



TO PREPARE REVOLUTION

Peter Sheehan

MAO

“A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.”



THE DINNER PARTY

Judy Chicago: “I firmly believe that if art speaks clearly about something relevant to people’s lives, it can change the way they perceive reality.”



WHY THE DINNER PARTY

“This woman had done all the work, trying as best she could to fit her creative drive— which could probably have expanded into mural size paintings or monumental sculptures- into the confined space of her house, which could hardly have held another piece of WORK. The china painting world and the household objects the women painted, seemed to be a perfect metaphor for women’s domesticated and trivialized circumstances.”



MONUMENTAL ART

As a symbol of heritage, what makes the dinner party more than ascribing to the character of a monument? Judy Chicago wants the piece to be a masterpiece. I would argue she makes it a monument, which are similar, but distinct. A monument requires an institution behind it. Art does not necessarily need one.

“I would say, one crosses the threshold of the logic of the monument, entering the space of what could be called its negative condition-a kind of sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place. Which is to say one enters modernism, since it is the modernist period of sculptural production that operates in relation to this loss of site, producing the monument as abstraction, the monument as pure marker or base, functionally placeless and largely self-referential. “ -
Rosalind Krauss, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*

CRITICISM

- Exclusionary, inherently a Western focused piece focused on white women
- Did not pay her workers, took advantage of their commitment to the project (in my opinion)



THESIS

The central theme of this presentation is the difference between large scale multi year work and shorter form performances, with similar goals in mind—to express anger and frustration with the historical treatment and social role of women in society serving primarily as laborers and second class citizens. How does the methodology of antagonism affect the art world, changing from ideas of masterpieces and great works to including those outside of the domain?

RELATIONAL AESTHETICS

Relational Aesthetics is a theory of form, not of art. Relational aesthetics was supposed to be a democratization of art, a form of art whose chief goal was to get dialogue between people going.

- Claire Bishop develops antagonism through Laclau and Moiffe



ANTAGONISM

- Who is the revolution for? This may be a microtopia, but—like utopia—it is still predicated on the exclusion of those who hinder or prevent its realization.
- The relations produced by their performances and installations are marked by sensations of unease and discomfort rather than belonging, because the work acknowledges the impossibility of a “microtopia” and instead sustains a tension among viewers, participants, and context.
(Bishop 70)

CAPITALISM AND INVISIBILITY

Traditional women's roles are “invisible work” or labor that is widespread throughout society and yet not conceived as work and moreover, not valued.



HOW HAVE ARTISTS ATTEMPTED TO MAKE CHANGE?

- Labor is an essential theme to the chosen works.
- They use that which is contemporary - the internet, film, photography, television, to get their points across.

SEMIOTICS OF THE KITCHEN

Martha Rosler embraces film to transform the distribution of art through technology in *Semiotics of the Kitchen*. The medium serves both as a parody of cooking shows, which are essentially designed to be propaganda which reinforce domestic roles.



SHEDDING THE UTOPIAN

“Regardless of the intentions (which were heterogeneous) of artists who turned to television technologies... many of these early users saw themselves as carrying out an act of profound social criticism, criticism specifically directed at the domination of groups and individuals epitomized by broadcast tv and perhaps all of mainstream Western industrial and technological culture.” - Martha Rosler



I CHING APPLE PIE

I Ching Apple pie by Carolee Schneemann, like *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, incorporates domestic tools in a critique of patriarchal dominance.



FROM THE LIBERATED COOKBOOK

Go into the kitchen with defiant joyful anger. On this scruffy battleground you will lay down the cookbook forever. You will cease competition with untold legions of sublimated self-satisfied female psyches engaged over the centuries. In a pursuit of excellence through flour grease onion turnips blenders colander strainer boilers mincers graters choppers whiskers mincers beaters **DESIST DESIST STOP STOP NOW**



MARY'S CHERRIES

Mary's Cherries imagines a capitalist structure that seems utopic—the grow light will grow the fingernails always, which is powered by the women, and generates a dessert that can be sold for burgers, apparently.



MARY'S CHERRIES

Mika Rottenberg hired “fantasy wrestlers” for this work, outsiders to the art world. These are women who will beat men in wrestling matches, to then be paid for their services.



ANTAGONISM REVISITED

An integral part of the tension of antagonism is the introduction of collaborators from diverse economic backgrounds, which in turn serves to challenge contemporary art's self-perception as a domain that embraces other social and political structures.

TO CONCLUDE

The fact is, these works are attempts to promote revolution. The question remains how well they themselves get the job done. They use their institutions to attempt to deal with issues of economic and political exploitation, yet they would be ineffective as revolutionary tools without the lens of antagonism.