

Dynamic Collectivity

Artistic Direct Action, Economic Sustainability,
and the Punchclock Printing Collective

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Homes Not Colonies (2007) poster by Stefan Pilipa. Printed with Shannon Muegge.

ABSTRACT

Through a case study of the Toronto-based Punchclock Printing Collective, this paper considers how experiments with prefigurative politics and collective cultural production pose alternatives to hegemonic power structures, and just as importantly, what kinds of contradictions and challenges these endeavours face. I begin with a personal story about my relationship to art and politics, a brief introduction to Punchclock, some theory I've found useful, and an overview of my research process. These sections set the groundwork for a detailed case study based on interviews I conducted with members of Punchclock.

The first part of the case study explores how Punchclock formed and evolved over time as a social entity born from artistic, political, and economic desires. My research suggests that from 2003-2013 there were three discernible acts: a founding by two activist artists who brought a range of other people on board; a second wind of political and cultural activity under new leadership, which was interrupted by economic pressures, a stark turnover, and internal tensions; and a deradicalized third form in which Punchclock continued to function as a collective space for art production without direct engagement with political movements.

The second part of the case study analyzes Punchclock's activities in more depth: Who are the members of Punchclock? What are their relations of collective production? What is the meaning of their political graphics? What kinds of contestations of power are taking place? This approach is otherwise summarized as: WHO, HOW, WHAT, and SO WHAT. The reflections of Punchclock members offer complex and nuanced insights into these questions, which I hope will be useful for socially-engaged artists and anyone with an interest in cultural production and social movements.

I found that when a group of outsider artists with activist backgrounds coalesced around Punchclock, new collective relationships allowed them to transcend their singular capacities and make important artistic, political and economic contributions to social struggles. These contributions were shaped by the hybrid and ever-shifting nature of their collective organizing, which brought activist artists together with musicians and other cultural producers. However, Punchclock's eventual reversal in core membership from self-taught activists to art school graduates is indicative of the challenges with sustaining prefigurative collectives. Internal tensions are often exacerbated by the difficulties of surviving within a hostile political climate. Along with external factors, including aggressive gentrification and the onerous task of ethical sourcing with little money, internal tensions abounded: the effects of a wave of personal transitions and health crises were compounded by the lack of an access mandate, loose operating principles, and a devaluing of this work by movements themselves.

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این سرزمین بومی است

This research was undertaken in Tkaronto / Gichi Kiiwenging / Toronto on the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the New Credit and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy¹, a place which continues to be home to more than 60,000 people from many Indigenous Nations.

As I worked on this project, the Idle No More movement was spreading across Canada and beyond its colonial borders, with grassroots indigenous leadership asserting their visions for sovereignty and environmental protections. These visions call for honouring official nation-to-nation treaties, which Canada has constantly violated while pursuing official and unofficial policies of indigenous extinction. Idle No More is part of centuries of creative resistance and survival in the face of these policies.

One reason why I was drawn to Punchclock was because of their work as settlers in support of indigenous sovereignty, which is something I have a little experience with and would like to learn more about. I am extremely grateful to the members of Punchclock that I was able to speak with: Shannon Muegge, Simone Schmidt, Rocky Dobby and Stefan Pilipa. Each were incredibly generous with their time and extremely thoughtful in the way that they engaged with my questions. I left every interview feeling inspired and holding a deeper appreciation for the intricacies of people's lived experiences and their engagements with collective organizing. It only makes sense that people who have produced such interesting work and such vital social infrastructure have put so much thought into their artmaking practices.

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¹ An accessible resource on the indigenous history of Toronto:
Suzanne Methot, "Toronto' is an Iroquois Word". <http://dragonflycanada.ca/toronto-is-an-iroquois-word/>
An art intervention project focused on restoring indigenous place-names:
Ogimaa Mikana Project: Reclaiming/Renaming. <http://ogimaamikana.tumblr.com/>

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o FOREWORD You Don't Make Anything: An Inventory of Affects

The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory; therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory.

Antonio Gramsci, 1971: 324 in Edward Said 1978: 25

Crushing Words

Ze Frank made a video about “crushing words”² that stuck with me. There’s a sense of genuine vulnerability when Ze shares his encounters with crushing words, including opening *The Art of Game Design* by Jesse Schell, which is about how to get prepared to make great creative things, and seeing as the very first step: “Make sure that your personal life is sorted.”

OK, this is no small task. Many of us use creative work as an outlet to sort through difficult parts of our personal lives. But I understand how abrupt it must have felt to see those words, to be confronted with a reality you’ve actively or unknowingly been avoiding. As Ze says, crushing words are not necessarily bad but we fear them because of what they reveal.

I remember how jarring it was when Sheila looked at me and said “You don’t make anything.” Sheila, Noaman and I were at the UofT archives studying old maps and ephemera produced by earlier generations of student radicals. I don’t remember what I did to elicit that response, I think I made unhelpful comments about a drawing she was working on. Sometimes I tease like a bully, putting people down to try to raise myself up. When Sheila pushed back, it brushed against the insecurities I was trying to assuage.

Even though I felt crushed, I agreed with her. I was this hyper-engaged activist but I didn’t feel like I produced interesting or beautiful things. I didn’t take creative risks, I always outsourced them. I leaned on her and Noaman anytime I wanted a design for a flyer, t-shirt, or the cover of the anti-calendar our student union published.

My sense of self was tied to my achievements, which were never enough. It wasn’t hard to persuade me that I didn’t make – or really, amount, to anything – not in the grand scheme of things or even our tiny activist subculture. I developed an unhealthy relationship to the idea that I should *matter* – I thought I should be great at something, that individually I should be able to intervene in the course of history, and my happiness was staked on this grandiosity.³ Despite my

² Ze Frank, “Crushing Words”, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJ9e32MNEOk>

Ze is a video blogging pioneer. He is the creator of a popular internet show called *a show with ze frank*.

³ I’m not trying to suggest that aspiring to *matter*, or questioning one’s place in the world is unhealthy, but rather that I lacked a good underlying baseline of self-esteem. Terrance Real’s (1998: 63) writing on men and depression resonates with me: In covert depression, the defense or addiction always pulls the man from “less than” to “better than” – rather than to a moderate sense of inherent value. Defensive compensations for underlying depression can never move one directly from shame to healthy self-esteem, because such a shift requires confrontation with, rather than avoidance of, one’s own feelings.

immersion in political organizing, the historical narrative of Great White Men still had a firm grip on my consciousness, and I was working through my own baggage.

Activism gave me a powerful space for self-discovery and personal growth, where I found my voice and felt like I was part of something larger than myself. But the circuit of constant activity was also a perfect enabler for avoidance. As a high school student, joining a youth-led advocacy group offered me a sense of autonomy and validation that I couldn't find anywhere else. I skipped school to be at city hall, where I could talk politics and organize campaigns with other young people. I threw myself into the work. Work was how I tended to relate to people. I put emotional labour on the backburner, neglecting things like forming intimate personal relationships, taking social risks, honestly sharing my feelings, and practicing self-care.

I think looking over Sheila and Noaman's shoulders was partly about me trying to forge friendships through the work, and attempting to fulfill a desire to be creative and make things, if only vicariously through them. I was like a turtle coming out of its shell, with the same glacial pace and an extreme level of trepidation.

An Infinity of Traces

Sometimes I wonder how a young boy acquires such a shell. I think about my family, about my mom and dad, who've given me everything. Mixed with many gifts, their struggles have become entangled with my own. Some of my anger and fear is carried, inherited from behaviours tied to unspoken legacies of trauma. When I was little and did something to make my dad angry, sometimes he would go livid and say "I would never *dare* to talk back to my father like that." This was the impression I was given of a man I never met, who passed away before my dad reached 18. Why so much anger, so present that it reverberated through him to my father to me?

I feel it flicker in me. I try to put this anger in context by thinking about the relationship between white males and Canada's founding myths. I think about broken promises, how emasculating economic realities reveal social pacts as lies, and even still, we cling to them for degrees of privilege in a system of racial hierarchies. To preserve our exception from slaveability (Smith 2006: 67), we are willing to pretend that such a system cannot exist. That it doesn't continue to exist. That it isn't thriving. Instead, we resent having to defer our dreams while continuing to hold up our end of the bargain, forfeiting our waking hours and bodies to feed the war machine. We are so beholden to this routine that we never challenge the massive theft and suffering that this settler colonial project is built upon. Our pain manifests as sorrow and anger, which we take out on ourselves and the people around us.

I also think about our schools, which like our families, are intrinsic sites where social norms are introduced and contested. Here we are taught a national anthem, which we are made to observe and sometimes sing, professing "true patriot love" before we know the meaning of the words. Schooling invests us in the inescapable logic of grading, where different ways of thinking, being, or acting become risky. The threat of failure is the authorization of reduced life chances, which of course are never fairly distributed to begin with. We learn to become our own jail guards. We discipline each other. There is a battle royale of physical and social violence just to survive, probably more than we are capable of admitting.

I remember feeling at age 7, when my mom briefly enrolled me in a Saturday Farsi language school, that learning my mother tongue was undesirable. It was a marker of being different –

ethnic, non-white, not “normal” – and it was easier, or felt hard enough already, just passing. I remember this feeling of undesirability extending from a cultural context, from something in my head, to a physical one. I remember feeling a sense of discomfort about my hairy, chubby body. I stopped wearing shorts in grade 4 in order to cover-up my hairy legs.

I find it hard to believe that my deskmate used to playfully tease me about singing pop songs to myself in grade 6. I can hardly recognize that person now. Sometimes I wish I had better role models, like maybe if I'd known graffiti writers writing “FUCK THE POLICE” or even just their own names, I'd have been making art on my own terms much earlier. But I was likely scared too straight to even try.

Instead, I did poorly in grade 9 art even though I worked harder in that class than any other, because I refused to submit anything that wasn't “good”. I hated getting bad grades for not being able to reproduce perfect floating noses or fabric shadows. Their idea of art, basically fine art produced by creative geniuses working alone, was far too limiting and exclusive.

Necessity and Desire

I never took art class again, but my desire to be creative and make things didn't go away. I found other releases. To procrastinate from essay writing, I would spend hours designing cover pages. The year I spent living in a university dorm was something like an artist residency filled with weird experiments, including an album produced with the technical expertise of my roommate Tyler, where we solicited musical interpretations of a poem about bicycles (that we stumbled upon in a student-funded literary journal) from a dozen people living on our floor.

The following year, not long after the crushing words incident, I was at a No One Is Illegal meeting. During the customary silence that follows the announcement of a task near the end of a meeting, where we wait to see who will cave-in first, I raised my hand to volunteer to design a poster. Out of a mixture of desire and necessity⁴, I became the go-to graphic designer for the group. I didn't talk a lot in the weekly meetings so it felt like a good way to contribute. I liked making stuff with computers because there was always an undo option and an endless supply of pre-existing material to borrow from and build on.

Critical Cultural Production

Over time this role became more frustrating than rewarding. With the urgency of everything else we were doing, art was an afterthought subjected to the rules of immediacy. The design-by-committee process could be grueling, only to produce unsatisfying results, particularly when interacting with people whose personalities and politics clashed with my own. I felt like an employee answering to a boss. I remember having to justify the existence of cultural projects, like the monthly radio show some of us collaborated on, when two senior members of the group

⁴ Credit goes to Dara Greenwald and Josh MacPhee in *Signs of Change* (2010: 14) for this phrasing, which is worth reading in full: Out of both desire and necessity, people who previously did not consider themselves media or art producers emerge from struggles as artists, designers, and video makers – as well as organizers, communications specialists, public speakers, caretakers, carpenters, group facilitators, electricians, and dozens of other new identities. This process challenges the common notion of the individual artistic genius and creates more flexible definitions of who is or can be an artist.

pointedly asked “Why do we even do this?” Part of what made the show so appealing was that it enjoyed some autonomy from the whims of dominant personalities within general meetings.

I was ready to make a few of my own “You don’t make anything” retorts. Maybe I deserved it after all I’d put my artist friends through. In any case, I wasn’t alone. Sheila burned-out from doing the same thing before me. Although written 70 years earlier, the frustrations expressed by Bertolt Brecht (1938: 97) to his friend Walter Benjamin could easily have been from us venting:

They are, to put it bluntly, enemies of production. Production makes them uncomfortable. You never-know where you are with production; production is the unforeseeable. You never know what's going to come out. And they themselves don't want to produce. They want to play the apparatchik and exercise control over other people. Every one of their criticisms contains a threat.

The division between production and consumption is an ongoing source of tension. Even when we share political commitments and say we oppose all forms of domination, we tend to default to alienating consumer/producer and employee/employer relations that undermine meaningful collaboration. I know I’m guilty of doing this and I’d like to do better. I made a zine about migrant justice graphics (2010) partly as a way to process my experiences of making art with movements.

Cut and Mix Culture & Collectivity

While preparing to host the first Radical Design School workshop series with my friend Natalia Saavedra, the phrase “You don’t make anything” resurfaced. I learned to see it as a humbling gesture, not just for perceived enemies of production but for any practicing or aspiring artist. By adding the qualification “*alone*”, “You don’t make anything” becomes a frame that troubles the binary of creative/non-creative. I came to this realization after watching Kirby Ferguson’s *Everything Is A Remix* web series, where he argues that the act of remixing – copying, combining, and transforming existing material to make something new – is a key part of cultural production. This ethos is echoed in artist and educator Corita Kent’s pronouncement that “To create means to relate. The root meaning of the word art is ‘to fit together’ and we all do this everyday.” (Steward and Kent 1992: 4)

We used the concept of remixing to help demystify the creative process. I developed a matching activity to identify influences and examples of borrowing in the work of some of my favourite political artists. Our objective with the workshop series was to help people excluded from art-making see themselves as producers and experiment with different ways of making things together. In sharing our skills, we were pushing against the isolating roles we had fallen into as providers of a specialized service for movements (or employers) on-demand. It was an opportunity for us to shift towards the prefigurative idea of “designing-with” rather than always “designing-for”. As a result, by working collectively, I changed my relationship to some crushing words – or maybe it was the crushing words that propelled me towards collective production.

Spectral Dust

I started writing about crushing words as an exercise in self-location, to help connect the dots between my personal history, broader systems of power, and the research process I was undertaking. I remembered those words resonating upon impact, but also saw them reverberating through time, evoking critical moments from well before and well after. Inspired

by Gramsci, I set out to compile an inventory of affects that would bridge my “infinity of traces” with interrelated historical processes. Doing this allowed me to situate my narrative about my evolving relationship to art and politics in a wider context.

The exercise of writing kicked up a cloud of spectral dust, revealing central themes and subtler undercurrents that I returned to in my conversations with members of Punchclock: the process of finding your voice, the liberty of making art without a license, the beauty and frustrations of working with social movements, the challenges of working collectively and across differences, the complexity of hybridity and existing within in-between spaces, the imminence of personal and social transformations, our common experiences with evolving ideas about the nature of social change, and the necessity of practicing critical self-reflexivity.

My interest in prefigurative culture and collective cultural production is directly connected to my mess of experiences and the task of trying to make sense of them. I realize that these kinds of exercises, in isolation, can be dismissed as narcissistic naval gazing. However, to dismiss them outright would be a mistake. The “connecting process” is vital; in this, I draw inspiration from Himani Bannerji’s assertion that “[T]here is no better point of entry into a critique or a reflection than one’s own experience. It is not the end point, but the beginning of an exploration of the relationship between the personal and the social and therefore the political.” (1995: 55)

Let us continue our explorations.

1 INTRODUCTION Collective Dream Production

*And we are alive in amazing times
Delicate hearts, diabolical minds
Revelations, hatred, love and war
And more and more and more and more
And more of less than ever before
It's just too much more for your mind to absorb
It's scary like hell, but there's no doubt
We can't be alive in no time but NOW*

*It's just another shot to the heart
It's just a sure shot in the dark
It's just another place in the stars
Wonders on every side, life in marvelous times*

Yasiin Bey, "Life in Marvelous Times"

The Radical Imagination

The artist formerly known as Mos Def invokes the Marvelous on this stand-out track from his 2009 album *The Ecstatic*. Bey's record was inspired by Victor LaValle's fantastical novel from 2002 that shares the same name. But as I was reading Robin Kelley's *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (2002), I was wondering if Bey had inspected the same pages, particularly when Kelley discusses Martinican author Suzanne Césaire's argument in a 1941 issue of *Tropiques* that surrealism was "not an ideology but a state of mind, a 'permanent readiness for the Marvelous.'" (170) This point is quite similar to the one Bey is making with his record. Today, even though we are contending with "more of less than ever before", particularly in racialized communities hit hardest by neoliberal violence and economic apartheid, there are "wonders on every side" – if we are prepared for the possibility of their existence.

One way we can start getting ready for the Marvelous is by recognizing our dreams and desires as deeply political. Stephen Duncombe incisively explains what is at stake when we talk about the radical imagination:

"The powers that be do not sustain their legitimacy by convincing people that the current system is The Answer. That fiction would be too difficult to sustain in the face of so much evidence to the contrary. What they must do, and what they have done very effectively, is convince the mass of people that *there is no alternative*." (1997: 6)

As a key member of the Négritude movement, Césaire's counter-hegemonic surrealism embodied alterity by expanding the conceptual limits of art and politics. Césaire invited her readers to imagine as political:

"the domains of the strange, the marvelous and the fantastic, a domain scorned by people of certain inclinations. Here is the freed image, dazzling and beautiful, with a beauty that could not be more unexpected and overwhelming. Here are the poet, the painter and the artist, presiding over the metamorphoses and the inversions of the world under the sign of hallucination and madness." (170)

In synchrony, Césaire envisioned surrealism as a revolutionary anti-colonial cultural movement embedded in everyday life, "endlessly reinforcing the massive army of refusals":

Millions of black hands will hoist their terror across the furious skies of world war. Freed from a long benumbing slumber, the most disinherited of all peoples will rise up from plains of ashes.

Our surrealism will supply this rising people with a punch from its very depths. Our surrealism will enable us to finally transcend the sordid antinomies of the present: whites/Blacks, Europeans/Africans, civilized/savages – at last rediscovering the magic power of the mahoulis, drawn directly from living sources. Colonial idiocy will be purified in the welder's blue flame. We shall recover our value as metal, our cutting edge of steel, our unprecedented communions. (171)

The orchestra of refusals and recoveries – of turning shared desires into public ideas into collective actions – is a matter of great importance. Walter Benjamin (1936) wrote that "One of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later." Art can offer a "designated imaginative space" where freedom is experienced, in which there is a "suspension of the rules that govern daily life, a denial of gravity" (Becker 1994: 117), however the insinuation is that Benjamin's "later" – the fulfillment of our desires – can only be realized in a post-revolutionary society. On the ground, crass interpretations of this idea can produce polarizing opinions about strategy. One extreme involves "after-the-revolution" excuses that uncritically reproduce x, y, and z forms of oppression, which are regarded as divisive or unimportant, while at the other pole, "lifestyle activism" is quickly dismissed as impractical and ineffective for focusing on perfecting individual behaviour at the expense of systemic change.

Prefigurative Politics & Realizing the Impossible

This project takes a different approach, one that is aligned with the spirit of permanent readiness for the Marvelous, and is committed to learning from radically imaginative efforts to "realize the impossible" without neglecting the practical dimensions of political organizing, including the necessity of a critical intersectional analysis of oppression. As an activist-artist, I dream about how we can use art to organize together for transformative social change. I'm interested in finding ways to counter the isolating processes of atomization that try to fix us into individualized consumer relations and identities.⁵ Consequently, this paper considers how experiments with prefigurative politics and collective cultural production pose alternatives to hegemonic power structures and, just as importantly, how these endeavours stumble, struggle and fail to achieve their goals.

One way to explore these questions is through critical reflection on my own experiences working at the intersections between art and politics. A complementary approach involves making a concerted effort to learn from those who have come before me. In that spirit, this research project focuses on the Punchclock Printing Collective, a crucial Toronto-based organization

⁵ This line of thought is complicated by the questions of who gets to identify as an artist and how our lived experiences differ based on race, gender, class, sexuality, disability and other intersecting axes of identity. If we can recognize our relative complicity in converging systems of domination, how should this shape our organizing efforts? What are the implications for our desires to create new kinds of social relations and make meaningful interventions in the politics of everyday life? I take up these questions in section 5. 1.

founded in 2003 by Shannon Muegge and Stefan Pilipa. On their now defunct website, Punchclock offered this nebulous description of their activities (circa 2007):

Punchclock is a trans-disciplinary democratic organization of cultural workers, political activists and trades people operating out of and around two hives functioning as collective metal and screen printing studios. Our mandates are economic sustainability and artistic direct action.

Beneath the Punchclock umbrella are two worker-owned business cooperatives as well as an ever-morphing network of information architects, visual artists and musicians. We produce aesthetically defiant graphic design, video, poster, sculpture, performance, installation, textile and street art. Our efforts challenge conventional, isolating and competitive models of professional art careers; we exist not for wealthy collectors or insular art patronage, but as an essential element to a healthy and dynamic community.

Currently fourteen people share tenancy of the two studios that shift chameleon-like between conceptual laboratory, underground venue, political meeting space, and production plant. As such we provide infrastructure; access to tools, skills, and training for participants in radical political and cultural movements.

I'm particularly interested in Punchclock Printing, the initial hive of activity that was joined by a metalshop several years later, because my own identity as an artist largely came out of producing posters and graphics with social movements in Toronto. As a young activist, I admired Punchclock from a distance. We went to Punchclock to get our student union's t-shirts printed. I saw their beautiful hand-printed silkscreen posters and heard about exciting shows that combined art and music to raise money for indigenous sovereignty movements. By the time I built up enough confidence to see myself as an artist, Punchclock seemed to have disappeared. I was left feeling disappointed and, in a perverse way, betrayed for being excluded from this community and having to start over from scratch – not just in terms of tools and equipment, but also in the search for an actually existing model of a “good way” of being.⁶

Beyond my personal affinity, Punchclock is an important example of “infrastructures of resistance” (Shantz 2009) in action, with its complex relationship between radical possibilities and harsh realities. I found that when a group of outsider artists with activist backgrounds coalesced around Punchclock, new collective relationships allowed them to transcend their singular capacities and make important artistic, political and economic contributions to social struggles. These contributions were shaped by the hybrid and ever-shifting nature of their collective organizing, which brought activist artists together with musicians and other cultural producers. However, Punchclock's eventual reversal in core membership from self-taught activists to art school graduates is indicative of the challenges with sustaining prefigurative collectives. Internal tensions are often exacerbated by the difficulties of surviving within a hostile political climate. Along with external factors, including aggressive gentrification and the onerous task of ethical sourcing with little money, internal tensions abounded: the effects of a wave of personal transitions and health crises were compounded by the lack of an access mandate, loose operating principles, and a devaluing of this work by movements themselves.

⁶ I've undertaken this research project with this history in mind. I'm writing as someone critically engaged in collective cultural production today, and in anticipation of the radiant folks out there who are working up the nerve to reclaim their creative spirits and challenge their senses of atomization.

In the sections that follow, I provide a review of sources that I've found useful in thinking about prefigurative culture and political printmaking and a brief overview of my research process. These sections set the groundwork for a detailed case study based on interviews I conducted with four members of the Punchclock Printing Collective.

The first part of the case study explores how Punchclock formed and evolved over time as a social entity born from artistic, political, and economic desires. My research suggests that from 2003-2013 there were three discernable acts: a founding by two activist artists who brought a range of other people on board; a second wind of political and cultural activity under new leadership, which was interrupted by economic pressures, a stark turnover, and internal tensions; and a deradicalized third form in which Punchclock continued to function as a collective space for art production without direct engagement with political movements.

The second part of the case study analyzes Punchclock's activities in more depth by asking: Who are the members of Punchclock? What are their relations of collective production? What is the meaning of their political graphics? What kinds of contestations of power are taking place? This approach is otherwise summarized as: WHO, HOW, WHAT, and SO WHAT. My overarching question is this: What do engagements with prefigurative culture and collective production offer in terms of non-hegemonic organizing models, and likewise, what are some of the contradictions and challenges that these projects face?

The reflections of Punchclock members offer complex and nuanced insights into these questions, which I hope will be useful for socially-engaged artists and anyone with an interest in cultural production and social movements. With this purpose in mind, I conclude by considering some ideas raised by the study and their implications for new collectivities.

2 THEORY Prefigurative Culture

2.1 Theory & Activist Praxis

I confess, I struggle with theory. As tempting as it is to dismiss academic theory for its inaccessibility, its frequent irrelevance, or its role in overshadowing movement and experiential knowledge, inside I know that any theory worth engaging is supposed to be challenging. Just as changing habitual behaviours is difficult, so is changing ingrained ways of thinking. Reactionary impulses like resentment from being made to feel stupid, or a revulsion from archaic language can sabotage our learning. Worse yet, if we aren't careful, our grievances can become intellectual cover for upholding the status quo. When I saw this line in Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory*, I knew there was truth to it: "Keynes once remarked that those economists who disliked theory, or claimed to get along better without it, were simply in the grip of an older theory." (1996: ix) We might be hiding behind a smokescreen – the proliferation of badly written theory – to avoid something more troubling: theory that demands more from you, that insists on nuance and complexity, and that compels you to take risks.

My most productive engagements with theory have been in conversation with my practice as a community-based artist and activist. This practice is rooted in a commitment to prefigurative organizing for radical social change. Prefigurative in the sense that our means need to be consistent with our ends, that as much as possible we must try to embody the society we wish to create (Graeber 2005: 194). And radical as in "grasping things at the root", after Angela Davis (1990: 14), which for me means taking a position against all forms of oppression, and applying an intersectional approach that recognizes we have differing relationships to power structures, including heteropatriarchy and systems of slavery/capitalism, genocide/colonialism and orientalism/war (Smith 2006: 67).

My identification with anti-authoritarian politics is part of an ongoing learning process, stimulated by 10 years of political activity, beginning with municipal youth advocacy work, student union activism, grassroots migrant justice organizing, and more recently, arts-based collaborations with a range of social movements. I've made innumerable mistakes. And I've been burned enough times by hierarchical power structures to know that I'm not interested in maintaining or reproducing them. I have no illusions about the challenges of prefigurative organizing, they too are innumerable. But this is the type of work – cultivating critical connections rather than worrying only about critical mass (Lee Boggs in Team Colors Collective 2010: 312) – that makes sense for me, nourishes my spirit, and allows me to see myself participating in struggles that we aim to win for the long haul.

At this point, I'm reminded of feedback I received from a friend when I was working on my research proposal: "I really like the idea of living what you preach to embody the society you want to create, but does this alone make for progressive politics? What informs us about the world we want to create?" As they suggested, prefigurative organizing needs to be supplemented by an explicit analysis of power in order to be meaningful. I remember the first time I attended an anti-oppression workshop, which was mandatory for new members of our youth group, where I was introduced to the idea of interlocking power and privilege through petal-power diagrams, step-forward, step-backwards activities, and discussions of racism, sexism, classism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia. That was a transformative experience for me because it introduced systemic power into my vocabulary, a coherent framework for naming and

acting upon my pre-existing, but unfocused anti-authoritarian sensibilities. I started to learn about the relationship between different modes of oppression and identity formations, some of which I had never encountered before, and began to locate myself in this matrix.

Useful as this framework may be, my understanding of power has continued to evolve, so I realize that anti-oppression 101 has its limitations. Lawrence and Dua's "Decolonizing Antiracism" (2005) offered an important corrective with their argument that colonialism needs to be understood as foundational to racism in Canada, and therefore to anti-racist practice, not as just one amongst many other petals of oppression. Their article, along with Sharma and Wright's (2009) critical response, were helpful references for people I was organizing with as we considered our relationship to indigenous sovereignty work. Similarly, by critiquing how some strategies for liberation result in the oppression of others, Andrea Smith (2006: 69) suggests an alternative framework for women of colour organizing where alliances are based on relationships of complicity in the victimization of others rather than on the assumption of shared victimization.

These ideas and experiences have informed my choice and framing of this study, my engagement with cultural theory, my interaction with research participants, and my desire to make this work accessible to a broader audience. As a researcher, I recognize that my social location as a non-disabled, mixed-race, passing for white, straight cis-gendered male with a middle class upbringing in Toronto means that my understanding can only be "partial and perverse" (Hartsock 1987: 159). In order to address the gaps in my first-hand knowledge, I have tried to inform myself, reflect, consult, and revise. At the same time, I have been reminded to consider the unique gifts of my particular subject position, including the ways in which my experiences with cultural hybridity and capitalist white supremacist institutions have contributed towards my interest in remix culture and collectivity.

The frameworks that I introduce in the following sections focus on prefigurative culture, political printmaking, and the role of collective cultural production in organizing for social change.

2.2 How We Do Culture / What Culture Does

Culture ... is not so much a set of *things* ... as a process, a set of *practices*. Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and exchange of meaning ... between the members of a society or group.

Stuart Hall 1997: 2⁷

What makes art radical? Or dare I say it – revolutionary? In Walter Benjamin's classic essay "The Author as Producer" (1934), he makes the case that the content of a work of art is less important than the conditions of cultural production. Through the transformative medium of photography even poverty – worse yet, the struggle against poverty – has been made into an object of consumption for "fashionably perfected" enjoyment. Benjamin observes that the capitalist "apparatus of production and publication can assimilate astonishing qualities of revolutionary themes." He suggests that ultimately what matters is for art to have an organizing function

⁷ Hennessy Youngman's "How to Make an Art" offers a humorous take on this sentiment in relation to the practices of the mainstream contemporary art world: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVFasyCvEOg>

beyond its value as propaganda, such as inspiring other producers to produce, and putting more tools at their disposal, so that more *consumers* can become *producers*, earning the title of "patron saint of DIY culture" from Stephen Duncombe, editor of the *Cultural Resistance Reader* (2002). Benjamin's essay is a critique of cultural producers who "have passed through a revolutionary development in their attitudes, without being able simultaneously to rethink their own work, their relation to the means of production, their technique, in a really revolutionary way."⁸ There is something very alluring about this argument. When the curtains concealing the social relations of production are pulled back, the question is no longer just "what?" but also "how?".

Benjamin's thesis resonates with William Roy's (2010) comparative analysis of the use of folk music in the United States by the communist-inspired Old Left movement of the 1930s/40s with the civil rights movement of the 1950s/60s. Roy is interested in how social movements do culture, and in particular how these two movements made music part of their struggles for racial and economic justice. His argument is that the effects of culture "depend at least as much on the social relations within which culture is embedded as on its content." (235) As an organization that emerged from the Old Left, People's Songs was more of a vanguard movement, delivering content from above by booking performances and publishing songbooks. In contrast, for the civil rights movement, music was more about collective action than a performer-audience relationship (236):

Doing music on the picket line, on the bus, or in jail, especially when done in racially mixed groups, made music an act of defiance against the system of segregation. The music was not just about conflict; it was a form of conflict. (240)

While the Old Left had success with popularizing folk music, the civil rights movement made tangible gains by using music to bridge racial boundaries (24). From this study, Roy concludes that "many people doing music, not just consuming it, is an extraordinarily powerful mode for both solidifying commitment to collective action and for helping collectivities achieve their goals." (235)

I find Roy's work helpful because he connects social relations (a prominent feature in my own experiences with art and social movements) to the effects of culture, which are not always self-evident or easy to measure. In *The Art of Protest* (2005), T.V. Reed notes that academics risk misinterpreting cultural resistance, and refers to two extremes: scientific sociologists who reduce culture to politics – as merely expressive, effective only when directly measurable with traditional analytical tools – and cultural studies scholars "who see cultural resistance everywhere, turning all culture into politics" without regard for relative scales of impact (290). Roy finds efficacy in the realization of movement goals, but also in the production of a "prefigurative culture" – a culture that reflects the values and kinds of relationships that activists are striving for (241). In relation to folk music, he identifies four key areas: the division of labour, the dynamics of power, the way that people are tuned in, and the way that culture is embedded (241). Informed by his own comparative study of the cultural dimension and impacts of U.S. social movements⁹, Reed offers a range of functions that describe the effects of culture: to

⁸ For example, Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg suggested that "there is no structural difference between a painting that depicts Trotsky heading a red army, and a painting that depicts Napoleon heading an imperial army." (Van Doesburg 1923 in *Experimental Jetset* 2001).

⁹ Reed examines nine U.S. social movements, from the songs of the civil rights movement to feminist poetry, Xicana/o murals, the AIDS crisis graphics of ACT-UP, and the use of new media by the global justice movement.

encourage, empower, harmonize, inform internally, inform externally, enact movement goals, historicize, transform affect or tactics, critique movement ideology, and make room for pleasure (299). These cultural functions can help bring attention to deeply transformative experiences that might otherwise be ignored by a purely quantitative approach or a formal textual analysis.

By considering how Punchclock does culture, I hope to gain some insight into the effects of their work for social change. I don't expect Punchclock to be a paragon of prefigurative social relations, and of course it doesn't have to be. As a real life example of people taking collective action to pursue their needs and desires, the complexities, tensions, limitations and failures that Punchclock encountered are just as instructive as any degrees of success. Learning from defeats and practicing critical self-reflexivity is a prominent theme in the accounts of participants in collective cultural production, including Honor Ford-Smith's (1997) writing on the Sistren Theatre Collective, Mary Patten's (2011) reflections on the Madame Binh Graphics Collective, and the Taller Tupac Amaru's (Dunn and MacPhee 2010) thoughts on the past, present and future of Xicana printmaking.

Similarly, I accept that the dimensions of prefigurative culture that Roy focuses on in his comparative study on the use of folk music cannot be seamlessly applied to my exploration of Punchclock's art making practices. The mediums of folk music and printmaking have distinct traditions and present different possibilities for radical participatory culture. That said, there are certainly parallels between the concept of prefigurative culture and the work of visual artists and popular educators engaged in transforming spectators into participants (Mackey 2010: 299), among them: Corita Kent, dian marino, Bread and Puppet, Rini Templeton, the Beehive Collective, and the Justseeds Artists' Cooperative.

What I am most interested in is examining the essence of Roy's argument, that how culture is done matters as much as its content. Roy's concept of prefigurative culture and Reed's cultural functions offer a good starting point for approaching the task of evaluation, though I'm also mindful of Reed's warning that the "bestly complexity of movements" means that "no one will ever capture one alive for their private movement zoo." (287) That shouldn't stop us from trying to generate theory about organizing, I think it remains a worthwhile effort, but Deleuze (in Foucault 1980) reminds us that "No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall." (206) As Stefan Pilipa said during our interview, at some point "the only ingredient we have to put into it is activity." That's why this study concludes by considering possibilities for new collectivities.

The next section focuses on a particular kind of activity: political printmaking and its relationship to prefigurative culture and collective production.

2.3 Making Multiples: From Socially Engaged Printmaking to Social Movement Cultures

Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign.

Valéry, 1928 [1964], p. 226 in Benjamin 1936

These prescient words from French polymath Paul Valéry are quoted in another of Benjamin's classic essays, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936). Valéry's prediction encapsulates the state of digital reproduction today – what is the internet if not a stream of visual and auditory content that we conjure with almost unconscious movements of the hand? However, at the time of writing Benjamin was captivated by the repercussions of another technological revolution: mechanical reproduction. In the realm of images, the reproducibility of woodcut graphic art was followed by engravings and etchings on metal plates, and later transcended by lithography which "virtually implied" the advent of the illustrated newspaper. Lithography was soon surpassed by photography, replacing the work of the hand with the pairing of the eye and lens, opening a gateway into film. While Benjamin is transfixed by film, part of his broader argument is that all of these methods of mechanical reproduction liberate art from its "parasitical dependence" on authenticity and ritual.

In *Ways of Seeing* (1972), John Berger channels Benjamin, describing a process of mystification that tries to compensate for the loss of an aura around the "original image" of works of art:

The bogus religiosity which now surrounds original works of art, and which is ultimately dependent upon their market value, has become the substitute for what paintings lost when the camera made them reproducible. Its function is nostalgic. It is the final empty claim for the continuing values of an oligarchic, undemocratic culture. If the image is no longer unique and exclusive, the art object, the thing, must be made mysteriously so. (16)

Even though images can "theoretically be used by anybody", Berger contends that reproductions sold commercially are still used to "bolster the illusion that nothing has changed", putting art in the service of the ruling classes by making "inequality seem noble and hierarchies seem thrilling." (22)¹⁰ In order to find the power of a "new language of images", freed from the authority of art, we have to look elsewhere.

Gregory Sholette developed the concept of "artistic dark matter" (2011: 88) to refer to the missing mass of the "other 99% of cultural activity that fails to achieve sustained visibility." Within dominant institutions, gatekeepers tend to exclude social movement culture for being too ephemeral, too political, or not cool enough to catalogue. And yet Sholette points out that the maintenance of their institutional authority – as arbiters of "Great Art" – is dependent upon the invisible presence of this dark matter:

To test this idea, contemplate the impact on art world institutions if hobbyists and amateurs were to stop purchasing art supplies, or if the enormous surplus army of MFAs stopped subscribing to art magazines or museums, or no longer attended lectures, or refused to serve as part-time instructors "reproducing" the next generation of artists for the market. We can easily see how the producers of movement graphics and other oppositional art practices might belong to this phantom sphere of dark matter that continuously haunts, informs, and/or delimits the works of visible, mainstream art and culture (94).

¹⁰ Emory Douglas, former Minister of Culture of the Black Panther Party, adds: Well, if you've got art that's helping people to escape from their problems, then you're dealing with art that serves the interest of those who want to continue to oppress you. That's basically what they want you to do; they want you to just be passive. (Palmer 2008)

Sholette invites us to imagine artistic dark matter existing as part of an informal hidden archive that is both material and immaterial, something that can be salvaged piece-by-piece while also existing "within our collective cultural imagination".

If you seek out this hidden archive, a long tradition of art for social change, in which the reproducible image plays a central role, will begin to reveal itself.¹¹ Since stumbling upon some of their posters years ago, I have been deeply inspired by the 24 artists from the United States, Mexico and Canada that form the Justseeds Artists' Cooperative. Justseeds is both a platform for distributing art and a network for collaboration between its members. They are printmakers and designers who have shown a keen interest in popularizing knowledge of unsung histories as a way to strengthen contemporary social struggles. Dara Greenwald and her partner Josh MacPhee, a founding member of Justseeds, published *Signs of Change: Social Movement Cultures, 1960s to Now* (2010) as a catalogue for an art exhibit by the same name that evolved from their personal collections and a public call for submissions. To house this growing collection and make it permanently accessible, Greenwald, MacPhee and others founded the Interference Archive in Brooklyn, New York, with a mandate to explore the relationship between cultural production and social movements. These activities were complemented by the launch of *Signal: A Journal of International Political Graphics & Culture* (2010, 2012).

To rewind a bit, *Signs of Change* marked an important shift from its predecessor, MacPhee's *Paper Politics: Socially Engaged Printmaking Today* (2009). I'll get to that shift in a moment, but first I want to give a brief overview of *Paper Politics*. This book is the product of a travelling exhibit of political prints that were first shown in Chicago in 2004, evolving from city-to-city as the loose network of artists involved in the project expanded. In the introduction, MacPhee considers the contradictory nature of printing by hand. The affective power of handmade prints lies in the fact that they are out-of-step with the dominant forms of communication today: "Our prints can stand out from the pack, but only if we print them in small batches by hand." (6) And so, if the aim is to reach as many people as possible, as vital a purpose as ever, why print by hand? Contributing artist Jesse Goldstein offers the idea of "production at a human scale" (100), printing for a humble *few* instead of the exclusive *one* or the endlessly commodified *many*. For Goldstein, there is a strong connection between community and printmaking, not unlike the "powerful connection between printer and print and audience" that MacPhee invokes.

But the "simplicity, accessibility and inexpensive charm" (7) that MacPhee ascribes to printmaking is not universal. Perspectives on printmaking are shaped by our particular social locations. In my experience, dominant modes of communication such as digital design were what was most available and familiar to me, while the do-it-yourself medium of printmaking was in another world, without shared references or role models that I could relate to. Printing by hand evokes a certain pre-mechanical, pre-capitalist romanticism, but the ability to inhabit this space today requires access to particular means of production that are not distributed equally, particularly amidst widespread alienation and deskilling under capitalism. This tension between accessibility and inaccessibility is another contradiction facing printmaking today.

Now back to the shift. Where *Paper Politics* gathered handmade prints that fit an open-ended idea of political art produced by individual artists, *Signs of Change* focuses on social movement

¹¹ Those of us who are heretics are also archaeologists. We sift through the shards of past experiments, buried in the rich subterranean, for evidence of what Hannah Arendt called "the lost treasure" of revolutions, the "organizational impulses of the people themselves." (Milstein and Ruin 2012: 92)

cultures: visual art, not just prints made by hand, produced in conjunction with autonomous social movements.¹² In a review of *Paper Politics* entitled "Printmaking as Resistance?" (2010), Eric Triantafillou assesses the claims made by artists in blurbs that accompany their work. Triantafillou acknowledges differences of quality, quantity and accessibility associated with printing by hand, but concludes that beyond a personal negation of market logics "it is not entirely clear what effect these acts of disavowal have on capitalist production and social relations." His contention is that they are still rooted in capitalism. We are in a much better position to address the concerns raised by this critique if we change our frame of reference from individual printmakers to social movement cultures, which are closely linked to collective cultural production and prefigurative organizing for social change.

In "Activist Art: Does it Work?" (2013), Duncombe and Lambert pose the same problem in a slightly different fashion: "What artistic activist aims have in common is a faith that awareness can change the world without any specific follow-through. This is magical thinking." Or perhaps this is the wrong kind of magical thinking. A vision rooted solely in individualism is not very imaginative. The autonomous social movements that Greenwald and MacPhee profile in *Signs of Change* experiment with alternative social formations, such as feminist media collectives, "where the form of production must manifest the anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist values of the movements." (12) In addition to collective processes, they engage with utopian proposals:

By imagining and practicing what could be, social movements often develop ideas and innovations about society that transform the status quo. Movement experiments and proposals, which at the time of their inception might seem absurd to outside observers, are often later adopted, in part or whole, and eventually are thought of as common sense.

Early environmental activists who pushed for transforming our relationship to the earth's resources are now seeing many of their ideas widely practiced, including the growth of organic food production, recycling, and eliminating toxins in the environment. The women's liberation movement fundamentally transformed the status quo understanding of women's roles in society. Participants in the movement proposed, prefigured, and enacted different gender relations and roles, and now many related aspects of society have changed. (13)

Of course, these visionary ideas are never fully embraced, and as Greenwald and MacPhee say, "the more anti-capitalist aspects of these ideas are often lost in their shift from margin to centre." (13) But it is through these dynamics of contention – where "large numbers of people mobiliz[e] to achieve transformative goals" (15) – that artists can make meaningful interventions. Artists play a vital role, not just in supporting immediate actions, but also by making contributions in the realm of ideas, helping to create shifts in consciousness that are necessary for long-term organizing towards transformative social change (Rodriguez 2013). Likewise, the process of recovering, rethinking and refashioning hidden and neglected histories is crucial to expanding our field of possibilities in the present. *Signs of Change* is an offering rooted in praxis – the continual interplay between theory and practice (Katsiaficas 2010: 18). It is the "beginnings of a map" (11) of social movement cultures, motivated by the questions and concerns of movement artists themselves, and an open invitation to "collectively begin a more in-depth analysis" (15).

¹² What Greenwald and MacPhee call: "movements that emerge from the 1960s onward that define themselves as separate from traditional modes of political organizing, such as social democratic electoral politics, authoritarian communist and socialist parties, or top down and bureaucratic union structures." (12)

2.4 New Traditions

While I share Greenwald and MacPhee's affinity with autonomous social movements, their work is just one point of entry into the hidden archives of artistic dark matter, building on a much wider tradition of political poster archives pursued by many others. The authors of *Signs of Change* note that they started their research at the Centre for the Study of Political Graphics in Los Angeles and the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam (11). Another key resource is not an institution, but an individual: Lincoln Cushing, a radical archivist, graphic artist and former collective member of a movement printshop, who has published poster books about each of his major archival projects, which focus on Cuba (*¡Revolucion!*, 2003), China (*Chinese Posters*, 2007), the U.S. labour movement (*Agitate! Educate! Organize!*, 2009), Berkeley's Inkworks Press (*Visions of Peace & Justice*, 2007), where he worked for almost 20 years, and the San Francisco Bay Area (*All of Us or None*, 2012). Cushing shares his process with short notes in his books and in much greater detail on his *Docs Populi* ("documents for the public") website, demystifying the methodology of archiving visual culture.

Justseeds and Cushing have been my personal touchstones, but I've also learned from other collections of political posters and graphic art such as Liz McQuiston's *Graphic Agitation* (1995), *Suffragettes to She-Devils* (1997), and *Graphic Agitation 2* (2004), Milton Glaser and Mirko Ilić's *Design of Dissent* (2006), James Aulich and Marta Sylvestrova's *Political Posters in Central and Eastern Europe 1945-1995* (2000), and Russ Davidson's *Latin American Posters* (2006). More specific studies have included books on South African anti-apartheid posters (1990, 2007), the posters of May 1968 in France (2008), Xicana graphic arts in California (2002), and creative resistance in Australia (2009). These are complemented by monographs on Black Panther artist Emory Douglas (2007), the anarchist graphics of Clifford Harper (1984), and the woodcuts of José Guadalupe Posada (1972).

However, I've noticed that this tradition of archiving radical ephemera is much less visible when it comes to content produced within the Canadian settler state, where I live. There are several poster books, such as Marc Choko's trilogy on war posters (1994), Québec posters (2001), and travel posters of the Canadian Pacific (2004), but very little social movement culture has been formally documented and even less has been written about it. In the process of doing some of this work, I've come across crucial resources, including a book about social movement posters from Québec (2007) and an article by popular educator dian marino (1997: 19) about her process of collaborative poster production with social justice groups. I've also had the pleasure to visit the Toronto Zine Library and learn about the work of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

Most auspiciously, I stumbled upon a one-day show in Kensington Market called "Rear-View Mirror: A Snapshot of Toronto Activist Art 1976-1996" in April of 2012. Organized by the Cultural Committee (CultCom) of the Greater Toronto Workers Assembly, the works were presented by their creators and people intimately familiar with the content, including artists Carole Condé, Karl Beveridge, and Mike Constable. There were even some pieces in the show by Rocky Dobey, a Punchclock-affiliated artist who has been active for decades. Perhaps with the exception of Rocky, most of the artists were of the Old Left Marxist tradition, reflecting the membership of CultCom. Although my interests and politics are more closely aligned with contemporary autonomous social movements, I was very impressed by the show. I connected with the Rear-View Mirror organizers and have continued to meet with them to explore ways to archive and

share their material online, as I have already started doing with PIRGs at UofT and York University (OPIRG Poster Archive 2012).

My sense is that the general gap I've noticed is due to the fact that social movement culture is neglected by dominant institutions for the reasons that Sholette suggests, and by alternative institutions and movements themselves due to a lack of stability, resources and prioritization. The material exists but is hidden, often in fragments, and scattered across generational and other kinds of divides. Our histories – of radicalism in general and radical imagination in particular – fall prey to the “social organization of forgetting” and will continue to do so until we assemble a critical mass of public interest around practicing the “resistance of remembering” (Kinsman 2010). This work will never be complete. In order to breathe, a living archive of social texts must continually be re-read, re-imagined, and re-enacted in light of our present conditions. At the volunteer-run Interference Archive in Brooklyn, their no white glove policy reflects a radical stance that use is a form of preservation (Bader 2012).

By producing a case study about the Punchclock Printing Collective, I hope to contribute towards our understanding of what social movement cultures look like here and what kinds of effects they are capable of having. This case involves a number of intriguing dynamics that are relevant to anyone interested in art and politics. Through Punchclock we encounter the social locations of cultural workers and mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion; collective practices and organizational patterns of evolution and institutionalization; the significance of radical aesthetics in working with social movements; as well as the effects of culture and future possibilities.

3 METHODS 404 – File Not Found

3.1 Research Process

This research project uses a qualitative case study method in order to foreground the voices of socially-engaged artists. Through a case study of the Toronto-based Punchclock Printing Collective, this paper considers how experiments with prefigurative culture and collective production pose alternatives to hegemonic power structures, and just as importantly, what kinds of contradictions and challenges these experiments face. This project draws inspiration from Walter Benjamin, William Roy and T.V. Reed to a) establish the importance of attending to the social relations of cultural production and b) to suggest frameworks – “prefigurative culture” and “cultural functions” – for making the connection between social relations and social change more visible. At the root of this research project is a desire to better understand the relationship between cultural production and social movements, or between art and social change.

3.2 Data Collection & Analysis

This research process involves three elements of data collection:

1. Gathering any sources that reference Punchclock or affiliated artists/activists
2. Conducting interviews with key members of Punchclock
3. Compiling an inventory of images by Punchclock members, or of their space and events

UNIT 1

Way before this project was an idea floating in my head, I remember being disappointed to discover that the Punchclock website had gone offline, taking with it much of the publicly accessible documentation of their activities. As I began this research process, I was able to recover some of this content with the Wayback Machine maintained by the Internet Archive (www.archive.org), but almost all of the images were missing. I crawled old blogs, social media accounts, and email listservs for other traces, with modest success.

I found some reproductions in social justice calendars and books on political art, particularly in OCAP's *Perpetual Calendar*, the annual prison justice calendar produced by the Certain Days collective, and in books that Josh MacPhee from Justseeds had a hand in producing. Here and there, I dug up an article in mainstream or alternative press, mostly concerning Rocky Dobe's street art, both during his period of working anonymously and afterwards.

Content from these sources was reviewed and plotted onto spreadsheets to develop a basic – if episodic and incomplete – understanding of Punchclock's history, fluctuating membership, shifting address, publicized events, and other activities. Digital images were organized in folders by source and where possible by producer and date of production. Selections from this research are included in the Appendix.

UNIT 2

Data from the first phase was used to draft a list of key participants, or potential interviewees, with reference to different periods in Punchclock's history (the three acts I tentatively outlined in the introduction of this paper): Shannon Muegge (I/II), Stefan Pilipa (I/II), Rocky Dobey (I/II), Simone Schmidt (II/III), Jesjit Gill (II/III), and Jacob Horwood (II/III). After drafting a guide for semi-structured conversational interviews, I contacted potential interviewees by email.

As someone with introverted tendencies, I was afraid of rejection. I was worried that no one would respond or be interested in speaking with me. My fears were totally unfounded. While the process of making contact and finding a date to meet can take a while, everyone was incredibly generous with their time and extremely thoughtful in the way that they engaged with my questions. I am very grateful for their support. I left every interview feeling inspired and holding a deeper appreciation for the nuances and complexities of people's lived experiences and their engagements with collectivity. With each conversation I felt like I was getting a higher resolution picture of what being part of Punchclock was like.

My goal was to speak with at least three participants who would ideally cover the spectrum of the three acts. Given my research focus, I prioritized speaking with artists who produced socially-engaged work. I completed four interviews with the time that I had available. I spoke with Shannon via phone on May 6, 2013, Simone in person on May 23, 2013, Rocky in person on June 4, 2013, and Stefan in person on June 14, 2013. Interviews were captured with a digital audio recorder. Complete transcripts were sent to interviewees for them to review and edit (only one participant elected to make changes). Each interview was analyzed to draft a preliminary list of themes. This initial list was turned into a more comprehensive outline after more in-depth coding of the interview data once all the interviews were completed.

I wish that I had time to speak with everyone who was involved with Punchclock. While I met with the people whose work was most closely related to my focus on social movement cultures, in the course of doing this research my understanding of what is political has broadened. Now I am more conscious of approaches that don't look like typical dynamics of contention, including queer parties that make space for expressing new subjectivities, small press gatherings that bring independent cultural producers together to amplify their efforts, and street poster campaigns that playfully suggest new social and political readings of popular culture – all things that other members of Punchclock were spearheading. My inability to speak with everyone involved with Punchclock informed my decision to publish the zine that will follow the completion of this paper in an issue-by-issue format with a first series of #1-4, leaving open the possibility of continuing the interview series, and eventually bringing the whole package together.

UNIT 3

After sharing the interview transcript, I followed-up with participants to ask if they would be interested in contributing images for this research and the zine booklet that will be designed after the completion of this paper. I committed to show the zine to them for feedback before sharing it publicly. Quite a few images were shared with me after making this request. Along the way, I've also discovered more examples of their work in friends' homes and collective spaces like Bike Pirates and the OCAP office. All of these images, including those gathered during *UNIT 1*, were organized together to be reviewed for their visual and written content.

3.3 Research Ethics

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts from participation in this research. Participants were selected due to their public association as members of Punchclock Printing. Participants were informed of their right to skip any question or discontinue their participation at any time. Participants consented to using the names used in this research paper, with the option to choose their own pseudonym or to forgo anonymity.

As a researcher directly engaging with social movements, research ethics also means considering how my work may affect the movements participants are affiliated with. My intent, much like with individual participants, is to minimize any harm and maximize the potential usefulness of this work. As Bevington and Dixon (2005) write:

Direct engagement is not simply chumminess with a favored movement. It is about putting the thoughts and concerns of the movement participants at the center of the research agenda and showing a commitment to producing accurate and potentially useful information about the issues that are important to these activists. This is a principal foundation for building a dynamic and reciprocal engagement with movement participants. One result of this engagement is better research as scholars develop deeper and more nuanced understandings of movements (200).

I strongly believe that ongoing analysis, action, and critical reflection (Choudry et al 2012: 17) is a vital process in organizing for transformative justice. My experience has often been that the thinking work gets short-circuited by the urgency of day-to-day political organizing and I think we are worse off for it. I am thankful for having the opportunity to engage with these issues and I hope that people find this research helpful.

4 CASE A Short History of Punchclock in Three Acts

This section introduces the people involved with Punchclock, their chosen art form of screenprinting, the scope of their organizing, and the challenges that they faced. While this section focuses primarily on how the history of Punchclock unfolded from 2003-2013, I share some of the prior context that led to the formation of the collective. Punchclock emerged from local anti-capitalist organizing against neoliberal governments in the early 2000s, just as the broader global justice movement appeared to be dissipating, but its roots go much deeper. As a hybrid between artist collective and worker cooperative, Punchclock is situated in the tradition of Toronto-based radical art groups going back until at least the late 1960s, and an even longer history of worker-owned enterprises. The name “Punchclock” is a reference to the dehumanizing experience of workers under capitalism, where work is a prison house of measured time, increasingly standardized and controlled. The way that our bodies are disciplined as labourers doing waged work for survival is yet another step in the enclosure of social life. Collectives and cooperatives attempt to reclaim common spaces by freeing our labour from systems of domination and redirecting our resources towards more caring and fulfilling ends.

4.1 Act I: Artistic Direct Action and Economic Sustainability

If streetcar tracks could know the pain
of people
the same way laid
– so rolled over everyday –
they too would gnarl + buckle
throw cobblestones to windows
and make audible the blame

Paul Daniel, “June 15th” in *June 13 ½*¹³

Background Radiation

Punchclock Printing was started in 2003 by Shannon Muegge and Stefan Pilipa as a shared space to screenprint posters and t-shirts for activists and non-profits. Shannon and Stefan were friends who knew each other from their activist work with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), which is best known for organizing large-scale militant demonstrations and its model of direct action casework.

Along with 250 others, Shannon and Stefan faced politically-motivated charges for participating in the June 15, 2000 demonstration that became known as the “Queen’s Park Riot”. In the climate leading up to June 15, OCAP advocated for a shift away from the “mass therapy” style of protest towards “organizing with the intention to actually win” (2002: 61). Neoliberal cuts to social programs by the federal Liberal government were matched by aggressive attacks on poor and working people from the provincial Conservative government of Mike Harris, including:

The slashing of affordable housing projects, the 1995 Welfare cut, the 1997 Tenant Protection Act, the 1999 Safe Streets Act, the static minimum wage, the ideological assault on trade

¹³ *June 13 ½* is a small book produced by the June 15, 2000 “Queen’s Park Riot” Defendants in 2002. *13 ½* refers to the prison justice slogan: 1 judge, 12 jurors, and half a fuckin’ chance.

unions, and the increasing power and violence of police forces [...] Yet, collectively we have failed to mount effective battles against these overt attacks on our lives. (61)

So on June 15, “a crowd made up of some of the hardest hit victims of the Tories” showed up on their doorstep. Two thousand people marched to the Legislature, sending forward a delegation to address the house in session. When the delegation was turned away, the angry crowd pressed for their entry, coming face-to-face with a curiously malformed police line. The police retreated after an “initial sense that the lines were ... being overrun” (63), only to return with a vengeance. Mounted police and riot cops charged repeatedly, seeking to “clear the entire grounds”. Forty two officers reported injuries in the battle that ensued, along with three dozen demonstrators who suffered injuries including broken bones and cracked skulls.

In OCAP’s analysis, the Premier who was already infamous for his command to get the “fucking Indians out of the park” at Ipperwash in 1995, “was more than happy to see the grievances of homeless people dealt with as a police matter.” (63) After being taken off guard by the rage and coordination of their victims, the government went on the offensive, seizing footage from mainstream media outlets to aid their efforts to lay as many trumped-up charges as possible. Aside from the sheer quantity of charges, there was a clear effort to target the perceived leadership of OCAP and people from different movements and oppressed groups.

The legacy of June 15 risks being overshadowed by the hostile media reports of the day and the taxing legal defense process that came afterwards. However, organizers are clear that June 15 was a “watershed in terms of resistance to the Tory Regime and the broader ‘global’ agenda it personifies [...] The call to ‘fight to win’ that came out of June 15 was taken up by others, contributing to ... building real resistance in this Province and beyond.” (65) As OCAP member A.J. Withers reflected, “While there is no doubt that repression has increased exponentially since June 15, OCAP has met it with ingenuity, creativity and resilience.” (16)

Early Days: The Politics Came With Us

My sense is that Punchclock is one example of the ingenuity, creativity and resilience that came out of June 15. The noxious experiences of being arrested, facing criminal charges, and having to live with restrictive bail conditions are, in some ways, a perfect cauldron for such a development. Here’s how Shannon describes the beginnings of Punchclock:

Well I was working as a screen printer, printing t-shirts in a basement, and Stefan and I, we were both part of OCAP at the time, and had been making art together for years. We decided to start the business because activists are always trying to get things done in a rush – t-shirts, flyers, posters, fundraising. So we just felt like it was a natural fit with the activist work we were doing, and then also, the professional work that I was doing. So we thought we could subsidize the fundraising materials with the for-profit side of the business.

Stefan also had experience with basement screenprinting as an extension of his work drawing and designing activist posters. Similar to Shannon’s “natural fit” between activist and paid work, Stefan describes Punchclock as an attempt to address a mixture of competing needs and desires:

Punchclock came about because, on a personal level, I was doing OCAP for a bunch of years, and my partner was in OCAP too, and we had a baby, and at that time, if you were an OCAP organizer, we got by living off welfare. But after a while, after you have a baby, you get older, it’s starting to feel weird a little bit.

And then with the screenprinting work that I'd done with the posters and doing design and drawing, I thought it might be viable to start a screenprinting studio. So I hooked up with Shannon – Shannon was a long time friend of mine, and we went out on a limb and just did it.

And so for us the politics of collectivism just came with us, it was just a project for us to try to live, and do something cool and meaningful and long-lasting. That's how it started. I needed money [laughing]. And I had a baby to feed.

Punchclock was envisioned as a way to meet their economic needs and pursue their artistic passions without having to check their political ideals at the door. The business model was to pay their rent and wages by offering original designs and printing to organizations with funding, and have this income underwrite the production of free or cheap work for grassroots groups they wanted to support.

Sidebar | Histories Conspire Together: A Radical Genealogy of Screenprinting

Screenprinting evolved from stenciling, one of earliest methods of duplicating images. Egyptian, Chinese, and Japanese artists have used stencils for over 1,000 years to produce wall decorations, ceramics, and textiles (Hughes and Vernon-Morris 2008: 310).

But a major limitation of the stencil process is that every element of an image has to be physically attached to its base. If you think about making a simple stencil for the letter *O*, cutting all the way around the *O* would cause the centre of the letter to fall out, so stencil artists have to make *bridges* to support *islands* by creatively manipulating their source material. This is why text that is reproduced with stencils has the distinct aesthetic of gaps within letters. Now imagine the difficulty of trying to duplicate a detailed image of a human face with stencils. Screenprinting came about from people trying to transcend these limits:

In Japan, printers began to use human hair and silk filament to suspend floating parts of their images. Ink could easily pass around a fine threadlike material, so the bridges were invisible. This idea probably led to the use of a net of threads, or a screen, and so the screenprinting story began. (Paparone et al 2008: 10)

After this innovation by Japanese artists in the 1850s, the screenprinting method travelled through trade with the West (Paparone et al 2008: 10). As Westerners do, Samuel Simone patented the “screen as we know it” in England in 1907. *The Printmaking Bible* cites an earlier patent claim of 1887 in Michigan, noting that rapid improvements followed, such as substituting more durable polyester meshes for silk (Hughes and Vernon-Morris 2008: 310).

In the early 1900s, the commercial printing industry was a major catalyst for the spread of screenprinting in the West, applying the method to produce display signs, banners, and souvenir pennants. Chain grocery stores found the services of screen printers more expedient and economical than the sign painters they had previously employed (Paparone et al 2008: 10).

In Lincoln Cushing’s article “Meshed Histories: The Influence of Screen Printing on Social Movements” (2009), he highlights two historical moments – one during the 1930s and one during the 1960s – when the commercial process of screenprinting was “discovered” by artists.

Operating from 1935 to 1943, the Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration (FAP/WPA) is described by Cushing as the “first, and so far, the last, great effort to put public funding into the arts” in the United States. The FAP/WPA was part of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal relief efforts to counter the effects of the Great Depression. Initially, 90% of the artists hired by the FAP/WPA had to come from the welfare rolls. Artists were employed to produce murals, paintings, posters and other accessible forms of art for the public. The FAP/WPA had a poster division based in New York City, which became a Silk Screen Unit in 1939 under the direction of artist Anthony Velonis. Whereas poster artists had previously painted their works by hand, Velonis used his background with commercial production – printing window display cards and wallpaper – to set-up a much more prolific screenprint operation (De Noon 1987: 18).

Decades later, during the May 1968 revolt in Paris, students famously took over the print departments of their art schools, converting them into around-the-clock poster production studios that were run according to principles of participatory democracy. The first poster produced by the Atelier Populaire was duplicated on a lithography press, taking all afternoon to produce 30 copies (Cushing 2009). The workshop then switched to screenprinting, which wasn’t very well known in France at the time, allowing them to turn out 100-200 posters per station, per hour. Much like students during the Paris revolt, movement artists around the world have used screenprinting to amplify their struggles, from internationalist artists in Cuba to anti-apartheid activists in South Africa and community-based Xicana organizers in the United States.

Parallel to this history, Andy Warhol began screenprinting images in the 1960s in The Factory, his New York City studio, starting in 1962 with a piece called *200 One Dollar Bills* (Hughes and Vernon-Morris 2008: 310), which sold for \$43 million in 2009. Warhol also produced his iconic screenprinted portrait of actress Marilyn Monroe in 1962. The ability to produce multiples in an assembly line process, along with the medium’s commercial tradition, fit perfectly with Warhol’s interest in the connections between celebrity and consumer culture.

All of these histories have conspired together to produce today’s context. In recent years, the silkscreening torch has been carried by the do-it-yourself ethics and aesthetics of independent cultural and political movements, including the gig poster community for concerts and networks of socially-engaged artists. Both streams gained momentum by using the internet to connect with each other and share their work with broader audiences.

While less so since Warhol, screenprinting still has a tenuous relationship to mainstream art institutions, where it is considered “a form of a lower order than other processes and forms of printmaking” (Gardner 1979: 7) due to its commercial tradition, relatively low barriers to entry, and political associations. The technical side of the process has remained mostly unchanged, though since the 1980s there has been a switch towards water-based inks, which are safer and require less intense chemicals for cleanup.

Just as Stefan received his first lesson in screenprinting from punk rock t-shirt printer Stacey Case, there are commonly direct links between past and present generations of artists. I was introduced to another connection by chance, when I put up a blog post that included an observation about the visual similarity between a recent poster by Melanie Cervantes and Jesus Barraza and a piece produced by Juan Fuentes in the 1980s. Soon after, a comment was posted by Melanie, who together with Jesus forms the Oakland-based collective Dignidad Rebelde, noting that Jesus had actually been mentored by Juan Fuentes, and that in turn, Jesus had mentored and collaborated with her (2011). In an interview with Melanie, Jesus, and Favianna

Rodriguez published in the journal *Signal* (2010: 9), they also say that they came into much of their printing equipment from older artists who were no longer printing or going digital.

Similar themes emerge in the documentary *Just Like Being There* (2012) about gig poster designers: older artists found inspiration in the psychedelic posters of the 1960s and influenced subsequent generations of artists who continue to push the envelope today. Often, as we see with Punchclock, there is overlap between subcultures and political scenes, which is something that MacPhee references in *Paper Politics* (2009: 7), and Cushing identifies in his study of Bay Area posters, both in terms of who made art and where their work got printed (2012).

You Have to Make Those Mistakes

In the spring of 2003 Shannon and Stefan rented a small studio in a warehouse populated by creative types at 44 Dovercourt Road, just south of Queen Street West on the eastern edge of Parkdale. The unit was about 400 square feet, with no window, ventilation, or a proper drain. These early days were a bit rough, says Stefan:

Just cause you can be a scrappy anarchist-activist doesn't mean you know how to do anything else. Looking back on it, it's cringe worthy, some of stuff that we were doing, but I think it's part of the process. You have to make those mistakes.

We didn't even have a proper drain in the first unit that we rented. So we drained into a bucket and had to go and dump it in the washroom. We didn't know how to screenprint properly either, so we were screwing up the screens and washing, then losing track of the bucket and flooding. We'd flood the auto detailer that was below us. It was just total anarchy, the bad kind of anarchy [laughing].

Punchclock operated out of there for a few months until it was obvious that a larger space was needed. They moved downstairs into a unit with loading dock doors on the sublevel from the first floor, which was about 1,000 square feet.

Most of the equipment was bought second-hand on the internet or through word of mouth. Stefan was able to piece things together like a functioning exposure unit for burning screens from used broken stuff.

“One business would be going out of sale and you'd be able to buy up all of their ink” remembers Shannon. “A friend actually had come into an inheritance and given Punchclock start-up money, and that's what we bought the t-shirt press with. It was a four-colour manual silkscreen press.”

Embracing Hybridity

The following year Punchclock began bringing other people in to share the equipment and to help pay the rent. “That's kind of when the idea of it being a collective came about” says Shannon, however the initial expansion went a little overboard:

At one point we had way too many people. Two bands – Kids on TV and Jon Rae and the River – were using it also as practice space. It was not big enough to have that multi-purpose. At that point we decided to boil it down to about five or six printers, and that was the steady, good balance that we struck: Will Munro, who has passed away now, and Michael Comeau who is an amazing artist, who did all the Vazaleen posters, John Caffery from Kids on TV, Simone Schmidt, and Stefan and I.

Rocky Dobe, a street artist who has been active in Toronto since the late 1970s, recalls visiting Punchclock in its early days:

I came down when they first started. It was a great collective, you could tell right away. There was something happening there every weekend. There were a lot of parties. Shannon did a lot of these railroad track treks. I remember one time it was -30°C and they'd meet at a party. They did this street art by the railroad tracks in the middle of winter. I just remember the collective nature of it. The energy was strong enough that people were showing up.

You'd go in there and there was always things happening. There was always people working, printing. There's bands coming out of there, it was just a great place to go in. Every time I went in there was always new projects. And there were no meetings. People used it as collective space. Some people took on collecting the rent – Stefan, Shannon, they were kind of the key people – that's how I met them. I mostly did posters – I was doing some street projects. I was kind of more independent out of the group. I used it differently because I was up north a lot.

Rocky's description of the multiple nodes of activity emanating from Punchclock resonates with Shannon's characterization of it as a "mythological beast" that was changing forms many times. Punchclock meant different things to people based on their particular interests and points of contact.

Balancing Acts

Simone Schmidt, an activist and artist who met Shannon and Stefan through OCAP, remembers how Punchclock's party atmosphere was partly a response to the chronic stress of political organizing:

There was a party attitude in Punchclock – that came predominantly from Shannon, Hunter, Ian, and Serena. They would throw big parties. And that was kind of a reaction, I think to a group of friends, half of the people were in OCAP and were doing really serious anti-poverty organizing –

So to balance it with something else?

Ya. Like half of the friends were like "You know what? We're queer, we're here, let's just party."

On a similar note, Stefan says that beyond economic sustainability, he had desires that were more lofty, such as having a space to develop skills for working together in a more functionally cooperative way. This aspiration was a reaction to shortcomings within activist circles and the isolation, alienation and loneliness of the competitive industrial world.

When I asked Stefan about how he saw Punchclock enacting "artistic direct action", he said:

Well, you can see artistic direct action was like a combination of OCAP sloganeering and our artistic sensibilities. Some of the actions that Shannon did were literally artistic direct actions. And then you think about what Rocky does, if you've ever seen Rocky work, it's pretty action packed. And also just thinking of all the examples of OCAP paraphernalia that came out of the studio as well, particularly things like pennants, flags, and placards.

I wanted all the people at the demonstrations to be magnified by these things, and the presence to be overwhelming for the state forces to see and for people passing by to see that. The type of organizing that we were doing to bring about large-scale militant demonstrations, you don't see that when you're just a passer-by, all you see is people, people that you think maybe are scary or that are fanatics.

So what I wanted to depict was an aura of organization and a unified message. I would print hundreds of oversized flags in bright colours so that there was a sense of unity. Because in North America, we are a sort of heterogeneous culture and when you go to demonstrations, we really are not skilled at acting as a unified body of people, whereas in other countries, there's more of a cultural tendency of that.

Transitions

Eventually, Stefan moved on because there was not enough paid work to support two people full-time. His role as a *de facto* studio technician fixing and building equipment was a key part of his personal evolution towards metalworking in factories.

Stefan started Punchclock Metal in 2006 as a collective space to share equipment and tools. In 2007, when Shannon decided that she also needed to shift careers, she and Stefan gave the business and the managing position of the studio over to Simone Schmidt.

4.2 Act II: “The Change That Needed to Happen”

New Era

When I was a young activist coming up, Simone Schmidt was coordinating day-to-day activities at Punchclock. I first heard about Punchclock through OPIRG-Toronto, a campus hub for social justice organizing, when Simone facilitated a pair of workshops on design as part of OPIRG’s *Tools for Change* series. Although I was already a fan of OCAP’s posters (there were quite a few on the OPIRG office walls), I’d never met any of the designers behind the work. I later connected with Simone about screen printing t-shirts for our student union and then again when I was with No One Is Illegal – Toronto.

Simone’s story about joining Punchclock is pretty interesting. After growing disillusioned with academia and deciding to drop out of university in Guelph, she describes applying to the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) as an “excuse” for moving back to Toronto:

I moved back to Toronto to go to OCAD but I didn't even go to the first day because I joined OCAP in the summer, and I was really into that, and I was 19, and I was doing housing casework, and, you know, it was all consuming. June 30th was happening at the same time – June 30th was a movement to mark the first anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. So the first meeting that I went to was in Punchclock at 44 Dovercourt.

Because Simone had taken on the task of doing flyers for OCAP, Stefan and Shannon invited her to work out of Punchclock. This opportunity conveniently allowed Simone to “appease my parents, and make some reason why I wasn’t going to art school. I was like ‘Look, I can just apprentice at this silkscreening shop.’”

Resisting Gentrification

While doing housing casework with OCAP, Simone became very familiar with the struggle for housing in the Parkdale neighbourhood that Punchclock inhabited:

I was going in to a lot of these places, the buildings and seeing how shitty they were. And the change that needed to happen in the neighbourhood wasn't the change that came. The change that came, first in this hotel, was Jeff Stober, the owner of the Drake, writing this declaration on his website, that he had made his money on a dot com business, and had taken a luxury vacation to Bali, and realized the importance of life itself.

And so he wanted to open up a community centre for artists, basically. And that this was our place. It was doing things like inviting artists to do residencies there. So all these kids were like, “Ya, free place to stay, that's great.” But ultimately it serves the rich and it became a beacon for people who were going to look at real estate in the area, and art galleries – whatever, you've heard about gentrification in Parkdale.

Members of Punchclock organized a big street party called *Noise Attack* as a response to this neighbourhood redefining act of aggression by the “death-star of gentrification” (2005):

Chris Eby, who would DJ at Punchclock parties, had this big rig of powerful speakers on a bike and trailer. And we just had all different people doing stuff. There was confetti that on one side said ‘crack’ and the other side said ‘illegal’ and then another one that would say ‘cocaine’ and then ‘legal’. We started from Punchclock at 44 Dovercourt and made the very

close walk to the Drake Hotel. We used the night to target the place because it was kind of like it's unveiling.

The police had already arrived once we got there. And we really actually had only planned to have a street party. People were all dressed up in costumes. It was the sight of one of the weirdest kinds of confrontational conversations I've ever had, and not with an owner, with an artist, this guy Misha Glouberman, he runs Trampoline Hall. He was trying to tell us "Don't protest against the Drake". He was like, "This could be a great place. Why don't we just take over the Drake?"

So we were doing a great, hilarious party, and then the speakers got confiscated. But it was enough to bring three paddy wagons to the vicinity. I had this pamphlet where I had taken the declaration of Jeff Stober and printed it, and then just circled all the offensive stuff about it. And that was funny because I got to hand it to him. So that was one kind of site of hilarious resistance.

Punchclock and all the tenants of 44 Dovercourt Road were ultimately evicted in 2008 due to the unchecked forces of gentrification. In a supreme act of irony, or perhaps conquest, the condo that was installed on the site of 44 Dovercourt after the original building was demolished gave itself the name ART Condos.

The condo developer hired the design firm responsible for putting together the interiors of the Drake (Laporte 2010). The lobby of the building is slated to "function as an art gallery, featuring artifacts showcasing the building's history as well as the work of local residents and area artists." Given the rapid pace of gentrification, "artifacts" may be an apt description for cultural production originating from this former Studio District.

Simone oversaw Punchclock's move to 251 Sorauren Avenue, a building owned by the original landlord of 44 Dovercourt Road, with whom Stefan had a good relationship, and where Punchclock Metal was already based.

While shifting westward towards the border between Parkdale and Roncesvalles, Punchclock's evasion of the forces of gentrification is perhaps only a temporary respite. As Edward Tubb (2012) observes in his blog post "On artistic industries", decades ago Sorauren used to be home to 1,000 artists and now there's only about 30 left, all located in 251 Sorauren. Interestingly, a catalyst cited for this particular shift in the dynamics of the neighbourhood was the choice to build an attractive public park instead of a transit bus depot.

Of course, this is just one episode of gentrification among many¹⁴, and artists are uniquely situated in relation to these transformations. Unlike rooming houses and other housing for low-income people, the loss of artist live-work studios receives public sympathy and some degree of action from dominant institutions. Artists are especially entangled with gentrification, first as agents, providing symbolic legitimation for neoliberal urban development (Blackwell 2005: 34), before being counted amongst the wreckage as victims.

An earlier episode of gentrification, also featuring the neighbourhood: When they were building the Gardiner Expressway in the late 1950s, much of South Parkdale was obliterated (Lost

¹⁴ "Theft", an intervention by Shannon, was given the following description: Who gets by, who gets broke, who dances on the pieces? Theft written in subdivisions at the foot of Gladstone and Queen, *in the many times over colonized district* (emphasis added) of the Queen West West, Parkdale, Toronto, Ontario, Turtle Island. (2007)

Toronto 2010). The curator of the Lost Toronto blog notes that his grandparents' home was demolished. The map that he provides shows that a number of streets were also wiped out, including "Mississauga" and "Iroquois", what European settlers called the Haudenosaunee.

The erasure of these street names that reference Indigenous Peoples is a symbolic reminder of the link between the neoliberal ideology that gentrification embodies and the ongoing process of colonialism. As the faces of government change from angry slashers to supposedly kinder, gentler reformers on the provincial level, or vice versa federally, the overall gameplan remains the same, only with slightly different packaging and priorities.

Indigenous Solidarity

Besides generating creative resistance to gentrification, Simone was also involved in organizing events that called attention to rising indigenous sovereignty movements that were being targeted by the state. Punchclock issued a call for art and organized a two night event under the banner of *Shawn Brant Is No Criminal*:

With parties, I think much like the idea of taking money from projects that were lucrative and funding print work for activist organizations, we decided to take money from indie rockers that we knew were going to spend \$5 on a Friday night anyways and direct it towards indigenous sovereignty movements. We knew Shawn Brant because of OCAP. Tyendinaga was involved in a struggle, and at the time there was not that much talk. Same with the BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions against Apartheid Israel] movement.

Anyways, we decided we were going to at the very least try to get money out of indie rockers. At the very most, involve them in some consciousness-raising.

As Shannon points out, support for Shawn Brant and the Tyendinaga Mohawks was particularly symbiotic because their pre-existing relationships stemmed from working together with OCAP and a lot of work being kicked towards Punchclock from 2003-05 to produce labels and packaging for Tyendinaga tobacco.

The fundraisers also included an element of reciprocity, with Simone noting that she would barter free printing for musicians in exchange for performances, knowing that artists struggled to make a living in the economy.

Sources of Tension

Likewise, economic challenges were an ongoing concern for Punchclock. When Simone shifted to printing full-time, she felt that:

There was a lot of pressure to make a certain quota. But also when you're an anti-capitalist it's hard to run a business because you pretty much don't want to be charging people any money because it feels like blood.

There were a number of other points of tension. Sourcing fair trade shirts became very costly and difficult. Making the transition from plastisol to water-based inks was another expense. There were also compounding environmental factors related to printing. Says Simone, "I loved it at first, but the chemicals started making me irritable." And then "artistically, when you're in the

realm of multiples, it feels like you're, in effect contributing to a glut." This was especially acute with printing shirts for one-day-only events like runs and even activist gatherings.¹⁵

While dealing with these strenuous economic and environmental tensions, Simone was getting sick from printing, her partner was fighting cancer, and Punchclock was facing a stark turnover in membership:

Shannon was gone and hadn't wanted to print anymore because of personal factors in her life, stages of life changing, and so I was left with the business. Stefan was into the metal shop, that was cool, but he didn't want to print anymore, and Will Munro, who had shared the space, died. Michael Comeau, who had also used the space, his arms stopped being useable for printing. So this was a medium he had been using forever and he couldn't print anymore.

Efforts to wrangle together a new generation of printers were impeded by a general lack of interest in collective process:

A lot of the new ethic in DIY culture seemed to only have to do with people resisting art school. I saw a lot of this attitude that people didn't want to be involved in any democratic process, or had no interest in meeting and trying to form something new together.

I remember we had a meeting at Punchclock, and we brought everyone who was interested in renting in, and I was like, "Okay, does anyone want to keep a speakers' list?" And I realized that that was such a crazy idea to some people because they had never operated in an environment where that had been used. Over the course of the meeting, the men talked. And the women were like [silence]. And the natural order, or conditioned order, of the culture prevailed. But I didn't really know how, as one person, how to break that down. Because there had been this stark turnover.

Disinterest in collective process carried over into a lack of understanding around the ethic of taking care of space collectively. Simone describes having to put up signs about cleaning-up after yourself, which was frustrating and "kind of ridiculous".

At the time Simone was in the process of mentoring someone who ultimately decided that she didn't want to pursue printing. What happened instead was "like capitalism in general, where the person who had the most interest in running a business and appropriating the tools to run his own business ended up taking it over."

In late 2009, Simone stopped printing out of Punchclock and directed her energy towards writing and performing music full-time:

I stopped printing at Punchclock eventually. After a few attempts at trying to make it keep going as an art collective, or show people how to use the website, my focus shifted to being a musician, because it was a thing that felt more accessible to me. I endured an amount of hardship in my personal life that required a more nuanced outlet.

¹⁵ Simone suggested the location of our interview, Café Pamenar in Kensington Market, because at the time they were displaying artwork by former Punchclock member Michael Comeau. Simone credits Michael as an inspiration in terms of eliminating waste and adapting to scarce resources by drawing from what's around you and then designing to those parameters. Michael developed a strong personal aesthetic and a considerable following with these principles.

And an outlet that didn't require direct relationships to movements. I used to be like I want to participate in this social movement because I admire what it's done. And then the more engagement that I had, the more I experienced sexual harassment within the movement, the more I experienced a lack of support in that sexual harassment, the more I experienced a lack of frankness in approaching the failures of movements, the less I wanted to be expressing in my art the kind of very red-and-black understanding of how things are. I think a lot of the time political art lacks in nuance. In terms of my mode of expression, it stopped being the only thing I wanted to do. I found that it was easier in song and language and poetry to have a few different readings.

4.3 Act III: Disappeared / Never Left

By the time I built up enough courage to see myself as an artist, Punchclock had faded from sight. The website was offline and my emails received no response. I was left feeling disappointed and confused.

This project started as a bid to figure out what happened. I wanted to talk with the people who started Punchclock in order to hear their stories and learn from their experiences with collective production. Then I wanted to find an accessible way to share this knowledge with folks in my communities of practice and beyond.

When I began doing interviews, one of the first things that I learned via Shannon was that Punchclock still exists at 251 Sorauren Avenue – at least as a collective space where people print out of, if not as a collective name that people share and produce work under, or as a platform for parties, events and political organizing.

After our chat outside of the Punchclock metal shop, Stefan brought me up to meet Jacob Horwood, who took over the administrator role at Punchclock Printing after Simone left. When I met Jacob he was in the process of printing a poster designed by Michael Comeau for a Vazaleen commemorative party in honour of the Will Munro Fund for Queers Living with Cancer.

Punchclock was also preparing to move into a more spacious unit downstairs, which would allow it to share space with Jesjit Gill's risography-based Colour Code Printing, upgrade its equipment, and bring a few new renters on board.

This third act is clearly a distinct phase of activity. Although Punchclock fell off my radar with the lack of a web presence and disconnection from social movement circles, it is easy to see how it may have “never left” for folks who were rooted in different scenes and had different expectations of Punchclock.

Of the five current renters that I've met (including Jacob and Jesjit), all went to art school at OCAD. This completes an interesting transformation from a membership primarily affiliated with OCAP to OCAD. In addition to printing with Punchclock, or as part of their printmaking practice, they are all doing interesting work in the broader cultural sector, such as organizing zine fairs, working in a gallery for emerging artists, running a small label for indie music distribution, and interning at a non-profit store that specializes in artists books.

4.4 Dynamic Collectivity

The artists' group includes a certain continuity ... At the same time, there is almost always present an awareness of the clock of self-destruction ticking in every group endeavour. Intensification of collective cooperation and interchange is more or less inevitably followed by a retreat from group life, and from the fringes of commodity culture to its centre.

What, How and for Whom, *Collective Creativity*, 2005: 14

As I sat with Rocky in his studio, he listed collective after collective that he had worked with over the years: No Right Turn, Anti-Racist Action, Purple Institute, Symptom Hall, Blackbird, and many anarchist gatherings and bookfairs. Speaking from decades of experience, Rocky observed, "The interesting thing about collectives is they don't last forever." I would add: nor are they ever static. Punchclock is as good an example as any of the dynamic nature of collectivity. After speaking with people who were directly involved with Punchclock, I can see how my initial theorization of a short history in three acts – essentially: radical, hybrid, deradical – was too neat. Dynamics of mixing and evolution were ever-present. As Shannon said, Punchclock was always a "mythological beast" that was changing form many times.

I failed to appreciate the full range of cultural activity linked with Punchclock and the ways in which these diverse forms complemented each other – in effect, I overlooked the centrality of hybridity due to my narrow view of what qualifies as political and my misgivings about the reversal in primary affiliation from OCAP activists to OCAD graduates. I still believe in the importance of artists directly engaging with politics, however I've realized that my thinking about what this looks like needs to be more expansive in order to do justice to the transformative dimension of creating queer social spaces, a major focus of Punchclock-affiliated band Kids on TV and party organizer Will Munro, the sense of community created by independent zine fairs, which Jesjit Gill has played an instrumental role in, and the artistic and practical lessons offered by Michael Comeau's example of pushing aesthetic boundaries while working within your means with inventive posters and comics influenced by pop culture and politics.

Although interesting to note, the shift in membership from OCAP to OCAD does not offer an explanation of *how* Punchclock evolved over time. We can start to understand the dynamics of change by attending to people's accounts of their own experiences. In doing so we encounter the complexities of everyday life: constant economic pressures, an unforeseen onslaught of sickness, career shifts and stages of life changing, a lack of opportunities for mentorship, differing interest in collectivity from a new generation of artists, a desire for more nuanced outlets for expression, and disillusionment with movements that were formerly a source of inspiration and strength. The reason why collectives are so dynamic is because the people who sustain them are constantly responding to changing conditions and their own competing needs and desires. As noted in the band list for Punchclock's eviction party, "THIS IS SLATED TO CHANGE, such is the nature of life." (2008)

When a group dissolves, or emerges as something new, what is left behind? Artifacts, memories, relationships? What about a void? For a time, Punchclock was a tentpole that people interested in art and activism could gather under to amplify their efforts. The fact of its existence was a source of inspiration as a model of people working together to enact a vision of artistic direct action and economic sustainability. And then it was no longer. With its evolution, Punchclock is an opportunity to think about how people come together to form collectives and the nature of

these ever-shifting formations. It's a moment to reflect on collectivity as an intervention, responding to limits we face and dreams we hope to realize. It's a chance to think about the multiplicity of cultural practices and how different scenes intersect. Punchclock demonstrates how a space can take on different meanings to different people. It could be a unique space to see a show, or an accessible place to print your art, do commercial jobs, connect with other artists and meet people. I saw it as an exciting political project that was making inspiring art. All these experiences, and many more, coexist and contend with each other.

To my mind, I'm still drawn to Punchclock's twin mandates of artistic direct action and economic sustainability, which suggest a certain level of self-reflexivity, of thinking about the urgencies of social movement struggles, the relegation of art to afterthought, and the necessity of waged work for survival. Punchclock was an attempt to address these challenges with a new kind of organization. Because these challenges still exist, and because Punchclock was continually transformed by its engagement with these realities, I think that it is worth examining in greater detail. In the following sections, I look at Punchclock through four fields: social locations, collective practices, radical aesthetics, and disruptive power.

5 ANALYSIS “The Struggle to Make the Brutal World Order Crumble”

5.1 [WHO] Social Locations and Apartheid States

Cutting Against the Grain

The members of Punchclock that I spoke with have a number of things in common, and many of these attributes are sources of inspiration because they go against the grain of dominant ideas about who gets to make art. The four people I spoke with are all self-taught artists who didn't go to art school. They come from a mixture of working class and middle class backgrounds. Most of their work was organized independently or on the margins of established art world institutions. And they all have experience working with movements organizing for social change. Often, this work with movements was formative to the development of their artistic practices.

When Shannon and I were discussing gentrification, and how one kind of response has been to bracket off artists as deserving of affordable housing, she offered Punchclock as an example of why this division was unhelpful. Shannon noted that many people involved with Punchclock were not involved with the fine art scene or formally trained as artists. Some people had 40 hour work weeks doing a trade and still contributed to the city's cultural sphere by doing activism, creating public art, and going to shows. Here's how she described her own process of artistic development when I asked if she had a background in fine art:

No I never, I got my high school diploma and moved to Toronto, and just started working low-wage retail kind of jobs, and got involved in activism, and just did art, had a practice that was in response to the little sub-culture that I belonged to. I then was fortunate enough to become an art installation technician, so working in galleries, working with people who are professional artists, have their Masters in Fine Art and whatever. I got my education in sort of a round-about much cheaper way, where I don't have the debt, and it took me probably longer. I wouldn't say I have as much confidence as doing maybe four years of crits or something, but ya, I just preferred to do it in a bit more of a DIY sort of dirty kind of way.

Even though Simone applied to art school and was accepted in to OCAD, she never actually attended. Instead, she also took a DIY path into art that was closely linked to activism:

I come from a middle-class background, my mom is a Slovenian immigrant who just wanted me to finish university, and retain my class privilege, because it didn't make any sense to her that I would resist that. So I went to apply to OCAD as an excuse. In the last few months of my university career I had been applying myself to a thing that I had normally thought of as a hobby, which was visual arts. I moved back to Toronto to go to OCAD but I didn't even go to the first day because I joined OCAP in the summer, and I was really into that, and I was 19, and I was doing housing casework, and, you know, it was all consuming.

Much like Shannon and Simone, Rocky made his own way into art-making, although he grew up as a “Ukrainian kid” in an earlier era, which he calls a “different world”:

I started as a street kid, so that was a little different. I started on the street, shining shoes in Toronto, and so it came as an extension of personal, like a lot of art, trying to figure life out. I grew up in downtown Toronto, single mom with four kids. Back then, there were no single moms, divorce was barely legal in '68. It was a different world than now. We moved here when I was 10 from northern Manitoba, far north, way up, no road in the town.

Rocky started putting stuff up on the streets in the late 1970s when photocopy machines first became accessible. He developed a bit of a cult following for the metal books and plaques that he anonymously mounted around the city starting in the 1980s. During the same period, without telling anyone about his street art, Rocky was making political posters and doing large-scale billboard modifications with activists. Rather than trying to make a living from art, Rocky worked in construction so that he could retain full control over his artistic practice. Only recently, he's started to produce intaglio prints and explore the "fine art" printmaking scene:

I just learned this technique because I had to learn it. I was making plates to put up in the street and then people said you can print on them. So I did a course. So this one here I'm going to scratch in, then I'll dip it in to acid, and the line will be black. Then aquatint later for shading and stuff. I've actually started doing some printmaking. And that's not bad. They have this big national printmaking awards at the Palais Royale. I won national – I win money and the stuff sells, so it's a way to make some money.

Stefan, who like Rocky also has Ukrainian roots, started making art as a youngster in B.C. with his dad, a self-taught sculptor:

We lived in a housing project and we would sharpen screwdrivers and use them as chisels to carve soapstone. For him it was sort of living the dream of being a craftsman. He always had these schemes about selling our sculptures to lawyers and used car salesmen. It never really panned out that way. It was more the passion and the dream than it was the reality.

But then in terms of printmaking in Toronto, lots of years go past, lots of adventures, lots of misadventures, and I end up in downtown Toronto, living in an a sort of anarchist, collective, squeegee punk house in Kensington Market. And then somebody invited [punk t-shirt printer] Stacey Case over to give a screenprinting workshop.

With Stacey Case's rudimentary lesson, Stefan went a step further and created a screenprinting studio in the basement of his collective house. Stefan aspired to work for movements and wanted to join OCAP, but felt intimidated because they were doing "very hardcore stuff" and he was "reading *Z Magazine* and talking all night long at coffee shops about what was so fucked up about the world." Art became an accessible way for him to contribute and satisfy his drive to be part of something larger. In turn, by drawing and designing posters for movements, Stefan became more skilled and grew more confident as an artist.

Anti-Racism & Prefigurative Politics

Another attribute that the people I spoke with have in common is that they are white settlers, or descendants from European immigrants to Turtle Island. Unlike the factors listed above, the prevalence of whiteness falls in line with dominant conceptions of who gets to make art.

While I use the term "whiteness" in relation to members of Punchclock, it is important to recognize that the process of racial formation is a result of social and historical forces. In the early 1900s people of Eastern European heritage, and Ukrainians in particular, were assigned specific roles in the Canadian nation-building project based on the idea that they were "racially" suited for the difficult work of pioneer farming on the Prairies (Satzewich 1999: 322). Moreover, during the First World War and for two years after, from 1914 to 1920, about 4,000 Ukrainians were interned under the War Measures Act, with another 80,000 registered as "enemy aliens" obliged to report regularly to police (Luciuk 2001: 6). Internees were forced not only to construct

the camps they were being detained in, but also to work on road-building, land-clearing, woodcutting, and railway construction projects (14). However, over time Eastern Europeans have been assimilated into the project of whiteness, while the unfree labour and mass incarceration of brown and black bodies still underwrites capitalist hyper-exploitation. Although slightly reconfigured, the dynamic of slaveability continues to intersect with colonialism and war (Smith 2006) to sustain Canada's white supremacist nation-building project.

Since the focus of this research paper is on prefigurative cultural production and challenges to hegemonic power structures, I would like to look at this reality in greater detail. Practicing prefigurative politics means actively working towards making the space you share with people reflect your values. So with Punchclock, what was the relationship between anti-racist values and anti-racist practice? Why may Punchclock have had more success with supporting anti-racist and anti-colonial campaigns than with addressing these systemic power imbalances in their own organizing spaces and events?

Simone brings attention to this dynamic in her reflections on organizing the *Shawn Brant Is No Criminal* shows in 2008:

I think the things we could have done better was trying to do a general exposure and education and create forums that didn't exemplify the apartheid state, which is to say that most of the people who attended the shows were white and settlers. We didn't make partnerships with other people. So that was a big failure in terms of it being a sustainable thing. But it wasn't that calculated. We just needed money [to support legal defense] so we did it. Same thing with Algonquins of Barriere Lake.

A similar critique of whiteness was raised in relation to the composition of Punchclock itself:

One of the people that I was training came in and was like, "There are no people of colour here." And I was like, "Well, I invite you to do whatever you want. If you want to do a POC printing day, Saturday free, the space is yours." You just have to put in the work of like, making the posters, getting the word out. And she didn't do it, which made me be like "OK, you just don't want to do this work, but you want to criticize why this can't work."

I felt within the younger generation a lack of ability to make things happen. I was so lucky to have people who were older than me, I was offered the tools and then I used them. So that was also interesting because clearly what was necessary was a kind of mentorship with an older generation that had been totaled by sickness, ultimately.

I've seen a lot of organizations deflate because of lack of mentorship. The other part is that mentorship requires a really organic combination of personalities, especially in artistic practice, which is private, a lot of the time, or personal at least. So that just didn't come about with the people who were joining.

This anecdote provides a sense of the tension between self-reflexivity and capacity, or the gap between awareness and action. In addition to mentorship, another potential strategy that Simone identified was skillsharing:

I think the coolest things that I've seen that I wished Punchclock could have done, but didn't, was skillshares. I think that can be a site for people to meet and come to know each other and gain access to tools and skills. Like the parties were really good sites for people to meet and come, but ya, skillshares would have been cool.

When I asked if skillsharing opportunities still happened informally, Simone responded:

Ya, you just had to have a level of desire, and confidence, to penetrate a social environment, because it wasn't an open call. And I think there's a range a comforts and discomforts that people have, based on race and gender, and I think that means it's easier for a white kid like me to join Punchclock than for someone else who might have the same aptitude or skill. But that's because they didn't have in their mandate that they were an open collective.

In short, the whiteness of Punchclock's membership and audience was linked to a lack of partnerships with POC and indigenous groups; an unmet need for dedicated time and space, mentorship, and skillsharing; and the deterrence of a predominantly white space for people from different social locations and social circles. Amidst Punchclock's whirlwind of activity and engagement with internal and external struggles, mechanisms to address the reproduction of racial privilege and exclusion were missing. This kind of access was not made a priority.

How We Do Access

Although there were mechanisms that took financial accessibility into consideration, these alone were not enough to ensure equal access. When other folks were invited to join Punchclock, part of the criteria for membership was based on their ability to pay a share of the rent. To ameliorate this, rent was charged on a sliding scale, significantly lower than the rates of fancy institutions, and you could make arrangements to print a single project at a low daily rate. But how would you know this unless you were already connected to the right people? And who would be in the best position to take advantage of this opportunity? While informed by strong social justice principles, free or subsidized work for grassroots groups followed the same service model as paid gigs: production-for rather than production-with. So even when the work was made accessible to diverse groups, the production process was not. Skillsharing did occur, but informally, with those who had secured access to the space.

Punchclock deserves recognition for taking on work that many people were not touching at the time. They supported direct action anti-poverty organizing, Palestine solidarity activists in their efforts to launch the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement, non-status migrant justice campaigns, and indigenous land defense struggles that were being criminalized by the state. Punchclock directly contributed to movements working to dismantle destructive systems of capitalism and colonialism through their art-making and fundraising efforts. Having said that, I believe that the absence of a more inclusive and proactive access mandate hindered the transformative potential of their work and limited their own sustainability as a political project. Without creating new opportunities for access and education, Punchclock was primarily making art for struggles rather than supporting more people in struggle to find their artistic voices. As a result, when faced with a stark turnover in membership, Punchclock was limited to the existing pool of printmakers, which is predominantly populated by art school graduates, who may actually be more racially diverse, but who do not necessarily share the same commitments to challenging power as self-taught activist artists.

The case of "who gets to print" is a good illustration of William Roy's (2010) argument that how we do culture is as important to understanding its effects as the content of what gets produced. In fact, the two are closely related, evoking Walter Benjamin's (1934) call for revolutionary art to have an organizing function beyond its value as propaganda. As Stefan noted in relation to his

experiences with movement organizing, the concentration of responsibility into small groups is ultimately a “self-defeating process”:

You can argue that it's justified in certain ways because things in some cases wouldn't happen without it, but then also it's a self-defeating process in the sense that it always makes sure that there is a small number of people doing stuff when there needs to be a large number of people doing stuff.

During anti-apartheid organizing in South Africa in the 1980s (Poster Book Collective 1991: 2), in a context marked by incredibly violent state repression, artists made a conscious effort to pass on their skills and promote easy-to-adopt techniques because aboveground political activity was made illegal by the apartheid state and poster workshops were being firebombed. The skills for designing and producing silkscreen posters had to be distributed as far and wide as possible in order to keep the communicative capacity of the movement alive. In a similar fashion, social movement artists in 1968 Mexico City rotated responsibility as a way to socialize risks:

We had a rule that whoever printed the posters didn't do anything else at the time. Creating those posters was an illegal act, so if you were to engage in putting them up you would be committing two crimes. Meaning that if you were to get busted, it would be only for producing posters and nothing else. So we took turns printing and pasting. (Armengod with Moreno 2010: 94)

I agree that skillsharing, mentorship, and dedicated time and space are good strategies for promoting access. Even though it's primarily oriented to monthly fee-paying members, HackLab.TO, a collaborative space for using technology to make and repurpose things, offers weekly open houses where guests are fed, given enthusiastic tours of the space, and info on how you might join (2013). Bike Pirates, another collectively-run space in Toronto, is a DIY bikeshop that teaches you how to fix your own bike. Bike Pirates made Sunday a day for trans and women only hours as part of their efforts to address their own challenges with accessibility (2013). While I'm focusing here on access through the lens of race, this analysis can and should be extended in terms of gender, class, sexuality, disability and other intersecting axes of identity.

Still, the politics of inclusion must be practiced critically, or they risk being wielded as merit badges to deflect responsibility from persisting forms of exclusion and oppression. Given the unrelenting history of white supremacy, the idea that a primarily white space can transform itself to successfully model anti-racist principles warrants a high degree of skepticism (Ahmed 2004). Inclusive gestures can be a way of allowing white supremacy, or the dominant space initiating the process of inclusion, to continue without fundamental reorganization. Therefore, it is also important to learn from examples of autonomous organizing that go beyond the politics of inclusion into existing structures. To provide another Toronto-based example, the Queercore Toronto collective has been organizing a Queer Coverband shows for several years as a response to intersecting forms of exclusion in the mainstream music scene, writing:

We are bored and tired of straight cis-gendered white dudes taking up the majority of space at shows. We want more rad folks to sing and play their hearts out. For too long we have been excluded. It's time for our glittery selves to shine.

This space is prioritizing queer/trans people of colour, black, indigenous, women and all those that are underrepresented and alienated from the music scene. Let's build our own beats to break down barriers and help create a music scene that aims to be safe, inclusive and empowering. Have no shame in your skill level. You can do it! (2013)

Similarly, the Ste-Émilie Skillshare is a community art space in Montreal with a focus on empowerment, self-determination and collective liberation, which is “run by and for people who are trans, two-spirit, queer, Indigenous and/or people of colour and friends” (2013). Prefigurative cultural projects need to give serious thought to how they will engage with access and make it a central priority. Part of our responsibility as cultural workers is to “create conditions in which the ability to make what you want is shared by all.” (Triantafillou 2010: 25) And this might include taking leadership from existing or emerging autonomous organizing efforts. Given that the tradition of political printmaking is racially diverse, and has been embedded in struggles against white supremacy, there is no reason for whiteness to be the prevailing condition today.

5.2 [HOW] Relations of Collective Production

It should, however, be possible to trace the various forms of collective works back to an essential condition: collective works should produce content that could not otherwise be achieved by individuals.

What, How and for Whom, *Collective Creativity*, 2005: 26

Resource Sharing & Collaborative Production

What kinds of collective activity were members of Punchclock engaged in? What was actually done collectively and what was not? Finding the answers to these questions is oddly difficult because we are conditioned to see the world in terms of individual actors and actions. We are fixated upon sole authorship even though most of our daily existence is a product of collectivity. As the members of the art group Temporary Services write in their book *Group Work* (2005: 8), “Each person participates in hundreds of groupings simultaneously without even thinking about it. We move fluidly in and out of groups all day long, even if we spend that time entirely by ourselves.” In the most reductive sense, I see Punchclock performing two interconnected types of collective practice: a) resource sharing and b) collaborative production. I will provide a few examples to expand on these ideas and demonstrate how their collective activity exceeded the bounds of individual potentialities.

Punchclock started as a shared idea between Shannon and Stefan, who pooled their resources together to rent a space and acquire equipment. Forming Punchclock allowed them to generate income and produce art together in a way that transcended their singular capacities. They were able to move from printing in their basements to a proper studio set-up. Commercial jobs paid the bills and subsidized work with grassroots groups. Moreover, the demands of these jobs helped develop new skills that fed back into socially-engaged art projects. When Shannon and Stefan opened Punchclock up to new members, the collective operation expanded, bringing in new people and ideas. Artists and musicians came on board because they had a mutual need for affordable space and shared similar cultural affinities. Although overcrowding was a risk, everyone benefitted from having cheaper rent and an eclectic array of talented people to assist with fundraising parties. Shannon and Stefan had the administrative responsibility of collecting rent and interacting with the landlord, perhaps the only formal role, which was later passed on to Simone, and taken up by Jacob.

By virtue of sharing space together, there was further cross-pollination between artistic, musical, and political scenes. Bands practiced, performed, and printed posters in the space. Sometimes parties fed into art actions like Shannon’s railroad treks. Sometimes parties *were* art actions like the *Noise Attack* organized against the Drake Hotel. Simone shifted from being a full-time printer to a full-time musician while working at Punchclock. This plug by the Wavelength music festival for Punchclock’s eviction party is a good testimony to their bond with the music scene:

Punchclock is a great group of artists, cultural workers, social and political activists and have countless opened their studio space to local bands for really wicked shows. Perhaps you were there when Arcade Fire played surrounded by beautiful screen prints and illuminated by flashlights. Perhaps you bought some amazing prints from them or had them design your bands show poster. To celebrate and/or eulogize their home, the people behind the studio have organized a two-day party on August 28 & 29: Stars on 44. (2008)

Aside from the shows and practice space, undoubtedly what attracted many people to Punchclock was the printmaking operation. As Rocky points out, printmaking is communal in nature because it is impractical for most working artists to acquire space and equipment with their limited resources. Some people are content to share equipment and just do their own thing. The gift of cheap collective space is that it affords you the autonomy of having your own individual art practice. Many artists are “working alone together” (Gillick 2010: 43) out of sheer necessity, however by doing so, they create something new. The reality of shared spaces is that they are often catalysts for new relationships, ideas, and collaborations.

As an example of collaborative production, when I asked Stefan about the *Homes Not Colonies* poster, he mentioned that he hadn’t come up with the message:

I was really struggling with what to put on this particular poster ... I think we were drinking at a bar, and we were just throwing slogans out there, and Shannon ended up coming up with the sentence. We wanted to use "homes not something", but we couldn't think of what it was. I think also the colonies came from, I could be mistaken about the timeline, but Gaza might have been happening at the same time, and so I think the colonies was also a reference to colonizing of Occupied Palestine. And then applying that same logic here, thinking about condo towers going up, and these colonies of privileged people.

Many times he and Shannon would do the labour-intensive work of printing posters together, which can be a lot easier with an extra set of hands. During Simone’s era, Punchclock organized showcases of members’ work. The shows took on an added collaborative dimension with the *Shawn Brant Is No Criminal* events, where Simone issued a public call for art. She says:

I just wanted people to think about it on their own. And I would contact people who had shown to care about social justice and art. There are a lot of weirdos in Toronto who are struggling to fit in in all different ways. This artist Mark Connery, he's been at it for years, he put stuff in. We had David Morrisseau, he's an artist, related to Norval Morrisseau, and he was active at PARC. Then we had Agata Mrozowski, who would help out with Punchclock stuff, and she printed her own work. People were just getting their minds around how to represent the problems they saw, the struggles they wanted to commemorate, and struggles they wanted to see in the images. And that was good.

In essence, as Alan Moore (2007: 216) writes, collectivity creates new “situations, opportunities, and understandings within the social practice of art.” Or, as he put it elsewhere: “artists’ collectives do not so much make the flowers as the soil.” (2002) Yet the production of social life is intimately connected to social death. Referencing the histories of the Black Panthers, Young Lords and Brown Berets, Moore states “Oppression is the laboratory of collectivity.” (2002) He suggests that many artists of colour were inspired by the formation of these militant revolutionary political collectives in the 1960s. For artists, collectives can be mostly self-serving, just for the benefit of a select few, but they also have the potential to be in service, or in active collaboration, with struggles against hegemonic power structures on a scale that transcends our individual capacities. Further, their prefigurative practices model possible ways forward for nonhierarchical organizing towards transformative social justice.

Conditions for Success

If we accept the axiom that “without others no one can succeed” (Moore 2011: 1), taking this as a “basic fact, well known among artists of all eras [that] was put aside in the buildup of the modern artist hero,” then what are the conditions for success, if any, beyond shared needs and interests?

What about shared values? Or formal structures and decision-making processes? Punchclock members expressed a range of views on this question. With respect to shared values, Rocky identified two challenges: first, that ideological motivation is not enough to sustain a functioning collective, and second, that prescriptive ideology can be divisive and ineffective:

Usually I find collectives work when you share equipment and share what you need to share. If it's ideologically based, it doesn't really work. You're there because "I think I should be in the collective" – it's not real. It's like a relationship with a partner, it has to be more than – it has to be connected to how you live your life. [...]

You have to be able to live with not agreeing with everybody. As opposed to, I've seen collectives get together, they want to have a manifesto, "How do we agree on stuff?" Well you can't get everyone to agree on something. If you can agree not to agree you might be alright. You might have a basic study, but you have to trust. What does it matter if it's written down? Nobody cares what you say you're doing, it's what you're doing. "We're white anti-colonialist allies" – well whatever, what are you doing?

Stefan also spoke against having a formal ideological basis for a collective, but he stressed the importance of core principles, which perhaps are similar to the "basic study" that Rocky mentions, in order to prefigure the type of social relations we want to see:

Well, I think you do that by applying activist, anarchist, or socialist principles to institutions that we create, that are functional institutions that actually give you things that you need to survive, like workplaces, workers' cooperatives, places that distribute food, gardening – any of those things that we need to get by.

And don't follow a rule book or whatever, but when it comes to sweeping up the shop here, I find it to be a great injustice to the history of working class struggle when guys here don't sweep up after themselves – not because I feel like it's personally insulting to me, or because it's messy. I feel like if you're working in a collaborative environment, it's even more important for you to step-up and do onto others as you would have them do onto you. Clean the shop up. Invest your time and energy so that it's for the benefit of all.

Those practices lead to those type of practices on a larger scale. Because then, say we have a metal shop over here, and we treat each other respectfully, and we operate under those principles, and there's another shop over there, and they need some help with something, and they come over here and we say "No problem, your problem is our problem". And whether or not they're political, that just became a political transaction between us. Through that relationship. And we didn't even have to say the word communist or socialist or anarchist or whatever.

This grounded approach resonates with me. I like the idea of embodying principles rooted in relationships of mutual aid and collective responsibility, particularly as a way of connecting with people who are not immersed in radical politics, or who may have had negative experiences. However, on a practical level I worry about the lack of formal process and structure in a context where things are always changing. When faced with challenging internal and external tensions, such as stark membership turnover and rampant gentrification, collectives need to decide how they want to engage with these inescapable dynamics of change.

Both Shannon and Simone mentioned that they had explored the idea of institutionalizing Punchclock to some degree. Shannon said that Punchclock had thought about becoming something more formal like a workers' cooperative, but they found the loose collective model worked better for them:

Collective is something that fit better because we just were shaking hands kind of, that sort of agreement. Aside from a business partnership that Stefan and I owned that was called Punchclock, where there was two of us operating under one business number. Punchclock the studio and I guess the octopus was always just an idea, and not so much of a legal structure. So we had thought about becoming a cooperative at some point, but it never seemed that important for us to have by-laws or that kind of thing. People kind of came and went. There was always one studio manager and lots of people's interests were balanced, but it was less formal than a cooperative.

Simone recalled that a potential benefit of going with a more formal structure was being eligible to apply for grants, a potential stabilizing source of income, but she noted “my work [was] cut out for me in life”, and also “in my heart of hearts, I don’t know about institutionalizing collectives.” In her experience, groups operating with these models tend to become very top-heavy, whereas Punchclock had a kind of spontaneity that allowed for every artist to have autonomy:

I think everyone's artistic practice is so different that we need to allow each other freedom within our artistic practices, and that might be like, not working together, and that might be just allowing people to grow – this, that, the other way, that I think that institutionalizing and having boards of directors maybe doesn't allow – that's a question...

My thinking on institutionalization is that it's a strategic choice: you have to give some things up in order to (hopefully) gain other things. While formal structures like non-profits and coops are required by law to follow particular rules, informal structures like collectives and grassroots social movements vary widely in how they choose to articulate their core principles and operating procedures, though they tend to have much less written on paper. One of the trade offs with resisting formal processes is that informal processes will fill the gaps. As Simone described, when you have a meeting for new members and people don't want to talk about process – either because they've never had these kinds of conversations before, or because they haven't worked out for them in the past – the conditioned order prevails: men tend to talk over women. Without formal rules on how to join, some people will be able to navigate through informal networks due to their privileged social locations, while others will not.

That said, the strategic dilemma is real because as Simone also mentioned, the process of formalizing rules, even while utilizing social justice language, can lead towards top-down or bureaucratic structures that squeeze the life out of a collective. Today I see many organizations, some with radical histories, continue to exist seemingly only for their own sakes, marching forward with forgotten visions and empty hearts, accomplishing very little as far as progressive politics. When Rocky and Stefan describe their aversion to dogmatic ideology and endless group process, they are speaking from experience. Like with any labour relationship, artists strive to have some degree of autonomy over their work, a sense of purpose, and enough time and energy to follow through on their commitments. In her reflections on organizing with the Sistren Theatre Collective, Honor Ford-Smith (1997: 253) discusses how the amount of time required for collective decision-making left the group with significantly less time to produce. She writes, “We became so busy debating issues of race, class, political affiliation, finances, and status among ourselves...” that “we were all tired *all the time*.”

For rules to be useful, they have to be developed collectively and periodically revisited, revised, and reaffirmed as people come and go. Otherwise they are more restrictive than constructive. When I say rules, I'm thinking about something concise, boiled down to the essentials based on

your own priorities, somewhere in between Corita Kent's 10 rules for making art (Steward and Kent 1992: 176) and the Inkworks Press 10 point basis of unity (Cushing 2007: 145). It doesn't necessarily have to be an ideological manifesto, just principled and practical, anticipating the inevitability of conflict and change. What are your goals? Who do you want to work with? How will you work together? What kind of things will you produce? How will you gauge if you are on track?

As Punchclock demonstrates, one of the challenges of collective practice is that we are not taught about how to work cooperatively. In fact the opposite is true. Our default conditioning is to emulate the competitive, self-interested devices of capitalism. And so it is important to make space to develop skills for working together in a functionally cooperative way. Perhaps part of this process is engaging with the idea of making your underlying principles more explicit without alienating the people you want to work with.

Another lesson we can take from Punchclock is that of pragmatism. One way to look at the presiding operating framework would be as a lack, a missed opportunity, because processes were more informal than formal, and ultimately unable to ingrain Punchclock's original politicized mandate beyond a certain point. But this perspective leaves out the wider context: everything else going on in the world and the day-to-day realities within Punchclock. An additional way to look at primarily informal processes is as a series of tacit agreements rooted in flexibility and compromise, revisited on an ongoing basis as a necessary part of a hybrid group that is constantly changing forms. In short: a give-and-take. If the support isn't there, you can't make a discussion on rules and structure a priority, and from the sounds of it, even the activist artists were wary of any path involving more formality.

However, by adopting a pragmatic approach, Punchclock was able to evolve and survive rather than collapsing from the weight of its political ambitions and social contradictions.¹⁶ Perhaps by paying attention to which way the wind was blowing internally, and what external conditions were dictating, self-destructive debates and divisive demands were avoided. Punchclock overcame early difficulties by embracing hybridity and clearly benefitted from the cross-pollination arising from the collective practices of resource sharing and collaboration. Although Punchclock may have entered into an abeyance period in relation to its activist mandate, if there were enough interest in seeing this activity emerge again, all the instruments are still in place. In the spirit of Suzanne Césaire's permanent readiness for the Marvelous, I hope for such a reality to manifest, informed by the experiences of those who came before us.

¹⁶ To give some insight into their future endeavours, Shannon added that she went on to take a business course on managing co-operatives and has been working on a non-profit land co-op "for as long as Punchclock has been around", which Rocky and Stefan were also part of founding, though they are not as centrally involved. This land co-op has more formal rules and processes and is less action-oriented.

5.3 [WHAT] The Work of Art in the Age of Apocalypse

Why Print by Hand?

In this age of digital design and mass reproducibility, why bother with screenprinting? Why print anything by hand? Punchclock's medium of choice, handmade silkscreen prints, are a throwback to another era, when screenprinting was one of the most accessible and economical ways for people with scarce resources to produce colourful images in multiples.

When Shannon described her DIY path into art-making, I asked her if that was why she gravitated towards the medium of screenprinting:

I think so, ya, probably. It's really accessible. The fact that you can make multiples and you can sell things for really cheap. And you can make street art at very low cost and you're not working on an original that you need to sell for three grand to make any money off the work that you make. It's definitely a medium that lends itself to activism and DIY street culture.

While certainly more accessible than many forms of fine art, the difference today is that with digital design and copy machines, screenprinting is not necessarily the most affordable medium, even for colour copies. Accessibility depends on your position in relation to these mostly digital and analog tools. For instance, in my work with social movements almost everything I made was designed on a computer and printed with the support of sympathetic labour or student unions who own colour photocopiers that print posters up to 11x17 inches. And yet, with the fairly widespread availability of these newer technologies, people continue to screenprint. This is Stefan's take on why:

I mean in some ways it distinguishes itself from digital image reproduction because people are so used to it that they always look past it. So when they see something that's screenprinted, it has more potency and it requires you to have less copies, but then it also requires you to make sure that's there's more impact, in terms of what the messaging is.

Echoing Stefan's point about the importance of impact in a climate where we're visually overwhelmed, Simone explains the connection between images that "pack a real punch" and the slow, thoughtful process of printmaking:

If you can make something really quick, it means that you haven't had to meditate and think about it, and so part of why I think digital media becomes iffy and absorbing the aesthetic of the dominant culture should be done thoughtfully, is that you want to pack a real punch if you're going to print a lot of things. And if you have to stare at something that you're going to be printing for a lot longer, like if you have to do it, or you have to print it this many times, that's an opportunity for meditation that is useful.

Radical Aesthetics & Productive Political Tensions

Within their own distinctive styles, all the Punchclock members I spoke with have a strong emphasis on hand-drawn elements, as opposed to slick digital imagery that mirrors mainstream advertising. Compared to most activist posters that you encounter, there's clearly a lot of time and thought put into the designs, with a focus on conveying more nuanced ideas and exploring different aesthetic possibilities.

For example, Shannon has a drawing in the *OACAP Perpetual Calendar* of a woman standing on the street while lighting a crack pipe. A plane flies overhead with a banner waving behind it that says “government”. Little packages with parachutes fall from the plane, carrying incendiary words: you, dirty, fiend, piss test, prison, HIV, \$5 rock. On the top left of the page, there’s a brick building where a man in a suit is snorting cocaine, undisturbed. And in the bottom right, a question: “Can you afford a bomb shelter?” This evocative imagery and language carries over into Shannon’s screenprinted work. Simone mentioned two pieces by Shannon that were favourites of hers:

Shannon made this really cool poster, it said "Be safe, run with the pack" and it was like all these wolves running together, and then it said "date rape drug".

Whoa. Jarring, right?

Ya, just being honest about this threat, and safety in numbers. And she had one that was like "Love who you will". That always stuck with me. I think her art really enriched people's houses and living environments.

Even though Punchclock oriented itself towards the activist community, there were recurrent tensions in this relationship. These points of friction are quite informative, in that they reveal contested ideas about how arts-based organizing might challenge and improve upon methods of political organizing that get reproduced uncritically. When I spoke with Shannon about her artistic approach, she highlighted this tension:

In terms of my style, I think ya, it being more personal, more narrative, it being influenced by an aesthetic interest in beauty that is suspended above ... activist branding. That was always difficult for me because I found it really difficult to do graphic design for activists, which is sort of what we were pitching ourselves to be. I don't know if I really succeeded in that matter. In Punchclock there was always this little bit of tension where I'd make things that were a little too weird, or not so simple, not like a red star on a black flag kind of thing. It wasn't really my thing. So ya, I love illustration, and I love more complicated stories, and more complicated aesthetics than activists usually go for.

Complicated or unconventional narratives and aesthetics are not always well-received. Rocky mentioned that when he produces political posters, he’s also had to contend with rigid ideas about what activist art should look like:

Often people don't like it. They say "Can't you have a fist?" Then eventually a couple years later, like nobody liked this poster when I handed that one in [gesturing to 2001 FTAA poster]

And now it's a classic. What would they say?

Can you make the text bigger?

Can you add some fists? Can you put some flags in there?

Ya exactly. It's okay, I don't really care. They can say what they want. But this is what I do and I do it for free. So imagine if you're always doing it for money. You're always going to be slowly compromised – you're going to move your work towards that.

Because Rocky didn't have to rely on art as a primary source of income, he had the artistic freedom to pursue his own desires. When working with movements, having an established

personal practice makes some space for boundaries. You could say: “Look, if you’re asking me, this is the kind of work that I do, so keep that in mind.”¹⁷ Meaningful collaboration is easier when there’s mutual respect. However, the reality is that some people don’t trust images. And maybe for good reason. For people who want to micromanage everything down to spoon-feeding a single correct reading, many images prove too unwieldy.

Rocky’s work is a perfect example of this. His intricate compositions, which begin as etchings on copper plates, have a very personal feel and yet are open-ended enough to leave lots of room for interpretation. His style is transfixing partly because it is so different than everything else that you see. Like the 2001 FTAA poster, many of Rocky’s images prominently feature buildings that are in various states of destruction and dramatic upheavals. They’re high-stakes, apocalyptic kinds of visuals that invoke, sometimes explicitly, Marx’s declaration that “All that is solid melts into air.” When I asked him about the significance of these buildings, he turned the tables, asking me what I thought. Then, gesturing to some copper plates on his worktable, he said:

That’s a log tower, to me that’s colonial. Everything is a building, kind of, that I do. I don’t know, other than: power, they look like prisons, they look like office towers.

Rocky explained that he worked in highrises as a construction worker for many years. And that he used to dream of buildings too. They were a potent symbol, one that he knew how to draw, and that stuck with him.

If Rocky’s images offer a sense of apocalyptic possibility, that amidst a suspension of social norms new realities could emerge, Stefan’s work runs with the theme of large-scale disruptive action yet grounds each image in particular struggles. Stefan was often credited by his fellow artists for successfully balancing the need to produce images that could communicate the militancy and urgency that activists wanted, while still creating pieces that were visually interesting and imaginative. When Stefan talks about his affinity for the aesthetics of heraldry and banners, which are strong features in the *Homes Not Colonies*, *Economic Disruption for Lands & Survival*, and *Boycott Chapters* posters, he relates this to the goal of connecting with people on an emotional level:

You know, I like putting banners in my posters to sort of harken back to, I really love the look of banners with people marching, and I mean I like them in posters as well, it reminds me of heraldry, and sometimes when you’re in a demonstration it feels like, it’s kind of medieval in a way, and it feels like you’re peasants –

Marching against your feudal overlords, because the power relations haven’t changed that much –

Ya, it does feel very visceral, so for me the aesthetic of heraldry and crests really lends itself to it, and then also the flowing of feathers from helmets of the knights, and the frayed banners from when the demonstration’s over, and it’s hanging up in the corner and it’s dirty and it’s torn. It has a lot of emotional connotation.

Empathic connections are an important but frequently overlooked aspect of activism. Simone said that one of the reasons why she gravitated towards music was because there was a lack of

¹⁷ Shannon cited Michael Comeau as a good example of someone who does exactly that, but noted that activist groups were reluctant to break away from the standard repertoire of tropes.

engagement with these issues within movements. It was easier to have multiple readings in language and song. Reflecting on her art practice, and a departure from a red-and-black understanding of politics, she said:

I think my only really successful poster that I ever made was one that was a bouquet of all the provincial flowers, and it just said "These flowers were picked from stolen land". And then it said "Free Shawn Brant". It was a 6-colour Victorian print of flowers.

So kind of disarming, because at first you only see the flowers and not the meaning behind it.

Right, it's something my mom has up at her cottage, which is obviously not effective because she has a cottage in Muskoka, but the reality is that every time she looks at it, she has to contend with the idea. I think sometimes art is just a reminder. It's not a movement. But I don't know. What do you think?

My sense is that when you start to imagine how people might connect with an image on a personal level, and how such an image might embody your liberatory ideals, you are in the idea space that Favianna Rodriguez talks about in her article "Change Culture, And the World" (2013). Making art that intervenes in the realm of ideas is part of the long-term organizing needed to create cultural shifts around mainstream conceptions of big issues like gender, sexuality, migration and colonialism. As Rodriguez points out, too often this crucial work is neglected at the expense of supporting immediate actions, which activists tend to get preoccupied with. Shannon suggested that critical engagement with aesthetics could allow for activists to connect with people outside the same typical echo chamber and beyond dull reactionary politics:

I think that people can sense that, if they see a poster and it sort of looks like the same old speech that you've heard 1,000 times, then you're kind of like, I don't think I'll go to that. But if you see something with an aesthetic design that's radical, that's new and exciting and colourful and something you've never seen before, then that will turn you on to what the content of the poster is. These people might be saying shit that I haven't heard before, or this might be reaching out to a broader group of people than just the same old people that I see at the marches, which I think could be a really exciting idea, and which could be the role of the artists in these organizations instead of just pumping out these same flyers that look like Canadian Tire things.

Through the experiences of political printmakers, we get a sense of some of the tensions between cultural production and social movement organizing, as well as the affective and political power of handmade prints that consciously try to "pack a real punch" by making emotional connections and putting forward inspiring ideas. A wonderful zine produced by the London-based Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination (2010: 23) argues that the most successful political actions "don't just demand or block something, they put our dreams on display, they don't just say NO, but they show how else we could live."

Further, we need to recognize that art is not just a tool for social movements to wield, it is its own terrain for struggle. Being committed to prefigurative politics means acknowledging that aesthetic choices are also material choices, as Simone put it. They're deeply political. If we adopt the dominant aesthetics of corporate culture, we should think about why we're doing this. Is it because we are seeking legitimacy? To project the idea that we're not just some "rag-tag bunch of people" and if so, why do we associate legitimacy with this aesthetic? What does it mean when DIY or movement aesthetics get coopted by corporate culture? If we're promoting social justice campaigns, we should consider how the materials we produce relate to these struggles. What

does it mean if we use sweatshop t-shirts, paper from clearcut forests on unceded native land, or make things that are effectively disposable the day after our actions? Mitigating this reality is a necessary part of our political work as we continue organizing to change the underlying conditions that produce them.

5.4 [SO WHAT] Disruptive Power

Art plays an important role in imagining and creating, shared human traits that can connect individuals in collective generative action. Art can provide dis-alienating experiences for a society desperately in need of healing. Art allows for experimentation with new ways of seeing, being, and relating, as well as opportunities to develop innovative strategies and tools for resistance ... Art creates accessible points of entry into political discussions, educating and mobilizing people in ways that may be difficult to quantify but nonetheless tangible.

Julie Perini, "Art as Intervention: A Guide to Today's Radical Art Practices", 2010: 183

Measuring Efficacy

Ultimately with any kind of artistic activism, the lingering question is always "Does it work?" Or less pointedly: "What does it do?" Much in the way that Suzanne Césaire envisioned surrealism expanding the limits of art and politics, I believe that social movement cultures can do the same. Prefigurative culture and collective production, two strategies associated with social movement cultures, can make meaningful interventions in political systems and everyday life. Having said it, I now have the task of proving it. Not an easy job, considering that engagements with radical imagination take so many forms, which range from deeply intimate, personal exchanges to mass collective actions – and sometimes they are both simultaneously. While these experiences may have immediate repercussions, they can also plant the seeds of an idea that only comes to fruition years later. In *The Art of Protest* (2005: 299), T.V. Reed suggests a list of cultural functions to assist with the challenge of measuring the effects of culture. I've used Reed's 10 functions as a guide to highlight different impacts arising from Punchclock's collective activity.

First, let's consider the relationship between individuals and collective action. Punchclock was able to *encourage* people to act: from a distance with the posters and graphics that they produced for movements, and in a more direct capacity by organizing showcases of members' work and issuing the call for art for the *Shawn Brant Is No Criminal* events. Less tangible but no less real is the invigorating climate of shared space and how Punchclock served as a source of inspiration more broadly. Beyond lending the strength of a collective platform, Punchclock was in a position to *empower*, or help people feel their own strength. Artists were given space and equipment to develop their own autonomous art practices. With the freedom to make mistakes and informal processes of skillsharing, Shannon and Stefan learned the ropes, invited Simone and others to join, and eventually gave the shop over to her when they decided to shift careers. Through their cultural production, Punchclock was able to *harmonize*, providing an "aura of organization" and sense of connection amidst widespread heterogeneity at mass gatherings. As Shannon said:

If we can create these little sheets of paper and have them be badges and flags of honour, that's amazing, that gives us as a community a sense of belonging and a sense of strength when there's not really that much tying us together. We're not all in the same union or all in the same church. We're gathering under these flags, or going to these events, and if we have posters that are drawing us together as a community, that's awesome.

Moreover, the Punchclock showcases also played a unifying function, embracing the hybrid nature of the group by bringing people together around exuberant shows and parties.

As a collective of artists, Punchclock's capacity for communicating was particularly strong, both in terms of being able to *inform internally* and *inform externally*. Screenprinted posters perform a dual role, using their affective power to express new ideas to people outside the movement and reinforce concepts, values, and tactics amongst movement participants. Printed t-shirts have a similar function, in that the choice to wear them is based on identifying with the shirt's aesthetic and political content, and yet the act of wearing is also a form of promotion. Simone suggested that sometimes art acts as a reminder, and in other instances, it is an interjection. Much like their posters and shirts, Punchclock's activities within and outside the space engaged people with politics in unique ways that wouldn't have otherwise existed.

As an extension of their work expressing ideas, Punchclock was able to *enact movement goals* by playing an active role in social movement organizing. Through existing relationships with OCAP, Punchclock helped develop the culture of mass demonstrations, seeking to create a presence that could overwhelm repressive state forces. Stefan recalls drawing inspiration from video footage of highly-coordinated militant protests in South Korea:

So I wanted the same thing and I wanted OCAP to spearhead the culture of that. And I feel like it played – I don't think it played a huge role, but it did play a role in OCAP's success at that time. OCAP was taken very seriously by people because of the way that we presented ourselves. And also by the way that people like Sue Collis and Shawn Brant or John Clarke were able to articulate the grievances that people were feeling at the time. So for me it felt like we were all operating in concert and Punchclock was an adjunct of that for sure.

Further, by helping to get the BDS campaign off the ground, and organizing shows in support of Shawn Brant, Punchclock was making things happen at time when "there was not that much talk, it was really quiet ... even within the left," remembers Simone. Punchclock amplified these struggles by creating images and hosting events that brought people together, educated people about the issues, and raised much needed funds. And not to forget, Punchclock itself was a kind of movement intervention, creating a platform for activist artists to converge and take their work to the next level while trying to foster a culture of collaboration and solidarity.

Speaking of forgetting, Punchclock should also be recognized for its capacity to *historicize* movement activity. When we look back at the materials that people produced, these are sometimes the only physical traces of movement activity that we're left with. Stefan said:

I would love to be able to look behind me ... and see something tangible that we built, like I almost wish we were a construction crew ... so at least we'd have something left behind. From that point of view, the poster design and introducing artistic radical propaganda into the political organizing was kind of my way of leaving something tangible behind.

We also see this with Rocky's plaques: street-level memoirs that offer eulogies for the unseen and the forgotten, the devalued and the defaced. When Shannon installed her "Theft" street art intervention about gentrification and colonialism in Parkdale, she supplied a counternarrative, a different way of reading the history of the city and our place within it.

Punchclock's activities had a transgressive character, evoking Reed's concepts of political cultures that are able *transform affect or tactics*, *critique movement ideology*, and *make room for pleasure*. With the *Noise Attack* against the Drake, artists were drawn into the struggle against gentrification, and encouraged to bring their eccentricities with them as a collective expression of their creative forces. Punchclock challenged taken-for-granted ideas about political organizing,

encountering tensions with activists around the importance of nuance and complexity, the autonomy of artists, and culture as a terrain for struggle. As artists, they were interested in supporting immediate actions, but also understood the long-term significance of intervening in the realm of ideas. When I asked Shannon about how she gauged success, she replied:

I guess my most known work, like that I see on the walls of my friends houses, is stuff that is less blatant and, like I said, I don't think I had much success when I did try to do the slogan activist poster. I made a few that were nice, but my work was more dreamy, sort of sexual, crazy, psychedelic themes, which was a lot more interesting to myself and to other people.

Shannon was able to use the medium of printmaking to articulate deeper desires, just as Rocky and Stefan depicted wish images of disruptive action, and Simone provided a cutting sense of truth and humour. Unfortunately movements have an abysmal track record in terms of making room for joy, as efforts to counteract “drudgery and oppression” can get overwhelmed by their “inescapable relations of conflict” (Roy 2010: 238). Punchclock’s art and parties were a reaction to this reality, and a prefigurative effort to build some degree of pleasure into organizing.

Practicing Critical Self-Reflexivity

Consequently, Reed’s cultural functions help to identify transformative aspects of social movement cultures. Punchclock made substantive contributions towards efforts to reimagine political systems and everyday life, however, I also appreciate how members of Punchclock were self-reflexive about their experiences, and were clearly interested in considering how to make artistic activism *work better*. As Simone said, “It’s important always as an artist to be like how much energy am I putting into the thing I am doing and how much will it yield or emanate.” Following her experiences with housing casework, which struggles to break out of the service delivery model, Simone searched for a role that wouldn’t “detract from people who are directly affected taking leadership.” She said:

I started being like “Who are my people?” and “Who do I want to try to politicize and try to remind?” The big thing that I came up against was the notion of coolness. I think it’s important to look at a culture that’s been ravaged by capitalism, whose aesthetics, and things that naturally would make people act or inspire them, have been totally co-opted. There’s a dead people, they’re taking up resources, buying like 20 expensive coffees a day, and working jobs that are actively destroying the planet. And they’re my people, so how am I going to try to speak to them? I know there’s so many problems with talking about “my people”, but I don’t know how else to articulate it. It’s hard coming up against the impotence of your own tools.

Simone felt like she was having some success with this strategy in the music scene, offering small, but important interjections in culture through songwriting and performance, like by opening shows with talking about the land of the people that you’re on, which creates a kind of encounter that many people in attendance haven’t had to reckon with before.

Stefan also offered some reflections on the limitations of current methods of political organizing, observing that alternative spaces (as few and as precarious as they are) are often uninviting and unappealing to people outside of specific subcultures. He had this to say about the building where Punchclock Printing and Punchclock Metal reside:

There’s a little bit of a privileged hipster enclave about it, that I find isn’t really conducive to the type of projects and activities that we want to have. I remember when Rocky and I worked together, we were driving around, we’d always see nail salons, and we’d always make

fun of anarchist infoshops and bookfairs being like, "You know what's more important, really? Nail salons. Anarchist nail salons. It'd have way more impact. You sit there, chat."

And people might actually walk into a nail salon versus an infoshop, where if you weren't already an anarchist, why would you want to go in?

So same with this. Yes, it's sad this building is going to get turned into condos, probably in 2 or 3 or 4 years. That sucks. But really, is this the best that we could hope for, in terms of posing an alternative system to the one we've got? This still basically is an exception to the rule. We want our structures and our institutions to be mainstream, we want them to be accepted, and we want them to be useful.

That means they have to take place in Scarborough, they have to take place in Etobicoke, they have to take place in North York. And I think that as long as we keep deferring that part of the project, we're going to keep being stuck in a state of semi-irrelevancy, because that's where we have to engage with people.

Stefan admits that organizing in post-industrial suburbs looks different than organizing in downtown Toronto. He says, "If you go and engage in a community, or engage with a group of workers ... at a real level, the aesthetic and the images will come directly from that process." However, time is a major challenge when people are operating on a "day-to-day survival level." And there's understandably a sense of distrust towards people who talk about the possibility of changing these conditions without roots in the day-to-day realities of a particular community.

This kind of critical and speculative thinking is part of the necessary cycle of analysis, action, and reflection that effective political organizing requires (Choudry et al 2012: 17). The real effects of our engagements with action cause us to re-evaluate our work. Simone recalls:

When I just worked in Toronto I had such a simple view of how things could be. But the more I was exposed to touring, the apartheid in every city – really different rules, different privileges afforded to different people everywhere. And then you're driving through Saskatchewan and there's a fucking pro-life billboard every 10 minutes off the highway. Talking to people, just the kind of racism, I think it challenges your – sometimes when I was young I'd be buoyed by the notion of a big movement that was going to overturn everything. I think I don't really believe in that part of it anymore – but I do believe in the Idle No More movement, or what that will spur, and Defenders of the Land, I think it's very exciting.

Simone's assessment speaks to the shifting relationships we have with our own histories. At one point we might have a particular vision of what change will look like, perhaps a revolutionary upheaval, and over time, that vision might change, not as a betrayal of our political ideals, but as a response to the complexity of our experiences. The struggle to make the brutal world order crumble gets reimagined. We have to revisit our strategies for provoking change and see if they are having the intended result. Sometimes that means we have to face the inadequacy of our own tools. We have to sit with our challenges and contradictions, to inhabit them rather than turning away. For those of us interested in using art to figure life out and make it something better, collective activity offers a rewarding opportunity to experiment with radical alternatives.

You're not going to learn by sitting in front of your computer – you're going to learn by talking to people. Like in a relationship, you're going to be in a relationship by really talking, not just looking for positive feedback. Listening and honesty is kind of the key to art. Not so much pleasing people.

Rocky Dobey

6 CONCLUSION New Collectivities

When it's truly alive, memory doesn't contemplate history, it invites us to make it. More than in museums, where its poor old soul gets bored, memory is in the air we breathe, and from the air, it breathes us.

Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down*, 2001: 210

While speaking with Shannon, Simone, Rocky and Stefan, I was often reminded of my own experiences working with art collectives and social movements. Every two weeks or so I'd be at a Radical Design School meeting where the five members of our group would try to figure out what to do next. After our initial workshop series and the one-off interventions we'd done since then, what was the best way to pursue our goal of "cultivating a community of skill-sharing that supports our allies in grassroots social movements while reaching out to marginalized communities that have historically been excluded from institutionalized art and design"? (Radical Design School 2013) From time to time, I'd receive personal requests from groups like OCAP and Earth Justice Action asking for help with screenprinting placards or flags. And partly due to the lack of infrastructure to support these activities, I was also working with two friends and frequent collaborators to set-up and financially sustain a shared studio space in one person's apartment, encountering differing visions, working styles, scheduling conflicts, and a general lack of free time that ultimately proved to be too much to overcome.

In my work with collectives, we grapple with questions about who we are and who we want to work with, how we want to work, what we want to produce, and towards what end. Sometimes these questions can feel overwhelming. I'm grateful for having the opportunity to learn from and reflect upon Punchclock's collective activity. The nature of cultural movements is that they emerge from a particular context, evolve new ways of doing things, and then diffuse elements back into the wider culture (Reed 2005: 296). Part of our task as cultural producers and activists is to identify these elements and consider how they might apply to our own struggles.

From my conversations with members of Punchclock, I take note of the fact that collectives don't last forever. They are never static, rather they are ever-changing and shifting in-between forms. Moreover, I realize that creative resistance takes different shapes – not all labeled with a capital-P for "Politics" – and that I need to a more expansive approach in order to account for this diversity. Otherwise, exciting currents of cultural activity are overlooked or misunderstood.

I draw inspiration from the fact that many of the artists involved with Punchclock are outsiders who didn't go to school to get a license to make art. They made their own paths, emerging as artists from a mixture of "desire and necessity". At the same time, I take seriously the persistent reality of apartheid that permeates our society and activist cultural production. I know that we need to think critically and creatively about ways of supporting meaningful access that don't reproduce white supremacy and other forms of domination.

Even though it seems obvious, it's heartening to hear about how collectivity has allowed people to transcend their individual capacities, amplifying their efforts through resource sharing and collaborative production. Punchclock is a perfect illustration of the strategic dilemma between loose and formal structures when we consider what the ideal conditions are for success. I'm interested in thinking about what shared values that are not dogmatic and alienating could look like. In this respect, the pragmatic aspects of Punchclock's collective activity are impressive for

their ability to sustain the space and mitigate internal tensions, just as they are a troubling indication of the challenge of maintaining a radical political focus amidst neoliberal economic forces of gentrification and underdeveloped relationships of cooperation.

My artistic practice will certainly benefit from the idea that images need to “pack a real punch” in order to break through the field of general monotony. I would like to embrace the idea that the tension between artists and movements can actually be quite productive. We can advocate for work that expresses more nuanced and complex ideas, and talk about the importance of intervening in the realm of ideas, not only the realm of immediate actions. By engaging with radical aesthetics, we can do political organizing better, especially if we consider how our aesthetic choices also have material consequences that need to be taken into account.

Finally, the process of taking stock – of thinking about the effects of culture and practicing critical self-reflexivity – helps to demonstrate the fact that this work matters. Collective artmaking can bring people together, magnify our actions, break the silence about issues no one is talking about, and support grassroots struggles. Our challenges and failures are also instructive. If we want to avoid the self-defeating dynamic of only a privileged few producing art, then our art needs to have an organizing function beyond its value as propaganda. How we make art is as important as what we make. While there are no easy victories or solutions, the genealogies of our creative resistance – no longer just artistic dark matter – are real enough to sustain our radical imaginations and inspire future efforts to realize the impossible.

[P]eople’s memories are maybe the fuel they burn to stay alive.

Haruki Murakami, *After Dark*, 2008: 206

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Appendix 2: Callout for Noise Attack (posted on *Toronto Underground* online message board)

Noise! vs. The Drake Hotel

A sound attack on the death-star of gentrification!

Don't be Quiet!!

Show up at 44 Dovercourt at 1:30 am on Friday, Sept. 16th (sharp)

Bring: boomboxes, soundsystems, drums, racket, terrible and offensive noises, screaming children, pots and pans, screeching eagles, fire-crackers, megaphones, noise bands, instruments you don't know how to play, smoke-bombs, banners and costumes.

Don't pay money. Party hard. Protest. Perform. Extra batteries provided.

No Spectators!

Make some noise!!

(pls forward widely)

Appendix 3: Callout for First Showcase (via Toronto Craft Alert website)

invitation from Punchclock Collective:

bear witness to a rare showcase of the bold passions that propel the Punchclock collective. Punchclock is a transdisciplinary, democratic organization of cultural workers, political activists and trades people operating out of two hives functioning as collective metal and screenprinting studios.

Punchclock's mandates are economic sustainability and artistic direct action. Punchclock produces aesthetically defiant graphic design, video, poster, sculpture, performance, installation, textile and street art. Punchclock's efforts challenge conventional, isolating and competitive models of professional art careers. Punchclock exists not for wealthy collectors or insular art patrons, but as an essential element to a healthy and dynamic community.

Begun in 2003 by activists Shannon Muegge and Stefan Pilipa, the abundance of talent that currently inflames the collective consists of the following individuals:

Rocky Dobey – Metal worker, artist, street installation legend.

Simone Schmidt – activist, artist, musician (100 dollars, LSdoubleDcup)

Jesjit Gill – print artist

Michael Comeau – artist, musician (LSdoubleDcup)

Will Munro – artist, DJ, promoter, restaurateur

Christopher Cook – carpenter, musician (LSdoubleDcup)

Fancy Gordon Zero – carpenter, artist

Kids on TV – multimedia collective, dancefloor destroyers.

A sudden and serious diagnosis has spurred a detoxifying process that requires your support. Help Punchclock maintain physical integrity so it may continue to ignite the soul of our community.

With the help of friends at BlocksBLoCksBLoCks records and Keep Six gallery, Punchclock presents two evening of exceptional cultural significance.

An exhibit of art and design and performances by...

thursday Dec. 6th

dj. Guvnor General (warm, soulfull selections from Caribbean and beyond)

the Youngest (sweet solo sounds)

Castlemusic (captivating with voice and guitar)

100 dollars (catalyst country, songs about something)

Final Fantasy (ethereal one man symphony)

friday Dec. 7th

dj. Will Munro (punk, electro dance enabling)

LSdoubleDcup (psychadoolic day of pentacost)

the Blankett (reimagined past to build future)

Kids on TV (queer dancefloor detonators)

sliding scale cover charge of \$5 – \$10.

Keep Six gallery 938 Bathurst st (block and a half north of Bloor)

Thursday Dec. 6th

viewing 6pm music 9:30pm

Friday Dec. 7th viewing 12pm music 9:30pm

rafi.projects@gmail.com

comeaumichael@hotmail.com

Appendix 4: Callout for Shawn Brant Is No Criminal (email from Simone Schmidt)

Punchclock Showcase No. 2: Shawn Brant Is No Criminal!

Two Days of Art and Music in Support of Indigenous Sovereignty and the Tyendinaga Legal Defense Fund

FRIDAY MAY 16 and SATURDAY MAY 17

TWO MUSIC SHOWS, AN ART EXHIBIT AND A WORKSHOP

- DETAILS BELOW

The Punchclock Collective invites Toronto to Showcase No.2, a music and art extravaganza held over two days in May at the Whippersnapper Gallery.

Shawn Brant Is No Criminal! presents works by emerging, outsider, and established artists in diverse media, interpreting themes of anti-colonial resistance, indigenous sovereignty, and silencing through sentencing. Artists whose work will be featured in the showcase include David Morrisseau, Branko, Nidal El-Khairi, Jaime Drew, Angela Steritt, Riel Manywounds, Luis Jacob, Schuster Gindin, Alana Svilans, Gord Hill, Tania Willard, Ibrahim Shalaby, Gabrielle L'hirondelle, Fancy Gordon Zero, Christopher Cubitt-Cooke, and an array of infamous Punchclockers, including Michael Comeau, Rockey Dobey, Shannon Muegge, Agata Mrozowski and Stefan Pilipa.

Showcase No. 2 will also feature two evening performances by three generations of Toronto's most solid musicians.

FRIDAY MAY 16 - 19+ - doors at 9 pm

ANAGRAM

NIF-D

\$100

w dj Michael Comeau

SATURDAY MAY 17 - ALL AGES - doors at 8 pm

The Phonemes

BOB WISEMAN

Richard Laviolette

Calvados

w hair cuts by kenny

and portraits by zeesy

Money raised will go to the legal defense fund of Mohawk Activist Shawn Brant and to the quarry reclamation site. Like seven other First Nations leaders across Ontario who have opposed non-native mining on indigenous land, Brant is currently being held in jail. Singled out for taking part in rail blockades during a national day of action last June, he is facing up to twelve years of incarceration and a multi-million dollar civil suit laid against him by CN Rail.

This weekend long event will also feature live hair cutting by donation, live portrait drawings, also by donation, live screen printing on your clothes, again, by donation and this workshop:

Workshop: Saturday May 16th, 5pm - 7pm, Whippersnapper Gallery

Tyendinaga: Criminalizing the Struggle for Self-Determination

Presented by members of the Tyendinaga Support Committee

An in-depth look at recent developments in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory to understand what indigenous nations fighting for their land, and the right to self determination, are facing when they take a stand.

Participants will gain an understanding of the history and struggle of Tyendinaga Mohawks and the insane legal

implications for community leaders. We will discuss the web of injustice maintained by federal heel-dragging in a land claim process, resource extraction legislation that allows the land to be gutted and stripped in the mean time, and an OPP dominated media circuit feeding the public the same old racist messaging.

Join us for this discussion and to learn about ongoing support initiatives and ways to get involved. The Punchclock Collective is a trans-disciplinary democratic organization of cultural workers, political activists and trades people operating out of two hives functioning as collective metal and screen-printing studios. Their mandates are economic sustainability and artistic direct action. Punchclock Showcase No.1, held last December, featured poster art from the Print Shop, and acts like Final Fantasy, Castle Music and Kids On TV.

ART LINKS

David Morrisseau: <http://www.davidmorrisseau.com>

Luis Jacob: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis_Jacob

Riel Manywounds: <http://www.no2010.com/node/128>

Nidal El-Khairy: <http://www.nidal48.com/>

Ibrahim Shalaby: <http://www.jorpalart.com/>

Artists of the Punchclock collective: <http://www.punchclock.org/workers>

MUSIC LINKS

Richard Laviolette: <http://www.myspace.com/richardlavioletteforprimeminister>

The Phonemes: <http://www.myspace.com/thephonemes>

Bob Wiseman: <http://www.myspace.com/bobwiseman>

\$100: <http://www.myspace.com/ihundreddollars>

Nif-D: <http://www.myspace.com/princenifty>

ANAGRAM: <http://www.myspace.com/anagram>



1. Studio: Punchclock Printing in Summer 2013 at 251 Soraruén, move in process.
Photo by Ryan Hayes.



2. Studio: Punchclock Printing in Spring 2012 at 251 Sorauren. Photo by Jesjit Gill:
<https://secure.flickr.com/photos/gillje/7129258943/sizes/o/in/photostream/>



3. Show: *Shawn Brant Is No Criminal* display. Photo via Keep Six Contemporary: <http://keep6c.blogspot.ca/2007/12/punchclock.html>



4. Shannon Muegge: "Can you afford a bomb shelter" by Shannon Muegge in OCAP Perpetual Calendar (2007).




5. Shannon Muegge: "Love who you will" by Shannon Muegge in *Paper Politics* (2009).




6. Stefan Pilipa: “Active Resistance ‘98” by Stefan Pilipa. Via Stefan Pilipa.


FIGHT TO WIN JUNE 15



POLICE
Social-Cleaning Unit
the Safe Streets Act



the concealing of
affordable housing



the 21.8% welfare cut

March on Queens Park


Allan Gardens, Toronto 12 pm
Demand to Address the Legislature

There are two worlds in this province: the world of the rich and the world of the poor.

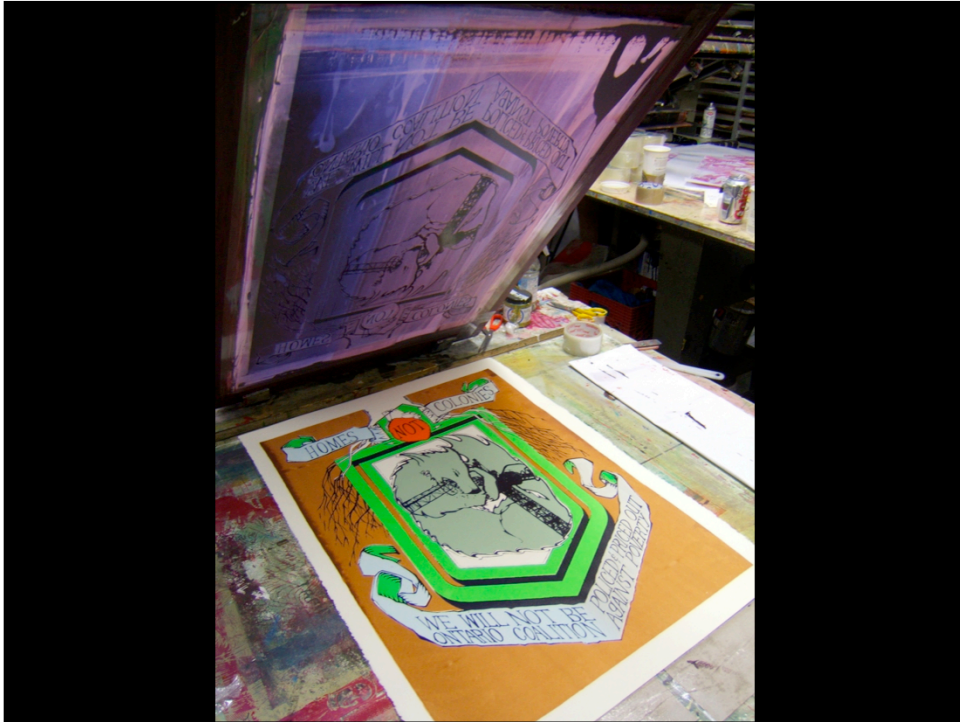
Since the Harris Government came to power it has done nothing but attack poor and working people. Premier Harris openly works to make the lives of the rich easier, while we struggle to put food on the table and make enough money to pay the rent. Our brothers and sisters die in the streets while the rich profit from our poverty.

June 15th will mark the beginning of a summer of resistance.

Harris can be stopped.
Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
416.925.6939
www.oacp.ca / oacp @tso.ca



7. Stefan Pilipa: "June 15 2001" poster by Stefan Pilipa. Via Stefan Pilipa.



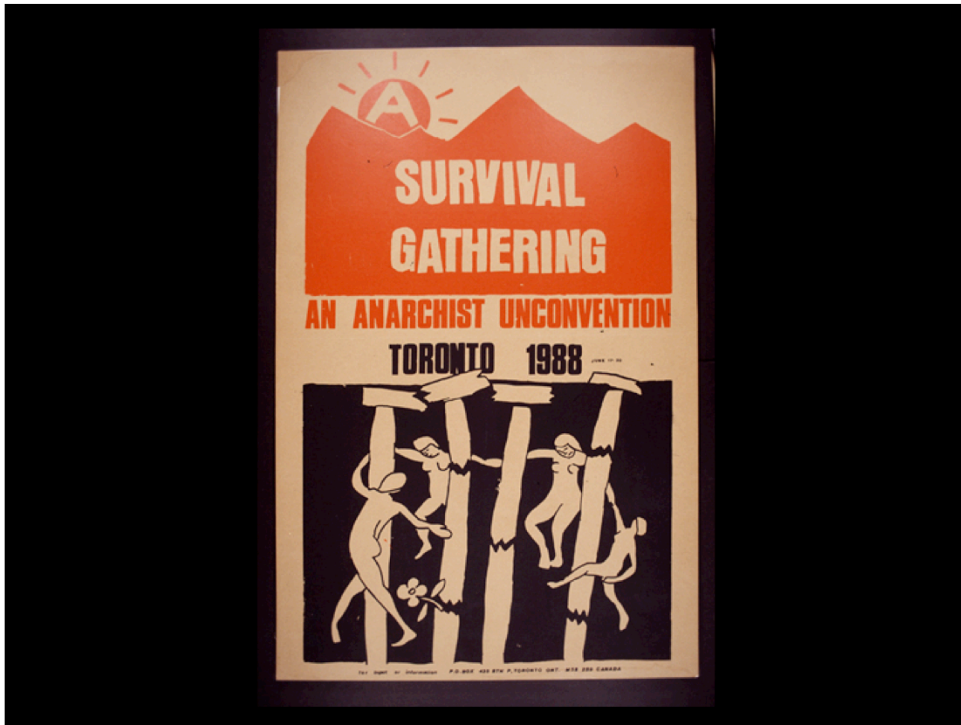
8. Stefan Pilipa: "Homes Not Colonies" by Stefan Pilipa. Via Stefan Pilipa.



9. Stefan Pilipa: "Economic Disruption for Land & Survival" by Stefan Pilipa. Via Stefan Pilipa.



10. Stefan Pilipa: "Boycott Chapters" by Stefan Pilipa. Via *Certain Days Calendar for Political Prisoners* (2009).



10. Rocky Dobey: "Survival Gathering" by Rocky Dobey. Via Rocky Dobey.



11. Rocky Dobey: "FTAA 2001" by Rocky Dobey. Via Rocky Dobey.



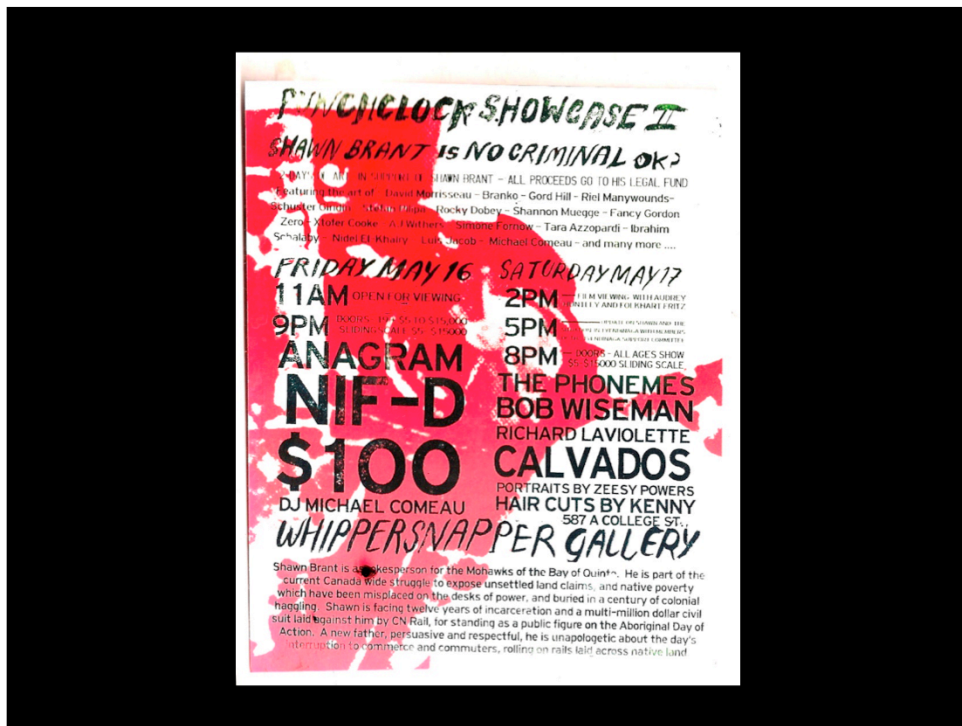
13. Rocky Dobey: "Prison Justice Day" by Rocky Dobey. Via *Celebrate People's History!* (2010).



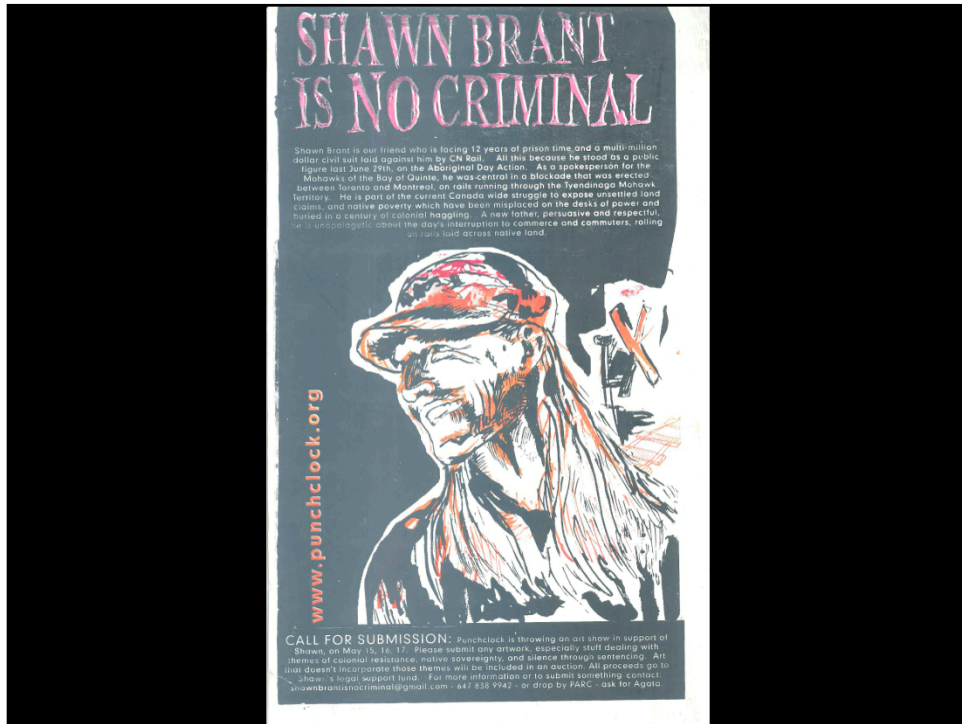
14. Rocky Dobey: Street plaque memorial for Otto Vass by Rocky Dobey. Via *OCAP Perpetual Calendar* (2007).



15. Rocky Dobey: Street plaque memorial for Dudley George by Rocky Dobey. Photo by Ryan Hayes, taken in 2011.



16. Simone Schmidt: "Punchclock Showcase II" (2008) by Simone Schmidt. Via Simone Schmidt.



17. Simone Schmidt: "Shawn Brant Is No Criminal" by Simone Schmidt (2008). Via OPIRG-York Poster Archive: <http://archive.opirgyork.ca/items/show/1206>



18. Simone Schmidt: "These flowers were picked from Native land" (2008) by Simone Schmidt. Via TMT Support Committee: http://www.ocap.ca/supporttmt/files/flowers_large.gif



19. Simone Schmidt: "No More Bantustans" by Simone Schmidt. Photo by Ryan Hayes.



20. Michael Comeau: "Vazaleen" (2013) by Michael Comeau. Via Michael Comeau: <http://slomeau.tumblr.com/post/55350866250/vazaleen-june-30-2013-the-hidden-cameras-this>