EUNSONG KIM

The Politics of Collecting

RACE AND THE AESTHETICIZATION OF PROPERTY

THE POLITICS OF COLLECTING

BUY

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Race and the Aestheticization of Property

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For my brother,
Sung Gi Kim

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PRELUDE

On Motivations

In 2011, the Getty Museum hired James Cuno from the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC). As preordained by neoliberalism, his primary contribution at the AIC had been dismantling the education department and replacing the staff with volunteers. During his tenure at the AIC he wrote a number of books against repatriation and in favor of the elevation of the encyclopedic museum—a rhyme scheme, if you will. When he was hired as the CEO of the Getty Museum—an institution previously embroiled in its own criminal negligence of provenance—the Getty prepared a press release stating that, while it had been noted that Cuno's personal views on repatriation are "liberal," he would abide by the museum's official policy, which we could surmise was less "liberal" (or more ethical?) than his own.

Much as one would expect, on joining the Getty, Cuno took apart the education department, replacing educators with volunteers (who, in turn, needed to be trained and replaced often, which turned out not to be as cost effective as Cuno had initially laid out). This was done to relieve the endowment deficit, as the endowment had dipped from $5 billion to $4 billion. It is not clear how much this "dippage" had to do with the operations budget, but nevertheless, the budget for the departments of education, building, foods, and services were cut to ease anxiety.

The utilization of unpaid, *free* educational volunteers in lieu of wage laborers and public accountability with regard to education under the guise of community service—a liberal good misappropriated to serve the interests of a private institution—is part and parcel of the maintenance of neoliberal institutions. Here, the rhetoric of inclusion and expansion comes at the cost of labor expropriation and property entrenchment, together with the disavowal of colonial history and a hostility toward reparations. That the Getty continues to maintain its operations through both its refusal to pay workers and its refusal to repatriate objects is unexceptional to the general practice of the neoliberal schema.[1]

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I was officially at the Getty to acculturate myself to the world of museums and gain professional experience, coaxing myself into the violent flexibilities demanded by the neoliberal academic "market." I was personally there to learn more about the politics of provenance research and institutional provenance claims. As an eager student of Marxist feminism, but also as an ethnographer of sorts, I attended all the town hall meetings and budget proposals. I took copious notes. When Cuno declared in the same meeting both that the Getty is the "richest museum in the world" and that volunteers make up fifty-four full-time positions, I wondered if there would be a secondary meeting afterward for its IWW-aspiring members. When scientists were brought in to discuss the optimal temperature for artworks to live in (i.e., the best refrigerators in the world), I understood that all of this was the backdrop for how colonial theft becomes normalized, and how repatriation and redistribution is narrated as cannot be.

Thus I, of course, attended all the acquisitions meetings where newly purchased items were shown and told. I was particularly surprised by the acquisition of the Knoedler Gallery archives, not because the Getty had bothered to purchase them, but because of what the presenting curator deemed to be their importance. It was discussed how, in the sales books, we could see that Henry Clay Frick was buying and returning paintings as if he was shopping at a department store. Cue laughter. It is indeed funny and peculiar to trace through acquisition records the figures of union busters, robber barons. In this book, I work to display these figures' desires and efforts to extract, to destroy, to segregate, along with the desire and effort to memorialize themselves through collections.

But my desire to research capitalism, colonialism, philanthropy, patronage, and expression has roots deeper than graduate school. I was raised by parents who grew up in a Korea full of white missionaries, and who then wanted to become missionaries. Having this goal, our family was dependent on the charity of wealthy Christians, the desires of churchgoers and their pastors. This is to say, we grew up very poor, and they remain very poor. My personal understanding of poverty was the act of waiting for the rich to decide whether we were a cause worthy of support.

Since my parents never owned a home and most likely will never own very much, all my memories of growing up in Korea, and then at times in the United States, revolve around staying in the homes of wealthy Christians as they vacationed elsewhere. To say we moved a lot would be an understatement; we moved endlessly. In Canada, the apartment we lived in was owned by a Christian organization and was supposedly free. This

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meant poorly kept, rodent-infested, and uncared for. Free has a cost: free means you don't complain. Free means enforced gratitude.

My brother and I would routinely ask my parents to select a different kind of job. We didn't articulate it as such, but we hated this life of waiting to be moved by the rich and of accepting the untenably "free." As I began to gnaw at the research of this book, at the theoretical questions that were, in fact, deeply personal, I began to see how the material dynamics of wealth, desire, and legacy play out visibly yet are mystified in arts and poetry spaces. Prominent museums, archives, and poetry spaces become so via colonial accumulation. That is, they require the transfer of the commons, Black and Indigenous dispossession, and labor expropriation to a concentrated figure of wealth, and then to his desired aesthetic pursuit. I am interested in what is lost in this transfer because I imagine there is much. I remain interested in the desires of those fighting, waiting.

My positionality serves as both the possibility and limitation of grappling with the various stakes of property, US settler colonialism, chattel slavery, aesthetics, poetics, labor, and representation. The experiences of my life before and at the Getty prompted me to trace a transfer that I believe extrapolates labor and aesthetic congruences, and, as I stated at the beginning, my interest in tackling this history is about the present. As another dawn of robber barons is upon us, as individual wings of museums and aestheticized techno-utopian schemes are presented to the public with applause, I work to denaturalize their historical and political continuums.[2] If we are to abolish them, it is imperative to understand the politics carried forth as sacred aesthetic expression, and to repatriate these havens in their entirety.

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Introduction

here we lie in folds, collected stones
in the museum of spectacles,
our limbs displayed, fract and soluble
were this a painting, it would combust canvases,
this lunate pebble, this splintered phalanx,
I can hardly hold their sincere explosions
Dionne Brand, *Ossuaries*

The inspection of finance within museums and institutions has become an object of study, whether by buyers and dealers evaluating the art market or by researchers who study the privatization of culture.[1] A peculiar debate concerning the terrain of aesthetics and finance occurred when the news network CBS aired a thirteen-minute segment on *60 Minutes* titled "Even in Tough Times, Contemporary Art Sells."[2] The 2012 coverage was immediately met with controversy, disdain, and discourse across news outlets. In the segment, journalist Morley Safer visits Miami's Art Basel art fair to speak with dealers and buyers about the market. [3] The piece is full of quotes from infamous dealers such as Timothy Blum and Larry Gagosian. Gagosian remarks about the fair to the onetime American International Group owner turned venture capitalist Eli Broad, "It's a place to sell art, it's a place to make money." In response, Broad declares with a large smile, "We just bought this," in front of a piece by Kara Walker. Safer narrates the segment with mundane or controversial statements, such as "Contemporary art has become a global commodity, just like oil or soybeans or pork belly and there seems to be no shortage of people wanting to speculate in it, and no shortage of billions willing to invest in it. As a haven for their cash, love of art, or status symbol . . . to feed those beasts, there are virtually art fairs every weekend around the globe. . . . The collectors are bubble proof—it's only their mad money they're spending anyway."[4]

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Within twenty-four hours of the segment airing, two noted US art critics, Jerry Saltz and Roberta Smith, wrote nearly identical responses to the report.[5] Both rebuttals emphasized the importance of "looking at the art" and argued against Safer's concentration on inevitable issues such as money and access, which they argued prevented him from looking closely. Neither critic attempted to address or question the function of finance in the art world; instead, they dismissed its inspection as something that takes away from art appreciation. Emphasizing Safer's lack of positive affect, Smith's response in the *New York Times* included framings such as "Mr. Safer clearly has no time for love, and no one bothers to explain that even speculators and the superrich don't stay interested too long unless they have some knowledge of and attraction to art."[6] In a subtle defense of the *superrich*, Smith subsumes the connection between aesthetics and finance and postulates that Safer's reductive understanding of art and focus on its market have to do with how he is affectively disconnected from aesthetics.

It is noteworthy that, while Safer candidly critiques high art's clear partnership with finance, his ideological position is revealed in other comments, such as "There's very little sense of an aesthetic experience here."[7] Safer claims that today's art fairs do not present an "aesthetic experience" but rather are a "cacophony of cash," and does not consider how the two could be related or even erotically entwined. To Safer, the corrosion of art is caused not by the influx of finance or money, but by the way that money and finance have shifted the definition of aesthetic value to include conceptual art, multimedia art, and other such forms and mediums purposefully untouched by the artist's hand. One potential subtext of Safer's antics in Miami is a nostalgia for an Enlightenment-driven understanding of aesthetics, where the artist provides the experience for contemplation, and his creation of beauty is believed to be the entrance into the sublime.

Notably, both the critics and the journalist reenact a false dichotomy where one can either (1) inspect the mode of circulation or (2) look for meaning, when in fact it is the cohesion of the two that opens up a set of pivotal questions and challenging provocations. This book seeks to pursue these tenets together and demonstrate how they are, in fact, integrally enmeshed and interdependent. I seek to materialize the relationship between finance and aesthetics or, as I frame it throughout the book, between property, race, and aesthetics. Racial capitalism mediated all aspects of the twentieth century, including the development of US museums and aesthetic forms, and I document the expansion of conceptualized forms together with racial capitalism to show how immaterialism—which

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underwrites most "innovation" in avant-garde forms and spans collecting imperatives from found art to digital artifacts such as NFTs (nonfungible tokens)—does not move away from possessive materialism but further cements it through the aestheticization of property. Holding this particular context in focus throughout the book, I explore how objects and collections become valued, and how the ideas linked to the objects are essential for understanding how meaning is managed, distributed, and archived.

Debates concerning materiality/immateriality have been waged across Western epistemes with little agreement and consensus. Sometimes situated as the Cartesian binary, other times aligned with the sublime and transcendence, Lacanian critiques of the real, or contemporary notions of the virtual and digital, *materiality* and *immateriality* have resisted settled definitions.[8] What seems consistent in the debates is how the fragility affixed to the immaterial remains at the helm of aestheticized property and art capital. Marxist analysis instructs how it is through mediation that the material realizes value, and further, it is through a cerebrality removed from the body that material becomes property. Cedric Robinson situates the epistemological foundation of materialism/immaterialism as a religious venture beginning with Plato and Aristotle and traceable throughout the formation of European Christianity. He argues that fixations of the material (earth, body) and the ideal/immaterial (not of the earth, not of the body) spring out of religious critiques, whether in favor of radicalizing the church or protecting its authority. As the church synonymized itself with power, those vested in its protection worked to define divinity through concepts of the ideal/immaterial, situated dialectically and above what was material and earthly. Rejection of the material became conflated with submission to the divine.[9] Taking from Robinson, I argue that the capitalist dichotomy of mind- and handwork mirrors the lines drawn from immateriality to materiality, conceptual to racialized, and artist/manager to worker. In this light, I examine theories concerning deskilling and immateriality, and notions of separating concept from craft, idea from body.

Museums and archives are spaces that have been delegated as environments where aesthetics can be propertized. The conversation between Safer and Smith concerning aesthetics and finance situates the political and historical backdrop of this book, as it demonstrates how issues of financial value become bracketed off from debates over aesthetic value and experience. But in my experience as an arts and culture writer, I have found that directly talking about money, labor, and our relationships with(in) institutions is the only way to clarify the mystification process predicated

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upon culture. The conferral of aesthetic value does not happen prior to but rather through financialized and racialized processes of indoctrination. Clarifying the stakes—such as how an artist enters the permanent collection of a prominent museum, how poets enter the archives of an institution, how a personal collection becomes a museum—will allow me to set up arguments about how we might like to proceed in this realm, be it inside of it, and perhaps reimagine rupturing such formations.

This book follows paths opened up by transnational activists to trace the colonial and material history of immaterialism, which requires an examination of both the rise of immaterial and conceptual aesthetic forms and the creation of personal and private collections of objects that become normalized as the site of the museum.[10] In describing the structure of this book, I return to the *60 Minutes* segment in which Safer inspects the evidence that leads him to conclude that Art Basel—one of the biggest art fairs in the world—is devoid of an "aesthetic experience." In the clip, Safer mocks installation art, video art, and what appear to be found- and appropriated-art sculptures. He finds a large installation of a hat and stands under it, rolling his eyes. The clip seeks to demonstrate that, while the works examined are stupid and probably "not-art," they are expensive and collected and, therefore, validated as art.

It is true that aesthetics require indoctrination. But rather than scrutinize and delve into the relationship between finance and aesthetics, the public discourse between Safer and his critics reveals that there are people who have accepted the expansion of art as aesthetic experience, and there are people who continue to believe art should induce an aesthetic experience. To be of the latter category speaks to one's class position.[11] For those of the former, money, while an annoying reality of the art world, deserves no place in any aesthetic or affective discussion of it. Hence, those in the former cannot conceive of why money is even being discussed.

The fusion of finance, aesthetics, and politics abounds across mediums and institutions.[12] In 2010, two years prior to Safer's report, the Poetry Foundation would be transformed from being a platform for a little magazine (*Poetry*) into one of the most powerful poetry organizations in the United States, thanks to a $100 million donation of Lilly pharmaceutical stock from Ruth Lilly.[13] The foundation would receive part of Lilly's inheritance of the giant pharmaceutical corporation that produced antidepressants such as Prozac and Zyprexa and other drugs.[14] The corporation's development process included nonconsensual testing on incarcerated persons, who developed issues ranging from diabetes to long-term disabilities.[15]

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Akin to the discourse generated by Safer's report, writing on the donation vacillated between praise for increased arts funding and moralization of finance in the field of poetry.[16] Neither produced tools for examining how certain kinds of poetry become synonymized with immateriality and function as the form of mediation. This becomes most apparent in scholarship about new and experimental poetry, discussed in chapter 4.

The most common response to conceptual, avant-garde art and experimental poetry is often flat rejection. Safer's belittlement of found object art, while clearly in awe of its financial value, is one of the ideological frameworks I explore throughout this book. I address how found art—art that works against familiar forms of "aesthetic experience" and expectation—becomes theorized, valued, and then permanently collected in museum spaces and archives. I ask: How does a urinal become sculpture; appropriation, an innovative new form; exploitation, a performance; management, an aesthetic impulse? What are the historic and socioeconomic forces that situate the variegated developments of aesthetic forms and their institutions? In addressing these questions, I demonstrate how the context of racial capitalism and settler colonialism is vital to understanding how the category of art becomes expanded and vital to materializing the building of institutions that house their collections. I do so in order to investigate the political framework that protects the categorical expansion of art, while simultaneously restricting the subject position of those who occupy the subject of the artist.

Many of us—particularly in critical ethnic studies and American studies—are familiar with how race is made real through laws, social structures, and forms of power. In this book, I demonstrate how the usage of the terms *experimental*, *innovative*, *conceptual*, and *immaterial* in the arts and their collecting institutions works in tandem with the ongoing process of making race real. Collected objects are situated as the highest order of aesthetic importance and formal invention have been understood as some of art's greatest achievements. This book situates historical and contemporary articulations of formalist experimentation and innovation in the arts and argues that the primary signifier of innovation has been and remains the propertization of race, and of anti-Blackness in particular.[17]

I argue that what demarcates the expansive possibilities of modern and postmodern art is the racialized and gendered labor that is imperative to the notion of aesthetic freedom. In pursuing this inquiry, I explore the relationship between whiteness and freedom, and argue, as Cheryl Harris has so pivotally laid out, that whiteness as property has tethered whiteness

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to freedom in all aspects of aesthetic cultures, materializing how racialized property becomes interpolated as innovation. In order to examine the relationship between whiteness and expansion in the arts, I treat art collections as property, and then pursue the political implications of their aesthetics in order to analyze the socioeconomic ideological freedoms said to be found in their work.[18] Examining the political implications of property and artistic freedom allows me to engage with artists such as Noah Purifoy and Sasha Huber, whose practices intervene into the provenance of property claims.

My reading of property is fundamentally grounded in Harris's scholarship. Harris shows that the construction of property was the legal definition of whiteness, and thus, all discussions regarding property are racialized formations. She demonstrates that, in the US context, the origins of property are "rooted in racial domination," and extends how this US-specific understanding comes from a longer tradition of European thought that analyzed property as a metaphysical right to exclude.[19] In this book, I am connecting the right to exclude and racial domination to what Harryette Mullen has described as *aesthetic apartheid*: the ways in which aesthetic and literary institutions work to segregate genres, forms, and objects.[20] Through this, I would add the ways in which they limit and define the scope of art's expansion. I use Harris to inspect property claims theorized as formal innovation, such as the found object, as well as the forging of the personal collection, to reveal how racialized concepts of "new" and "experimental" are at the core of the expansion of the arts. It is through this legal framework that I examine the "neutralizing" space of the museum and the archive, and arguments that put forth how aesthetic spaces afford deracialized and depoliticized abstraction. Debates that polarize one against the other, such as Safer and Smith's about Art Basel, or that underdescribe the impact of propertization, such as that around Ruth Lilly's donation to the Poetry Foundation, subsume finance as either a minor detail or misunderstanding, rather than as the opportunity to inspect the role of racial capitalism and settler colonialism as cultural production.[21]

On the Making of US Museums

Aesthetic debates concerning form, such as those around found object, appropriation, and conceptual art, as well as new and experimental poetry, are property concerns, as I will discuss in chapters 3 and 4. However, the

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current discourse about form—as unattached to material, economic, and historical contexts—has yet to broach this framework. Legal understandings of property must be taken into consideration when we discuss aesthetic forms that reify the collecting and archiving of its object, as the term *property* clarifies the stakes of the debate. Property remains, per Harris's analysis, a form historically rooted in exclusion and not in physical objecthood, or even in an individual sense of ownership.

It is through property relations that I inspect the politics that have expanded the category of aesthetics. In taking seriously the accepted modernist argument that Marcel Duchamp opens up the possibility of art—as in, he triumphantly delinks labor from concept and thereby offers and elevates the immateriality of the concept—I posit that the gesture did not open up the possibilities of the subject called the artist. Rather, it opened up possibilities only for a particular chosen subset. The elevated artist remains to this day primarily white and male. Susan Cahan has demonstrated that for Black and nonwhite artists, even placement in permanent collections at premiere institutions has not resulted in "lifelong membership"—a curious duality.[22] It is not much better in poetry. One can witness these debates whenever an anthology is published. When Pulitzer Prize–winning former poet laureate Rita Dove edited an anthology of US poetry in 2011 that included more Black poets than previous anthologies, the anti-Black backlash became so intense that headlines reviewing the debate unironically announced that there was a "Bloodletting over an Anthology."[23] How is it that what "counts" as art expands, while who counts as artist remains? I situate this conundrum as one of property relations.

Moreover, the exclusion of nonwhite artists and poets from historically white institutions is more than a question of representation; it is about the materiality required to maintain what Hortense Spillers calls "their new world."[24] Rather than a progressive narrative of *new* world culture, it is the wealth dispossessed in the *new* colonial world that upholds the traditions and artifacts of the *old* world order; the United States is entrusted with the role of global leader because of its commitment to the continuum of colonial rule. It is by design that this continuum is duly extended through the composition of contemporary museum boards and prize committees.[25] What has received much less attention is how formative this new world culture was and is to the material development of art institutions and aesthetic practice.

The developmental narrative of museums posits that encyclopedic museums began as "cabinets of curiosities" that European colonialists

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would bring back in order to display "curiosities" in their homes, and that this colonial structure grew until it became a home unto itself. This origin is reflected in the collecting practices and policies of museums, as in the Louvre's collection of Indigenous remains and the British Museum's refusal to repatriate objects, as well as in the narration of US museums. European art dealers such as Joseph Duveen and US art galleries such as Knoedler worked exclusively between twentieth-century robber barons—Andrew Carnegie, Andrew Mellon, Henry Clay Frick, John D. Rockefeller, John Pierpont Morgan—and European aristocrats, in the sale and transfer of objects.[26] In identifying the artifact possibilities of US *new* money with European *old*-world dynasty, Duveen and other functionary bureaucrats mediated the wealth and objects of the US through the creation of the personal collection museum. In particular, Duveen worked with Andrew Mellon to establish the objects that would come to constitute the National Gallery in Washington, DC, and was pivotal to the Frick Collection, in New York, procuring and offloading European artifacts to the United States on behalf of European aristocrats and US billionaires.[27] His assistance in establishing single-minded US museums was one of explicit effort. The structural legacies shared by Europe and the United States are explained through this competitive and colonial partnership, and colonial notions of linear time are essential to how this dynasty becomes justified.

The direct connection between museums and industry is also largely subsumed under specific aesthetic periods, even as it is continuous. Though the extraction of coke, coal, and steel by robber barons Carnegie, Frick, Rockefeller, and, later, John D. Rockefeller Jr., is widely known, it is less advertised that the family of Duchamp's primary patron, Walter Arensberg, operated a steel company along the same Allegheny River where Carnegie and Frick based their operations, and that this industry generated a dynastic wealth that exempted the Arensbergs (particularly Walter and his wife, Louise) from the lifelong exploitation of wage labor, that is, work. The coal extracted and generated into steel from this region would become the building blocks of what we now understand as the modern world: the sky-high buildings, architectural gems, the Brooklyn Bridge, navy ships—the very marrow of US empire.

In situating my argument, I look to the historical parameters that transfigure property into art and examine sites that have been disconnected or misconnected in this process. Toward this end, my first chapter politicizes the provenance of the Frick Collection, today a museum housed in Frick's New York City mansion. I read the development of the Frick

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Collection through the disavowal of union culture and the segregation primary to labor dispossession in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In examining the violence that grounds the materialization of the personal collection museum space, I provoke connections between this history and the rise of twentieth-century scientific management. The dispossession pivotal to situating the exceptional collecting space parallels the dispossession primary to the rise of institutions of collecting and forms such as the found object and conceptual practices.

In making my argument, I present a macro-examination of the museum and the archive, as well as a micro-inspection of elevated aesthetic objects. I consider art museums and aesthetic archives to be symbols, property, and symbolic property. For this reason, I do not discuss the variegated nuances between the encyclopedic and the specialized collection, their purported democratic ideals for artistic citizenship, or exceptional examples of stellar management or ethical collecting practices. I avoid these discussions because I am interested in demystifying symbolic property and examining the connections among aesthetics, property, and labor writ large. In addition, while I find examples of deviance to be necessary to the imagination, I am arguing that museum and archives are already constructed sites of exception, and therefore, I have devoted my energy to de-exceptionalizing this state.

Michel Foucault described museums as "heterotopias," spaces "beyond" time and space.[28] He wrote that the site of the archive "is the first law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events."[29] Considering that the museum space originated through the expansion of the colonial cabinet of curiosities, my argument is one that traces how colonialism continues to structure our relations, aesthetics, and otherwise through the space of the archive and the museum.

Heterotopic idealizations of museums as dead and consigned to the past bypass the genealogical imperative that roots how museums were founded as the *first law*: property. As property, they exist through the valence of power afforded by law. If reparations, redress, and disappearance are movements of the dead that the dying make, and the calls that some make on their behalf, I argue that a better framing of museums is their undying. They are constant reminders of how colonialism is maintained: the objects of the museums cannot be repatriated, redressed, or burned down; to do so would be an affront to our foundational relationship to the preservation of colonial aesthetics and, by extension, freedom. The recent return of a small number of objects bears no existential threat to any such institution.

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This maintenance of property is afforded through the dynamics of colonial time. As Indigenous critical theorists such as Mishuana Goeman and Jodi Byrd have demonstrated, discussions of settler colonial structures solely through time-based frameworks are limited by the discourse of progressive history and its articulations of past, present, and future.[30] The undercurrents of time-based framings make inevitable the continuous presence of the colonial order. As in, if there is no way to go back to how things were, rather than grappling with what J. Kēhaulani Kauanui situates as "enduring indigeneity"—both in that "indigeneity itself is enduring" and in that "settler colonialism is a structure that endures indigeneity, as it holds out against it"—the present colonial order is indemnified as the *natural* order of things.[31] In this hierarchy, property and dispossession are naturalized foundations for the liberal world.

In *Ossuaries*, poet Dionne Brand evokes the underground to unmask this developmental European fantasy. The fifteen-part epic poem centers on Yasmine, the object/subject imprisoned by the colonial museumification of life. Though the target of violence, Yasmine is refused an innocence, an "outside" elevation to her predicament.[32] Brand labors against aesthetics as a cure ("a mild narcotic") for the malady of colonial existence.[33] Opening with the testament that even her body and her dreams are incarcerated, the epic traces imprisonment as the museum form.[34] This voice is living yet denied life; Brand's epic encircles the tempo and conditions of objecthood. Thus, if Kauanui's enduring indigeneity is foregrounded with Brand's archaeological politicization of the museum form, rather than centralizing colonial time and positing a developmental narrative of movement—from European cabinets of curiosities to encyclopedic museums in Europe and the United States, from European dynasty to US settler-colonial extractive wealth, and from modernist to postmodernist forms—the museum apologia would have no standing. When orienting with Kauanui and Brand, colonial notions of the past are not treated as holding the evidence of colonization; the very metric of "the past" *is* evidence of settler colonialism. Reform would be inconceivable if the progressive lineage from artifacts procured to uphold chattel slavery to objects of aesthetic merit is pressed upon *who endures* and who cannot rather than the elapsed time in which such collections were developed. This consideration materializes the way in which US and European museums are not collections that hold the proof of their crimes, but rather that their continued spatial existence constitutes the crime. They do not hold the proof, they *are* the proof.[35]

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A critical intervention into time is necessary, as the function of colonial time has also worked to uphold the archive's explicit entitlement to ownership and dispossession: colonial time legitimates property.[36] When museum CEOs defend their illegitimate records and their lack of provenance against repatriation, it is often through the metaphor of time as guardianship. It is rationalized that the colonial institution protected the artifact from destruction. The decades or centuries of preservation serve as evidence of institutional care, and the longer the institution has confined the object, the deeper its entitlement. I look to historical materialist thinkers to undo this collapse. In *Slaves and Other Objects*, Page duBois discusses how the field of classics, while fundamentally dependent on objects from antiquity, often fails to contextualize the materiality of the object. She posits that the fields of classics and cultural studies—in their efforts to analyze the object—pry themselves away from the context or the *dirt* of the object; in this case, how each and every object the field of classics studies was made available through enslaved persons and derived through chattel slavery. Following duBois's call for "embeddedness," I likewise insist that objects cannot be separated from their material conditions and their culture.[37]

Walter Benjamin has famously articulated that "there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."[38] My case study of the Homestead Strike of 1892 and the Frick Collection in chapter 1 takes seriously duBois's and Benjamin's theorizations, and I aim to link most explicitly the documents of civilization to barbarism *and* the aesthetic theories that have worked to mystify these connections. In resuscitating the Homestead Strike, the Frick Collection, the Carnegie libraries, and the rise of Taylorism to consider alongside notions of artistic rupture and "enduring indigeneity," I work to challenge our theories concerning the museum space, innovation, and appropriation—the kinds of expression often deemed progressive by modern and contemporary theories. I contend that such forms are not only consistent with how property is understood but are also the documents of civilization.

There are liberal notions of the art object and the museum space, and both liberal and illiberal notions of striking; the fact that neither leads to abolition (of property or otherwise) has been undertheorized. It has become normalized to look to the museum space and the private collection for evidence of art and aesthetics.[39] How might we reformulate our understanding of expression (and aesthetics) given a history where collections have been forged through disavowal? I am asking: What has been unthought through our acceptance of the painting, of the object as that which must be

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preserved, saved, publicized? The scope of this project is to explore *expression*: the museum collection and the poetry archive have become registered sources of aesthetic expression; strikes and protests have become legitimate and illegitimate forms of recognized political expression; and then there are unaccounted forms of unregistered impressions. I interrogate the first two forms, to make space for the third, the fourth, and more.[40]

As the frameworks conjoined in this book historically have been considered disparate, their amalgamation demands much from its interlocutors. The configuration presented—from institutions to forms, conceptual art to labor theory, immaterialism to settler colonialism, and collecting practices to racial capitalism—strains disciplinary confines and thus will ask those engaged with the text to grapple with the difficulties and pleasures of its coalescence. In writing the book, I grappled with the complex ways in which the frameworks have been made structurally separate and tended to both the maintenance of ideological continuums and the permutations that have occurred from disciplinary maintenance. I aim for this book to open up critical insights into how colonialism and discourses on race and gender (via property) have informed and continue to inform aesthetic emergence in order to aid the ongoing efforts to center emergent and anticolonial epistemologies across institutions. This project seeks to bridge the perceived political and aesthetic gaps between what has been categorized as material- and concept-driven aesthetics and what is classified as immaterial, through understanding both as praxes of property. In the remainder of this introduction, I delineate debates concerning property, materiality, immateriality, and the avant-garde that will be vital to the theoretical stakes of this project.

Aesthetic Shields

Cheryl Harris's insight that property is the right to exclude and thus should be characterized as metaphysical and not physical situates how the interrelationship between the physical and metaphysical exists beyond the mythology of Western civilization and thrives to this day.[41] During antiquity, this dichotomy was understood as realism and idealism. From there, the binary has been discussed as the mind/body division of the Enlightenment; scientific management's brainwork/handwork, later transmuted into skilled/unskilled work; and the concept/object division in the tradition of avant-garde and conceptual art. This last category, however, does

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not name its negation; it does not name the function and labor it has abandoned to the other.

We can trace whiteness as property and the right to exclude to fundamental operations concerning forms writ large, as well as to contemporary aesthetics and their institutions. Some artists assume the freedom to expand the category of art—for example, urinals as fountains—and these objects and ideas have historically been considered their property. It is in and through whiteness that property claims can be registered, and objects and ideas become witnessed as the owners' property through the discourse of exclusion (as in, not all urinals are fountains or art, just those found by Duchamp). That the symbols of segregation (urinals/fountains) become mistranslated as symbols of aesthetic liberation—for those already considered legally free—exposes the relationship between racial capitalism, settler colonialism, and modernism and the characteristics that formalize the aestheticization of property.

The tradition of racialized appropriation continues today, from Richard Prince's endless theft of works by Black photographers, to Joe Scanlan's "Donnelle Woodford" blackface project, to Santiago Sierra's entire oeuvre, which is examined in this book. Exemplifying this practice, in 2015, MoMA's first poet laureate, Kenneth Goldsmith, attempted to present the autopsy report of Michael Brown, the young Black man shot by police in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014, as his poem in a reading at Brown University. Immediately afterward, he releasing a statement that read, "Appropriation and plagiarism are here to stay."[42] In the effort to defend Goldsmith's anti-Black "found object" poetry from criticism, a 2015 *New Yorker* piece proclaimed that "conceptual art and conceptual poetry embody ideas, and both descend from Duchamp."[43] The invocation of Duchamp was to serve as the closing argument. If racialized and gendered formations provide the expansive and conceptual possibilities of modern and postmodern art imperative to the concept of artistic freedom, then we should ask: For whom is decontextualized appropriation—transformations of the urinal—the site of aesthetic liberation? As situated by my research—from Duchamp's *Fountain* to the digitization of daguerreotypes and the Archive for New Poetry—the usage, control, and modification of an imagined Blackness (one that can and should *aesthetically* be removed from its embodiments) becomes the primary mode of innovative art, aesthetic rupture, and originality.

While my research begins in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, I am interested in laying out the colonial history of immaterial/conceptual art in order to clarify the racial dynamics of the present. For

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these reasons, I fixate on the praxis of property and traverse forms and movements usually considered politically and aesthetically differentiated. I read concept- and idea-oriented aesthetic projects, be they defined as postmodern, modern, avant-garde, conceptual, or otherwise within the vital scope of art historical periodization, as also needing to be understood within economic and legal processes. Throughout the book, I track the ways in which the building of artistic institutions and institutionalized aesthetic forms is in close conversation with contested and naturalized labor divisions. For example, in one case, I ask: How do the distinctions and parallels between the labor *experiments* forced onto steel workers in the early twentieth century by Fredrick Taylor and the burgeoning categorizations of experimental aesthetic forms provide insight into the antagonistic and cooperative relationship between art and capital?

In this study, I am distinguishing property from commodity, as property claims remain with their supposed owners.[44] While we are allowed and encouraged to purchase and consume commodities, and even to commodify (e.g., purchasing a coffee mug of a painting at the museum gift shop), the ability to profit from, indeed own, the object of profit, and exclude by controlling access to said object (e.g., the painting upstairs represented on the coffee mug) is altogether and purposefully denied. This book pushes for a petty materialist approach to interrogating the ownership of "liberatory" art objects for the purposes of clarifying the racial and gender dispossessions embedded in the discourse of property, and one day, of dismantling property altogether.

For those outside of the incestuous cloisters of contemporary art and poetry, the avant-garde may be a topic of disinterest. In this book, I demonstrate how theories invented for modernism and the avant-garde are foundational shielding arguments for the mediation of settler colonialism and the anti-Blackness of cultural forms into the present.[45] Recent protests of art institutions, while vibrant, have approached singular board members and actors, rather than the institutions' history and the construction of the boards more broadly. Thus, I hope to aid in what can become an ongoing investigation into institutional finance, history, land, and more. I seek to examine the racialized contours that marked immaterialism in the avant-garde as innovative and trace the theories that naturalized narratives of experimentation via colonization, in order to denaturalize them.

Throughout the book I take up what I call *shields*: people, objects, and forms that have been so thoroughly defended that their names themselves come to serve as a shelter from critique—the shield of glory that is

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the museum form, the shield of Duchamp that invokes the avant-garde and the authority of the artist-manager, the shield that terminology such as *new* and *experimental* provides against material analysis, the shield of archival preservation, the shield of an immaterial removed of material. As Duchampian ideological promulgations have only been extended, rather than limited, by art historians and literary scholars, an unfamiliarity with the terrains of his name and its function also serves to shame and discipline young new artists and field outsiders. In other instances, figures like Santiago Sierra have used Marxism as a shield to re-create and aestheticize exploitation, wherein Marxism engenders neat class critiques that accommodate rather than destroy the economy of the gallery space. I take apart these shields to create a window through which we may speak to each other about violence, imagination, dreams, and more.

Across the chapters, I grapple with the relationship between finance and aesthetics and the routes they traverse to create corresponding systems of colonial logic. Each chapter deals with the mutations between racial capitalism and modern aesthetic institutions. When reading an earlier draft of this manuscript, theorist Max Haiven graciously pointed to the ways in which the rise of certain financial products corresponds to financial periods; as in, the financialization of life and death begins in the late 1970s, as does the rise of terms such as "intangible economy"—much later than the rise of immaterial art that I track here. However, while the precision of vocabulary is important, so too is understanding its contradictions and developments. The wealth legacies of Frick, Carnegie, and the Arensbergs share a primary extractive source: the coke, coal, and steel industries mentioned above. This continuity is an instructive depiction of late nineteenth-century colonial accumulation.[46] Further, the Carnegie Steel Company became the first billion-dollar company in the world through its partnership with J. P. Morgan, who worked to financialize extractive industries. So while financial capitalism and conceptual/immaterial art as we currently understand them may not have existed at this time, their forms were in the making. If immaterial labor has been commodified under capitalism (as Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt have recently argued), in this book, I argue that immaterial labor and art were invented in late capitalism to distinguish *forms* of labor.[47]

This book's focus on New York institutions is not merely a detail, but is the book's very grounding. In grappling with the *longue durée* of public silence, Joanne Barker writes of how Manna-hata means "island of the many hills" in Lenape and became "Manhattan" through mistranslation

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by "an Englishman working for the Dutch West India Company."[48] While the traditional homeland of the Lenape people (Manna-hata) has become synonymous with financial capitalism, museums, entertainment, and culture (Manhattan), Barker's scholarship establishes how the city with all its famous scenery remains a site of dispossession, a settler city founded as a barrier fort built to restrict the movement of the Lenape people in the effort to remove them from their homelands.[49] The presence of the Lenape people is made explicit through the name, and it is through this clarity that their presence lives and remains disavowed. This book shows how aesthetic traditions have not merely participated in this violence, but have actively formalized it into what are considered immaterial and transcendent aesthetics.

Each chapter of this book thus opens by discussing the land on which the subject's histories and ideas take shape. Manhattan, the Allegheny River in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, the Kumeyaay land known as La Jolla in California, and Massachusetts are all variations of colonial mistranslated or borrowed Indigenous words and names. This methodology aims to consider English in light of Kauanui's "enduring indigeneity." Though US empire actively works against Indigenous presence, its language is full of Indigenous words and names. And so, perhaps another failing of modernist structuralism, and even postmodernist poststructuralism, is how the relationship between the stable signifier and the unstable signified does not open into an engagement with Native presence or reparation; and thus, I return to the root.

There are arguments that have been made privately to me, and sometimes not so privately, that some nonwhite artists consider themselves to be conceptual, or have been branded conceptual posthumously, or have been theorized as avant-garde in the present. That select nonwhite artists have been granted the title of *experimental*, or may have taken up the term voluntarily, does not invalidate the arguments I make regarding the found form, aesthetics, racial capitalism, or collecting imperatives. I do not see the presence of exceptions as evidence against the structure; nor do I believe in the utilization of nonwhite peoples to nullify the overwhelming facts of white supremacy. One could make the argument that certain nonwhite artists and poets truly believe their lineage is sincerely linked to the white avant-garde; I would respond that the sincerity of their feelings is not a shield for the history and violence of institutionalized aesthetics. Others might make the case that my arguments collapse certain nonwhite artists further into the white canon; I would ask for the field to reexam-

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ine nonwhite artists and writers who may be vulnerable to such forms of erasure. Furthermore, while whiteness continues to be protected legally, the perpetuation of anti-Blackness does not require legalized whiteness. It may be that in this contemporary moment, non-Black artists of color take up what has been normalized by white avant-garde and white institutional practices to perpetuate anti-Blackness in their aesthetics, sincerely, as their own expression.

The focus of this project is not the visual marker of whiteness or white persons, but the formations of property. Throughout my analysis, I press into how certain objects, materials, and people are assumed to be vacant, empty vessels and how notions of *found*, *readymade*, *collected* depend on notions of previous indeterminacy, transient vacancy, and the legal division between the object and property. The rest of this introduction tracks the frameworks that support this analysis—and against which it sometimes strains. The various case studies in this book—the Frick Collection, scientific management, Duchamp's *Fountain*, the Archive for New Poetry, Harvard's claim to the daguerreotypes of enslaved persons, and the uncritical criticism concerning Santiago Sierra—have been selected for their formal and material logics. I am interested in the invention of the forms of *collecting* and *propertizing*, from the dispossession that is the museum space to the discourse of *found* and *readymade*, and how these forms were and remain the aesthetic mediations of racial capitalism. By exploring these cases, I argue that the discourse of formal aesthetic innovation is rooted in materialized notions of possession and dispossession; it occurs through an affirmation of the racialization of property. In arguing this, I seek to connect the language of form with the politics of property in order to amplify the stakes of this *excess* realm.[50] I have selected these particular case studies as they are exemplary of a dominant mode of art and literature that has normalized itself as abstract, immaterial, and avant-garde. In this normalization, I track the origin tale of vacancy and property so that their abrogation may one day be plotted.

On Form and Property

Throughout this book I ask: How and why are certain spaces imagined as vacant, as available for discovery?[51] And in return: How does abstraction construct emptiness? Further, though constructed through an emptiness that cannot be, how do forms of exclusion appear so consistently without

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contradiction? It was and is a particularity that the aestheticization of property is witnessed as innovative and new. It was and is a particular positionality that carries out the aestheticization of property as one's own unique expression—art, anti-art, or otherwise.

Cheryl Harris's foundational "Whiteness as Property" opens with an excerpt of Harris's unpublished poem and an extract from the petition in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. I read this gesture as the text's porous ambition to interact with all contours of language, from legal to aesthetic and otherwise. Harris harrows into how the legitimation of settler colonialism and racial capitalism takes root in European philosophy. She situates how whiteness in the US was invented to uphold the legal distinction between enslaved persons and free persons (white), and in this, whiteness becomes the vehicle for legal notions of freedom. Thus, to own property (including one's body and labor) was the material manifestation of freedom. In this legal formulation, property is not the demonstration of *having* things, but of "the right to exclude" others from the categorical imperative of freedom. Exclusion demarcates property. Further, Harris demonstrates that through this definition of property, US settlers insisted that the land they "discovered" was *vacant*, and this conversion from vacancy into occupation was crystalized through the discourse of property that defined the legalization of chattel slavery.[52] The legalization of settler colonialism and chattel slavery worked in tandem to construct *whiteness as property*. Whiteness was and remains the positionality to insist on something (or someone) as vacant when they are full and alive.[53]

Anticapitalist traditions often trace previous European philosophies in order to press the discourse of revolution and decolonization. Harris's methodology of tracking European philosophy in order to critique the foundation of violence is a shared procedure among Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial scholars. However, Harris's critique of property may not necessarily be Marxist; as Harris renders race a priori to understanding historical and contemporary forms of property, affecting how its abolition would be theorized and imagined. Marx's critique of the property form varied throughout his life, from the discourse on the protection of the private property of workers, to his formidable critique of the commons, to his ambivalence or affirmation toward socialist forms of colonization.[54] Though Marx's groundbreaking intervention was to reframe Hegel's understanding of progressive history from the dialectic between master and slave to one between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Marx's ideal proletariat was European and, as examined in my final chapter, uninvolved in aesthetics.[55]

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Most masterfully, Cedric Robinson's oeuvre demonstrates a critique of Marx and Marxism by situating how it is not the transformation of the proletariat and bourgeoisie that is a priori to revolution; rather it is the lumpenproletariat, the enslaved, the colonized, the Indigenous, and the older tradition of peasant revolts that ground ontological transformation. In *Black Marxism*, Robinson situates three key components of his critique: (1) the historical context of German nationalism and its importance to understanding the rise of communism; (2) the erasure of slave revolts and marronage from the historization of capitalism and colonization and the subsequent misgivings of frameworks such as primitive accumulation and labor; and (3) how the history and presence of Black Radical Tradition pushes Marxism further than what it could ever imagine.[56] In *Anthropology of Marxism*, Robinson extends his critique into Western civilization to trace how the genealogy of Western socialism comes not out of Marx or capitalism, but from heretics, peasants, and their revolts against the church and state. By situating how a critique of property and capital preexist capitalism and modern colonization, Robinson forges a primary critique of Marx, whose developmental understanding of liberation and socialism situates capitalism as prefiguring socialism, erroneously marking capitalism as a central stage of global liberation.

Similar to Kauanui's critique of colonial time, Robinson's epistemological critique is vital to denying the developmental narrative of progress predicated upon exploitation and to denying *any* necessity of capitalism and colonization, and it serves as a model for rejecting narratives of property and its forms writ large. The toils of labor and exploitation do not prefigure the liberated subject; Robinson demonstrates that capitalism does not exist to liberate, nor can it eventually be fashioned into liberation. Capitalism is not the grounds upon which liberation can be built; the foundation for the fight lies elsewhere.

Furthermore, Robinson argues that an orthodox Marxist understanding of property and history does not and cannot account for chattel slavery but rather fails to understand the relationship between colonialism and what becomes considered primitive accumulation. Thus, Robinson situates capitalism as always racial capitalism.[57] Previously, W. E. B. Du Bois delineated the ongoing conflicts between the terms *Black* and *worker*.[58] Under racial capitalism, the categories of *Black* and *worker* are witnessed as terms of separation and contradiction.[59] Affixed to chattel slavery, Black labor is not recognized as a site of wage labor or private property. In the term *worker*, whiteness is presumed, and thus Black labor remains a site

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of dispossession. In this trajectory, Black, Indigenous, immigrant, and undocumented persons are often left out of the discourse of the working class because US rhetoric tends to situate the working class as a static position belonging specifically to white persons, rather than, as Harry Braverman notes, "an ongoing social process."[60] Such distinctions remain palpable in ongoing tensions between white Marxist theorists on the one hand, and postcolonial and anticolonial Black Marxists and Black studies and Indigenous critical theory scholars on the other. Some of these tensions will be explored in my first chapter, on the Homestead Strike and the anti-Black discourse of "scab" labor.

I depart from previous Marxist scholarship, such as Adorno's and Horkheimer's work on the culture industry and more recent examinations of arts funding, in key ways. While I am sympathetic to Adorno's political project of reading culture as symptomatic of capitalism (which prescribes the "art of resistance" as immutable surface refractions at best, co-optation at worst) such a reading practices what Lewis Gordon theorized as "epistemic closure"[61] and refuses what Gayatri Spivak has described as "intimate sabotage."[62] Museums, archives, and cultural production do not exist outside of racial capitalism, *and* the critiques made in this book do not serve to foreclose what cannot be seen by the politicized critic, be it ruptures, weapons, silences, absences, continuums, more.[63]

Furthermore, my approach to historical materialism is without moral indictments, without some faulty prescription for artists, writers, persons, without an illusive guidance for better funding, path, or space. Unlike contemporary scholarship that traces the financial documents of an institution in order to ultimately level an individualistic critique of (too often) nonwhite artists and writers who have interacted with said institutions, the aims of my critiques are structurally more ambitious and uncurative. The embeddedness of specific individual artists and writers of color within institutions speaks to the larger structures of colonialism and capitalism. The concentration on how they operate—as if they could operate outside of colonialism while we remain inside of it—speaks to the misguided popularity of morally condemning particular individuals rather than the gatekeepers, colonial agents and their ancestors, and the ways in which the property form becomes naturalized through this dynamic.

The neoliberal mutations that continue to occur between criticism, the institution, the artist, and the critic almost demand constant apprehension toward the instrumentalization of critical theory and its selected artist, such as the scholarship surrounding Santiago Sierra (discussed in

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chapter 6) and the usage of Marxism as a shield to recreate and aestheticize exploitation. Critics interested in work and labor have often approached this issue as cased in the pursuit of individual artists, and, in a positivistic sense, they approach artists interested in legible protest, artists interested in wage negotiation, through a deracialized framework, as case studies of artists with "better politics."[64] In their scholarship, Marxism becomes reframed as a class critique suited for the confines of a gallery space, while the abolition of private property, field examinations of labor practices, or the mild pursuit of a socialist future entirely fall off the map. Thus, the framework Harris provides allows for history to be materially reexamined, and I use her framework to interrogate modernism and the avant-garde in necessary ways. "Whiteness as property" offers the framework and vocabulary by which avant-garde origin stories might be fundamentally perforated.

On the Racial Politics of the Avant-Garde

The desire to leave behind older traditions in the pursuit of newer ones should be understood as part of the theoretical justification of colonization. Fatima El-Tayeb has powerfully demonstrated how, contrary to the assertion of "race" as a US concern, race was constructed in Europe for the purposes of colonization, and European racial hierarchy was exported around the globe to uphold colonialism.[65] Thus, theorizations that obscure the racial politics of the avant-garde can only do so through a conflation of liberalism with racialization, and, as Lisa Lowe has so exquisitely laid out, by mistaking "liberalism as the primary ideology of—and not the source of critique for—colonized civilization."[66] In aesthetic inquiry, there has been little distinction between these political formations. Lowe posits, "The genealogy of modern liberalism is thus also a genealogy of modern race; racial differences and distinctions designate the boundaries of the human and endure as remainders attesting to the violence of liberal universality."[67] Modern understandings of the world were racialized perspectives—they were colonial formations that informed the definitions of universality and freedom.

To hone in on a defining moment for modernist freedom, in 1917 in New York City, at the height of modernist momentum, the Society of Independent Artists held a show that promised to accept all submitted works of art. The call is a revolutionary claim against the forces of institutional gatekeeping, against the spaces of authority that had worked for centuries to keep art exclusive.[68] By refusing to evaluate expression through

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the discourse of selection, the society promised an art show that would prioritize personal expression above all else. Duchamp tests the boundaries of this progressive gesture by submitting an object that he terms a "readymade." He claims to have found the object and declares it his work of art. This gesture forces the Society of Independent Artists to reveal the limits of their initial call: all legible artworks will be accepted, but this call is not an opening for illegible or emergent aesthetic forms. For the society, art is made or designed by the author. Their rejection of Duchamp's object marks a compression within modernist understandings of art, which were without ambition to rupture the links between the artist, expression, and craft. The modernists reveal the limitation of their understanding of aesthetics, thus anointing themselves, in the view of the forthcoming avant-gardists, as the outdated, aging former vanguard—and the discovery of this limitation propels the avant-gardist project of expansion forward.

Neither the expansion of the category of artist nor that of art expanded the category of the human—I do not state this as a recuperative gesture of longing, but as fact.[69] The endless expansion of artist and art exists within the realm of settler colonialism, neocolonialism, and racial capitalism. That the committee members of the society consisted of white men (Duchamp was also part of the committee) and one white woman rarely factors into the narrative of avant-garde invention and liberation. That the show—irrespective of Duchamp's rejection or inclusion—would have been a segregated show, in a settler nation-state, has not been part of the discourse of artistic freedom and experimentalism. I further explore how aesthetic movements become divided into racialized timelines in the fourth chapter of this book, to elucidate the naturalization of what Mullen describes as *aesthetic apartheid*.[70]

Scholars interested in thinking across colonialism, slavery, and aesthetics have often been looped into a cycle of disenfranchisement, amnesia, dehistoricization, deconxtexualization, and misreadings. I believe the tool that continues this cycle to be the negation of property. I politicize the neutrality pivotal to the discourse of forms and aesthetic spaces by centering property claims, be it the innovation of a form, their objects, or collections. While primary to their constructions, theorization, and circulation, the politics of property remain wholly absent in discussions concerning museums, modern art, and poetry.

Property is an important differentiator to the said freedoms of conceptual art, as conceptual art is fundamentally exclusive. While it is true that figures such as Duchamp worked to expand the category of what was

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considered art, they did so through the confines of the legible subject, expanding only what was already and only available to them. *Whiteness as property* was vital to the narration of innovation and freedom of conceptual art, as it is only through the vehicle of property that the category of art is expanded. This is the ontological problem of immaterialism: its author is required to be a property-eligible subject.

In liberal New York City, whiteness as property and colorblind rhetoric became woven into the liberalism of the avant-garde. My reading of aesthetics with racial capitalism is symptomatic, as canonical modern artworks such as *Fountain* emerged in the presence of Jim Crow law and culture.[71] Given this history, it is no accident that the most important works of modern art, avant-garde forms, and museums have all been rendered universal and therefore outside the purview of racial analysis. It is precisely this narrative of universal aesthetic liberation that racializes and contextualizes *Fountain*. As Lowe has demonstrated, liberal freedom is predicated upon racial and gender dispossession, and thus it is through the expansion of artistic freedom that its racial signification becomes pronounced.[72]

My decision to fold art and poetry together stems from my desire to examine the dynamics between racial capitalism and modernism. In a critique of Language poetry, David Marriott argues that finance is not about value or representation, but instead about forms of communication.[73] While advocates of modernist abstraction and modernist-driven conceptualist practices focus on theories of production, Marriott materializes how finance is "fundamentally dependent on communication."[74] The communiqué narrated from one seller in finding another purchaser operates through abstracted form. A materialist reading of the genre differences between poetry and visual art is immensely helpful in understanding why and how particular notions of property, form, and innovation arise and are adopted across genres. Their similarities as well as their differences lead to new analyses about the underlying politics of the modernist tradition.

Though cross-media aesthetic movements have mostly waned, contemporary artists and writers continue to look to each other as part of generative practice and to establish the necessity of their formal pursuits. Genre-shielding can be witnessed back and forth throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In 1959, Brion Gysin declared that "writing is fifty years behind painting," and this phrase has been endlessly cited by conceptualist writers to justify their racially appropriative practices.[75] Furthermore, the difference in material stakes between media amplifies the politics in place. While artists exhibiting in museums and producing

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objects may have clear financial incentives to produce objects for sale, the financial goals of the poetry market have not always been so transparent.[76] Though poetry is without an immediate object value—which constitutes its claim to moral superiority—and currently there is no "poetry blue chip market," the normalization of modernist found-art occurred in tandem with found poetic practices.[77] If abstract modernist forms in visual art are displays of white property claims, abstract modernist forms in poetry situate the language space in which such objects can reside.[78]

On Work/Labor

The affective appeal of avant-garde forms is in their suppression of the category of labor. Modernist expression remained linked to artistic craft, which implicitly carries with it questions of access *and* work: the artist paints their new vision; the poet expresses feelings by writing new lines. Taking from Duchamp's reification of ideas, conceptual art insists that art can move away from the object altogether through a denigration of non-art forms and objects, all of which will be decided by the recognized artist. The work of thinking, conceptualizing, and art-doing becomes bracketed from the labor of making, using, and being, and as such, a hierarchical elevation from one to the other is created. More than anything else, found and conceptual art reify the processes of dispossession and division of labor. In avant-garde found practices, who enacts what kinds of labor and where, how much (or if) they are paid, what is made invisible and why, and how non-art work differs from art work are questions that become fundamentally passé, or affectively uninteresting, and their pursuit is only taken up by conservative modernists or ill-informed killjoys.[79] Situated as one of the most important works of modern art—the origin point of its mythology—*Fountain* is the gesture that allowed some to move beyond questions of materiality, context, work, and place, and as such, it continues to deflect such questions in the present.

When presenting my research at conferences, I often hear the rebuttal that artists have always outsourced their labor in the form of painting schools and factories. I would agree that large-scale canonical art productions have paralleled the various economic structures of the societies in which they take place. The fact that Rembrandt and the "old European masters" employed uncredited persons to paint and make is an important dimension of the political economy of art, but not the emphasis of this book. My contention here is not that avant-garde and contemporary art-

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ists and poets are *unlike* the European tradition from which they descend, but rather that their narratives concerning art *too* parallel the societal and economic shifts of their present and should be examined in that light. Their emphasis on dividing *idea* (art) from *object* (material, labor, person) is a way to understand the aestheticized meditations of racial capitalism and settler colonialism. Therefore, how the rise of racial and economic systems becomes animated through forms pronounced as immaterial remains my focus.

The implications of the question of mental work—a vestige of the Cartesian binary—impact academia as much as the discourse of aesthetics. To ask what the labor and role of thinking might be, particularly amid the neoliberalization of academia and the normalization of white supremacy, may feel either excessive or self-laudatory. In the former vein, I have seen radical academics, artists, and writers (professionalized thinkers) apologize for their profession. It does not seem *enough* to write and think. *Real work* seems like more. A critical examination of labor divisions created during the early twentieth century in deunionized steel mills, and then aestheticized through the avant-garde, is required to track how the fields of writing and art perpetuate ideas of mind work as removed from hand work in both their critique and solidarity. In accepting this division, the artist/writer/academic identifies as the guilty mind-worker/manager, perhaps romanticizing the hand work they are not paid to perform and laboring to articulate projects that elevate the hand-worker above the mind-worker. The elevation from one to the other is supposed to become their gesture of worker solidarity. But what to make of this? Surely we do not accept the implication that some people live without their minds and others live without their bodies. Rejecting this division does not erase the serious exploitation that many face in their daily lives while others do not.

Conceptual art has often been akin to management, and bureaucracy has been narrated as pivotal to modern and contemporary art forms.[80] The elevation of conceptual forms is neither exceptional to nor innovative of the logic of racial capitalism and colonialism but rather is the *aestheticization of its politics.*[81] The emancipation of some is produced through the work of others. As immaterial fantasies are continually expounded, labor becomes the darkest matter.[82] What do the material foundations of immaterial aesthetics reveal about the foundational violence of aesthetics and freedom? In the second and third chapters, I take up how the categorical expansion of art for white artists adheres to the new labor divisions created in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Frederick Winslow

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Taylor created the categories of "mind work" and "hand work" by observing newly deunionized steel mills, describing them in texts such as *Shop Management* and *The Principles of Scientific Management*. His work remains foundational in business schools, managerial studies, and, I argue, aesthetic movements.[83] The goal of scientific management was to displace the knowledge of production into units of managerial control, so much so that workers would be unable to point to their exact contribution. It was also a tactic to deny claims of creativity and ownership from those considered low-wage workers. Such labor divisions have been normalized and remain in place, and labor scholars continue to study the structural dispossession created by Taylorism.

The freedoms offered through conceptual divides are the same freedoms offered by segregation. The gesture of aesthetic appropriation replicates the dispossession that labor divisions exact in the form of private property. Tracking the divisions drawn between elevated mind workers and unionized hand workers, deunionized hand workers, and segregated and immigrant "scabs" is vital to understanding the inventions of avant-garde forms and notions of the artist today. In this project, I analyze the transformation of each category in conjunction with the movements taking place in aesthetics. How is the labor of artists and intellectuals understood and defined? How do we define ourselves in a moment in which mental activity is taken away and then "given back" to workers (as a mechanism of further disempowerment)?

Structure of the Book

Divided into six chapters, this book inspects the various historical parameters that transfigure the aestheticization of property. Throughout, I connect histories and sites that have been disconnected, such as labor studies and art history, or misconnected, such as property and form. To this end, my opening chapter politicizes the provenance of the Frick Collection in New York City. In order to read the development of the Frick Collection through the disavowal of union culture and the segregation primary to labor dispossession in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I first turned to Frick's acquisition records of art objects from the Knoedler Gallery alongside his role in the Homestead Strike of 1892. The strike at the Homestead Steel Works outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, took place during union renegotiations with Frick and Carnegie and is still

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known as one of the largest union strikes, as well as one of the most violent union clashes with private security forces in US history. Labor historians have theorized that the violence workers faced at Homestead degraded US union culture. Though it is the breaking of steel unions that led to the rapacious wealth that Carnegie and Frick remain known for, I complicate even this class-conscious narrative through an examination of racial segregation within late nineteenth-century unions and the anti-Black riots executed by the Homestead union members during the strike. In racializing every aspect of this labor and art history, I situate how the distance between illegible person, dignified laborer, and aesthetic expression continues to be maintained.

I begin with the Frick because I seek to highlight the political linkages between patrons of European masters, patrons of the avant-garde, and patrons of experimental poetics in the growth of neoliberal aesthetics. The differences in their objects serve to illuminate the consistency with which they fortified their collections and legacies. In addition, I am staking that collectors of the old European masters and the avant-garde overlap in key ways when accounting for their racialized collecting efforts: from the impetus to leave behind their aesthetic vision to the narrative of aesthetic preservation as a benevolent gesture of public good. Why leave behind an art collection for a future public when one's relationship to the present public has been one of scorn, degradation, violence, and murder? What do we make of this ongoing, contradictory repetition?

In making connections between the personal-art-collection-as-museum and the procedure of donating one's art collection to an established museum, my second chapter looks at the parallel histories of scientific management and conceptual art. It is through scientific management that the materialist histories of the Frick Collection and the Arensberg collection of works by Duchamp—though seemingly disparate in aesthetic styles—are crystallized. I track how the rise of Fredrick Winslow Taylor's scientific management was made possible by deunionization, and I analyze the colonial history of scientific management itself—particularly how Taylor's conception was modeled after his deep admiration of the slave plantation as the most efficient site of management. I explore the parallel rise of scientific management and conceptual art because I want us to consider: How does exploitation become metastasized as innovation in economic and aesthetic spheres? How does it become naturalized that some people work without their minds and others are celebrated for an idea removed from the body? How did questions concerning the expropriation of

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labor and material become removed from considerations of what becomes defined as innovative?

The traditions of found art as understood by Duchamp, his patrons, and the art establishment are rooted in racialized understandings of property fundamentally unavailable to nonwhite persons, legally and as institutional practice. Thus, in the third chapter, I examine how financial patronage operated and remains vital to how the modernist canon is understood. I question ahistorical, apolitical, and meritocratic readings of found art, and instead read the politics of found object art as developed by Duchamp and his patrons. The correspondence between Duchamp and the Arensbergs firmly demonstrates the processes of museum donor acquisition—a phenomena that is both known and understudied. I contextualize this argument through an examination of Noah Purifoy's work and outdoor museum.

Further, I argue in chapter 3 that historicizing *Fountain* allows us to witness how pivotal colonialism and segregation have been to previous understandings of modernists' innovation and their collections. In conjunction, while appropriation becomes celebrated and normalized for avant-garde writers and artists, the violence of enforced assimilation becomes a key theme for many Black, Asian American, and postcolonial cultural producers. The tensions that foreground the celebration of the found object practice are the same processes that attempt to normalize assimilation. By examining the operations of property and property management in the arts, I propose that alongside the literature and art that expose the freedom of appropriation there exists a haunted and haunting archive of cultural texts that lay out dreams for liberation.

I set up all that I do with art, museums, labor, finance, and property in order to tend to the development of poetry archives, which has important convergences and divergences with the former. In chapter 4, I trace how *experimental* and *conceptual* remain racialized terms in poetic discourse and their archival formations. In this pursuit I examine the collecting priorities of the University of California San Diego's Archive for New Poetry (ANP). I begin by delineating how race becomes pivotal to the collection development priorities of the ANP, and how this prioritization is institutionally processed by literary scholarship that links innovation to whiteness. Under the banner of "new," the ANP created a segregated repository—its current collecting priorities are 100 percent white—with a historical dedication to Language poetry. The indexing of whiteness as the sole and proprietary manifestation of experimentation can be witnessed in the ANP's collection, appraisal, and acquisition processes. I argue that

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there is little institutional possibility for collecting imperatives to become desegregated if whiteness continues to be indexed to "new" forms—be it in poetry, art, or otherwise. As long as race remains at the margins of literary scholarship and archival praxis, segregated and segregating collections will remain the institutional norm.[84]

The ANP resides on Indigenous land—Kumeyaay, Cupeño, Luiseño, and Cahuilla land—and as such, the collection remains a settlement. And though containing poetry rather than art objects, the operations of exclusionary property function similarly to the Frick Collection. Thus, while not dismissing their differences, chapter 4 notes the similarities between these institutions as rooted in settler colonialism and racial capitalism: from their inception to their collection and organization, property remains their foregrounding logic.

Following my examination of race and experimental literary archives, I look at the racial politics of the ostensibly revolutionary form of digitization. As Kalindi Vora and Neda Atanasoski have demonstrated, digital technologies have fundamentally depended on preexisting racialized labor formations, and celebratory pronouncements of how new technologies will displace the human worker are simply advertisements to evade discussing the continuums of neocolonialism.[85] In my fifth chapter, I examine the institutional provenance of daguerreotypes of enslaved persons held by the Getty Museum and Harvard University—particularly how digital images continue the regimes of racialized property—and consider the ways contemporary Black artists have intervened in narratives of institutional ownership. By examining the critical framework offered by Carrie Mae Weems's artwork, the anticolonial extensions of Divya Mehra's practice, and Sasha Huber's performances, chapter 5 explores how US ideals of property and art become compounded by the digital present.

My critiques of property and the terms of immateriality will be instructive for analyzing the future operations of digital forms, as many reactions to digital property forms conjure outlandish statements from those who insist that it was different before. David Joselit provides the most recent summation of the transcendent mythology of the readymade form. In order to critique nonfungible tokens (NFTs), Joselit sets the tokens up against Duchamp's readymade, and argues that the digital financial tool is a "reverse of Duchamp's gesture."[86] He distinguishes property from free information, desublimation from deskilling, and abandonment from what could be assumed as dispossession, and then claims that generous readings of art have the potential to destabilize and reject the property form. In this

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reading, non-NFT readymade art is outside the bounds of property, and it is outside of property where we might somehow become destabilized. Joselit's definition, which situates "the legacy of slavery (the human becoming property)," reveals the liberal position from which the readymade remains mythologized away from material history: through an insistence on *becoming*.[87] In this liberal iteration, the human is naturalized before the enslaved, evading how the category of the human was invented during the Enlightenment to enslave and colonize.[88] The human does not become property and is not a container for transient or mobile relationships; rather, the *human* is the category afforded to those who possessed property. What Joselit instructively misses is how Duchamp's readymades have always been property through the colonial construction of the human, and, in this, could be considered prescient NFTs.

My last chapter outlines the continuation of *whiteness as property* and scientific management in contemporary art by discussing Santiago Sierra's body of work, particularly *250 cm Line Tattoo on 6 Paid People*, in which Sierra paid six day laborers thirty dollars each to have a line tattooed across their backs in front of an art gallery audience in Cuba. Taking up the labor and material conditions as well as the financial and rhetorical forces surrounding the series, I interrogate the Taylorist, managerial logics pivotal to the current milieu of contemporary gallery art. Though fundamentally dependent on humiliating vulnerable communities (homeless Black and brown women, unemployed men, undocumented persons, poor children), Sierra's performances have been described as "better politics" and as anticapitalist art by art historians, museum catalogs, and his gallery's PR statements.[89] I examine the theorems offered by Sierra, his gallery representations, and the arguments promulgated by prominent art critics to situate an evolving definition of neoliberal aesthetics. I locate neoliberal aesthetics as the aestheticized practice of Taylorism, dependent on the ongoing dispossession of race, gender, and labor discussed in chapters 1 and 2. Furthermore, in rejecting the replication of exploitation, which stems from the fetishization of production as the apex of criticality and innovation—my working definition of neoliberal aesthetics—I offer a loose antagonistic framework against this tradition.

There are no images from Sierra's catalog in this book because I take up what Kimberly Juanita Brown has theorized as the "repeating body" as a call for praxis.[90] While Brown speaks specifically about the images and representations of enslaved persons, I find her ethical puncturing key to discussing contemporary images of Black persons and useful for prob-

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lematizing the discourse of aesthetic representation. Some readers may be interested to look up referenced images, to do their own investigation of my reading, and to fault my citation of Sierra as perpetuating violence. I would respond that I believe we can discuss Sierra's catalog and the practice of neoliberal aesthetics without the image, as the image has been made purposefully uninteresting and without importance. I am interested in examining the prevailing narratives and undoing the powers of its circulation rather than compounding them.

Examining the political implications of artistic freedom essential to the Duchampian tradition has allowed me to describe how artists and poets such as Noah Purifoy, Sasha Huber, Divya Mehra, Wafaa Bilal, and Wanda Coleman intervene into the provenance of property claims. These artists engage with practices of reparations and work against colonial aesthetics. Specifically, they reject the abstraction that serves the imagination of colonialism and racial capitalism and confer a precise engagement with time, space, and materiality. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak deftly demonstrates how access to self-representation is the threshold for subalternity, these artists and writers are not subaltern.[91] They also do not perform the false alterity demanded by liberal inclusionary measures; rather they implicate their threshold positionality in their practice. Their positions as racialized, gendered subjects pressure rudimentary understandings of politicized and aesthetic action, and in each of their oeuvres we can witness a sustained and variegated engagement with the liminalities of liberation. While they differ from each other in complex and critical ways, I argue that when read together, artists and poets who materialize what continues to be dematerialized demand a commitment to the dissolution of normalized colonial forms, practices, and foundations, and allow us to approach the pleasures/pain of other things to come.

Rather than pretending to resolve the contradictions opened by aesthetics (be they formal, political, or otherwise) the work imagined by these artists and poets compounds their mediums' irresolution. Art and poetry do not work as an alibi, nor as the passive observer (perpetrator) that aestheticizes the structures and frameworks of historical violence to offer false solutions where none can exist; instead, they pressurize even the best representational answers as in need of more inquiry and dissolution. In offering unresolvable questions as part of their practice and in their work, they complicate the relationship between immaterial and material, and deny the transcendent ideology of aesthetics. Aesthetics without glory, without salvation, without cure. Here aesthetics works through reparations for those the world has denied and toward the world in which we can and must live.

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The ambition of this book is to aid in the deracination of the present world order by examining the colonial roots of art, poetry, museums, and archives. As stated by many before me, the liberation of aesthetics will require the liberation of all its dependent and constitutive spaces. In line with the long and ongoing call to abolish the police and prisons, recent arguments have been put forth by activists that, just as the police do not keep people safe, museums do not keep culture safe and therefore must be abolished. I agree and would extend the reach for abolition into the conceptualization and formation of property. I am not alone in rejecting a siloed exceptionalist freedom, a siloed transcendence, a freedom predicated upon the oppression of others. I begin in art because, though it advertises itself as a beautiful, wonderful space removed from the *messiness* of the world, it is in fact a space where this messiness becomes metastasized.[92] I begin in aesthetics to take up the world. I begin in art and poetry because all of the roots must be pulled out—especially and particularly colonial aesthetics.[93]

I am starting small with hopes that other case studies will arise, connecting or countering my arguments, which would, in effect, help it grow. I welcome contestations and criticism of this thesis as a method of growth. I also welcome partnerships and parallel projects from all spectrums, so that we might together grow toward the end.

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NOTES

Prelude. On Motivations

1 For historical analyses of the trajectory and systems of neoliberalism, see Wendy Brown's *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (2015) and *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West* (2019); Melinda Cooper's *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (2019); and Quinn Slobodian's *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (2018).

2 For example, venture capitalist Eli Broad (of the Broad museum, opened in 2015) worked to dismantle the teachers' union in Los Angeles. Peter James Hudson commented on this phenomenon at the Common Field conference in 2017; see Hudson, *Bankers and Empire*.

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1 Websites such as artprice.com, artmarket.com, and liveart.io provide uninterrupted updates on price points and market trends to whoever is interested. Critics such as Gregory Sholette and Chin-tao Wu have devoted their work and practice to interrogating the function of finance within museum and gallery spaces. For an introduction to a list of artists and writers engaged in this critique, see Sholette, *Dark Matter*. Sholette examines the genealogy of artists and scholars who trace and critique finance and capital within their practice.

2 News organizations will often report the sale of an expensive artwork or cover the scandals of auction houses. However, most careful inspections of the art market are aimed at people who are already part of niche circles, and are often disregarded by the larger public.

3 This was not Safer's first review or criticism of contemporary art; a similar piece titled "Yes . . . But Is It Art?" aired on CBS in 1993, which was followed by responses by prominent art critics. See Carol Vogel, "Art World Is Not Amused by Critique," *New York Times*, October 4, 1993.

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4 "Even in Tough Times, Contemporary Art Sells," *60 Minutes*, CBS News, produced by Morley Safer. For a full transcript, see https://www.cbsnews.com/news/even-in-tough-times-contemporary-art-sells/.

5 Jerry Saltz, "Jerry Saltz on Morley Safer's Facile *60 Minutes* Art-World Screed," *New York Magazine*, April 1, 2012, https://www.vulture.com/2012/04/jerry-saltz-on-morley-safer-60-minutes-art-world.html; and Roberta Smith, "Safer Looks at Art but Only Hears the Cash Register," *New York Times*, April 2, 2012, https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/02/morley-safer-launches-a-halfhearted-salvo-in-his-war-on-the-art-world/.

6 Smith, "Safer Looks at Art."

7 "Even in Tough Times, Contemporary Art Sells."

8 I thank Doreen Lee for a conversation that led to clarifying the terms of this trajectory.

9 See Robinson, *Anthropology of Marxism*.

10 For linear historical accounts of art collecting that naturalize empire and capital in the development of the museum space, see Alsop, *Rare Art Traditions*; Pearce, *Interpreting Objects and Collections*; and Muensterberger, *Collecting*.

11 For more on this, see Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

12 Authors in INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, demonstrate how this phenomenon works throughout the nonprofit industrial complex.

13 Armed with this new wealth, the foundation now hosts annual prizes, from the "discovery" award for young poets to the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize for established writers. The legend of this donation goes that Ruth Lilly—heir to Lilly pharmaceutical company—spent her life writing and trying to publish poetry. Though never published, she submitted often to *Poetry*, a magazine established in 1912 in Chicago, with a long history and modest operations budget. And for whatever reason—be it *Poetry*'s polite rejection letter or its stature in US poetry—Lilly decided to write the magazine into her will.

14 See Julia M. Klein, "A Windfall Illuminates the Poetry Field, and Its Fights," *New York Times*, November 12, 2007.

15 I thank the poet Cassandra Gillig for doing pivotal research into the history of Lilly. See Cassandra Gillig, "The Poetry Foundation, Eli Lilly, and the PIC," Out 2 Pasture (blog), February 9, 2021, https://orlandogillig.blogspot.com/2021/02/the-poetry-foundation-eli-lilly-pic.html.

16 Although the Poetry Foundation is the most powerful center for poetry in the United States, due to its endowment from Lilly pharmaceutical profits, which configures into paying more for published poetry and more prize money to emerging poets than any other organization, it turns out that this giving is arguably ungenerous, as it constitutes less than 4.5–5.5 percent of the organization's net asset value, or the precise minimum outlay required

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by the government to maintain its not-for-profit status. Moreover, as documented by tax filings, the majority of its funds are invested back into the market. This phenomenon—the absolute dependence on preexisting property forms, the absolute minimal expenditure on the arts, and the absolute maximum spending on financial services—is routine for museums and literary foundations, and marks the colonial continuum in which the world resides. Thus, rather than deference toward organizations such as the Poetry Foundation for annually gifting the public with 4.5–5.5 percent of its funds, might we suggest anything but gratitude? Nothing they have is theirs. And they are barely giving. See Foundations must meet the "The Five Percent Minimum Payout Requirement" within the 12 month fiscal calendar. For the Poetry Foundation's language on its 4.5–5.5 percent giving, see *The Poetry Foundation, Financial Report, December 31, 2019*, https://assets.poetryfoundation.org/uploads/documents/128178-The-Poetry-Foundation-1219-FS-Final.pdf.

17 In thinking about the function of anti-Blackness, I particularly looked to Vargas, *Denial of Antiblackness*; Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*; and Kim, *Bitter Fruit*.

18 This endeavor hopes to follow the scholarship of theorists Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd's collection *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Culture*. They distill, "If the tendency of transnational capitalism is to commodify everything and therefore to collapse the cultural into the economic, it is precisely where labor, differentiated rather than 'abstract' is being commodified that the cultural becomes political again. . . . Culture becomes politically important where a cultural formation comes into contraction with an economic or political logic that tries to refunction it for exploitation or domination" (24). The work of materializing abstracted labor, and abstraction writ large, remains my theoretical and political aim.

19 Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 1716, 1736.

20 See Mullen, *Cracks between What We Are and What We Are Supposed to Be*, 210.

21 Jodi Kim's *Settler Garrison* and Iyko Day's *Alien Capital* are indispensable examinations of the enmeshment of racial capitalism, settler colonialism, and cultural production. Their approach to the entanglements of structures and systems has been an important guide for this project.

22 Cahan, *Mounting Frustration*.

23 Peter Monaghan, "Bloodletting over an Anthology," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 20, 2011, https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/pageview/bloodletting-over-an-anthology/29876.

24 Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 60.

25 I thank Carrie Nakamura for this insight.

26 Britain's Tate Museum depended heavily on Joseph Duveen for its collection and financing. For more on Duveen and his life as an art dealer see S. N. Behrman's "The Days of Duveen," *New Yorker*, September 22, 1951;

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and *Duveen: The Story of the Most Spectacular Art Dealer of All Time*. See also Brewer, *American Leonardo*.

27 In his archive, Duveen kept an exhaustive list of established and emerging personal collection museums. See Joseph Duveen Files, 2007.D.1, Box 733, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

28 Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."

29 Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 1972, 129.

30 In *Transit of Empire*, Jodi Byrd delineates how "racialization and colonization should thus be understood as concomitant global systems that secure white dominance through time, property, and notions of self" (xxiii); and Goeman, in *Mark My Words*, compellingly argues, "Though the current liberal state disavows violence, both temporally, in ways that render the former as an unfortunate remnant of a violent past, and spatially, in which unjust spatial practices construct a racial and colonial distribution of property that in turn is normalized in settler cartographic languages, the material reality of these patterns nonetheless remains part of dispossessed peoples' everyday existence" (188). For Native critiques of progress and time, see Carpio, "(Un)disturbing Exhibitions"; Deloria, *God Is Red*; and Simpson's "Consent's Revenge."

31 Kauanui, "A Structure, Not an Event"; see also Ferguson, *Reorder of Things*.

32 "Yasmine knows in her hardest heart / that truth is worked and organized by some, / and she's on the wrong side always." Brand, *Ossuaries*, 53.

33 "A mild narcotic" is Freud's description of art in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 35.

34 "So many dreams were full of prisons, / mine were without relief." Brand, *Ossuaries*, 10.

35 For critiques of the legitimations of property, see Nichols, *Theft Is Property!* For the historicization of debates and definitions of property, see Park, "History Wars and Property Law."

36 Joe Zadeh writes, "Colonialism was not just a conquest of land, and therefore space, but also a conquest of time. From South Asia to Africa to Oceania, imperialists assaulted alternative forms of timekeeping." Zadeh, "Tyranny of Time." For critical engagements with the construction of how time is understood, see Canales, *The Physicist and the Philosopher*; and Birth, *Objects of Time*.

37 DuBois, *Slaves and Other Objects*, 23.

38 Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 256. I thank Luis Martin-Cabrera for bringing this quote up with me during a meeting at the Getty in 2012, as it helped shape the possibility of this project.

39 Too often, coffee shop galleries, youth-run art spaces, and even the walls in homes and offices reference and mirror the space naturalized by museums and collections. Such mirroring prompts questions yet is not the focus of this chapter or book. Here, I provoke that which has been crimi-

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nalized, outlawed, and almost disappeared because of the hegemonic notions of artistic expression.

40 This concern is amplified by Brian Wallis's thoughts on the work of Carrie Mae Weems, whom I discuss in this book. He writes, "If colonialism and ethnographic exploitation depend on appropriation, one must acknowledge that what is taken can always be taken back"; Wallis, "Black Bodies," 59. I find intensely seductive this notion that objects and symbols can be taken back and forth, and wonder if it is from this place that an abolitionist continuum might take shape.

41 Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 1725.

42 Kenneth Goldsmith, "I Look to Theory Only When I Realize That Somebody Has Dedicated Their Entire Life to a Question I Have Only Fleetingly Considered," Poetry Foundation, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/70209/i-look-to-theory-only-when-i-realize-that-somebody-has-dedicated-their-entire-life-to-a-question-i-have-only-fleetingly-considered.

43 See Alec Wilkinson, "The Poet Who Went Too Far," *New Yorker*, July 9, 2019, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/10/05/something-borrowed-wilkinson.

44 I thank Theo Davis for this provocative question.

45 Joy James's "Womb of Western Theory" lays out how pivotal European philosophers, such as Foucault and Arendt, evaded the lives and intellectual pursuits of thinkers such as Frantz Fanon while fundamentally dependent on them, rendering them "captive maternal." James's scholarship consistently delineates how anti-Black violence becomes architecturally important to liberal democracy. Relatedly, the collection Koshy et al., *Colonial Racial Capitalism*, critically examines the dynamics between settler colonialism and racial capitalism.

46 For the colonial continuum of the financial industries, see Hudson, *Bankers and Empire*.

47 Negri and Hardt, *Multitude*.

48 Barker, "Territory as Analytic," 27.

49 Barker, "Territory as Analytic," 28.

50 I am critically taking up the understanding of "excess" put forth by Georges Bataille in *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, which prioritizes the site of consumption as the formation of society.

51 For a contemporary study of this phenomenon, see Brown, "Logic of Settler Accumulation."

52 Harris writes, "To the conquerors, the land was 'vacant'"; and further, "the notion of vacant land belongs to Locke: the right to acquire property through labor as long as there was some 'good left in common for others' applied to the 'inland vacant places of America' (Locke, *supra* note 46, at 130, 134). Neither of these two premises is tenable." Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 1716, 1727.

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53 For a searing discussion concerning the lives considered property, see Patricia Williams, "On Being the Object of Property," in Williams, *Alchemy of Race and Rights*, 216–38.

54 For Indigenous critiques of Marx and political economy, see Coulthard, "From Wards of the State to Subjects of Recognition?" See also Barker, "Corporation and the Tribe"; and Grande, "Accumulation of the Primitive."

55 For a historical discussion of this, see Rancière, *Philosopher and His Poor*.

56 Robinson, *Black Marxism*.

57 Peter James Hudson traces the ways in which the term *racial capitalism* was deployed earlier by South African scholars. This is to note that the analytic of racial capitalism remains robust and unsettled, its origins and mutations ongoing. See Peter James Hudson, "Racial Capitalism and the Dark Proletariat," *Boston Review*, February 20, 2018, https://www.bostonreview.net/forum_response/peter-james-hudson-racial-capitalism-and/

58 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*.

59 For historical and theoretical discussions of this phenomenon and trajectory, see Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; and Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*.

60 Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*.

61 Gordon, "Disciplining as a Human Science."

62 Nazish Brohi, "Herald Exclusive: In Conversation with Gayatri Spivak," *Herald Exclusive*, December 23, 2014, https://www.dawn.com/news/1152482.

63 There is a body of work that has foregrounded the relationship between race, class, and art institutions. This includes Lawrence Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*; Bridget Cooks's *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum*; Mary Ann Calo's *Distinction & Denial: Race, Nation, and the Critical Construction of the African American Artist, 1920–40*; and artist Martha Rosler's pivotal "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience," which addresses the politics of artistic patronage.

64 This is Claire Bishop's framing of Santiago Sierra; see Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 79. I also discuss this framing in chapter 6.

65 See El-Tayeb, *European Others*.

66 Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 7.

67 Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 7.

68 Pamela Lee's groundbreaking analysis on the symptomatic relationship between modernism and the space of the militarized laboratory is most instructive in moving towards critical understandings of modernism. See Lee, *Think Tank Aesthetics*.

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69 For a full accounting of the liberal history between the categories of human and freedom as constructed against the non-human and enslavement, see Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*.

70 See Mullen, *Cracks Between What We Are and What We Are Supposed to Be*, 210.

71 For some literature examining racial segregation in New York, see Finkleman, *Age of Jim Crow*; Kelley, *Right to Ride*; Massey and Denton, "Dimensions of Residential Segregation"; Gellman and Quigley, *Jim Crow New York*; Bellush and David, *Race and Politics in New York City*; Kantrowitz, *Ethnic and Racial Segregation in the New York Metropolis*; Daily, *Age of Jim Crow*; Sokol, *All Eyes Are Upon Us*; L. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*; and Rothstein, *Color of Law*.

72 See Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*.

73 The Language poets were a group who, beginning in the 1970s, argued militantly against lyricism, in another attempt to create abstracted, whitened spaces for poetry. Members included Lyn Hejinian, Ron Silliman, Bruce Andrews, and others.

74 In "Signs Taken for Signifiers," David Marriott argues an orthodox Marxist analysis to language as production will no longer suffice when examining contemporary finance and poetics. He writes, "The speed of financial speculation, which has transformed the world into a single global day, is fundamentally based on communication and not on production" (340).

75 Quoted in Férez Kuri, *Brion Gysin*, 153.

76 This isn't to suggest that poetry spheres are without funding sources, as the poetry market could consist of the operations of prizes and residencies (witness the Poetry Foundation's inheritance of Lilly pharmaceutical company stock, and how this funding source altered twenty-first-century poetry organizations).

77 For example, and perhaps in a different vein, Tristan Tzara advocated for the "found poem" in the early 1910s.

78 See "Signs Taken for Signifiers," 340.

79 I derive "killjoys" from Ahmed, "Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)."

80 See the arguments made in Spieker, *Big Archive*; and Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969."

81 I draw the concept of the aestheticization of politics from Walter Benjamin's statement, "This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic." Benjamin, "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, 244.

82 For a discussion of the "dark matter" of the art industry, see Sholette, *Dark Matter.*

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83 Portending a 2004 survey for the Turner Prize that named Duchamp's urinal as the most influential work of modern art, in 2001, *The Principles of Scientific Management* was voted as the most influential management book of the twentieth century by the Academy of Management.

84 In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison argues powerfully that race is central, and not tertiary, to literature and literary analysis. In *The Other Side of Terror*, Erica Edwards demonstrates how Black feminist writers pushed back and against the strictures of both US literary formation and US empire.

85 Vora and Atanasoski, *Surrogate Humanity*.

86 Joselit, "NFTs, or The Readymade Reversed," 3.

87 Joselit, "NFTs, or The Readymade Reversed," 4.

88 See Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*.

89 Those analyzed in chapter 6 include Claire Bishop's and Coco Fusco's affirmative scholarship of Sierra's practice.

90 See Brown, *Repeating Body*.

91 Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

92 Grace Kyungwon Hong uses "messiness" in *Ruptures of American Capital* to describe how theorists often treat racial dynamics.

93 Angela Davis articulates that *radical* means "grasping things at the roots." Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, 14.

Chapter 1. Personal Collection and the Museum Form: Racial Capitalism, Settler Colonialism, and the Legacies of the Homestead Strike of 1892

1 Crawford, *Atlas of AI*.

2 Barker, "Territory as Analytic," 28. For translations of the river names, see *The Lenape Talking Dictionary*, https://www.talk-lenape.org/. Settler and missionary accounts also described "Allegheny" as coming from the Lenape language; see Heckewelder and Reichel, "Names Which the Lennie Lennape or Delaware Indians Gave to Rivers, Streams and Localities."

3 Stewart, *Names on the Land*.

4 See *The Lenape Talking Dictionary*.

5 Jeannette Bastian writes about the webpage "Flowers for Homestead" at the website Practical History (accessed in 2008 and no longer available), which displayed a photograph of flowers placed outside Dulwich Picture Gallery in London in July 2000, when a talk on Henry Clay Frick's art collection was scheduled to take place there; the website stated: "How easy it is to buy a place in posterity, so long as you can pay the asking price. The stories of the great cultural benefactors—the Fricks, Carnegies and Tates—rarely ask about the origins of their wealth. . . . But our memories are not for sale. For us Frick will always be remembered for his role in the Homestead strike in 1892 when he employed armed company

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