

On value

Silvia Federici, Melanie Gilligan, Shawn(ta) Smith Cruz, Lise Soskolne / W.A.G.E., Marina Vishmidt

Talks & Discussions  
Saturday, October 3

Day session: 11am – 5pm  
Evening roundtable: 7pm

Artists Space Books & Talks  
55 Walker Street

\$5 Entrance Donation  
Members Free, Guaranteed Entry

Marina Vishmidt, Melanie Gilligan, Lise Soskolne, Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz and Silvia Federici will lead a discussion around the value relations of art production, and what kinds of (feminist) value-critical politics can create transversal connections between crises in the different spaces where we practice.

Departing from the challenges posed to value as it is reproduced in the spaces of art as in the political economy at large, we want to focus on how those challenges can and have been formulated through practices of collectivity, poetics, feminism, de-coloniality, technology and politics around race. The labor of reproduction and a non- or alter-reproductive futurity are close parameters here. Three main approaches to value will be

pursued: conceptual, economic and the living-deathly of identity categories.

A few potential questions we could try to consider in our thinking for the day and the panel could be:

- What are the categories of value, gender and labour doing in and for our politics?
- Thinking about how labour and value circulate in, across and beyond specific communities, questions around the reproductive commons, and how that can relate to 'speculative practices' of collectivity (Harney and Moten) and prefiguration on a restricted scale.
- Collectivity – how it is extended and how it is barred in the horizons of current social movements and in capitalist social relations, especially as mediated by technologies (and can we consider value as one such technology)?

Since the past week of the *WE (Not I)* program has presented discussion on collectivity from a feminist viewpoint, the question we would like to begin with is what, at present, are some of the most significant obstacles facing collectivity? Judging from the name of our event today, you would imagine that our answer might be that the answer to this question can be revealed through a closer a study of value. This may be an answer in part, however today we are presented with so many obstacles to the creation of truly collective political and social forms and a collectively decided future. Gender oppression is one of them. So are the many dimensions of racism. These have often been dealt with inadequately within the the feminist movement, along with class. How do those who are resistant to gender and racial oppression make places to live, to sustain and grow their work and communities while trying to fight for better conditions? In what ways does the need for a wage mediate our subject positions in capital? How are our abilities to get that wage made more or less possible based on race and gender, and how does the supposedly unprejudiced and tradition-dissolving agency of money actually end up maintaining and sharpening these oppressions? We'd like for once not to see value as an abstract category but expressed in the lived particulars of how people encounter its dynamics through the daily occurrences of exclusion and other violence propagated in these societies mediated by value.

The Wages for Housework movement teaches that bringing the often excluded edges of value production into the conversation on value can teach us a great deal about its operation in capitalism. This awareness is underscored today by the knowledge that under the present conditions of austerity, women overwhelmingly are the ones to take the brunt of this strain because it is precisely in the interstices of home and working life, cost-saving, and money-stretching that the daily reproduction of one's life and the lives of

others transforms subjects and takes its toll on them. Topics left out of a traditional Marxist consideration of value are important to our discussion on this panel: the ambiguously or intangibly unmeasurable areas of care work and affective labor are unavowed pillars of the present economy just as are the use of the prison system to control unemployed and racially profiled populations. In order for the system of capital accumulation to sustain itself more and more of the institutions and networks that reproduce social life are made to function to fit the needs of that accumulation. This event will be about mediating these larger systemic concerns through reflecting on our own practices in all the scales at which they unfold.

#### Structure of Day

11 – Intros, setting out themes of day

12.30 – Presentation by Aliza Shvarts on ideas around ‘radical sabotage’

1.30 – Lunch

2 – W.A.G.E./Lise Soskolne and Abigail Levine on values, bodies, wages: performance in the visual arts

3 – Melanie Gilligan on her recent work *The Common Sense* and collectivity in capitalism today

4 – Marina Vishmidt - some capsule summaries of the social reproduction debate in Marxist feminism then and now

5-7 – Break

7 – Roundtable with Silvia Federici, Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz, Lise Soskolne and Melanie Gilligan, facilitated by Marina Vishmidt

This event will culminate *We (Not I)*, a four-day program of discursive meetings, presentations, and events organized by Melissa Gordon and Marina Vishmidt that brings together a wide range of female artists, writers, curators and thinkers identifying with feminist practices to exchange and produce content addressing questions around the role of “we” in contemporary art practice, held at Artists Space between September 30 and October 3, 2015.

Artists Space would like to thank Thea Westreich Wagner and Ethan Wagner for their gracious support of *WE (Not I)* in New York

Silvia Federici is a New York-based scholar, teacher, and organiser. She is a professor emerita and teaching fellow at Hofstra University, where she previously worked as a social science professor following many years of teaching in Nigeria. Amongst her many roles, Federici co-founded the Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa and the International Feminist Collective. She has organised with the Wages for Housework campaign, and was involved with the Midnight Notes Collective. Federici's best known work, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, argues that primitive accumulation is a fundamental characteristic of capitalism.

Melanie Gilligan is an artist and writer based in New York and London. *The Common Sense*, Gilligan's latest episodic video work is a three-part project presented across multiple institutions. The final installment is presently on view at de Appel Arts Center, Amsterdam, following exhibitions at Casco Office for Art, Design and Theory in Utrecht and De Hallen Haarlem. Previous solo exhibitions include Chisenhale Gallery, London; Kolnischer Kunstverein, Cologne; Banff Centre, Banff; and Galerie Max Mayer, Dusseldorf. Gilligan's critical writing on art, politics and economics has appeared in publications such as *The Market* (Whitechapel), and *Immaterial Economies* (Fillip), as well as in journals and magazines including *Grey Room*, *Artforum*, *Texte zur Kunst*, and *Mute* magazine.

Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz is a separatist, zinester, archivist, writer, and black-dyke-participant of intentional, community-specific, collective spaces. A coordinator at the Lesbian Herstory Archives, and collective member of WOW Cafe Theater as producer of women of color theater, namely, Rivers of Honey, Shawn is Head of Reference (appointed as Assistant Professor) at the Graduate Center, CUNY. From (the people's republic of) Brooklyn, Shawn founded the Queer Housing Nacional List, and has since purchased a home designated for queer women of color (QWOC) with her wife in the Bronx. A board member of Fire & Ink, a national organization for LGBT writers of African descent, and founder of Lambey Press, independently publishing QWOC; Shawn is current collective editor of a special issue of *Sinister Wisdom: A Multicultural Lesbian Literary & Art Journal*: Honoring the Michigan Women's Music Festival.

Lise Soskolne is an artist living in New York and core organizer of Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), an activist organization focused on regulating the payment of artist fees by nonprofit art institutions. An organizer within W.A.G.E. since its founding in 2008 and its core organizer since 2012, she has also worked in nonprofit arts presenting and development in New York since 1998 at venues that have included Anthology Film Archives, Artists Space, Diapason Gallery for Sound, Meredith Monk/The House Foundation for the Arts, Participant Inc, and Roulette Intermedium. In 2007 she was hired to use artists to increase the property value of Industry City, a 6.5 million sq ft industrial complex on the South Brooklyn waterfront. There she founded and managed the arts component in its broader regeneration with the intention of establishing a new paradigm for industrial redevelopment that would not displace workers, artists, local residents or industry but would instead build a sustainable community of working artists in a context that integrated cultural and industrial production.

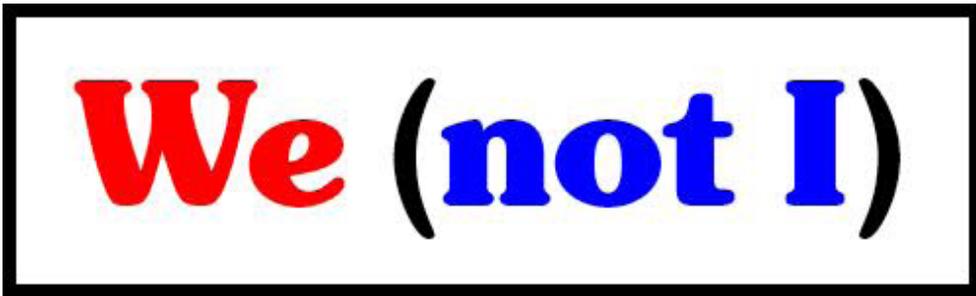
Marina Vishmidt is a London-based writer occupied mainly with questions around art, labour and value. She is the author of *Speculation as a Mode of Production* (Brill, forthcoming) and *A—Autonomy* (with Kerstin Stakemeier) (Textem and Mute, forthcoming). She also works regularly with Anthony Iles and with Melanie

Gilligan. She collaborates with artists and contributes to journals such as *Mute*, *Afterall*, *Texte zur Kunst*, and the *South Atlantic Quarterly*, as well as co-edited collections and catalogues, most recently *Anguish Language* (Archive Books, forthcoming). She is part of the Theory faculty at the Dutch Art Institute, a visiting lecturer at the University of Brighton, and has taught at the University of the Arts in Berlin, Central Saint Martins, and Goldsmiths.

Website: <http://artistsspace.org/programs/on-value>



Screenshot from *Financial Times* video



Kaisa Lassnaro  
*We (Not I)*, 2015