Vernaculars of Leisure and Festive Aesthetics: On the Contemporary Art Museum as a Social Host

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Abstract

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Béatrice Cloutier-Trépanier

This thesis examines relational art practices in the institutional context of the contemporary museum. Inscribed within the critical discourse surrounding Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, this thesis argues that institutionalized relational practices, specifically in the form of bars by artists, embody a tactic for the commissioning museum to diversify its cultural undertakings by acting as a welcoming social host. In light of Bourriaud's discussion of the optimization of cultural forms and the reparation of social bonds by artists in recent art, Dean Baldwin's artwork *Ship in a Bottle*, an installation produced for the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MACM) and presented in conjunction with the second edition of Québec's Triennale *Le travail qui nous attend* (2011), acts as a relevant case study to consider the implications of this theory on the cultural industry and the role of the museum. Enriched by an interview with MACM curator Mark Lanctôt, this examination posits that the museum appropriates the ethos of the *fête* (Henri Lefebvre) and presents it as relational art and a model of sociability. Arguing the annihilation of the *fête*'s critical potential and problematizing it, I then discuss the productivity of leisure and entertainment as introduced by the Experience Economy (Pine and Gilmore). I especially focus my attention on how this economic model's emphasis on experience is aligned with the cooptation of relational practices by institutions in need of diversification. By offering a leisure activity conceptualized as an artwork, the museum instrumentalizes the aesthetics of *Ship in a Bottle* and appropriates the tropes of everyday life the artwork references. Through embodied leisure activities such as sipping cocktails, the museum positions itself as a welcoming host for casual and pleasurable sociability, and as such legitimizes its mandate of providing easily accessible cultural products.

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"An artist can say a cup of coffee is art, but he's a damn fool if he says that a cup of coffee isn't a cup of coffee just because it's art."

-Lawrence Weiner, in Willoughby Sharp and Liza Béar, "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam," *Avalanche* 4 (Spring 1972): 66.

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Introduction

When asked about the relevance of his practice in relation to art institutions, Montreal-based artist Dean Baldwin explains: "I found a sort of deficiency […] Rather than having budgets to produce artworks, [institutions] had budgets for things like catering, vernissage, services and stuff like that. I found that little niche where I could funnel money into the production of projects if I also provided a double service of catering for the openings."[1] The artist's comment candidly exposes the process through which his practice—the installation of bars and hosting of social events in museums—responds to contemporary institutional needs unrelated to the museum's functions of promoting, exhibiting and acquiring art. Baldwin's statement discloses the peculiar value of his own work, while also speaking more broadly to the instrumentalization of art in museums.

The artwork that inspired Baldwin's comment is his own *Ship in a Bottle* (2011) (Figs. 1, 2), an installation produced for the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MACM) and presented in conjunction with the second edition of Québec's Triennale *Le travail qui nous attend*. Installed in the museum's atrium, the 1952 wooden Nordic sailboat was set on its side and turned into a playful, well-stocked bar at the Triennale's vernissage and every subsequent Wednesday for the duration of the exhibition, from October 7, 2010 to January 3, 2011. The English title of the artwork, *Ship in a Bottle*, refers to the classic hobby of placing a small-scale replica of a boat inside a bottle. The perception of the boat being impossible to fit through the mouth of the bottle is recreated in full scale by Baldwin's installation. Indeed one wondered how the real-size sailboat ended up in the museum's atrium.[2] The French title of the piece, *Le bateau ivre*, was included in parenthesis on all documentation pertaining to the piece. It may well refer to the eponymous poem by Arthur Rimbaud, published in 1871, which appeals to its reader through words that continuously refer to the human senses. The title also humorously relates to the position of Baldwin's *Ship*, turned on its side, as if too inebriated to stand straight.

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[1] Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. "Interview with Dean Baldwin" Youtube, 4:11. Posted by "Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal," 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G- avz0nptUY (accessed October 29, 2013)

[2] Curator Mark Lanctôt confirmed that bringing the boat in the space was a logistical puzzle for the museum's staff. rk Lanctôt, interview by author, Montreal, Canada, April 23, 2014.

The conceptual and physical structure of the *Ship in a Bottle* installation is relatively simple, and conveniently replicable: Baldwin was commissioned by the museum to produce a site-specific artwork that doubled as a catering service, providing a playfully thematic bar and turning the hosting venue into a party space. The piece, which was heavily decorated and adorned with thematic trinkets such as a captain hat and sailing paraphernalia, was intended to stand as a sculpture during the day, and get activated at night by the artist's presence as a bartender and entertainer. The artist was present to sell and serve drinks on the designated nights, but he also enlisted the help of friends and colleagues such as Stacey Lundeen, Mark Clintberg and Yann Pocreau. Curator Mark Lanctôt also helped serve the drinks. There was no supplemental staff hired to help Baldwin in his ambitious endeavour. While there had been talks of the alcohol being provided by the museum's usual vernissage sponsor, Pure Vodka, the bar was in the end stocked by the artist with his own choices: Gordon's London Dry Gin, Moskovskaya vodka, Veuve Cliquot Ponsardin Champagne Brut, Old Preserve Plantation Barbados Rum, and Juve Y Camps Cava.[3] The museum provided him with the funds to stock the bar for the first event, and asked him to use the profits for replenishing the supplies for subsequent events.[4]

Acting as a dominant reference point throughout this thesis, *Ship in a Bottle* is what prompted my original interest in the type of artwork Baldwin has made his own, the artist bar. Enlightened by Baldwin's words, the problematic insertion of artist bars in the institutional context of museums represents the central discussion. Through their incorporation within the institution, and how they represent a model of communal pleasure, artist bars have gain considerable attention as art practices; As Bennett Simpson notes in his assessment of forms of entertainment in recent art: "communal satisfactions such as drinking and socializing within the context of a party have been elevated and are now defining gestures."[5] The practices examined here re-enact a contemporary quotidian leisure activity—getting drinks with friends—but recasts it as worthy of artistic exhibition. Formed and informed by the contemporary requirements of art institutions, this elevation of mundane life praxis to art is particularly useful to the contemporary museum. The

[3] Ship in a Bottle explanatory panel. Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. *La Triennale québecoise 2011: Le travail qui nous attend.* Dossier de presse. (Consulted June 5, 2014)
[4] Lanctôt, interview.
[5] Bennett Simpson, "Specific Spectacles: Art and Entertainment." *Artext* 71 (November 2000/January 2001): 71.

function of the museum as a social space and as a host to private events, traditionally associated strictly with the institution's economic sustainability, can now rather be conceptualized and presented as a function of its artistic ambitions. This thesis proposes that artworks such as *Ship in a Bottle* embody a means for the commissioning museum to diversify its undertakings by acting as a social host, so as to actualize their social relevancy and general viability. More specifically, I argue that the values instilled in this type of relational artwork such as leisure and fun, accessibility and community, are instrumentalized and appropriated by the institutional host.

As I will further suggest, through the absorption of relational practices concerned with the embodiment of a model of sociability, the museum's presentation of itself as a social host is no longer pejoratively associated with the realm of capitalist necessities.[6] In fact, Nicolas Bourriaud, in his book *Relational Aesthetics*, casts the festive art event as a remedy to contemporary modes of communication and lack of social bonds. Influenced by this movement towards pleasant sociability, the inviting spaces that artistic practices such as Baldwin's create *in situ* allow for the museum's social activities to penetrate the ethos of their collections and exhibitions. In providing bars outside of the standard timeframe of the vernissage, this type of commission underlines the function of the contemporary museum as a space for social interactions and embodied entertainment based on values traditionally dissociated from the museum environment. Museums have been diversifying their activities beyond the scope of art exhibition for the past century, but the museum's recent embrace of relational art is influenced by the latter's peculiar ability to make the space they animate more accessible, inviting, and enjoyable. Relational art represents a means to fulfill a specific social function for the museum, that of entertainment and pleasure.

The analysis conducted here in conjunction with conceptions of festive activities and the productive nature of leisure for a capitalist society is developed in relation to the consumption of alcoholic beverages in a social context. Within the broader framework of relational practices based on consumables such as that of artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, the projects discussed here coexist, albeit slightly marginally, as their serving of inebriating substances, in the form of cocktails, distinguishes them. Sharing drinks, going to the pub and other similar social activities have long been associated

[6] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." In *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (*Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 53-92.

with unproductivity (non-work) and necessarily linked with leisure time. This type of activity, traditionally arranged by individuals, represents an organic process of social organization, rather than formalized or institutional requirements. It is conceived as the antithesis of work, as a way to distance notions of productivity and rather assert autonomy and power over how one spends time outside of the efficiency of work. If leisure time and how individuals decide to employ it have been historically conceived as the opposite of capitalist interests and productivity, contemporarily it represents a lucrative market for investments and a productive force. Installed in institutional settings, bars by artists such as *Ship in a Bottle* thus question the fraught relationship between work and leisure in contemporary times by further complicating the conventionally dichotomous link that unites them. If the party—or what French sociologist Henri Lefebvre has described as the *fête*—is associated with non-productive time and a space operating outside of capitalist conventions when organized by individuals, this particular conception of the social gathering can lose these qualities when conceived in association with the institution of the museum. In this context, the *fête* takes on mimicking and simulated airs.

The values derived from such installations—both for the hosting museum and audiences—are anchored in the encouragement and promotion of behaviours and attitudes associated with such activity: pleasure, fun, freedom. Through the festive works discussed in this thesis, notions of pleasure and enjoyment are juxtaposed to the institutional settings of museums so as to make them more attractive and welcoming. While historically the forms of pleasures within the realm of the museum could be discussed as intellectual ones, the goal of the contemporary museum institution rather seeks to engage the audience in embodied enjoyment through art and activities that promote a more affective involvement. Through that shift, the museum moves away from the tradition of internalized intellectual enjoyment. This incorporation of physical enjoyment, I propose, is part of the institution's sustained efforts to increase the relevance of their activities and diversify them so as to become accessible and appealing to larger audiences. This phenomenon is particularly observable in museums of contemporary art, which bear the stigmas of aloofness and unfriendly conceptualism in the popular imagination. MACM curator Mark Lanctôt, who generously agreed to share his thoughts on this topic, agreed that the accessibility of Baldwin's work, in terms of its easily enjoyable concept, was a way to soften the reputation of contemporary art as something

reserved for connoisseurs only and show the public that it can in fact be relatable and enjoyed by many.

If we consider the festive works analysed here as a response to institutional demands, they fulfill, as I suggest, a very specific purpose for the museum programme: their installation in institutional contexts function to present the museum as a welcoming, accessible space for leisure and embodied enjoyment, thus helping the institution attain its social ambitions. The convergence of practical and creative concerns as represented in the art practices detailed in the following pages demands a more pragmatist philosophical approach towards the purpose(s) of aesthetics for the postmodern cultural industry, such as that proposed by Richard Shusterman in his *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art.* Far from oblivious to the much-debated nature of practices such as Baldwin's and the sustained criticism directed at them, a pragmatist methodology allows for a productive interpretation of their aesthetic and conceptual particularities by accounting for the functional values of these installations. This thesis is an exploration of a genre and its institutional affiliations, but most importantly of the curious mutual reliance of practices such as Baldwin's and commissioning institutions.

Case Study: Dean Baldwin's *Ship in a Bottle*

Ship in a Bottle, described above, is one of many makeshift bars Baldwin has produced. Indeed, Baldwin's practice of the last five years has been almost exclusively comprised of these ephemeral parties and vernissages for various museums and galleries, including *Algonquin Tiki Tiki Hut* (2008) (Figs. 3, 4), the *Ice Fisher* (2010) (Figs. 5, 6), and *Bar Piano* (2012) (Figs. 7, 8), which were commissioned by the Justina M. Barnicke gallery in Toronto for the city's Nuit Blanche festivities. Intrinsically aligned with *Ship in a Bottle*, both *The Dork Porch* (2010) (Fig. 9) and *Chalet* (2012) (Fig. 11) also bear the weight of their respective institutional affiliations with the Art Gallery of Ontario and Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. Observed together, they help delineate the conditions under which this type of work flourish.

The Dork Porch was presented at the Art Gallery of Ontario's Young Gallery as part its *Toronto Now* series, an initiative aiming at promoting and celebrating emerging artistic practices from the Toronto area. Assembled with modest construction materials such as reclaimed wood and equipped with mismatched furniture and various found objects, the *Porch* resembled a charmingly disarrayed backyard deck (Fig. 10). Baldwin could be found in this definitively low-key environment mixing alcoholic concoctions, while meals from the AGO's adjacent restaurant FRANK were brought from their original upscale premise to the artist's whimsical installation. Appropriating FRANK's menus, food, and staff, the *Dork Porch* both in its nature and aesthetics contrasted sharply with the restaurant regarded as one of Toronto's best tables. Whether or not the installation constitutes a comment on the AGO's reliance on undertakings unrelated to art remains unanswered, but it still embodies a response to the institution's commissioning strategy and demonstrates a strong disposition towards unifying commercial and artistic endeavors.

Chalet was installed for the *Oh Canada* exhibition at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) in North Adams, Massachusetts, in 2012. Curated by Denise Markonish, the exhibition brought together sixty contemporary artists from Canada and represented the largest survey of Canadian art outside Canada.[7] The structure, a scaled-down model of a traditional cabin, was constructed from wood planks, and sparingly appointed with the objects and furniture usually found in a rudimentary cabin in the woods. Reproducing a domestic interior mostly associated with vacation and leisure, Baldwin created a welcoming environment in which participants could unwind by enjoying a drink, sharing food and having conversations in a setting completely different from the museum itself (Figs. 12, 13).

Also shown at MASS MoCA, the collective Bureau for Open Culture's beer garden was part of a larger site-specific project entitled *I Am Searching for Field Character* (2011) (Figs. 14, 15).

[7] The exhibition has become a traveling one. The exhibition was presented from June 27, 2014 to September 27, 2014 in Canada's Maritime provinces in multiples venues including the Confederation Centre Art Gallery in Charlottetown, the Owens Art Gallery in Sackville, The Louise and Reuben Cohen Art Gallery at the University of Moncton, and the Galerie Sans Nom in Moncton. It will also travel to Calgary and will open on January 31, 2015, with parts of the exhibition shown at the Glenbow Museum, the Esker Foundation, the Illingworth Kerr Gallery at the Alberta College of Art and Design, and the Nickel Galleries at the University of Calgary. CBC News Arts and Entertainment, "Oh, Canada contemporary art show sets Canadian dates" http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/oh-canada-contemporary-art-show-sets-canadian-dates-1.2519107 January 31, 2014. (accessed June 11, 2014)

Elaborated by artist James Voorhies, the multi-faceted installation was inspired by German artist Joseph Beuys' 1973 eponymous essay in which he discussed his wish "to expand the limits of art, turn theory into action and encourage widespread participation in the knowledge-producing sphere."[8] Through this reference, Bureau for Open Culture strived to contrast the industrial past of the town of North Adams with its current identity as a locus for culture and aesthetic experience.[9] On show from May 26 to September 30, 2011, the installation included work sites for freelance workers, lectures and workshops, and was most notably comprised of a traditional beer garden, which served local beer to be enjoyed at picnic tables along the nearby Hoosic River. The installation of a beer garden in the context of this larger installation is particularly interesting when examined in parallel with the institutional history of MASS MoCA. Founded by Thomas Krens, who is considered a forerunner in positioning the museum as a hub around which its location's cultural activities revolve,[10] Bureau for Open Culture's intervention embodies the museum's drive to position itself as an inviting, leisurely social space and also strived to expose the economic and social situation of North Adams' cultural labourers. As the Bureau's website notes:

> [The installation] examines this workforce within the context of a post-industrial city that has transformed economically from a site of major manufacturing industry to a locus for culture and experience. That examination conflates and purposely obscures notions of labor and touristic service industries, all transpiring inside architecture built originally for the production of goods and materials.

The provision of bar installations for vernissages and various other festive events can be affiliated with two art currents in distinct ways: art practices based in social interactions and institutional critique. Bars such as Baldwin's can first be related to socially based practices such as Allan Kaprow's Happenings of the late 1960s, mostly in their intent to foster sociability through artworks, but also as a way to circumvent the object-based art paradigm by shifting the focus toward an embodied and ephemeral experience of "being-together." This type of "being-together" also finds precedents in the Lettriste and Situationiste movements of the mid-twentieth century, which

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[8] MASS MoCA "Bureau for Open Culture" http://www.massmoca.org/event_details.php?id=649 (accessed February 14, 2013)

[9] MASS MoCA "Bureau for Open Culture" http://www.massmoca.org/event_details.php?id=649 (accessed February 14, 2013)

[10] Andrew McClellan "Commercialism," in *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao.* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2008), 193-232.

promoted the consumption of alcohol as an important component of their *dérives* and their "construction of situations." [11] In their journal *Potlatch*, in an article titled "Le jeu psychogéographique de la semaine," the Lettristes wrote:

> Construisez une maison. Meublez-la. Tirez le meilleur parti de sa décoration et de ses alentours. Choisissez la saison et l'heure. Réunissez les personnes les plus aptes, les disques et les alcools qui conviennent. L'éclairage et la conversation devront être évidemment de circonstance, comme le climat extérieur ou vos souvenirs. S'il n'y a pas d'erreurs dans les calculs, la réponse devrait vous plaire.[12]

This staging of situations suited to the ingestion of alcohol was particularly apparent in Situationistes environments such as the *Cavern of Anti-Matter* (1959), which was presented in the Galerie Drouin in Paris.[13] Close collaborator Yves Klein also staged a similar event at his 1959 *Le Vide* exhibition, for which blue cocktails were created and served. Both instances can be considered precursors in the act of recasting social settings and alcohol consumption as art.

The emphasis on forms of sociability as art has been recuperated more recently through the writings and curating of Nicolas Bourriaud, who has coined this resurgence of social models in contemporary art as relational aesthetics. Along with the art of Rirkrit Tiravanija, which embodies both the theory put forth by Bourriaud and constitutes an obvious precedent to the practices discussed here, the installation *...from the Transit Bar* (1992) by Canadian artist Vera Frenkel is also an example of an artwork functioning on the premise of a bar (Fig. 31) Deemed an early attempt and precursor of relational aesthetics,[14] Frenkel's bar, first conceived for the 1992 edition of DOCUMENTA in Kassel, was more recently recreated and presented at the National Gallery of Canada from May 15, 2014 to August 17, 2014. Mostly dealing with themes of displacement, migration and alienation through six video projections, the installation is also a fully functioning bar, serving cocktails and snacks to the audience. As Frenkel eloquently stated in an interview

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[11] Guy Debord, *Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action* (1957), trans. Tom McDonough, in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, ed. Tom McDonough, (Cambridge, Mass.; London, UK : The MIT Press, 2004), 29–50.
[12] International Lettriste, "Le jeu psychogéographique de la semaine," *Potlatch* 1 (22 juin 1954). Reprinted in Guy Debord, *Potlatch (1954-1957)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 15.
[13] See Nicola Pezolet, "The Cavern of Antimatter: Giuseppe "Pinot" Gallizio and the Technological Imaginary of the Early Situationist International." *Grey Room* 38, (Winter 2010): 62-89.
[14] Katherine Stauble, "Meet you at the Transit Bar,"NGC Magazine, May 13, 2014, http://www.ngcmagazine.ca/exhibitions/meet-you-at-the-transit-bar.

about the piece, the bar could provide an environment in which to explore concerns pertaining to cultural migration and its effects on identity, but also to simply offer a social space in which to enjoy refreshments. In this intent to provide a casual environment—made of unaltered construction materials—within an institutional setting, Frenkel's bar precedes Baldwin and Bureau for Open Culture in wanting to offer this type of leisurely experience, a space to enjoy a drink and interact with the people present.

The other important influence on the type of practices examined here is institutional critique from the 1980s onward, which embraced the museum as a fraught medium to exploit. Exposing the workings of the institution, artists openly criticized facets of the museum's program so as to denounce and reveal institutional biases, and the inherent flaws of institutionalizing art. While these practices were originally subversive in the hands of pioneers such as Andrea Fraser, their criticality was embraced and swiftly appropriated by the museum itself. Well-acquainted with the mechanisms of institutional critique, Fraser has long been involved in reflecting on the processes undermining the validity of the genre. Writing about the cooptation of institutional critique and the wish of museums to act as the focus of critical engagement, she observes: "How […] can we imagine, much less accomplish, a critique of art institutions when museum and market have grown into an all-encompassing apparatus of cultural reification? Now, when we need it the most, Institutional Critique is dead, a victim of its success or failure, swallowed up by the institutions it stood against."[15] Fraser most interestingly emphasizes the inevitability of this phenomenon: the evacuation of criticality from institutional commissions, which seek and endorse this exact type of critical engagement. This simultaneous recognition and annihilation of institutional critique ("success or failure") represents a strange impasse in that not only does it points out the overwhelming strength of the institution with regards to legitimization, it also highlights the inescapable fact that the museum's ethos of artistic reification stands in contradiction with the intent of institutional critique.

However indebted to these first forays into divergent territories, the contemporary cases at hand have perhaps lost the criticality of their predecessors. If this imprecise genealogy is relevant, it is

[15] Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique." *Artforum* 44, no. 1 (September 2005): 279.

because of the very nature of these historical practices as critical, and their contemporary recuperation as everything but. The absorption of avant-garde or marginal practices by the system has been widely discussed as one particularly insidious trait of the postmodern paradigm. In *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,* Fredric Jameson insists on the fact that postmodernism should be read as a "periodizing hypothesis"[16] rather than a stylistic attribute. He discusses the postmodern condition as a cultural dominant for which "aesthetic production has become integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic urgency […] now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation [which] find recognition in the institutional support of all kinds available to the newer art."[17] Jameson views the changes within the cultural field as a consequence of its penetration by capital, and the modification of the field as the divesting of its social and critical functions. The logic of late capitalism undermines the previously semi-autonomous cultural sphere, which gave way to an explosion of "the expansion of culture throughout the social realm"[18] and the reabsorption by the system of any forms of criticality. This paradigm is particularly observable in the cases at hand, in that both Baldwin's and Bureau for Open Culture's works are constructed through and for the institutional apparatus of the museum, which by commissioning them appropriates their values to achieve their own contemporary objectives with regards to their social role.

Shifts in the Museum's Mission

In "Having One's Tate and Eating It: Transformations of the Museum in a Hypermodern Era," Nick Prior argues that the contemporary museum is allotropic, neither an entertainment machine nor the bastion of elevated culture. In his view, late capitalist amusement has not completely replaced traditional contemplation, as postmodern theorists would have us believe. As Prior notes, "commerce and culture are now increasingly melded into a seamless entity, further withering the

[16] Jameson, 56.
[17] Jameson, 56.
[18] Jameson, 87.

line between high culture and popular culture."[19] This balance between commercial and artistic concerns is aligned with positions such as Henri Lefebvre's, in that spaces of leisure such as the museum operate in an ambiguous zone, merging the seemingly divergent interests of commerce and art and navigating (not always successfully) the differences between populism and elitism. This is evidence of a moderate position adopted toward the commercialization of the museum institution. While acknowledging its excesses in the twentieth century, and alluding to the criticism directed at it by artists and authors alike, Prior's discussion reveals an agreeable compromise between the traditionally divergent commercial and creative interests of the museum in recent times. These important negotiations are telling of the reflexivity and self-consciousness of the museum's endeavours towards its diversification: "Competing with other leisure domains has not, on the whole, meant museums abandoning *in toto* the cultural conventions and grounds on which they were established."[20]

Those historical conventions have to do with the intent, by the late nineteenth century, to offer a distraction to occupy leisure time properly through cultural and artistic education. Referring to the ideological debate between John Ruskin's vision of the museum as a non-utilitarian refuge from industrialization and John Brown Goode and John Cotton Dana's conception of the museum as an agency for public education and enlightenment, Andrew McClellan in *The Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*, indicates that the latter model has taken precedence in recent times. Motivated by the need to attract audiences and redeem their elitist reputation, museums since the 1950s have become increasingly audience-driven and more responsive to public taste. About this need to attract new audiences, McClellan writes: "The old art museum public wasn't big enough to pay the bills, and new audiences, surrounded by recreational alternatives, required new forms of stimulation to keep them coming back."[21] Out of this motivation to attract new publics, as well as widespread financial concerns, museums diversified their activities to include singles nights, concerts, restaurants, cafés, etc. These financial concerns and resulting diversification pointed to by McClellan are both political and economic in nature, as the latter part of the twentieth century saw the progressive

[19] Nick Prior, "Having One's Tate and Eating It: Transformations of the Museum in a Hypermodern Era," in *Art and its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, ed. Andrew McClellan. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing Company, 2003), 54.
[20] Prior, 67.
[21] McClellan, 213.

disinvestment of the state in cultural sectors, especially with the rise of neo-liberalism in the 1980s.[22]

The museum has always been conceived as a social institution, and a useful one at that. While nowadays it represents only one of many recreational activities for the middle class, it was used as a tool of regulation following the industrial revolution and the unrest it created within the British urban social masses. Insisting on the "palliative effects of museum-going on the working multitude,"[23] McClellan refers to John Ruskin to exemplify this historical locus. Ruskin's apparent disdain for the working class and the urgent need to provide them with appropriate recreational activities is exposed in his writings: "[the museum offers] an example of perfect order and perfect elegance…to the disorderly and rude populace."[24] This elitist position, echoed by a multitude of his contemporaries, exemplifies the historical emphasis put on the mission of the museum as a provider of appropriate recreation, a source of order and knowledge that could serve to educate (and regulate) "the populace." Criteria of appropriateness are historically contextual, and bound to shifting social constructs related to what is suitable and socially acceptable. Normalizing in essence, and instilled with the hope of cultural and social elevation, the relevance of the museum in the historical writings cited by McClellan is necessarily conceived in opposition to other forms of activities deemed inappropriate, such as drinking and gambling. Such activities had taken prevalence in the newly industrialized cities where museums were swiftly deployed so as to curtail those "degenerate" pastimes and promote wholesome values of beauty and knowledge. Thus the museum was seen as useful recreation, and in the humanist tradition of the Enlightenment conceived as akin to a "classic utopia […] set apart from the flow of normal life [to] offer a seductive vision of harmonious existence and communal values."[25]

The museum's overarching social mission of unifying communities and presenting a model for harmonious living, conceived as a contribution to the "cementing of the bonds of union between richer and poorer orders of state," is still relevant today, albeit without the decidedly classist

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[22] See Gregory Sholette and Oliver Ressler, ed. *It's the Political Economy, Stupid : The Global Financial Crisis in Art and Theory* (London : Pluto Press ; New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[23] McClellan, 22.
[24] John Ruskin, as quoted in McClellan, 23.
[25] McClellan, 8.

argument made historically. This social aspect is also reworked in recent times through the practices examined here, in the reshaping of the museum not only as a social space but also as a social host. Here the term "social" takes on a slightly differentiated meaning, in that while it has previously been used to describe the historical purpose of the museum as part of a regulatory societal program, its intended meaning in its present association with "host" refers to sociability: the museum as a host to convivial, pleasant and welcoming festivities. In the commissioning of bars such as the ones Baldwin puts in place, the museum presents itself and effectively acts as a festive space, in which the sociable behaviours prescribed by Baldwin' artworks reflect on the institution.

Festive Aesthetics: The *Fête* as Relational Art and Model of Sociability

Ship in a Bottle's bar functions as a space of sociability and advocates behaviors associated with festivities. Through his installation and his role as a bartender and entertainer, Baldwin effectively throws a party for the museum's audience. With its aim of providing an environment of leisure, and its disheveled aesthetics, the artwork embodies the traits of a festive gathering and its values. Associated with excess and a sense of play, the model of the *fête* as proposed by Henri Lefebvre in his *Writings on Cities* is particularly suited to explain *Ship in a Bottle*'s festive mode of operation. Lefebvre conceived of the *fête* as an unproductive, pleasure-inducing, total experience and for him a critical example of leisure activities. Within his analysis of the paradoxical nature of leisure and its relationship to everyday life, Lefebvre refers to the *fête* - the party - as the ultimate unproductive activity: as a moment of pure sensorial enjoyment and a break from everyday productivity. For Lefebvre, the *fête* is the most eminent use of space precisely because "it consumes unproductively, without other advantage but pleasure."[26] His conception of leisure activities such as the *fête* is twofold: as the non-everyday within the quotidian, as a break away from it, and simultaneously as the critique of everyday life. Thus the *fête*, despite its ultimately unproductive nature, holds a critical potential that Lefebvre urges us to reclaim. Through that potential for criticality, festivities regain their traditional meaning but also function as an effective way to counter the effects of capitalism on everyday life. However, a possible counter effect of the *fête*'s use is its potential co-optation by the very system it should stand against. According to the *Critique of Everyday Life*, this

[26] Henri Lefebvre, "Industrialization and Urbanization," in *Writings on Cities*. 66.

paradoxical dual nature leads to the eventual establishment of a social organization passionately devoted to the spectacular and the *mise-en-scène*, to the exploitation of the *fête* as a model of sociability.

In the way it relies on the ludic ethos of the *fête* and its sense of play to function, *Ship in a Bottle* undeniably connects with contemporary theory on relational art, which has come to rely on the mediation of experience, inserting itself in circles which have previously been incorporated in the visual arts as the focus of criticism and rejection: entertainment, business, and popular culture. In "Specific Spectacles: Art and Entertainment," Bennett Simpson aptly writes: "The instrumentalization of culture has been user-tailored and repackaged as self-improvement and participation."[27] Conceptualized as an institutional artwork, the *fête* attests to the contemporary interest in relational practices as advocated by Nicolas Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics.* Referring to Louis Althusser's materialism of encounter[28] as the philosophical underpinning of relational art, Bourriaud conceives of the participatory artwork as a social interstice and a state of encounter, which has as "its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context." [29] Effectively promoting and institutionalizing this participatory and interactive model, within which artists propose "moments of sociability or objects producing sociability," [30] Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* theorizes art and/as spectacle and has become complicit in cultural industries rather than resisting them. According to him, these practices, amongst other democratizing traits, empower the viewer by conceptualizing use [31] and participation as (alternative) generative productive forms.[32] This represents what Bourriaud calls the social interstice, in which participation belongs to an aesthetic regime that entirely reconceptualises the audience's role but also alters and disrupts the prescribed modes of contemporary communication and human interaction.

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[27] Simpson, 71.
[28] Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87* (London; New York : Verso, 2006).
[29] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. Translated by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods. (Dijon: Presses du Réel, 2002), 14.
[30] Bourriaud, 33.
[31] Or "expenditure." Georges Bataille's. "The Notion of Expenditure," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl, with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).
[32] Simpson, 71.

According to Bourriaud's model, the artwork conceived as a social interstice "create[s] free areas, and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those of everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the 'communication zones' that are imposed upon us."[33]This relational model shifts the significance of the work of art from aesthetic value to use value, in that the object/work of art is only significant because it can be used, as directed by the artist, to be conducive of human relationships. While his theory was and to some extent still is enticing, its slightly utopian character does not account for the transgressive potential of human communications necessary to democratic processes, and has been much criticized for the commodification or instrumentalization of the art practices it advocated. For Bourriaud, art is a remedy to a current lack of socialisation: "through little services rendered, the artists fill the crack of the social bond."[34] Meanwhile he does not mention pleasure or enjoyment. He rather refers to the optimization of contemporary culture: "[Today's art] is presented as a social interstice within which these experiments, and these 'new possibilities of life' turn out to be feasible."[35] It relies on a belief that artists operate on an "alternate economy of cultural significance and participation."[36] Both the ideas and language used by Bourriaud, and especially exhibited in this last passage, are telling of his focus on optimization and the need to find a differentiated niche within the processes of conventional art production. While he conceives of this niche, or interstice, as essentially opposed to current "possibilities of life," his language rather denotes this niche's existence as nothing but one more option for consumers to choose. Relational aesthetics, especially in their recent cooptation by institutions, do not represent an alternative to the current economy. They instead appropriate and incorporate values once associated with genuine alternatives to capitalist activities.

Since its publication, the tenets of Bourriaud's theory have been problematized, particularly in relation to the insertion of relational practices in institutional contexts. Perhaps the most fervent critic of Bourriaud's argument, Claire Bishop pejoratively refers to relational practices—and aesthetics—as necessarily utopian, naïve, and unrepresentative of social and political reality. She posits that institutionalized relational art allows "the museum [to] become marketable as a space of leisure and entertainment [and is used] to differentiate [itself] from bureaucracy-encumbered

[33] Bourriaud, 16.
[34] Bourriaud, 16.
[35] Simpson, 74.
[36] Simpson, 75.

collection-based museums."[37] In her response to Bourriaud, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," she demonstrates the fallacy of democracy in the social forms or "microtopias"[38] instigated by artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija (Figs. 16, 17). Referring to Marxist theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, she posits that the antagonistic and dissident forces necessary to democracy are absent from the ephemeral communities created and advocated through and by relational practices. Bishop associates this crucial lack to the already-unified audience of relation art experiences, often constituted of art lovers or members of the art community. Returning to the utopian nature of these relations, and thus their intrinsic fallacy as democratic processes, she writes: "The relations set up by relational aesthetics […] rest too comfortably within an ideal of subjectivity as whole and of community as immanent togetherness."[39] Their reliance on institutions mimics the current experience economy, which seeks to offer engaged (staged) experiences. Clearly, the point of contention for Bishop is what she perceives as the facile nature of these art practices, and their overly swift appropriation by institutions to fulfill their own needs. She dismisses their functionality within the museum, as if their instrumentalization and their relevance were mutually exclusive. While Bishop proposes a strong argument against art practices endorsed by Bourriaud by demonstrating their neutralization of social values, her judgment dismisses what such artworks can contribute to the revitalization of museums' activities. If we accept that works such as *Ship in a Bottle* are dependent on the museum and function to accommodate its needs, the frame of reference to which it relates can be different from the one proposed by Bishop; namely a framework that acknowledges but does not dismiss entirely the pragmatist aspect of these practices and their instrumentalization.

Also responding to Bourriaud's concept of the social interstice or the reparation, by artists, of the "weaknesses in the social bond,"[40] Jacques Rancière points out, in *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, that this art of encounters is a simple invitation: the invitation to create and share a situation for which, interestingly, the political and/or polemical aspect is reduced to the simple activation of

[37] Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 52.
[38] Ibid, 54.
[39] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 67. See also Bishop, *Artificial Hells*. (London; Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2012).
[40] Bourriaud, 36.

processes of socialization and communitarian impulses.[41] He writes: "Indeed, it seems as if the time of consensus, with its shrinking of public space and effacing of political inventiveness, has given to artists and their mini-demonstrations, […] their *dispositifs* of interaction, their *in situ* or other provocations, a substitutive political function."[42] In reducing relational practices to their simplest form, as an invitation, and by questioning their political nature, Rancière enables the limitations of these invitations to shine through, particularly in terms of access to these open-ended offers. Their functioning is predicated on social limitations extrinsic to the artworks, such as social and economic statuses as well as divergences in culture and education, and therefore cannot be conceived as actual alternative ways of life considering its existence in an apolitical and insulated environment.

Rancière and Bishop are right in pointing to the potential shortcomings of relational art and its limitations in terms of its nature as a model of sociability, especially when the institution of the museum endorses it. Between installations and happenings, "art parties" of recent years are conceptually indebted to diverse twentieth-century terminologies such as DIY ("do-it-yourself") and participatory practices. Inscribed within this nomenclature, it would be rather easy to also historically associate these events with institutional critique. However seeing the lack of critical involvement and "hesitation" [43] in these endeavours, it seems appropriate to dismiss their assumed critical lineage to rather discuss the aestheticization of services (such as bartending) by artists. Indeed, as opposed to earlier forays of art into the realm of mundane activities such as sharing a meal or drinks, recent practices that incorporate or function entirely on the premise of providing services such as cooking, bartending, and entertaining are unapologetic about these endeavours. There is no hesitation—whether it is out of necessity or choice—in the contemporary embrace of mediums previously rejected as worthy of artistic attention and understood as commercial in intent. There is also little hesitation in the acceptance of shifted modes of art productions, in which the

[41] It is important to insist on the *invitation to*, as opposed to the *action of*, in the sense that before the actual gesture, the sole conception is theorized as political engagement and reaction. Rancière writes: "Aesthetics itself has its own specific politics, or rather it contains a tension between two opposed types of politics: between the logic of art becoming life at the price of its self-elimination and the logic of art's getting imvolved in politics on the express condition of not having anything to do with it." Jacques Rancière, "Problems and Transformations of Critical Art," in *Aesthetics and its Discontent* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2009), 46.
[42] Rancière, 60.
[43] Simpson, 71.

artist effectively acts as a service provider for the institution. In the case of Baldwin, he fulfills the role of a party planner and entertainer in all the bar installations he creates. In "When the Artist Parties, Is It Still a Celebration?" Paul Ardenne echoes Bishop's concerns with the programmatic aspect of the "institutional" party and the overly-simplistic sociability that artworks such as Baldwin's present: "No spontaneism, the contemporary party is a programmed and highly supervised event [which has] turned the party into the prime example of a mimicked sociality."[44] Linking the current type of events produced by the cultural industry with the instrumentalization of the *fête* highlights its contemporary purpose as an institutional instrument of revitalization, but most importantly reveals the dubious nature of social interactions they promote, hence Ardenne's reference to mimicry. Indeed as both Bishop and Ardenne point out, these art parties encourage relations based solely on pleasant social interactions and evacuate the other elements of democratic sociability such as dissent and criticality. By adopting Bourriaud's ideas on relational art as a remedy to contemporary sociability, the museums that commission such artworks evacuate the potential for criticality and dissent traditionally intrinsic to the festive event, and therefore present a restricted conception of social interactions. Indeed, the limitations of the social model presented by artworks such as *Ship in a Bottle* elicit their association with calculated and predictable relations, which can lead to their establishment as examples of mimicked sociality, rehearsed and un-problematized.

Historically, a party is an opportunity to indulge, to engage in a joyful activity. As such, it can be conceived as a model of harmonious, pleasant sociability. Specifically referring to artworks as social events, authors have recently been questioning the legitimacy of such a model, especially when presented in an institutional context. While acknowledging the inextricable link between artists and the *fête,* critics express reservations towards contemporary incarnations of festive celebrations. Undermined by postmodern utilitarian philosophy, the spontaneous ethos of the collective celebration is annihilated, exposing a programmatic, firmly controlled event that turns the party, the *fête*, into an instance of mimicked and phony sociality. This emphasis on the staging, and organizing, of an event that is conceived as a social opportunity, brings the discussion back to the original criticism directed toward Bourriaud's relational aesthetics: that is, the *faire-semblant* and the conceivable disingenuousness of the social bonds that are being created, or even forced. The

[44] Paul Ardenne, "When the Artist Parties, Is It Still a Celebration?" *Esse* 67 (Fall 2009): 14.

submission of life praxis to institutional rhetorics, of life to art, [45] instilled in the commissioning of parties explains the emphasis put on the mise-en-scène. Through explicit staging (especially obvious in Baldwin's elaborate installations), the artistic status of the experience is confirmed, and the museum thereby (re)sanctions its artistic and cultural authority. The ordinary gestures encouraged in institutionalized relational practices acquire a value (their artistic value, established through definite historical, social and theoretical conventions) that their everyday alter ego cannot claim. This particular notion of make-believe or the programmatic aspect of the *fête* is conveyed by the critical discourse that surrounds the social event-as-art, which insists on the apolitical, utopian and unsustainable nature of practices such as Baldwin's by referring to the importance of antagonism to social relations and democratic processes. It is also telling of the bypassing of the *fête*'s transgressive potential. There is a noticeable insistence, in criticism towards *Relational Aesthetics,* on the "simulated" experience relational practices offer, on the fallacious nature of the social model they represent. The "make-believe" sociability of this type of artwork and the specific function they are attributed in art institutions serve as instruments of revitalization, while also representing a possibility for the museum to act a part in its audiences' leisure and lifestyle, to engage its previously passive viewers in a mundane activity that has less to do with exhibiting and more with experiencing.

The reliance on forms of leisurely sociability such as the *fête* conceptualized as art practice is not without risks, especially when it is used in an institutional setting. Beyond their potential existence as an excuse to party and the possible mimicry they involve, which affect the production of art in alarming ways, those artworks conventionalize this model of sociability. The contemporary institutionalization of the *fête*, stripped from its historical ties to joyous subversion and carefree agitation, risks establishing, in Hal Foster's words, "a formalism of discursivity and sociability, for which the very idea of community has taken a utopian tinge."[46] Along with pointing to the risk of sociability as a prescribed art form, Foster also responds to Bourriaud in that he warns against the conception of the artist as a social organizer and someone who "repairs" the neglected social interactions produced by late capitalism. Moreover, if an institution commissions the artist, the sociability presented and fostered can only dubiously be conceived as genuine alternatives to the

[45] Richard Shusterman, as cited in Barbara Formis, *Esthétique de la vie ordinaire* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 2010) : 92.
[46] Hal Foster, "Arty Party." *London Review of Books* 25, no. 23 (December 4, 2003): 21.

current forms of precarious social interactions, as they are effectively established by and within this very system.

In its conception as a space of pleasant sociability, *Ship in a Bottle* can be related both to Bourriaud's ideas and the criticism directed to *Relational Aesthetics*. Indeed the unpretentious, fun setting that Baldwin creates with his bar can be associated with artworks championed by Bourriaud in that its immersive nature, which promotes the viewer's engagement through the act of serving him/her cocktails, is premised on Bourriaud's insistence on the role of the artist as someone who creates spaces of relational experiences rather than material objects, someone who offers an alternative space of communication. The medium of the *fête* as exhibited by Baldwin's artwork is quite similar to the practice of Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose invitations to share meals in galleries and museums Bourriaud elevated as exemplification of his theory. Tiravanija's works such as *Pad Thai* have been widely discussed in relation to the gift, since the meal he prepares is served to the audience for free. Seemingly, the commissioning institutions bear the costs of these installations. While similar in format—the artist preparing and serving food and drinks— *Ship in a Bottle* is different in that the cocktails were for sale. However, in that Baldwin effectively provides a service and functions as an entertainer, and that it is around these services that the artwork revolves, *Ship in a Bottle* exhibits many of the specific traits of relational art.

The artwork's explanatory panel corroborated the museum's intent to frame *Ship in a Bottle* within the relational paradigm, while also exhibiting awareness of the critical literature associated with it. It read:

> Dean Baldwin's work focuses on food and drink. He constructs elaborate, immersive social environments set within a specific vernacular where he often performs the role of host, employing humour, kitchen science, bar banter and carpentry in an attempt to turn on its head the earnest and politically correct pretensions of some relational practices and to infuse a level of pleasure and fun into the art experience.[47]

[47] Exhibition text panel, as cited by Steven Howell, "Musée d'art contemporain presents second edition of Triennial." Republican Press (November 3, 2011) Online. http://pressrepublican.com/thursday/x867533600/Musee-dArt-Contemporain-presents-second-edition-of-Triennial/print (accessed October 20, 2013)

The text clearly evokes Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, most importantly positioning the museum as a space for embodied leisure and fun as opposed to intellectual enjoyment traditionally prescribed. The museum now presents art that is easily approachable. "Pleasure and fun" being the operative words, it promotes the spectators' enjoyment and the emancipation of the museum as a social host. Neutralizing the intrinsically political nature of relational art and its theorization, the museum averts the potential criticality of Baldwin's installation in relation to the institution by dismissing the "politically correct pretensions" of some relational art. With that, the museum insulates itself from the criticism directed towards the apolitical nature of these practices by annihilating the installation's critical potential through its framing as "fun." The language used cleverly directs criticism toward relational aesthetics' detractors by emphasizing the fun and pleasurable aspects of the artworks. The promotional language positions the values of pleasure and enjoyment as apolitical liberation and as such, elevates "conviviality […] to the level of forgetting (of self as well as politics)."[48] Seemingly, *Ship in a Bottle* is presented as a relief from the seriousness of contemporary art practices and thus positions the museum as attuned to the need for pleasurable, unproductive leisure. Exploiting the sense of play and potential for excess emphasized by Lefebvre, relational art in the form of the *fête* appropriates the tropes of festivities and invests them as participatory art practices. The danger of this appropriation lies in its cooptation by institutions, insofar as the *fête* produced by the museum loses its critical potential. It is used for its value as unproductive pleasure, and pleasant participation, but stripped from its potential for social unrest.

Productive Leisure and the Experience Economy

Commissioning artworks that act as spaces of leisure, the museum is redefining itself as a multi-faceted cultural center that is able to cater to different audiences. Through the offering of unproductive leisure time and the presentation of values such as pleasure and fun, the museum uses *Ship in a Bottle* to create a convivial setting and positions itself as a host for social gatherings such as the ones usually found by nightclubs, festivals, sporting events and such. With that the institution situates itself as an enjoyable leisure activity and detaching itself from more traditional contexts of

[48] Simpson, 73.

art viewing. To the question of whether or not works such as Baldwin's installation brings new or different audiences to the museum, and effectively embodies a diversification towards more populist forms of entertainment, Lanctôt remains hesitant:

> It might, or it might not. The idea of bringing people in with something that is already in the museum is difficult. The triennale itself was and still remains our best-attended exhibition and I think that what happens is that if you do get through the door then and you're confronted to this or you fall into Dean's bar, especially if it [was] working, you couldn't peel off the smiles of people's faces. So it softens the blow. […] That show went from Dean's soft and cozy, warm comforting drinks under the soft glow of incandescent lighting under a sail to just not that far from there a barbed wire that has contact microphones around and a signal, an electrical signal pushed through, that had a very aggressive and rebarbative, repulsive effect to it. It would have been a completely different message if we had put that barbed wire piece on the ground. The idea is that you want people that are going to come in because they are curious, and because there is no big name that anybody recognizes, you want to soften people into it and also show the range of what contemporary art can be. [It was important] to have something that's way more hospitable and way more soft and friendly as a starting point. So in a way to get in people in…it's not so much to get people in but for people who are in to see that there is a range of propositions you can go through. It kind of softens the blow…and then maybe word of mouth happened and they find out they can come back on Wednesday. It made the visitor experience as diversified and multiple as possible. [It is about] the idea of also making the experience a bit more palatable.[49]

Lanctôt's reflection points to the need, even for the curatorial team, to design a diversified experience for a varied public by embracing the fluidity of the museum's mandate so as to juxtapose different aesthetic experiences. Despite his hesitation, the curator provides insight into the accessibility of the museum, and the inclusion of more populist forms of entertainment and leisure activities such as *Ship in a Bottle*. In this regard, the inclusion of inviting bar installations in museums is situated at a noteworthy crossroad. As reported by Prior, a 1998 British study showed that lower classes were more inclined to participate in "accessible, popular, and affordable forms of entertainment and leisure that provide the stuff of everyday sociability."[50] The pub notably counted as one of the privileged activities, along with short holidays and cinema. The foreseeable

[49] Lanctôt, interview.

[50] This study was conducted solely in Britain, and thus differences with the Canadian context are to be expected. It was reverted to after acknowledging the lack of Canadian data in this particular field of enquiry. J. Moore, "Poverty and Access to the Arts: Inequalities in Arts Attendance," *Cultural Trends*, no. 32 (1998), 31. As quoted in Prior, 61.

conclusions of this research are echoed in Lanctôt's thoughts on the position of the museum—and contemporary art—as hospitable and friendly, through the use of *Ship in a Bottle* as an entry point to the Triennale. While the curator suspects it doesn't necessarily bring new audiences to the museum, his statement still denotes a wish to appeal to various demographics by including a piece that is more pleasant for people not well-versed in contemporary art aesthetics and discourses. By proposing an experience that offers a type of sociability not traditionally offered in the context of the art exhibition, the museum ensures its relevance for a more diverse group of attendees. It should be stressed that the role of the museum as a social host is not novel: rental services, hosting of corporate events and ventures such as boutiques, restaurants and cafés are all part of a program aimed at diversifying the museum's profit-making activities. However this hosting role is usually largely separate from art exhibitions. It can also be noted that MACM approach to such activities appears to be rather conservative. The boutique is situated beyond the museum's walls, and there is in fact no café or such spaces commonly associated with museum institution.

The accessibility of the installation, is emphasized by Lanctôt through the use of words such as "soft" and "cozy," relies on the universality of the "everyday" activity of sharing a drink, of being social. Indeed most theories of leisure refer to the act of drinking alcoholic beverages as a prime example of leisurely activities from the late eighteenth century onward, in reaction to the industrialization and globalization of the urban landscape. Sharing a drink was established as a mass cultural leisure pastime in most industrial cities of Europe after the urban labour classes successfully negotiated a free afternoon on Saturday in the early nineteenth century; the negotiated afternoon off additionally provided the basis for flourishing leisure industries.[51]

One of the first authors to delineate the importance of leisure for the modern individual after the rise of industrialism is Johan Huizinga, whose definition of play was bound to its nature as essential to social processes and the production of culture. In the seminal *Homo Ludens* (1938), Huizinga explains the sense of play as non-serious activity fulfilling the individual's extrinsic cultural and social needs, as well as intrinsic psychological and physical pleasures.[52] Traditionally, theories of leisure had established that the sense of play present in games, sports and leisure activities

[51] Karl Spracklen, "Philosophy and Leisure." In *Constructing Leisure: Historical and Philosophical Debates.* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 144.
[52] Spracklen, 30.

essentially existed in opposition to work and for that reason associated with freedom and self-determination. Huizinga, however, denoted leisure's characteristic sense of play and make-believe as rooted in its ephemeral nature, necessarily limited both in time and space. Those very limitations affect the activity's potential as leisure. The fewer the external limitations, the greater the freedom, and thus the higher coefficient of fun and pleasure.[53] Perhaps this is what is common to all criticism pertaining to the commissioned art practices based on social drinking. The extrinsic function, motivation, and limitations are such that the potential for sociability as leisure found in a night at the pub/bar or an impromptu friendly gathering, is lowered to a threshold at which the pretense is too evident. The activity's function as leisure for the participants is less significant than the instrumental function it fulfills for the hosting institution. As Karl Spracklen reports in *Constructing Leisure: Historical and Philosophical Debates*, "The greater the emphasis on play as a vehicle for intentional learning, the lower its leisure potential becomes. The more structured a play form becomes, the less its leisure potential—and the greater the degree of organization in a game, the lower the degree of freedom and choice available to players."[54]

Pursuing this exploration in the values associated with leisure and complicating its relationship with the contemporaneous conception of labour, Georges Bataille also considered its importance in "The Notion of Expenditure," in which he outlined the paradoxical productivity of leisure time. Pleading for the recognition of unproductive activities and their importance for the individual's development, Bataille specified: "Any general judgment of social activity implies the principle that all individual effort, in order to be valid, must be reducible to the fundamental necessities of production and conservation. Pleasure, whether art, permissible debauchery, or play, is definitely reduced […] to a concession; in other words, it is reduced to a diversion whose role is subsidiary."[55] Seeing the exclusion of "non-productive expenditure"[56] from everyday life as inherently dishonest, Bataille argued that indulgence and pleasure dictate individual actions as much as rational principles do. Consumption of this nature, which includes luxury goods, games, spectacles, and the arts, is characterized by sacrifice and loss precisely because of its unproductive and non-utilitarian nature.

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[53] Spracklent, 30.
[54] Spracklen, 32.
[55] Georges Bataille. "The Notion of Expenditure," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*. Trans. Allan Stoekl, with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985.), 117.
[56] Bataille, 117.

He conceived of luxuries such as festivals and spectacles as activities upon which affluent classes establish themselves: "Social rank is linked to the possession of a fortune, but only on the condition that the fortune be partially sacrificed in unproductive social expenditure."[57] As such, within Bataille's discourse, art and festivities are perceived as simultaneously excessive and necessary, as unproductive yet vital.[58]

Henri Lefebvre further established the importance of leisure to capitalist modernity. In his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947), Lefebvre posited that the separation of manual and intellectual labor since the industrial revolution reshaped the relation between productivity and self-development. While these two poles were historically tied to the worker's everyday life, there was little to no distinction between the two. Elaborating on the nature of the modern needs for unproductive time, he insisted on the importance of modern leisure activities to produce a break (or at least the illusion of one) with everyday life. He writes: "With its fragmentation of labor, modern industrial civilization creates both a general need for leisure and differentiated concrete needs within that general framework […] There is an increasing emphasis on leisure characterized as distraction, […] liberation and pleasure."[59] According to Lefebvre, its ultimate characteristic consists of "the feeling of presence, towards nature and the life of the senses […] leisure transcends technical activities to become a style of living, an art of living."[60]

The narrativity, or what Huizinga conceived as the inherent make-believe of leisure experiences—both past and present—is recuperated by the postmodern "scriptural economy,"[61] for which consumption is premised on rehearsed storytelling. Joseph B. Pine and James H. Gilmore elaborate on this increased narrativity in their book *The Experience Economy*, which presents an economic model that reflects the constant multiplication of consumable offerings. Pine and Gilmore delineate a model in which products can no longer stand on their own, but rather need to be incorporated in spaces of consumption that are conceptualized as total environment. These environments are built

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[57] Bataille, 123.
[58] On the dual nature of leisure, see also the work of Bataille's close collaborator. Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games* (1958), trans. Meyer Barash (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001).
[59] Henri Lefebvre, "Work and Leisure in Everyday Life," in *Critique of Everyday Life Volume I* (1958) Translated by John Moore. (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 229.
[60] Lefebvre, "Work and Leisure in Everyday Life," 235.
[61] Michel De Certeau, "The Scriptural Economy," in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* (1988) Trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.; London, UK: University of California Press, 2011), 131-53.

to distinguish themselves and the products they contain so as to appeal to their target market. Tracing the genealogy of this type of offerings, the authors interestingly refer to restaurants such as *Hard Rock Café* and coffee shops such as Starbucks as pioneers in this type of endeavor. In the case of *Starbucks*, the main product is coffee, but the setting in which it is served commands its substantially higher price: the endlessly customizable drinks, the identification of the customer by his name, and the general atmosphere are tactics of distinction. *In Brandscapes: Architecture in the Experience Economy*, Anna Klingmann specifies:

> Thus by combining service ("humanware"), entertainment ("software"), and design ("hardware'") into a holistic experience, [companies] strive to represent distinctive brand personalities where personal service is elevated to a staged performance, and where space is converted into an atmospherically charged lifestyle environment. [62]

The consumer not only buys a material object or a service, but rather buys into carefully crafted scripts, which embody the distinctiveness of the product and come to form and inform the identity of its user. The choices made regarding consumption thus thematically organize everyday life, and aestheticizes most of its aspects. [63] According to Pine and Gilmore, an experience should have some entertainment qualities, but should also have educational, aesthetic, or escapist ones as well. Ideally the instigators of such staged happenings should try to combine and balance these components in somewhat equal proportions to offer consumers a satisfying and profitable experience.

Art institutions contemporarily embrace the model described by Pine and Gilmore in *The Experience Economy* by following the trends affecting most cultural industries. Indeed, as Lanctôt's words convey, the embrace of relational art is seen as one of many strategies in the institution's goal to offer diversified, crowd-pleasing, and profitable activities that shift the museum

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[62] Anna Klingmann, *Brandscapes: Architecture in the Experience Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), 23.

[63] Pine and Gilmore discuss Walt Disney's original theme park as the first instance of a business offering a total experience to consumers, thus tracing the genealogy of experience economy alongside the multiplication of entertainment options and a rising affluence from the 1950s onward. However, they make an important distinction between entertainment and engagement, and suggest that experiences should engage first, and then perhaps provide entertainment. Joseph B. Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011).

from an exhibition space to a "full-service culture and entertainment destination"[64] which offers activities such as film screenings, music concerts, family days, children day camps, merchandise operations, etc. The MACM and MASS MoCA are finely attuned to the demands of today's cultural economy and offer leisure activities beyond art exhibitions. Both establish their mission to act as hubs for their respective communities by offering much more than art exhibitions through a plethora of social events designed to position the museum as widely accessible for casual, leisurely times. For example, the MACM has introduced "Nocturnes," periodically extending their opening hours past midnight. Well-attended by a younger crowd, these events are an opportunity for the audience to enjoy the exhibitions, attend artist or curator talks, but also share a bite or a drink, and enjoy live music. This effort to become a popular gathering place is conveyed by the MACM website, which states: "The Musée is becoming the place to be, to get together with friends."[65] More recently, it also hosted the 15th edition of the electronic and digital music festivals Elektra and Mutek, which in 2014 were combined as a joint venture and held almost entirely at the museum. As for MASS MoCA, its founder Thomas Krens conceived conceived it as a cultural center around which the town of North Adams could organize and be revitalized, through activities ranging from live music, theatre and dance performances, the presentation of films, to hosting dance parties and child-friendly events. From its inception in 1999, it has strived to expand the scope of their offerings to be, as their website describes:

> An open platform, a welcoming environment that encourages free exchange between the making of art and its display, between the visual and performing arts, and between our extraordinary historic factory campus and the patrons, workers and tenants who again inhabit it. We work equally hard to leverage the arts as a catalyst for community revitalization: the creation of new markets, good jobs and the long-term enrichment of a region in economic need are all part of our driving purpose. We at MASS MoCA are convinced that advancement of the arts, increased tourism, deeper community participation, and regional economic redevelopment are all mutually reinforcing and inextricably linked. [66]

[64] Martha Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise: Contemporary Art Between Museum and Marketplace.* (New York and London: Continuum, 2012), 18.
[65] MACM, "Nocturnes," http://www.macm.org/en/activities-and-events/friday-nocturnes/ (accessed August 11, 2014)
[66] MASS MoCA, "Mission," http://www.massmoca.org/mission.php (accessed August 11, 2014)

While the museum, since its inception, has been conceptualized as a socially acceptable form of leisure and as a space of popular education, it has also suffered from its reputation as perhaps too elitist of an entertainment. Alternately perceived as an ivory tower and a corporate sell-out in recent theory and criticism, and conceptually positioned as an institution in crisis, the balance between intellectual pleasure and physical indulgence is one the museum relentlessly tries to secure. Indeed museums increasingly wish to position themselves as an elevated, yet accessible form of leisure. Baldwin's bars and to a lesser extent Bureau for Open Culture's beer garden, can be seen as efforts to be such forms of leisure. These activities embody a compromise between the museum's artistic concerns and its need to reinvent its mission as a provider of leisure activities.

Seemingly, the art practices observed here don't escape the economic framework of the Experience Economy. The model notably suggests that most generally, the individual's response to prosperity is to increase the frequency of enjoyable, leisure activities, and that he is more inclined to pay more for an experience than for a simple commodity because the complete enjoyment it provides is perceived to be of greater value. Pine and Gilmore argue: "recent economic research into happiness [is equated with] experiences over commodities, pastimes over knick-knacks, doing over having."[67] Thus while the expense attached to an experience tends to be significantly higher, its distinctive (and later personal) value justify its monetary price. The relation between the price of the ephemeral experience and the lingering memories it produces is telling of a shift in how people spend not only their money, but also their time. The consumption of these programmed experiences, and the choices associated with them, forms and informs the user's lifestyle and identity. The intrinsic bonds uniting these personal decisions with notions of social and economic classes, as argued by Pine and Gilmore, demonstrate that decisions pertaining to consumption can be identified as distinctions between social classes[68]. The investments made towards free time and leisure, both in time and money, act as signifiers of appropriate (or otherwise) taste.

Indeed, the art installations commissioned under the guise of providing bar services embody the institutional concerns with exhibiting the museum as a fun, yet appropriate form of leisure. If we associate the diversification of museum offerings with the tenets of the Experience Economy, those

[67] Pine and Gilmore, 19.
[68] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979), trans. Richard Nice. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

artworks are part of this diversification and act as tools of distinction in that they offer an experience of art that is different from traditional exhibition viewing. This type of artwork educates the public about the range of contemporary art practices while the endearing aesthetics of the work mediate the experience of the viewer by placing him in a zone of ludic familiarity—a comfortable space within an otherwise stark atrium, and as referred to by Mark Lanctôt, escapist in essence as it suspends the narratives traditionally offered by the institution. Most importantly, its commission had a goal of entertainment, of offering an experience of fun and leisure through the festive aesthetics and leisurely nature of Baldwin's artwork. Despite the insistence on the educational, aesthetic, and escapist qualities of the experience as described by Pine and Gilmore, the entertainment factor remains the most conspicuous element in the writings on the Experience Economy.[69] Entertainment is used as "an anchor, a magnet to enhance hospitality."[70] Conviviality is notably mentioned by Lanctôt when discussing the selection of Baldwin to create a centerpiece in the form of a welcoming installation, referring to both the difficult nature of the museum's architecture and the need to "make the experience more palatable."[71] He said: "It was great to have that as a starting point but also an ending point. When you're done with the show you come down and you can spend a bit of time there. It [relates to] the idea of slowing things down. These bars are places for escapism."[72] Clearly, not only did *Ship in a Bottle* render the space of the atrium more welcoming by integrating a ludic element to the stark architecture, it also acted a transition space before and after the visit of the Triennale's dense exhibition. This reference to escapism and the ludic, playful nature of Baldwin's bar is reminiscent of the artwork's curatorial panel, which emphasized the pleasurable nature of the bar. There is an obvious connection between the conception of the *Ship* as a space of escapism, as the curator remarks, and its framing as a remedy to the seriousness and pretensions of most relational art. What is also presupposed by the palatable addition of Baldwin's piece to the Triennale is that the event needed an accessible entry point into contemporary art practices. As Lanctôt expresses, Baldwin's installation offered an art space more accessible and perhaps easier to grasp and enjoy than much contemporary art. Through the transformation of the museum space into a ludic environment, and by relying on popular aesthetic

[69] This can perhaps be explained by the historical reference point on which the Experience Economy was conceived, the Disney theme park.
[70] Brian Lonsway, *Making Leisure Work: Architecture and the Experience Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 145.
[71] Lanctôt, interview.
[72] Lanctôt, interview.

forms the audience could engage with, Baldwin's installation firmly inserted the museum into mundane everyday life by positioning art as a leisure activity.

In the way Baldwin's artwork is instrumentalized by the museum to fulfill its need become a welcoming space, and how the risks associated with the institutional commissioning of relational art as explained by Claire Bishop and Jacques Rancière are realized through the conception of *Ship in a Bottle*, it is evident that relational art in its contemporary incarnation functions as little more than a programmatic tool for the institution. The museum's swift cooptation of art practices such as Baldwin's is inevitable, because the artistic tropes advocated by Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* (and denounced by its detractors) are in perfect synchronicity with the type of experience prescribed by the influential economic model proposed by Pine and Gilmore. As advocated by the Experience Economy, the museum appropriates the ludic and leisurely ethos of *Ship in a Bottle*. As such, the veneer of escapism and the alternative, apolitical way of life presented by the artwork is less than convincing. The qualities of the *fête* as a model of sociability and as unproductive yet necessary leisure, as posited by Lefebvre, are turned on their heads and used to enhance the institutional agenda. With that, leisure is made productive and its original critical potential annihilated.

Art in/and the Everyday: On Aesthetic Pragmatism

Looking utilitarian and spare, and omitting the carefully crafted themes presented by Dean Baldwin, renowned artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's many iterations of (*Pad Thai)* (1990) (Fig. 16) and *Untitled (Free)* (1992-2007) (Fig. 17) are important precedents in creating inviting spaces within art institutions, and problematically championed the genre.[73] Aligned with an insistence on the integration of artistic practices in day to day living and vice versa, the parties and gatherings scrutinized here exemplify the revived interest in the everyday and the commonplace, contemporarily tapped as commercial potentials. Jacques Rancière in *Aesthetics and its Discontent*, aptly refers to the fluidity between commoditized everyday life and high art as "the becoming-life

[73] For a critical assessment of Tiravanija's model, see Janet Kraynak, "Rirkrit Tiravanija's Liability," in Anna Dezeuze, ed. *The 'do-it-yourself' Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 165-85.

of art and the becoming-art of life."[74] Despite the repopulation and rematerialization of high art with commonplace forms and gestures in recent relational installations, the passage from the critical (institutional critique) to the ludic becomes increasingly similar to the forms produced by the experience economy, and "the market's own forms of presentation."[75] Thus the transformation of forms of everyday life's commodities and services into forms of high art, and from their critical use towards entertainment renders their distinction from their commercial alter egos hard to observe, as they seemingly become one and the same.

As the spatial and temporal continuum in which both work, leisure, and their progressively analogous incarnations unfold, the everyday appears as a productive site for commercial exploitations based on leisure. The contemporary integration of leisure activities previously distinct from commercial offerings embodies their recuperation, but also the market's response to the historical theorization of the everyday as a prime site to oppose the commercialized world of the postwar period.[76] Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau offered different Marxist readings respectively in *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947) and *Practices of Everyday Life* (1980), presenting the everyday as a space for unconscious, yet important acts of social resistance as well as for greater demonstrations of hostility towards commercialization.

The appropriation of the everyday, and its branding by the Experience Economy, according to Brian Lonsway:

> Symbolically idealize[s] a model of life which is no longer tenable under the very economic situation which produced the idealization. But because the ideal can be produced, and because work and leisure can be—via the historical narrative—seen to once again blend in the scripted fun of the themed environment, the contemporary economy operates both in the spirit of its predecessor and no longer constrained by its inconveniences. It's the best of both worlds: symbolically historicist and functionally contemporary.[77]

[74] Ranciere, 84.
[75] Rancière, 88.
[76] Lonsway, 21.
[77] Lonsway, 20.

With *Ship in a Bottle*, Baldwin is effectively re-creating a seemingly mundane activity, sipping a cocktail and socializing in the manner of *faire semblant*. However, as Barbara Formis proposes in *Esthétique de la vie ordinaire*, the insertion of the artwork in the institutional context of the museum validates it as art, but its social nature simultaneously reinserts it in the realm of the everyday because of its formulation as a space of leisure and entertainment. Indeed, *Ship in a Bottle* exists dually as art and as everyday life, its form maintaining its everyday pragmatic goal (having a party) but also positioning Baldwin's gesture as an artistic intention. The gesture is executed both for its concrete result (having a party) and for its pure form (its existence as art) and thus embodies the pragmatist aesthetics and function *Ship in a Bottle*.[78]

Indebted to the writings of John Dewey in the often-cited *Art as Experience*, the seemingly paradoxical combination of pragmatist philosophy and aesthetics sheds light on forms of engagement with artworks that were previously ignored. By challenging the traditional opposition between their respective natures as practical and purposeless, it becomes possible to widen the accepted definitions of art and non-art, as well as recognize and attribute pragmatist values to aesthetics objects. As Richard Shusterman writes in *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, "Aesthetics become much more central and significant as we come to realize that in embracing the practical, in reflecting and informing the praxis of life, it also extends to the social and political."[79] With that, Shusterman establishes the purposeful potential of aesthetic forms and disavows the problematic concept of "art for art's sake."[80] Rather, the pragmatist model he presents allows for the attribution of a definite function to aesthetics, while also speaking of their potential instrumentalization. In that it presents art as useful and as a means towards an end, in this case to present the museum as a space of enjoyable sociability, pragmatism is particularly relevant to the analysis of *Ship in a Bottle,* as its commission and conception was premised on the function it would fulfill for the institution. Conceptualized as such, art is no longer abstracted from life; the alienating aesthetic autonomy prescribed by some art historical discourses and philosophies are

[78] Formis, 34.
[79] Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Cambridge, Mass; Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), iii.
[80] Benjamin Constant first conceived of this, noting in his journal : « L'art pour l'art, et sans but ; tout but dénature l'art. » (1804) Both Victor Coussin and Theophile Gauthier later used this saying.

suspended, and art is no longer reflexive, but rather active as part of everyday life.[81] Moreover, as Shusterman notes: "art's experience should be expected to admit of cognitive and practical elements without losing its legitimacy as artistic or aesthetic experience."[82]

The aesthetics of recent relational installations such as the ones discussed here embody values of familiarity and accessibility, of ludic moments and inclusive communities. In *Ship in a Bottle*, it is the DIY, the self-assembled visual identity, however calculated and crafted, that enable the inscription of the inclusive values onto the artistic practice of social gatherings. The well-known visual signs offered by artists' bars, despite their displacement in the museum, ensure their inclusion not only as a reflection or replica of a mundane activity, but as an experience embedded in everyday life; they embody the recuperation and usage of common gestures and objects in recent art practices. Thus the art events, in this case a social gathering and a *fête*, necessarily have to assume both aesthetic and pragmatic functions in order to maintain their relevance to the museum. The institutional incorporation of the aesthetics of everyday life and ordinary gestures embodied by festive artworks is telling of a shift in museal thinking. This shift can certainly be attributed to the re-examination of the traditional separation between art and praxis as well as a newly favourable assessment of pragmatism usually found in popular aesthetic forms rather than high art. The inclusion of pragmatic aesthetic forms, such as the ones presented by Baldwin in his recreation of a *fête*, is telling of the transformation of the museum into a welcoming social host, a space suited for pleasant social gatherings. *Ship in a Bottle*'s festive aesthetics are particularly well-suited for such a transformation. In a successful mix of kitsch and aesthetically accessible decoration, Baldwin's bars are characterized by strong visual signs indicating a space of leisure, a ludic moment. This reliance on outdated, vintage trinkets is imbued with the influence of Surrealism. Indeed, not only did the early twentieth-century movement cherish the idea of the collective production and reception of art, it also exhibited a strong penchant for the uncanny. The Surrealists cultivated the concept of contextual displacement, emphasizing the surprise of seeing objects in de-familiarized contexts. The inclusion of many obsolete and found objects, as well as the engagement of the movement with

[81] For a discussion on New Aestheticism and a reassessment of Theodor Adorno's contribution to aesthetics philosophies of the postmodern left, see David Beech and John Roberts, "Spectres of the Aesthetic. *New Left Review* 218 (July/August 1996), 102-27, and Beech and Roberts, "Tolerating Impurities: An Ontology, Genealogy and Defence of Philistinism," *New Left Review* 227 (January/February 1998): 45-71.
[82] Shusterman, 53.

vernacular and commercial modes of exhibitions are all traits exploited by Baldwin.[83] In *Ship in a Bottle*, the old wooden sailboat was host to a plethora of found objects and vintage trinkets (Figs. 29, 30). Thematically consistent, one could find nautical references scattered on and around the boat: a yellow rain jacket, a captain's hat, and traditional sailing tools. These were mixed with the requisite bar paraphernalia including liquor bottles, shakers, glasses, colorful straws, and fruit condiments. Familiar objects such as dirty rags and kitchen utensils also contributed to the air of nonchalance and happenstance instilled in the party vessel. *Chalet* (2012) also exhibits the same aura of familiarity, perhaps even more so. A wooden structure resembling the interior of a rudimentary cabin, it was installed to host festive gatherings and furnished with a wood-burning stove, vintage sofas, chairs and old appliances and enamel tableware. The space was completed with typical North American countryside decoration: plaid blankets, moose antlers, and an axe.

In these two installations, Baldwin creates concisely thematic environments within larger institutional spaces, and effectively suspends the usual experience of the museum's architecture. He invites the guests to revel in a social space rendered more inviting, and offers a bracketed moment of familiarity through highly thematic, always populist environments. As MACM curator Lanctôt notes: "His kitsch is imbued with nostalgia because his objects have a lot of sheen, of patina. They are very old. So they arch into another time, a nostalgia that most people don't event relate to."[84] This nostalgia is undoubtedly related to the familiarity of the objects selected by the artist. Their widely domestic purposes as well as their signs of use immediately put the audience at ease, referencing the familiar everyday life in an environment mostly devoid of familiar forms and objects. These very banal—but functional—objects contribute to the pragmatist program they are part of, both in the artwork's activation as a convivial social setting and through their sheer presence and use in an institutional space constructed for the exhibition of objects denoted as symbolically functional.

The aesthetic extravagance and careful thematic environments of Baldwin's installations are imbued with a sense of purpose, albeit sometimes concealed or camouflaged by the charming choreography associated with them. While most objects have a purpose, such as the instruments

[83] See Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, UK: The MIT Press, 2001).
[84] Mark Lanctôt, interview.

needed to serve drinks, some reveal themselves as purely decorative. This is noticeable in both *Ship in a Bottle* and *Chalet*, in which the respective thematic decorations are realized with the non-functional decorative trinkets: the thematically conducive sets of rope, captain hat, anchor decorations, fishing equipments and portable lighting of *Ship in a Bottle*, and the typical wood paneling, well-used furniture, axes, antlers, and hunting paraphernalia of *Chalet*. The charming abundance of objects in Baldwin's installations is contrasted with the functionality of Bureau for Open Culture's *I Am Searching for a Field Character* beer garden, which remains bare if not for the functional apparatus associated with bar services (Fig. 15). The aesthetics of the bar are subsumed to its intended function. One gets the sense that the ethos of the installation does not rest on its visual appeal (or lack thereof) but rather solely on the contextual nature of its existence, as well as the interactions it provokes. The aestheticization of everyday objects found in Baldwin's practice is replaced here by the effacement of aesthetic concerns usually associated with the museum. There is less of a spectacular element to the beer garden, perhaps because of its conception as one part of a site-specific installation that does not function entirely on the premise of providing a service to the museum and its branding. Rather, it was inscribed with an impulse to service the communities of North Adams while promoting the region's rich history.

Despite the artistic value added to these ephemeral artworks through their institutional inclusion, the museum nevertheless inserts itself in everyday life with these practices that mimic ordinary social activities. In how they appropriate these forms, the museum relies on the perceived continuity between ordinary gestures and their re-contextualization as art. As Mark Lanctôt has remarked, the commissioning of Baldwin's *Ship* was, in his opinion, a successful demonstration of curatorial implication in previously unrelated functions of the museum such as event hosting. While these events are usually disconnected from curatorial perspectives and commissioning concerns, *Ship in a Bottle* exemplifies a more global approach to commercial facets of institutional activities: "[Baldwin used] the material the museum or the public institution already works with…hosting, being social, fundraisers…Using that as material."[85] Therefore despite the similarities between the *fête* and institutional parties such the one Baldwin was commissioned to host, the nature of the institution and its orchestration of Baldwin's task prevent *Ship in a Bottle* from fully functioning as Lefebvre's *fête*, as an embodiment of everyday criticality and potential social unrest.

[85] Lanctôt, interview.

The continuity between art and life referenced here is aligned with aesthetic philosophies that assume no fundamental difference between artistic practices and ordinary gestures.[86] Particularly interesting to the artistic model at hand, this tacit continuity is premised "on the subordination of the form to the function of the aesthetic object, and the refusal of the definite divide between ordinary dispositions and purely aesthetic ones."[87] The formal submission of aesthetics to the benefit of pragmatic functions constitute a way to explain the recent wave of relational practices, and their inclusion in institutional spaces, as they exhibit functional attributes that the museum readily absorbs. Artworks that function on the premise of an inclusive, apolitical social model are suited to the contemporary needs of the museum, mainly to attract a clientele not entirely comfortable with the traditional role of the museum as a repository of enshrined art objects. Indeed, the institutional commissioning of artworks such as Baldwin's project the image of an inclusive institution, of a social space that acts, beyond its prime (read historical) function, as a cultural nucleus for the community it wants to service by offering a multiplicity of events no longer focused on passive viewing. Artworks such as *Ship in a Bottle* are conceived (and presented) as "a model of living-well, a means of being-together in the everyday."[88] Foster is not alone in positioning these pleasant artworks and their aesthetics as deeply rooted in processes traditionally belonging to the everyday. John Roberts, in his essay "Mad For It!" eloquently writes:

> The culture of art has come to overlap and interfuse with the forms and values of popular culture as a shared culture in new and extended ways. It is as if art had begun to live out its disenchantment with its institutionalism by treating the value of its activities as indistinguishable from the pursuit of everyday pleasure and activities. […] The new art occupies a 'way of life' within the culture.[89]

Roberts' words relate to the case at hand because the pragmatism that led to the conception of *Ship in a Bottle*, in its intent to act as a space of embodied leisure, represents an effort on the part of the museum to insert the art it presents (and commissions) in the continuum of everyday life. Baldwin's piece is especially telling of a type of art that forms and informs a way of life, a lifestyle. With the presentation of such a practice, which asserts itself as a leisure activity similar to those experienced outside the institution in bars, nightclubs, or impromptu parties, the museum sheds the traditional

[86] Formis, 78.
[87] Bourdieu, 33.
[88] Foster, 22.
[89] John Roberts, "Mad for It!" *Third Text* 10, no. 35 (Summer 1996): 30.

values connected to institutionalism. It rather associates itself with the values and way of life presented by Baldwin's bar, which was a space to have a good time in, a space of festivities and escapism. As the curatorial panel posited, *Ship in a Bottle* was intended to suspend the political implications of casting the *fête* as model of sociability and artistic practice.

The combination of curatorial and aesthetic concerns with the museum's social functions is imbued with pragmatism. Baldwin's installations in institutional settings are emblematic of relatively recent concerns with the harmonious integration of the museum's multi-faceted activities. *Ship in a Bottle* and *Chalet* were commissioned to mimic and recast the institutional function of hosting as an artistic practice. The commissioning of those artworks is essentially pragmatist, in that their particularly attractive aesthetics, akin to those of a *fête*, contribute to the presentation of the hosting institution as welcoming and accessible, and position it as a space of embodied enjoyment.

The Museum as a Social Host: Towards a Space of Enjoyment

In the translator's note to Henri Lefebvre's recently published *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*,[90] Robert Bononno writes:

> Enjoyment, in spite of its humble workaday simplicity […] has the virtue of reflecting such activity, one that is commonplace, easily accessible, and liable, even likely, to be associated with the experience of architecture or an architectural site or a (lived) space generally.[91]

As indicated by this precision offered, the choice of "enjoyment" as the English translation of the French *jouissance*[92] precludes its simple equation with "pleasure" or "bliss." Indeed, Bononno suggests that while bliss refers to a momentary state of being, pleasure denotes a way of being over time, a mode of active engagement.[93] The distinction between the different temporalities proposed

[90] It is assumed that the ontologies of architecture include conceptions beyond the physicality of the built environment, and understanding it as applicable to the construction of experiences such as the ones created by artists involved in the installation of relational structures.
[91] Robert Bononno, "Translator's Note," in Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, edited by Lukasz Stanek (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), x.
[92] Enjoyment, in French *jouissance*, refers to experiencing "joy, pleasure, a state of physical or moral well-being procured by something."
[93] Bononno, in Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, x.

by these terms is noteworthy in relation to the changing nature of the museum institution and its adaptation to contemporary demands. Particularly with regards to this "way of being" as proposed by Lefebvre, I would suggest the general mission of significant contemporary museums to be largely based on this exact notion of "way of life." The contemporary relevance of lifestyle to the Experience Economy is premised on the idea that the individual's decisions on what to purchase and on how to spend leisure time form and inform his identity. By offering an activity such as Baldwin's party, the museum inserts itself in a lifestyle based in embodied enjoyment and a way of being together that is novel to the institutional space.

In diversifying its activities, commercial or otherwise, the institutional agenda is conceived as being a comprehensive cultural provider, offering a plethora of services extending beyond its traditional mission of exhibiting art objects: restaurants, bars, shops, concert venue, etc. The museum as a hub is no longer a recent concept, but its latest incarnation as a social host, through artists' bars, is. This recent addition is premised on the insertion of the museum into its audience's lifestyle not solely as a space of passive encounter with art but rather of active—in the cases at hand sometimes boisterous—socialization. In acting as an unpretentious, welcoming social host, the museum is perceived as a space also fit for casual, mundane activities such as sipping cocktails. Given the very nature of drinking in social settings, the pleasure it procures is distinct from the ones traditionally prescribed by the museum by way of a heightened social engagement and potentially inebriated indulgence. Drinking in the museum traditionally happens during vernissages, events that celebrate the launch of a new exhibition and are removed from curatorial concerns. The vernissage is not conceived as part of the exhibition but rather a social function attached to it. The same applies to the other event where drinking is prescribed, the fund-raising party. In both cases, these social activities do not take place in display spaces and are not conceived as part of the curatorial program. A department removed from artistic concerns handles them. Moreover, these events are more often than not attended by invitation only. In their conception as important "corporate" events, especially in the case of the fundraisers, they are more constricted and restrained. About the difference between traditional events and Baldwin's party, Lanctôt explained:

> Fundraisers are corporate events. Because the attendees are corporate people, they want to see corporate things in a non-corporate setting, so they'll have a corporate notion of what creative is. It's very kitsch, extremely kitsch. The most expensive

> event that we organize is the foundation's annual ball. It is entirely organized by event planners and designers. They get together and they do this kind of kitschy theme that is very polished. People are paying $1,000 a plate. You have to get bang for your buck. Open bottles of vodka on each table. It's very, very extravagant, but not from a fine art [perspective]. Dean's [practice is a] different type of hosting. It [doesn't] have that sheen and that polish that some of the event organizers look for. It was always fun, Dean is very gregarious and the drinks were strong. The recollection of it is very boisterous and energetic. It wasn't a chill-out lounge. He had a little transistor radio that he had on CHOM with classic rock playing. That or Hawaiian guitar music. It was very social. People would talk amongst themselves…mingling…it was a huge icebreaker.[94]

As such, the party organized by Baldwin promotes the space of the museum in an entirely different way. As Mark Lanctôt says, the particularly cold, difficult architecture of the atrium was undeniably rendered more welcoming and accessible by the whimsical installation. These conclusions are also applicable to the other artworks discussed here, and to others functioning on similar premises. Baldwin's *The Dork Porch* as well *Chalet*, through the aesthetics described earlier, have a direct impact on the architectural space of the museum insofar as they alter the stark institutional architecture by introducing structures and decorative details associated with spaces of leisure and domestic interiors. The former is predicated on the replication of a mainstream patio, usually inhabited in times of leisure, while the latter is reminiscent of a typical cottage synonymous with vacations. As I have argued, these aesthetics are instrumental for the museum in its wish to insert itself in the everyday as a provider of casual social settings, and ultimately as a space of leisure dedicated to times of "non-work."[95]

Henri Lefebvre had already acknowledged the instrumental nature of leisure spaces to capitalism in the seminal *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947). His argument was significantly altered in the later *The Production of Space* (1974) in which he described the alternative potential of those same spaces as a new "pedagogy of space and time in and through the space of leisure" in which it might be possible to–albeit fleetingly-envision different ways of life.[96] In *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, revived earlier this year by Lukasz Stanek, Lefebvre goes further to fully expose the

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[94] Lanctôt, interview.

[95] For a historical overview and discussion of the relation between work and non-work, and contemporary theory related to it, see Brian Lonsway *Making Leisure Work: Architecture and the Experience Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

[96] Stanek, "Introduction" and "Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment," *Artforum* 52, no. 8 (April 2014): 234.

paradoxical nature of leisure spaces as essential to and reproductive of capitalism whilst simultaneously embodying its other in the form of non-work (unproductivity) and excess, as opposed to work and accumulation respectively. He continues by positioning the *fête* as a potential opportunity to find oneself "breaking out of the temporal and spatial shell developed in response to labor"—however commodified, "colonized," fetishistic, or irrelevant such situations might appear."[97] Defined as such, spaces of enjoyment or sites for leisure do encompass the institution of the contemporary museum, especially when it presents itself as a festive space through the use of artworks such as *Ship in a Bottle*. Stanek writes: "In spaces of leisure, the hegemonic social regime is disrupted, and Lefebvre urges us to think of this disruption not simply as a compensation for the tedium of ordinary routines but as an instance when this regime is experienced as "fundamentally incomplete."[98] While Lefebvre's writings invite us to appreciate this disruption not solely as reparation for everyday routine but as an occurrence of the capitalist regime's incompleteness, it proves difficult to fully believe and experience the disruption in the presence of Baldwin's work, as its existence is predicated on the museum's use of it.

The spaces of leisure described in *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment* are, according to the author, "neither enclaves within the dominant mode of space production nor reflections of the interests of the dominant class; rather, they exacerbate the contradictions of the social totality, revealing the antagonistic forces operating within it. [They are] sites that condense the most extraordinary promises of modernity with the dangers of ultimate alienation."[99] These spaces, such as the museum, are simultaneously situated within capitalist processes of the leisure industry, and yet also act beyond it as embodied spaces of "non-work" for its users. The interest of Lefebvre's conception lies in its ability to reconcile, or at the very least acknowledge, the dichotomous nature of leisure for the capitalist (post) modernity. While it is premised on the sometimes-dubious assumption of the impossible commodification of non-work, it nevertheless exposes some truths pertaining to the diverse incarnations of the cultural institution that is the museum, and its fraught nature as a simultaneously cultural and commercial entity. It is especially relevant in the present context because of its application within the discussion of the role(s) of art within the contemporary cultural industry. Despite his commitment to the idea of radical social change, and having been

[97] Stanek 234.
[98] Stanek, 235.
[99] Stanek, in Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, xxxi.

involved with the Surrealists and with Lettriste and Situationist Guy Debord, Lefebvre nevertheless sustains his disagreement with the radical positions of postwar Marxist discourse, which conceived of the then-emerging consumer culture exclusively as "normalized amusement and regenerative recreation, strictly functionalized within the reproduction of capitalist relationships."[100] The basis of this leftist warning has some relevance today, perhaps even more so considering the impact of the Experience Economy on leisure-based industries, which casts amusement as the ultimate ambition and yet absorbs it in processes of commodification.

In the context of the museum, Lefebvre's writings referred to here reveal the historical prevalence of the rise of attention and significance over pleasure and enjoyment, a dominance that denotes a lack, or rather a quasi-disappearance, of sensual engagement in fields such as art and culture in the twentieth century. However, in recent times, it is abundantly clear how institutions such as museums have had to turn to offerings that engage the senses and propose activities modeled to provide pleasures other than intellectual ones. Thus the museum's recourse to contemporary practices such as Baldwin's embodies a shift in the nature of the museum's offerings, as it deliberately delineates its social activity as conducive of leisurely engagement. Through its commissioning of works such as *Ship in a Bottle*, the museum establishes its status as a "laboratory, construction site, art factory" for the creation of experiences and "becomes marketable as a space of leisure and entertainment [used] to differentiate [itself] from bureaucracy-encumbered collection-based museums."[101]

Ship in a Bottle can be linked, through its activity as bar, to artworks such *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art* (1970-ongoing) (Fig. 18) and *Café Wednesday* (1992) (Fig. 19) by Tom Marioni, as well as Guy Overfelt's *Free Beer* (1999) (Fig. 20). In their form as resistance, these artworks have much in common with the previously mentioned events held by the Lettristes. Indeed their psychogeographical games and constructions of situations were conceived as revolutionary actions to oppose institutional forces. The Lettristes wrote: "Abolition des musées, et répartition des chefs-d'œuvre artistiques dans les bars (l'œuvre de Philippe de Champaigne dans les cafés arabes de la rue Xavier-Privas; le *Sacre*, de David, au Tonneau de la Montagne-

[100] Stanek, in Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, xviii.
[101] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 52.

Geneviève)."[102] But whereas these earlier examples were formed as critical responses to institutionalism, *Ship in a Bottle* is the result of institutional demands and the co-optation of relational art by museums. Examining the historicity of this fairly recent phenomenon, Claire Doherty positions this "New Institutionalism" as a reform of institutional practices from within the institution itself, and defines it as "characterized by the rhetoric of temporary/transient encounters, states of flux and open-endedness. It embraces a dominant strand of contemporary art practice—namely that which employs dialogue and participation to produce event or process-based works rather than objects for passive consumption."[103] Along with the institutional impulse to stage participatory events, Doherty identifies two other catalysts to account for this shift: cultural experiences being recognized as instrumental to processes of urban renewal and the subsequent influx of capital attributed to building spaces for contemporary art, and most significantly for Doherty, the nomadic curators and artists emerging from the now-ubiquitous biennale culture, who increase the circulation of innovative presentation models for contemporary art. More aligned with theorists such as Nicolas Bourriaud (she cites Palais de Tokyo as being exemplary of this New Institutionalism), she quotes curator Charles Esche's argument that "art […] has become an active space rather than one of passive observation. Therefore the institutions to foster it have to be part-community centre, part-laboratory and part-academy, with less need for the established showroom function."[104]

The institutions discussed in the present context are exemplarily attuned to the changing context of the cultural industries in which they operate, and have been reacting and adjusting their activities accordingly We can here think back to the conception of pragmatic aesthetics by Richard Shusterman, in that the specific aesthetics prescribed by Bourriaud's relational art theory is heavily informed by pragmatist philosophy. Seeing how easily these practices have been entrenched and appropriated by institutions, definite characteristics—both aesthetic and conceptual—make the art bars particularly relevant and suited to the museum's contemporary demands for aesthetic accessibility in the form of inviting, festive and ludic material (bar apparatus), and the invitation to

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[102] Lettriste Internationale, "Plan For Improving The Rationality Of The City Of Paris," *Potlatch* 23 (13 Octobre 1955), reprinted in Guy Debord, *Potlatch (1954-1957)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 205-6.
[103] Claire Doherty, "The Institution Is Dead! Long Live the Institution! Contemporary Art and New Institutionalism," *Engage* 15 (Summer 2004): 9.
[104] Doherty, 10.

leisure in the form of a social, informal gathering. The appropriation of this type of practice (more or less established on the premise of the museum's needs) embodies a diversification of the museum's activity as a social host. This type of installation allows for the museum to merge its exhibition and support of art and its often frowned-upon commercial ventures.

About the selection of *Ship in a Bottle* as both conceptual and physical entry point to the Quebec Triennale, Lantôt points to the hospitability and approachability of the artwork as a "good fit" to fill in the space of the atrium, which he describes as "austere and cold […] and difficult to work with." Baldwin was specifically approached to elaborate an iteration of his cocktail bars for the museum's entrance. Architecturally stark, the MACM's space is softened by Baldwin's intervention. The old wooden boat and soft glow of incandescent lighting changes the venue from awkward waiting room into a ludic and inviting space while the bar component finishes the transformation of the atrium into a recreation room. Entertainment, in the form of a thematic and inviting experience, is used by the museum as a way to enhance its hospitality. Baldwin's *Ship*, along with the other thematic bars he is known for, modifies the museum's existing architectural space so as to provide a more casual environment, an intermediate space to make the museum experience more enticing. The thematic aesthetics, in this case based on the idea of a shipwreck and/or desert island and the installation's formal characteristics— the carefully crafted vintage, DIY, bric-à-brac, controlled mess— contribute to the architectural break away from asceticism. Baldwin's architectural modification and thematic installation provide an alternative narrative environment that was commissioned to benefit the museum. The activation of the ship as a bar completes the tasks of softening the contours of contemporary art's reputation, and positioning the hosting museum as a space for enjoyable sociability.

The institutional penchant for relational art has notable consequences on modes of art production, both conceptual and economic. Most notable is the potential reframing of the artist's role in relation to the museum. Considering the type of work—artwork and labour—going into the production of the art bars discussed here, these contemporary manifestations of site-specificity in institutional contexts, such as *Ship in a Bottle,* encourage the establishment of wayfaring artists who increasingly act as service providers. Conceptualized as such, exactly how efficient are these services provided by artists? How can we assess their success, if not on efficacy and efficiency? It

is rather ambiguous to try answering those questions, precisely because of the very different set of criteria imposed on the efficiency of services and artworks respectively. In light of his artistic practice's existence as a response to institutional needs, it appears necessary to assess its success or failure in light of the purpose it was intended to fulfill. In the case of *Ship in a Bottle*, from which the profits went to the artist rather than the museum, its economic success is beyond the scope of this investigation. However in that it emulated and functioned as a party and was able to provide drinks in a festive setting, temporarily transforming the atrium into a space akin to a rec room, the installation achieved its intended objectives. In fulfilling its pragmatist function, the artwork and social event can be deemed effective. In light of the fulfilment of its predefined role, it can be deemed successful. Therefore the artwork's favourable outcome is mostly—if not entirely—dependant on the specifications the museum imposed on the function of the installation. Despite the obvious bias related to his involvement in the realization of *Ship in a Bottle*, Mark Lanctôt remarked, "you couldn't peel the smiles off people's faces." [105]

However if we consider *Ship in a Bottle*'s function as an amenity, it appears rather unsuccessful at meeting expectations in regards to bar services. This failure on the functional level is perhaps the only critical quality—although perhaps circumstantial rather than deliberate—to distil from practices such as Baldwin's. The inefficacy of the installation as a working bar is obvious. In the cramped setting of the sailboat, the difficult labour of the artist, both as a bartender and entertainer, is exposed. The physical presence and performative labour of the commissioned artist is exploited and established as the current indication of originality and authenticity, and effectively acts as a commodity. In "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity," Miwon Kwon argues: "Just as the shifts in the structural reorganization of cultural production alter the form of the art commodity (to services) and the authority of the artist (as 'reappeared' protagonist), values like originality, authenticity, and singularity are also reworked in site-oriented art—evacuated from the art work and attributed to the site—reinforcing a general cultural valorization of places as the locus of authentic experience." [106] The risk, then, is the appropriation of the work's cultural and social capital by the hosting institution. However unsuccessful it might be in terms of the actual service it

[105] Lanctôt, interview.
[106] Miwon Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site-Specificity." October 80 (Spring 1997): 104. See also Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, UK: The MIT Press, 2004).

should provide, the performance is spectacularized. It is perhaps exactly why the criteria of efficacy are waived in the context of the bar as art installation. The presence of the artist, as a token of authentic experience, cancels out the expectations one might have toward the service itself. In the particular context of *Ship in a Bottle*, people patiently waited in line to get their cocktails.[107] Paradoxically, Baldwin's "failure" to keep up with the demand and provide the service of bartending in timely fashion, and thus making people wait for their drinks, represents one of the installation's charming aspects. The failure of Baldwin's bar as a working service is evidently inherent to the artwork, and yet embraced by the museum.[108] *Ship in a Bottle*'s carefully-crafted messiness, slow service and air of impromptu party conveyed a dishevelled spirit the museum wished to be associated with, as it projected an appearance of authenticity and presented the museum as a relaxed, welcoming environment. Thus the artwork's inefficacy as a bar is precisely what makes it efficient as a commissioned artwork.

Marketable in the present industry of experience, the values of authenticity and originality are embodied by the artist turned successively host, bartender, and entertainer. The artist as an event designer is a terminology particularly suited to the language of the Experience Economy as introduced by Pine and Gilmore, in which "artists are those who design authentic experiences for the market."[109]. While oxymoronic in essence, this relationship between authenticity and the market is seemingly acknowledged and rendered productive in Baldwin's complicit attitude towards the commissioning museum. The artist is indeed fully aware of his role within the institution, which the valorization of his labour as an authentic praxis further establishes.[110] This embrace and acceptance by certain artists of shifted modes of productions, such as the providing of services to the institution, is captured by Bennett Simpson's assertion that the artist involved in such a commissioned practice is a symptom of the contemporary will-do mentality:

> Otherwise known as cynical opportunism, this is an extrapolation from the history and culture of business. […] If cynicism is largely an acquiescent relationship to the

[107] Lanctôt, interview.
[108] "As a bar it's not super efficient because as a work station it is very inefficient. I think that's part of it. I think it's the idea of making-do with that you've got." Lanctôt, interview.
[109] Stephen Horne, "Post Man: Resistance and Convention in the Art of Pierre Huyghe," *Border Crossings* 33, no.2 (July and August 2014): 70.
[110] Horne, 70.

> functionality of ideological frame, […] its manifestation is typically located in response to institutional or bureaucratic culture. A cynic knows he is being spun, manipulated, or exploited by the powers that be, but he has learnt to accept it, to profit from it even, with only the slightest melancholic dread that cynicism itself is the product of historical circumstances in which he has played a role all along.[111]

In light of these words and the way the artist interprets his own relationship to the museum, Baldwin is evidently aware of his practice's instrumentalization, and in the way it is dependent on the institution to function, complicit in its process.

In light of the contemporary malaise pertaining to the lack of authenticity produced by the cultural industry, present in much of the criticism towards participatory practices in museums, the organization and logistics surrounding Baldwin's *Ship in a Bottle* appear curiously messy. In discussing the installation with its curator, it blatantly appeared that the work posed several problems at the institutional level. While most critiques stress the disingenuity of institutionalized art such as Baldwin's, and the sterilized, accommodating nature of much of these "art parties," it was made evident that in the context of the MACM, it was otherwise. Underlying Lanctôt's discourse was an awareness of some departments' opposition to the project and its incarnation as a slightly chaotic party. The security department was concerned with the use of sharp objects, confiscating them and reporting them back to Lanctôt: "Senior staff would walk by and see a knife and take it out. I'd come to work and there'd be a knife on my desk. [They'd say] "Mark, take care of your knives. Why are there knives when visitors walk in? Kids could get hurt."[112] Cleaning issues also arose when the artist wanted to leave some elements such as empty drinks out for display as part of the shifting nature of the installation (Fig. 28).[113] Regarding the juxtaposition of the chaotic ethos of the *Ship* and its events, which were transposed into an institutional setting that has regulations, Lanctôt elaborates:

> [The institution has] huge regulations. People also see regulations even when there aren't any. We have events there all the time and there are knives around. The work wasn't fragile, so there was no security and that is what worried. Once you open that door to the idea that the only place you can serve drinks is in the museum's public spaces, there are two public spaces that are big enough to host that type of thing, the atrium upstairs or downstairs in the rotunda. So you go in the rotunda and

[111] Simpson, 72.
[112] Lanctôt, interview.
[113] "It got really funky and smelly. Cleaning issues were a big deal." Lanctôt, interview.

> once you're there, what does that mean? Well that means who's going to pay, within the institution, for additional cleaning? Is that on projects or operations? And operations [say]: "We don't want to pay for that because it's your idea and it's part of the work." And then you say "I don't have that much because we're exhibitions. We're shipping and crating works and installing them." Then who's going to do it? It turns out it's Dean and me picking up in the back, and restoration services cleaning the boat. [They weren't] happy about that. It was a weird. Who can touch the artwork? Janitors can't touch artworks. Maintenance crews can't touch artworks. But restoration can. The conservator can. So the conservator would be cleaning the countertop. The conservator knew what became part of the work so we could tell her and she'd know what to clean and what not to clean. And then the restaurant freaked out because there were fruit flies because of the drinks that stayed and all the stuff that spilled at the bottom of the boat…orange rinds and stuff. The restaurant thought it wasn't hygienic and would complain. Everybody was touched by it. I think that's part of the experience. If you take Dean on everybody has to get on board because it was boisterous. He would put music on loud, the restaurant would complain it was too loud, asking what was going on down there…[114]

The conflicts arising from Baldwin's installation are telling of the rigidity of the institution towards its traditional ways of working, as well as a distinct (un)willingness to align its social activities such as hosting with its curatorial agenda. It is expressive of a divide, despite evident internal efforts, between the artistic and bureaucratic responsibilities of the museum. It also shows the extent to which *Ship in a Bottle* was unusual in terms of what it altered in its immediate surroundings, the concessions that had to be made internally in order to accommodate Baldwin's vision for the space. The lack of appropriate logistics to manage this type of installation, as explained by the curator, also hints at the novelty of such practice within the context of the MACM. The resistance it received from the restaurant and other departments such as security emphasizes the weight of the institution, and the difficulty of actualizing its activities to be in synch with contemporary art trends. In light of the criticism towards relational art such as Baldwin's in institutional settings, the resistance Lanctôt describes is particularly interesting. Indeed while this type of work is suited to the need of the museum to offer a diversified experience to lure a bigger audience, it is problematic on an administrative and logistical level. With the regulations that are necessarily associated with such an institution, the museum is not particularly suited for Baldwin's boisterous party. From what Lanctôt said, it was very pleasant, but also quite an ordeal. While the disorderly nature of the piece encountered opposition within the institution, it is precisely what was attractive both for the

[114] Lanctôt, interview.

museum and it public, as it momentarily shifted the ethos of the museum and projected a more relaxed setting, creating a festive space in a context that usually advocates various degrees of passivity. The nature of the *Ship* as a party vessel and the values associated with festivities—freedom, fun, joy—stand in opposition to the values associated with traditional institutionalism; hence Lanctôt's reference to Baldwin's art as a remedy, as a way to make the experience of the museum and its art more engaging and pleasantly social.

Conclusion

Despite the literature that exclusively dismisses the commissioned artist party as a rehearsed, commercial ploy used solely to the benefit of the commissioning institutions, I would suggest that along with being telling of the contemporary paradigm of artistic production—for better or worse—these practices do significantly alter the museum space and enhance its curriculum. While the museum did not profit financially from Baldwin's artwork, it nevertheless used *Ship in a Bottle* as a legitimizing node within the contemporary cultural industry, in which the museum appears as yet another space of entertainment. There is obviously some truth to the suspicious discourse surrounding those practices, especially because in the incarnations discussed here they are conceived and have come to exist as responses to the contemporary identity of the museum as a cultural rallying point and its ensuing logistical requirements. While I don't wholeheartedly agree with positions such as Bishop's and Foster's, they offer a useful critical language to warn against the instrumentalized, productivist nature of the relational practices inserted in museum contexts. Practices such as Baldwin's nevertheless offer the possibility for its audience to engage in a genuinely enjoyable experience. As Lefebvre posited, the facts of leisure activities and their conception as reproduction of capitalist processes does not preclude their existences as authentic experiences of pleasurable sociability. While I agree with much of the criticism towards the inclusion of relational art such as Baldwin's in the context of the museum, in that the *fête* is divested from its potential for excess and social unrest, and representative of idealized social processes, my thoughts align with Lefebvre's pragmatic assessment.

Within this delicate balance between authentic experience and its commodified double, lies, for the museum, the opportunity to present itself to its audience as a space for accessible leisure and ludic sociability. The museum conceived as a welcoming social host, in artworks such as *Ship in a Bottle* and *Chalet*, is a departure from more established social functions of the museum such as fundraisers and corporate events. As curator Mark Lantcôt interestingly proposes, it can represent a more holistic approach to the usually strictly profit-making social events. He said:

> Because the fundraiser is a revenue-generating activity every penny that's spent is accounted for. How does that economy translate, how could it, into something else? If we're doing a vernissage, we just set up a bar and that's it. It's not the most expensive thing to put up. A vernissage will always cost less than what we paid to get Dean to come and do it but at the same time I like that idea that…How can you have a more holistic approach to all of your activities? To what degree is an institution comfortable with applying a kind of curatorial slant to all of its activities? [115]

This interesting position aligns commercial and curatorial interests in an approach previously unexploited. From our discussion, Lanctôt sees this occasional union as a positive asset, a way to re-establish the mission of the museum around the art it exhibits. In the case of the MACM, the commission given to Baldwin was a successful way to host a social event that is not rooted in purely commercial intents, such as the fundraisers, but rather envisioned by the curatorial team and the artist himself. This type of commission illustrates a merging (if momentary) of the often-divergent administrative and curatorial interests of the museum. In this particular conception of commissioning art as social events, and as a way to integrate curatorial concerns to the museum's primarily commercial functions, *Ship in a Bottle* can be seen as exemplary of the holistic approach the curator describes. In that it seemingly puts the emphasis on the art once more, it can be seen as redeeming the still frowned-upon commercial interests of the cultural institution. However, as evident in Baldwin's statement that he had found a niche and a way to produce art by providing art services to institutions such as the MACM, this type of production is dependent on the existence of the museum. Thus the service Baldwin provides has had institutional ties from its very inception. Through the institutional demands and the contemporary conditions of the museum, the services provided by artworks such as *Ship in a Bottle* or Bureau for Open Culture's *Beer Garden* are constituted by the museum's need for relevance, a relevance achieved by shifting the institution's

[115] Lanctôt, interview.

status from an exhibition space to a space of sociability. In that sense, the instrumentalization of art is obvious and can be seen as problematic with regards to the contemporary modes of art productions. Especially with *Ship in a Bottle*, the advocated model of sociability and the role of the artist as a service provider are dictated by the commissioning institution.

More representative of the concerns expressed by many detractors of the type of relational practices that have been referenced here is the ongoing series of *Art Bars* sponsored by the Absolut Vodka Art Bureau. Led by Vadim Grigorian, Marketing Director of Creativity and Luxury at Pernod Ricard, this initiative exemplifies the reification of the artist's bar, packaged as a luxurious yet accessible art activity. The three-year collaboration, for which international artists have been commissioned to install bars in conjunction with installments of Art Basel, now includes Nadim Abbas' *Apocalypse Postponed* (2014) (Fig. 21), Ry Rocklen's *Night Court* (2013) (Fig. 22), Mickalene Thomas' *Better Days* (2013) (Fig. 23), Adrian Wong's *Wun Dun Art Bar* (2013) (Fig. 24), Los Carpinteros' *Güiro Art Bar* (2012) (Fig. 25), and Jeremy Shaw's *The Kirlian Art Bar* (2012) (Fig. 26). All the bars presented within the boundaries of the collaboration with Absolut are highly thematic, immersive environments that are reminiscent of Baldwin's spaces. While more polished and less disheveled in nature, carefully crafted and organized, the bars still function on the same premise of providing leisurely social settings. They seemingly embody Martha Buskirk's words: "Too often, promoting dialogue seems to be little more than an excuse for a party, in the context of a contemporary business model centered on opening-night festivities and other largely social events." [116] Through their clear association with the Absolut products, these bars embody the co-optation of relational practices for purposes other than the unadulterated enjoyment of their audience, and in relation to the cases explored here, embody a step further in the use of art towards the redeeming of commercial interests through the presentation of the *fête* (and bar) as an artistic practice truly integrated into the everyday life and leisure time of its audience.

Going back to the wise words of artist Lawrence Weiner that prefaced my investigation—"An artist can say a cup of coffee is art, but he's a damn fool if he says that a cup of coffee isn't a cup of coffee just because it's art."—is pertinent to assess the relevance art practices such as Baldwin's. In

[116] Martha Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise: Contemporary Art Between Museum and Marketplace* (New York and London: Continuum, 2012): 327.

its ability to convey the difficult and contested duality of form and function when art is discussed, Weiner's words capture and accept the contemporary inevitability of art's nature as both aesthetic and pragmatist. Bluntly realist, they have helped in shaping my discussion on the inclusion of mundane objects and practices in artworks like *Ship in a Bottle*, but most importantly they have helped sustain and accept the ambiguous and ambivalent nature of relational practices within the institution of the museum—neither endorsing nor dismissing them completely. Indeed just as Shusterman also proposed, it would be foolish to underestimate the pragmatist aspects of aesthetics and art more generally. In the case which acted as a main reference point—Dean Baldwin's *Ship in a Bottle*—both the museum and the artist profited from the collaboration, and despite the questionable system that formed and supports this type of endeavor,[117] the question of whether it embodies mechanisms of exploitation finds an answer in the niche identified by Baldwin.[118] Indeed the artist in this case is compliant and embodies an opportunist attitude which, to my mind, in no way diminishes his artistic practice. In that I consider this very ambivalence to be a legitimate field of enquiry, I see this type of artwork as a precarious and temporary compromise between institutions and artists, while also representing a shift in how the institution positions itself in the vastness of cultural industries. Through the commission and pragmatic use of artworks such as *Ship in a Bottle*, the museum reinvents itself as a social host and thus presents itself as a space of accessible leisure and pleasant sociability. As conveyed throughout this thesis, the museum is navigating the fine line of ambiguity between pragmatism and instrumentalization, and as such (re)presents the interesting problematic of the exploitation of leisure. In the incorporation of the *fête* as an artistic practice to its commissioning agenda, the museum faces both its positive revitalization as a social host and by the same token the problematic inclusion of limiting modes of sociability and the shifted role of the artist as a service provider. To express the essentially dual nature of such leisure activities and the spaces that host them, Lefebvre explains it best: they "condense the most extraordinary promises of modernity with the dangers of ultimate alienation."[119]

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[117] "Rather than having budgets to produce artworks, [institutions] had budgets for things like catering, vernissage, services and stuff like that. I found that little niche where I could funnel money into the production of projects if I also provided a double service of catering for the openings." Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. "Interview with Dean Baldwin" 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-avz0nptUY (accessed October 29, 2013.)

[118] See note 103.

[119] Lukasz Stanek, in Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, xxxi.

This recent incarnation of the museum as a social host through the use of festive relational practices such as Baldwin's, represents, as it has been shown here, a shift in how museums act upon their social mission and actualize their activities to suit their needs so as to remain a relevant cultural institution. In this process, artworks and social events such *Ship in a Bottle* fulfill a specific function that relates to the museum's program, as it presents the institution as an accessible, inviting and enjoyable space for embodied leisure by reimagining the space as a festive one. As such, Baldwin's artwork was effectively commissioned and subsequently used to enhance the museum's curriculum and image. The function of the work is seemingly doubled; its "trendiness" is utilized as a signifier of cultural and artistic relevance, while its playful, benevolent and generous nature is exploited and transferred to its host's identity. By providing the cocktail bar for the vernissage and turning the artwork into an instrumental function of the hosting venue, the installation's spirit and perceived values are symbolically reassigned to the institution's identity, contributing to its redefinition as essential to unproductive, yet necessary leisure time and as Lefebvre puts it, part of a distinctive style of living that is predicated on enjoyment.

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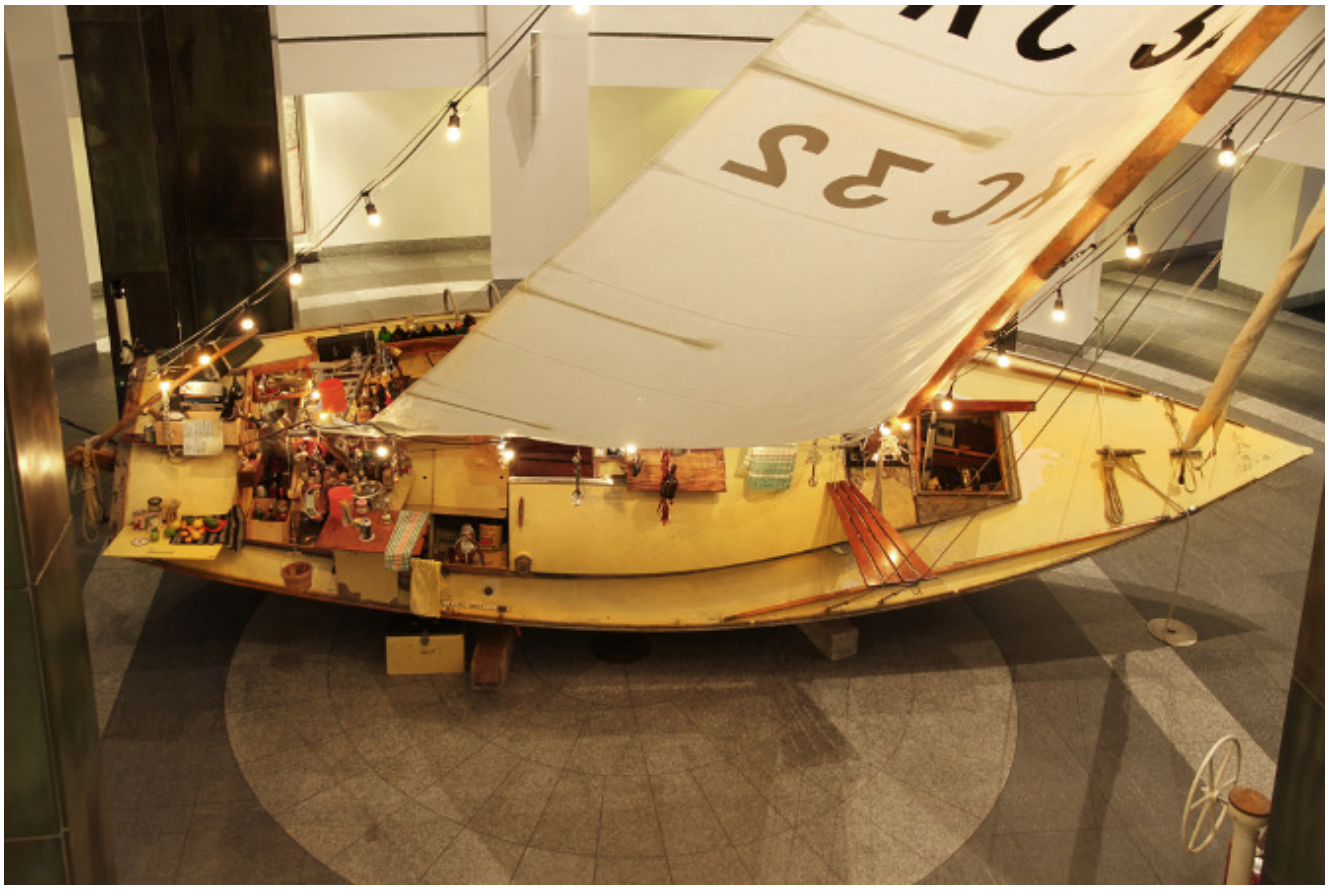

Figure 1 Dean Baldwin, *Ship in a Bottle*, 2011.

Source: http://www.deanbaldwin.ca/Ship-in-a-Bottle-Le-Bateau-ivre-2011

Figure 2 Dean Baldwin, *Ship in a Bottle*, 2011.

Source: http://www.deanbaldwin.ca/Ship-in-a-Bottle-Le-Bateau-ivre-2011

Figure 3 Dean Baldwin, *Algonquin Tiki Tiki Hut*, 2008.

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Figure 5 Dean Baldwin, *The Ice Fisher*, 2010.

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Figure 7 Dean Baldwin, *Bar Piano*, 2012.

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Figure 9 Dean Baldwin, *The Dork Porch,* 2010.

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Figure 10 Dean Baldwin, *The Dork Porch,* 2010.

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Figure 13 Dean Baldwin, *Chalet*, 2012. Details.

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Figure 14 Bureau for Open Culture, *Beer Garden*. Part of and performance *I Am Searching for Field Character*, 2011.

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Figure 15 Bureau for Open Culture, *Beer Garden*. Part of and performance *I Am Searching for Field Character*, 2011.

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Figure 16 Rirkrit Tiravanija*, Untitled (Pad Thai),* 1990.

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Figure 17 Rirkrit Tiravanija*, Untitled (Free),*1992-2007.

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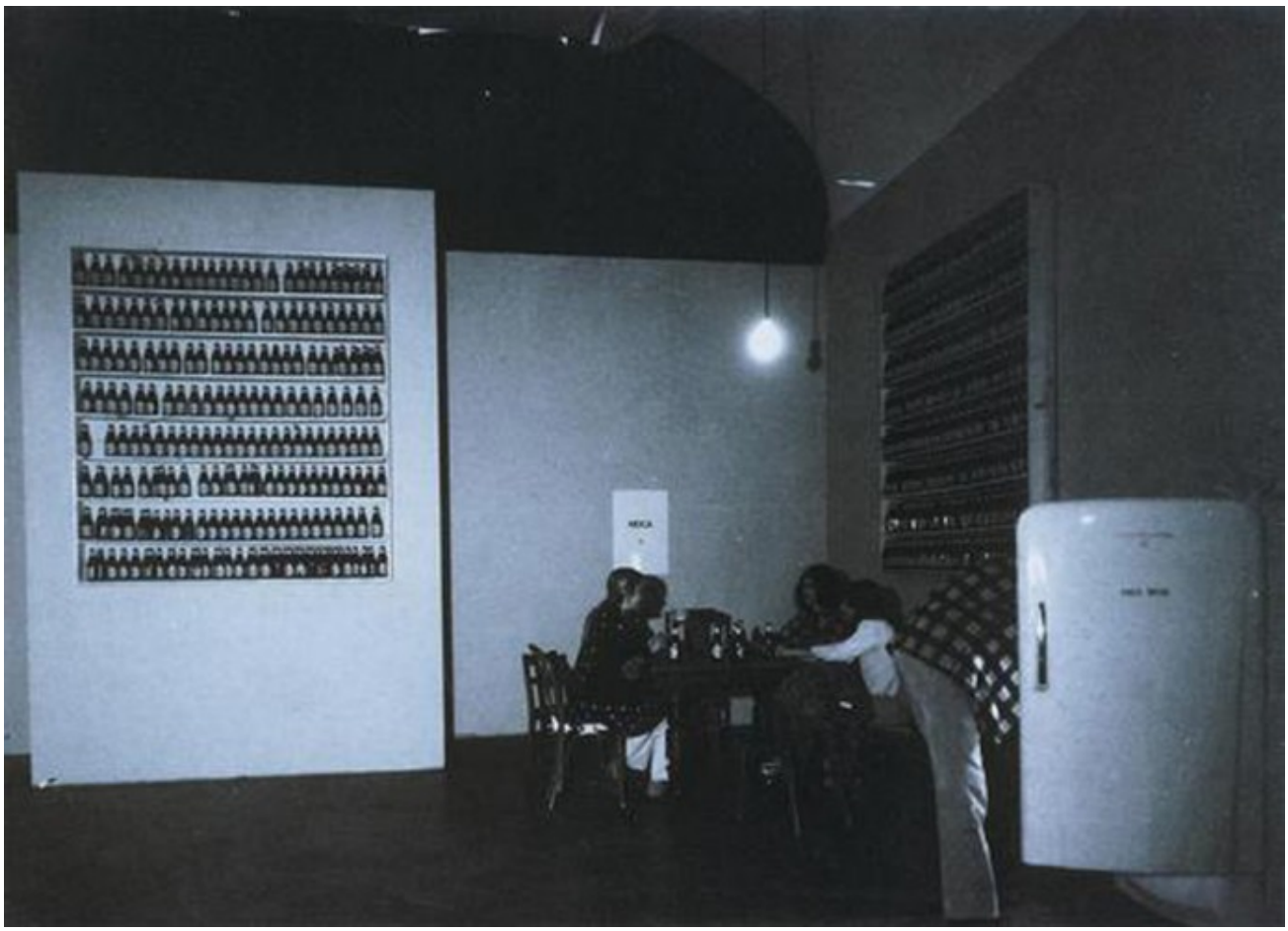

Figure 18 Tom Marioni, *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art*, October 26, 1970, Oakland Museum of California.
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Figure 20 Guy Overfelt, *Free Beer*, 1999. Refusalon Gallery, San Francisco.
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Figure 21 Nadim Abbas, *Apocalypse Postponed*, May 2014, Hong Kong.
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Figure 22 Ry Rocklen, *Night Court*, December 2013, Miami.

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Figure 23 Mickalene Thomas, *Better Days*, June 2013, Basel.

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Figure 25 Los Carpinteros, *Güiro*, Miami, December 5 to 8, 2012.
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Figure 26 Jeremy Shaw, *The Kirlian*, Basel, June 14 to 17, 2012.

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Figure 30 Dean Badlwin, *Ship in a Bottle*, 2011. Details.

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Figure 31 Vera Frenkel, *...from the Transit Bar,* 1992.

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