

The piece ‘Art is Anything is Art’ is composed of three statements, all of which follow each other.

The first is by Marxist philosopher and linguist Antonio Gramsci. In his famed prison notebooks, he posits that ‘*Everyone is an intellectual*.<sup>1</sup> In this text—and in many others—Gramsci’s core thesis is that knowledge is relative, and one should refrain from subjecting it to any hierarchy. All people are created with an equal ability to reason about the world and to form their own conclusions. Where we differ, lies mainly in our ability to articulate ideas; our capacity to convince others of our own position. The assertion may seem banal, but it is important. For it stresses that inequalities in society will persist unless we make concrete efforts to improve the communicative skills of those who are structurally under-privileged.

The second statement, ‘*Art is Resistance*’, was made by the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn. In the summer of 2013, Hirschhorn worked with inhabitants of Forrest Houses housing project in New York, to form a self-contained social structure dedicated to the work of Gramsci. The quote is taken from a text he wrote during the Gramsci Monument experience—in which he reflects on how his work has been formed by the ideas of the philosopher. Hirschhorn has repeatedly made clear that the ‘Monument’ was not built with a concrete political aim. That his objective was to bring attention to a plethora of problems surrounding socio-economic inequality—and to do this in an inclusive fashion, with emphasized the importance of educative interaction and critical discourse.<sup>2</sup>

The third and final statement, ‘*Art is Anything is Art*’, is an ode to an unknown girl—Malika—who visited the Gramsci Monument on a school outing. When tasked to reflect on what Hirschhorn’s project had taught her, she scribbled down: ‘*I learnt that you can make anything out of art*.<sup>3</sup> In English, the sentence is grammatically flawed. And it is likely the reverse of what the girl wanted to communicate (i.e: ‘you can make art out of anything’). But, as Glenn Ligon points out, nobody bothered to correct her syntax. And in this, the primary notion of Gramsci’s work resurfaces. Our ability to articulate ideas is strongly associated with the social class that we come from—and inequalities within society often persist because we place disproportionate value on the form in which an idea is expressed, above the contents of the idea itself.

All three statements are typeset in *Giorgi*: a font developed collaboratively by Alberto Malossi (IT), David Molnar (HU), and Shuhui Shi (CN) during a workshop held at the Villa Maraini in 2018. Based on inscriptions found at the Verano Cemetery in Rome, Giorgi is a re-interpretation of a futurist aesthetic that was strongly favored by the propaganda wing of Mussolini’s fascist government. In using it to disseminate the words of Marxist-leaning ideas, myself—and the font designers—wish to ‘disarm’ the fascist connotation of this visual form.

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<sup>1</sup> Gramsci, Antonio (1975). Quaderno 12 (XXIX) § (1): Appunti e note sparse per un gruppo di saggi sulla storia degli intellettuali (1932). *Quaderni del carcere*, Torino: Istituto Gramsci.

<sup>2</sup> Hirschhorn, T. (2015). Gramsci monument. *Rethinking Marxism*, 27(2), 213-240; Buchloh, B. H. (2005). An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn. *October*, (113), 77-100.

<sup>3</sup> Ligon, G. (2013). Monumental Endeavour: Thomas Hirschhorn’s Gramsci Monument. *Artforum International*, November 2013.