domains in the name of the division of labor and reveals class affiliations, it would be “fabulous” if, as in the stories of miracles, the groups that formerly gave us our masters and that are currently lodged in our corpus were to rise up and themselves mark their comings and goings in the texts that honor and bury them at the same time. This hope has disappeared, along with the beliefs which have long since vanished from our cities. There are no longer any ghosts who can remind the living of reciprocity. But in the order organized by the power of knowledge (ours), as in the order of the factories, a diversionary practice remains possible.

Once the images broadcast by television and the time spent in front of the TV set have been analyzed, it remains to be asked what the consumer makes of these images and during these hours. The thousands of people who buy a health magazine, the customers in a supermarket, the practitioners of urban space, the consumers of newspaper stories and legends - what do they make of what they “absorb,” receive, and pay for? What do they do with it? The enigma of the consumer-sphinx. His products are scattered in the graphs of televised, urbanistic, and commercial production. They are all the less visible because the networks framing them are becoming more and more tightly woven, flexible, and totalitarian. They are thus protean in form, blending in with their surroundings, and liable to disappear into the colonizing organizations whose products leave no room where the consumers

can mark their activity. The child still scrawls and daubs on his schoolbooks; even if he is punished for this crime, he has made a space for himself and signs his existence as an author on it. The television viewer cannot write anything on the screen of his set. He has been dislodged from the product; he plays no role in its apparition. He loses his author’s rights and becomes, or so it seems, a pure receiver, the mirror of a multiform and narcissistic actor. Pushed to the limit, he would be the image of appliances that no longer need him in order to produce themselves, a rationalized, expansionist, centralized, spectacular and clamorous production is confronted by an entirely different kind of production, called “consumption” and characterized by its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of the circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility, since it shows itself not in its own products (where would it place them?) but in an art of using those imposed on it. It is evidence, evidence which can only be fantastic and not scientific, of the disproportion between everyday tactics and a strategic elucidation. Of all the things everyone does, how much gets written down? Between the two, the image, the phantom of the expert but mute body, preserves the difference.

### *We Want Artists!*



This reader is part of *The Paint by Number Museum*, a project conceived by Émilie Ferrat and François Girard-Meunier in the context of the 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Brno Biennial’s OFF Program.

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p.3 Dan Robbins’s Signature. First Paint by Number Kit, *The Bullfighter*. “Tania”’s Signature as found on *Quarter Horse*. 1986.  
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p.5 Leisure society in the 1950s. Lewis Hine, *Power house mechanic working on steam pump*. 1920. Apple Factory in Chengdu, China. Circa 2000s.  
p.6-7 *The Birches*. Circa. 1965 I, II (close-up)  
p.8 Talia Schaffer, *Novel Craft*. 1996. Framed domestic painting from The Simpsons (“couch gag”). Amateur vs. Professional, stock image. <http://totalforextrading.com/pro-vs-amateur-forex-traders/>