

Constitution, in order to open up *new perspectives for the European project*.<sup>15</sup> And second, Ars Industrialis has very precisely located itself among the production of philosophical discourse, the media, and European policy, particularly as it relates to communication technologies, pumping out position papers that are a twirl away from becoming policy briefs. In looking for ways to function in between various fields alone, in swelling the interstice, Ars Industrialis already resembles a think tank more than it does traditional academic alliances or political party formations.

Another relevant model here may be Urbanomic, a publisher and arts organization based in the United Kingdom and spearheaded by philosopher Robin Mackay, which generates a great deal of novel material at the intersection of current philosophy and post-conceptual art, while often reaching into numerous fields, including architecture, planning, astrophysics, war strategy, and material history. Its aims, as the organization articulates them, are “to promote research activities that address crucial issues in contemporary philosophy and science and their relation to contemporary art practice; to present to the public the results of that research, and an insight into the research process itself; and to engender interdisciplinary thinking and production.” Moreover:

Urbanomic proposes a renegotiation of the relationship between philosophy, science and art, on the model of an interrupted relay in which thinkers offer their conceptual resources for reflection on artists’ practice, and artists in turn develop and synthesise them in unforeseen ways, stimulating a productive and unpredictable cycle of “research and development” subordinated neither to the norms of academic thinking nor to the mainstream discourses of art criticism.<sup>16</sup>

The organization fulfills this mission by producing its own journal, *Collapse*, organizing exhibitions, commissioning projects, publishing monographs and roundtable transcripts, intervening in discussions in mainstream institutions and schools, and creating partnerships with like-minded enterprises. Although distant from public-policy discourse, generating for itself a different profile than that of Ars Industrialis, Urbanomic certainly seems much more dynamic in generating fresh cognitive space through an audacious fusing of various strands of new knowledge for artists and others.

These models can serve the heuristic function of helping us envision how we can set off from the premise that the think tank, in the technocratic-advocacy form it has assumed in the American imaginary and in U.S.

halls of power, is not impervious to reconfiguration. We can water the seed of non-identity lodged in it. We can predispose it to new outcomes. Slant it toward the mobilization of unexpected desires. Its methods and vocation can be thought anew, and there is no good reason that we can’t repurpose it to be sensitive to our need to regenerate a space of possibilities for critical art production so that the latter can relevantly address the conditions in which it is now embedded. This is ultimately a design problem: How do we take a stable form and repurpose it so that it can respond to needs it never thought it would address? How do we exfoliate its hidden potentials, stretch its capacities? How do we turn an existing resource into raw material so that it can generate the sort of structure (or infrastructure) that we need to respond to new circumstances, that allows us to recalibrate our thinking and upgrade our production so that it aligns with these new circumstances?

#### Notes

1. It is fair to remember here that alternative spaces suffered through the demoralizing Culture Wars of the 1980s and, along with the rest of the culture, exchanged the need to instigate radical gestures that fed the historical project of emancipation for a hosting of the fluffy multiculturalism—towed for a while, it’s true, by truly political engagements that sought to debunk dominant discourses and representations—and objects characterized by a perennial indeterminacy in their meaning and commitments, both underwritten by postmodern thinking.
2. Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 4.
3. Germano Celant and Ingrid Sischy, “Editorial,” *Artforum*, February 1982, 34.
4. It’s not, of course, that one can’t refer to and derive lessons from historical precedent. It’s that doing so needs to be mediated by a pragmatic drive propelled by this question: How is such precedent employed to generate structures and practices that are in consonance—as effective critical and negative instances—within the conditions in which they will be embedded? In light of this question and considering the changes that are happening at a global scale, from the changes in the real abstractions of capitalism to the new demands that climate change puts to us, it seems that the repetition often called for by these exercises in taking memory as an instrument of rupture has little to offer.
5. Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2014), 99.
6. *Ibid.*, 116.
7. Slavoj Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2012), 107.
8. Thomas Medvetz, *Think Tanks in America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 7.
9. Enrique Mendizabal, “Think Tanks in Latin America: What Are They and What Drives Them?” <http://onthinktanks.org/2013/01/28/think-tanks-in-latin-america-what-are-they-and-what-drives-them/>
10. Medvetz, *Think Tanks*, 7.
11. Thomas Medvetz, “Murky Power: ‘Think Tanks’ as Boundary Organizations,” in *Rethinking Power in Organizations, Institutions, and Markets* (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Volume 34), ed. David Courpasson, Damon Golsorkhi, and Jeffrey J. Sallaz (Bradford, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited), 129.
12. See Gil Eyal, “Spaces Between Fields,” [http://works.bepress.com/gil\\_eyal/2](http://works.bepress.com/gil_eyal/2)
13. Bernard Stiegler, *The Re-Enchantment of the World: The Value of Spirit Against Industrial Populism* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2014), 3. See also: <http://www.arsindustrialis.org/node/1472> and [http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia14/parrhesia14\\_stiegler.pdf](http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia14/parrhesia14_stiegler.pdf)
14. *Ibid.*, 7.
15. *Ibid.*, 8.
16. <http://www.urbanomic.com/about.php>

## After Grand Arts

### Iain Kerr

#### I. AFTER

Grand Arts has closed.

Normally closings are not things to celebrate. But I would like to activate a curiosity that is tone-deaf to all the usual forms of righteous anger and even thoughtful memorialization that accompany closings, and instead to celebrate Grand Arts’s most radical action: *closing*.

This is by no means an ironic claim. I would like to consider the possibility that Grand Arts has managed to do something few artists or Art institutions are willing to really consider: to be done with Art. Stop. End. Walk on, differently. Nietzsche said it best: We have lost the ability to defecate. Here, we see this ability return. It is something to celebrate and to think about.

In 2007, I had the privilege of beginning a two-year project at Grand Arts called *Deep Time Rapid Time*.<sup>1</sup> It was at this time when I first sensed that many of us involved in the arts—both at Grand Arts and elsewhere—were reconceptualizing the status of Art. Something was different. It was not the usual debate about expanding the definitions of Art (Art into life and so on); it was, ironically, the opposite: artists wishing to limit the expanding definition of Art. Artists wishing to be done with Art. There was an urgency to step outside of Art, not for the sake of shifting Art into an alliance with another existing discipline, but for the sake of scrapping the existing realm of the aesthetic. What was being reconsidered was not solely Art (as if it could still be thought of as a stand-alone endeavor) but also the entire project of Western metaphysics and all its neat dualisms: Nature + Culture, Subject + Object, Human + Non-Human, Fact + Value, Art + Science, and so forth. The pressing and unavoidable question that seemed to be on all of our minds was: If these interwoven logics, in which Art plays a critical role, are no longer justifiable, then are the procedures that comprise Art worth adhering to even as everything else is being critically rethought? Can we really be “after Nature” and “after Culture” but not “after Art”? Giving Art a free pass no longer seemed viable or interesting.<sup>2</sup>

Now, I understand that the closing of an art institution and being done with Art should logically be considered two very distinct things. But let’s try a more speculative path by experimentally fusing (or confusing) *closing* and *ending*. What would it mean, in this case, to consider that coming after Grand Arts is also a coming after art? That is to say:

*After Grand Arts.*