ARTWASH

BIG OIL AND THE ARTS

MEL EVANS

'FASCINATING' NAOMI KLEIN

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For Rachel Singer, my mum, who taught me change is a process, not an event; and for her mother and grandmother, Mickey and Beth, who, in their purchasing, kept an arm's-length relationship with any company that invested heavily in advertising.

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List of Acronyms

A&B – Arts and Business (lobby group)
ACE – Arts Council England
APOC/AIOC/BP – Anglo-Persian Oil Company, later Anglo- Iranian Oil Company, later British Petroleum, now BP
Ash – Action on Smoking and Health
CAPP – Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
CEMA – Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts
CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility
DCMS – Department of Culture, Media and Sport
GDP – gross domestic product
G.U.L.F. – Global Ultra Luxury Faction
MoMA – Museum of Modern Art (usually, New York)
MOSOP – Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
NGO – non-governmental organisation
NDPB – non-departmental public body
PR – public relations
ppm – parts per million (usually of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere)
SLO – Social Licence to Operate

List of Characters

Leeora Black – founder and Managing Director, Australian Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility

Iwona Blazwick – Director, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2001–

Pierre Bourdieu – cultural theorist

George Brandis – Arts Minister, Australia, 2013–

John Browne – chairperson, Tate Board of Trustees 2007–; CEO of BP 1998–2007

Anna Cutler – Director of Learning, Tate, 2010–

Andrea Fraser – performance artist and theorist

Christopher Frayling – chairperson, Arts Council England, 2005–2009

Viv Golding – senior lecturer in Museum Studies, University of Leicester, UK

Hans Haacke – artist and theorist

Tom Henderson – Director for External Affairs, Shell Plc.

Jude Kelly – Artistic Director, Southbank Centre, London, 2005–

Jennie Lee – Minister for the Arts, UK, 1964–1970

Peter Mather – Honorary Director, Royal Opera House; BP Group Regional Vice President for Europe, 2010–

Emma Mahony – lecturer in Visual Culture, National College of Art and Design, Dublin, Éire

Maria Miller – Culture Secretary, UK, 2012–2014

Grayson Perry – artist

Nicholas Serota – Director, Tate, 1988–

Margaret Thatcher – British prime minister, 1979–1990

Colin Tweedy – Chief Executive, Arts & Business, 1983–2012

John Williams – co-founder, Fishburn Hedges (public relations firm)

Chin-tao Wu – assistant Research Fellow, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan

Acknowledgements

Artwash was born in 2012 when I attended a course at Tate led by curator Michaela Ross titled 'Inside Today's Museum'. I wanted to look into the reasons Tate was reluctant to drop BP from the perspective of each and every department. So I approach oil sponsorship both from the inside and the outside: as a visitor, a Tate member, as an artist and maker of performance interventions, and also as part of a community of objectors that includes staff, members, artists, academics and activists from around the world; and as a curious, critical outsider. I also attended a course led by curator Martine Rouleau at Tate, 'What's in a space?', and thank her for all the thinking that inspired. Many thanks to curator and academic Emma Mahony at the Dublin National College of Art and Design, whose writing and presentations on Liberate Tate have been enormously instructive.

I draw significantly on the work of the academic Chin-tao Wu, who also approaches the art museum from both within and without, as both a researcher and emigrant. A research fellow at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan, Wu's influential text *Privatising Culture* – which has been translated into Turkish, Portuguese and Spanish – started life as a doctoral dissertation at University College London and her research grew out of journeys between galleries in the USA and the UK. Wu describes her investigative interest as founded in an appreciation, then concern, for public access to the arts as she saw it increasingly under threat during her time living in London over two decades from the late 1980s. Therefore, I ground my questions in the very thing that is important to critics and supporters alike: the arts, and the valuable role of the arts in society. From that shared starting point I will consider what is at stake for the arts when oil sponsorship enters the scene. My concerns around oil sponsorship of the arts share a similar duality: I have worked in the arts for over a decade, starting in theatre,

and have been involved in environmental activism for the same period in parallel.

Artwash was nurtured into fruition by the arts, activism and the education organisation Platform, where I spent six years researching, writing and developing creative projects on oil, finance and arts sponsorship. I am forever thankful for the ambitious and dedicated world of Platform: Ben Amunwa, Anna Galkina, Tanya Hawkes, Emma Hughes, Farzana Khan, Sarah Legge, Adam Ma'anit, James Marriott, Mika Minio-Paluello, Greg Muttitt, Mark Roberts, Kevin Smith, Sarah Shoraka and Jane Trowell, among others in various eras; and trustees Rosa Curling, Glen Fendley, Charlie Kronick, Diana Morant and Charlotte Leonard. And thanks to the endlessly creative people of Liberate Tate – both past and present. Both groups embody many of the wonderful qualities I hope to find in all creative collaborations for social change. And, thanks to all the others in the Art Not Oil network: at BP Out of Opera, Reclaim Shakespeare Company, Rising Tide London, Science Unstained, UK Tar Sands Network and Shell Out Sounds. A few people deserve extra special mention: Kevin Smith, who I have had the sheer luxury to collaborate with so closely for a good number of years and hopefully a long time yet, and Hannah Davey and Hayley Newman, whose creative minds I admire and wavelengths I share. And the third organisation that of course bore *Artwash* into being is Pluto: thank you to you all for giving the project life and constructive feedback, especially David Castle, my editor, and Alison Alexanian, Emily Orford, Thérèse Wassily Saba, David Shulman and Robert Webb.

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1
Introduction

In June 2010 the British cultural institution Tate held its annual Summer Party. It was a prestigious affair. Guests were greeted and tickets were inspected at the main entrance. Notables on the guest list included the art historian Wendy Baron, the Duran Duran keyboardist Nick Rhodes, the artist, author and Marquess of Bath Alexander Thynn, and the Conservative party faithfuls Virginia and Peter Bottomley. Smiles and nods from smartly dressed staff directed them up the stairs into Tate Britain's impressive and expansive Duveen Galleries, where silver service staff standing in a perfect 'V' were holding shiny trays and offering each new arrival a flute of champagne.

The party hosted a cast of characters crucial to the story of *Artwash*. Nicholas Serota, Tate Director, and John Browne, ex-CEO of BP and Tate Chair of Trustees, were both holding court. Penelope Curtis was centre stage; as director of Tate Britain she curated the exhibition of Fiona Banner's artwork that formed the party's centrepiece. Nearby: Iwona Blazwick, once Head of Exhibitions and Displays at Tate and now Director of the Whitechapel Gallery in London – the position Serota held before stepping up the cultural professional's ladder – and Anna Cutler, the newly appointed Head of Learning. Around them party goers surveyed Banner's *Harrier and Jaguar*, decommissioned fighter jets suspended through the 100 metre-long gallery, and accepted offers of sausages on sticks.

It was an opportunity to rub shoulders or take 'selfies' with some prominent individuals. Christopher Frayling, a previous director of Arts Council England, and Colin Tweedy, a lobbyist for corporate sponsorship of the arts, each would have made an appearance, as would the artistic directors from other BP- and Shell-sponsored galleries,

such as Jude Kelly of the Southbank Centre and Sandy Nairne of the National Portrait Gallery. There was a light accompaniment of live music heard underneath the buzz of chattering guests.

Tate holds the party annually but on that particular occasion Tate directors elected to use the event to mark 20 years of BP sponsorship of Tate's group of four art galleries spread around the UK. And meanwhile, across the Atlantic Ocean, BP's Gulf of Mexico oil spill that had begun on 20 April 2010 was still splurging from the seabed as party guests gathered at Tate Britain on the River Thames in London. Outside of the party, the world's eyes were fixed on BP's gigantic spill as it spun out of control. It would take 87 days to cork the blowout but on 28 June, the night of Tate's party, no one knew how long the ruinous spill might last.

Unbeknown to the party planners beforehand, a number of unlisted guests were making their way to Tate Britain that evening, and not merely to gatecrash in pursuit of Pimm's and nibbles. Entering the building stage right at 7.15pm: Anna Feigenbaum and me, both part of the freshly formed Liberate Tate. We arrived ready to make a spill performance we created with climate activists Danni Paffard and Beth Whelan – Beth, Anna and I shared intertwined histories experimenting in art and activism, which for Anna was in parallel with a media studies lectureship and authoring the book *Protest Camps*, and for Beth and me this was our chosen path concurrent to our contemporaries' entry on to the Glasgow and London theatre scenes. Anna and I, naming ourselves Toni (Hayward) and Bobbi (Dudley) after the outgoing and incoming BP CEOs – we are also one English and one American performer – entered the party just like the other guests, with heads turning at our large floral vintage bouffant dresses. Invisible to the casual passer-by, we were carrying ten litres of oil-like molasses into the gallery under our skirts, held in easily rippable rubble sacks attached to our hips with remarkably transferable strap-on harnesses. When we reached the entrance to the 'V' of the champagne reception, we spilled our precious cargo across the polished stone floor of the gallery. Across the Atlantic BP was attempting to plug the dire spill, and here at Tate we replicated their messy clean-up mission. We donned the BP ponchos hidden in our handbags and attempted to contain our spill

Figure 1.1: *Toni & Bobbi*, Liberate Tate, June 2010, Tate Britain. Film stills. Video credit: Gavin Grindon, 2010.

with our nail-polished hands and classy party shoes, as we described the mess to our gathered audience as 'tiny in comparison to the size of the whole gallery', echoing Tony Hayward's widely criticised initial defence of the BP disaster. Gavin Grindon, who lectures in art history at the University of Essex and curated Disobedient Objects at the V&A, joined us inside as videographer of our spill performance.

Then, at 7.25pm a group of twelve performers in black clothing, with black veils reminiscent of Catholic widows in mourning covering their faces, poured more oil-like molasses from BP canisters at the main entrance to Tate Britain, as the guests continued to arrive. The spill seeped down the steps and across the entranceway, silent itself but eliciting gasps from the gathered crowd. In the group were Isa Fremeaux and John Jordan from the ever-inspiring art and activism collective the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, who were key to the catalysing of Liberate Tate; artists Hannah Davey, Tim Ratcliffe and Darren Sutton who with several more artists and activists went on to form the core of the Liberate Tate art collective and create many more interventions in the space and the discourse; and other performers who founded new groups such as Shell Out Sounds and the Reclaim Shakespeare Company to call out oil sponsorship in different museums and galleries. The twelve figures upon emptying their barrels turned and calmly walked away, a steady procession of graceful objection. These acts, among others by the group, brought the distant spill into greater physical and discursive proximity to the BP logos at Tate.

Remaining at the scene were over fifty people, who were part of a wider movement opposing oil sponsorship of the arts – Art Not Oil. A group of artists and activists held hand-crafted placards declaring 'Artists are angry' and interpreted the spill performances for guests: in the bunch was Matthew Todd, the editor of *Attitude* magazine, the performance artist Hayley Newman who later joined the hub of Liberate Tate, and the artist and educator Jane Trowell from Platform, an organisation that is a long-standing critic and creative provocateur of oil and its cultures. Platform's press officer Kevin Smith ferried himself between soundbites and interviews, and videographer Tom Costello captured every splash. Many of the artists who had gathered had signed

Figure 1.2: *Licence to Spill*, Liberate Tate, June 2010, Tate Britain. Photo credit: Immo Klink, 2010.

a letter in *The Guardian* that day, calling for an end to BP sponsorship of Tate. Signatories to the letter included the playwright Caryl Churchill and the artists Sonia Boyce, Hans Haacke and Suzanne Lacy.

A chorus of voices critical of alliances between art and oil in the city has since risen up, and oil sponsorship of the arts is becoming increasingly controversial in the UK and around the world. Soon after novelist Margaret Atwood expressed concerns about Shell sponsorship of the Southbank Centre in a presentation of her work revolving around art and climate change, the Southbank Centre's five-year-long sponsorship deal with Shell came to a close. *Artwash* will visit art museums around the world where Big Oil – the multinational power glut of petroleum conglomerates – has made an appearance. Of the galleries in London that accept oil sponsorship, it is Tate with which I am most intimately engaged. The changing exhibitions always bring something new to my attention with clarity and depth. Tate's vast collection of surrealist work is a real treasure and the Beuys exhibits remain a favourite. The buildings themselves are part of the delight: Tate Britain on Millbank, London; Tate Modern at Bankside, London; Tate Liverpool on the docks, Liverpool; and Tate St. Ives, on the sea

shore in Cornwall. Each one is distinct, but the four share a certain spacious, sacred – yet somehow not overly pretentious – core. The first time I visited Tate Britain the BP logos remained at the margins of my perception, but once the corporate message registered, my visiting experience changed. I'm glad of this – I want to be clear about how often visits to Tate incur regular, delicate imprints in my mind of a green and yellow 'helios'. This is the reason I set out to examine here the impact of oil branding in the art museum, with reflection on the various galleries around the world that accept oil sponsorship. I do this from a position connected to Liberate Tate, Platform and Art Not Oil, without wishing to speak for all involved in this movement but rather aiming to reflect some questions back at the picture we are collaboratively painting.

From the Thames, via the Atlantic, to the Gulf, the tides connected the two sites of Tate's party and BP's catastrophic spill. The link was both fluid, via the oceans, and solid, in BP share value, because BP's relationship with Tate was fundamental to the company's survival of the disaster. There is a cynical PR strategy central to every oil sponsorship deal, and the companies themselves do not deny this: sponsorship consultant Wendy Stephenson, who delivered many of BP and Shell's arts sponsorship contracts in London, says that 'they milk the sponsorship for what its worth.'[1] Oil companies' desire to associate themselves with prestigious arts institutions is a survival strategy of an industry that itself feels increasingly precarious, both upstream and downstream. In the theatre of the global public relations and brand management industry, arts sponsorship becomes a way for the global, transnational corporation to present and benefit from a nationally specific brand identity; it offers a pretence of corporate responsibility for the callous profiteer; and becomes an illusionary act of cultural relevance for outmoded industries. Many risks accompany the presence of Big Oil in major cultural institutions across the world: the political influence allowed to the oil lobby, stymying efforts to tackle climate change; the uncomfortable disjuncture between the oil sponsor branded on the entrance of the gallery and the artworks, learning programmes and curatorial intentions of specific exhibitions;

and the restraints put on our imaginations through Big Oil's co-optation of these spaces meant for creativity and reflection.

A visit to a gallery opens doors to moments in history when the present is made. It can bring the ideas of artists – who, walking the earth centuries apart, never would have crossed paths – into conversation with each other. The dialogue between visitor and artwork is varied and open-ended. I want to ask, where does Big Oil fit into that conversation? While a visitor to the Turner Prize final selection in 2012 stood seemingly engrossed in Paul Noble's *Homeland*, their mind might also have been filled with Spartacus Chetwynd, and those other things they saw: the map of the gallery, the names, the phrase 'sponsored by BP'. If the sign had no impact whatsoever, it simply wouldn't be worth putting it up: the fact of its very existence warrants critical discussion over the impact of those few words, 'sponsored by BP', 'supported by Shell', 'in association with Chevron'. However discreet, however small, these words have purpose and they have effects. What does the presence of an oil company *do* to the galleries they sponsor? What are the material and aesthetic impacts? How does the curatorial control of the gallery differently extend to staff, artists, visitors, members and corporate sponsors?

In the context of cuts in state funding for the arts, corporate sponsorship looms as an inevitable route – but these debates are riddled with ideological strategies and misleading narratives. This situation should not restrict anyone concerned with ethics and the arts from taking a critical stance on the arguments made by Tate staff and British civil servants under the all-consuming dictum of 'Austerity Britain'. Oil sponsorship is one small, replaceable thread in the multi-coloured cloth of the organisational incomes of large galleries in the UK, North America and Europe. Anyone working in the arts will have had first-hand experience of shifting funding terrains that require constant renegotiation. Power over these decisions is tangled: members and gallery-goers hold a stake in these spaces, but stand at a remove as audiences, while artists and staff share potential influence and precariousness since they are both essential and vulnerable to the institution. Crucially however, galleries can and do change. Shifts take

place when voices within and around coalesce in harmony to shape the institution as they see fit.

The question of oil sponsorship is sometimes submerged into the many considerations that arise with all corporate arts sponsorships. Although associations with certain companies, such as banks or car manufacturers, bring up related ethical questions, the singular impacts of oil make a narrow focus on oil sponsorship both necessary and urgent. The oil industry is responsible for some of the most devastating social and environmental disasters in history. At every stage of the industrial process from extraction to transport and refinery, the sector has created countless catastrophes. Eleven people died in the explosion on the BP Macondo rig in the Deepwater Horizon field, Gulf of Mexico, and sixteen were injured: these terrible risks are more often associated with joining the armed forces, not extracting oil. Drilling rigs like the Macondo have exploded numerous times, killing the workers on board. In 2012, 154 people died on the Chevron KS Endeavour exploration rig in the Funiwa field, Nigeria. Oil tankers at sea are another source of nightmares for the industry and feature in a heavy catalogue of oil's most apocalyptic moments. The counter climbs to over 9,500 tanker spills to date, depositing thousands upon thousands of oil into the oceans to be washed up along the shores. Oil pipelines, the arteries of the industry, are notorious for causing immediate community disruption and frequent accidental disaster. In Nigeria, up to 2,500 people have been killed in oil pipeline explosions between 1998 and 2008. In 2013 an ExxonMobil pipeline bearing tar sands oil from Canada burst in Arkansas and spewed out 1,000 tonnes worth of its contents. The spill basin included twenty-two homes, and forced residents to evacuate. And potential for accident awaits crude oil upon reaching its destination: refinery explosions around the world have wrought devastating losses of life. However shocking they may be in cause and consequence, these incidents are far too frequent to seem surprising.

Further to catastrophic events, oil extraction produces daily social and ecological harm. Despite its illegality since 1984, some oil companies in Nigeria continue to flare, or burn off, unwanted natural gas as a routine practice of oil extraction by crafting ways to

circumvent the law. Toxic chemicals released during gas flaring have been linked with chronic illnesses including respiratory problems and skin conditions. Shell pledged to phase out the activity by 2008, but has since postponed its commitment year on year, unfazed by condemnation from local and international civil society groups. In 2010 Shell burnt 22 billion cubic metres of gas, which was equivalent to 30 per cent of North Sea gas production in the same period. In Canada, numerous First Nations groups have joined together to oppose tar sands expansion because it denies communities access to indigenous lands and livelihoods; the extractive method has also been linked to increasing cancer rates and decreasing deer populations. Resistance to oil pipelines is global: communities in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Egypt, Ireland, Ghana, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Canada and the USA are all engaged in ongoing campaigns against the pipelines built and proposed to be built in their respective regions because of the disruption to land use and risks associated with living in the proximity of a monstrous and foreboding oil pipeline.

From UN report findings to scrawled peace protest placards, the capacity of oil to exacerbate war and conflict has been noted on every continent. The influence of oil companies in the decision of the US and UK governments to attack Iraq in 2003 is summed up in the minutes from a meeting between BP and the British Foreign Office, which state: 'BP is desperate to get in there and anxious that political deals should not deny them the opportunity.'[2] Smaller oil companies Tullow and Heritage raised capital to drill exploration wells on the border between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the same month that 30,000 people fled North Kivu during two weeks of fighting in the region. With reference to British Foreign Office emails and US diplomatic cables Platform and Corporate Watch accused Heritage Oil, founded by former private mercenary Tony Buckingham, of bearing responsibility for the death of six Congolese civilians near an oil exploration site in 2007,[3] and a Platform source found Heritage had equipped the DRC military with boats and jeeps in 2010.[4] In Nigeria, Shell is alleged 'to have transferred over $159,000 to a group credibly linked to militia violence.'[5]

These examples of the relationship between oil and conflict also demonstrate an uncomfortable pattern of the industry to re-inscribe colonial geographies. BP, Shell, Chevron, ExxonMobil and Total's operations in Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Uganda, Madagascar, D.R.C. and Angola trace the shape of nineteenth-century British, French and Portuguese colonialism. BP originated as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) to drill for oil in Iran in 1909 with the objective of fuelling Royal Navy warships, and in the following decades it formed subsidiaries to drill in Mesopotamia (now Iraq) and Kuwait. When Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh announced the nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry and said that AIOC should 'return its property to the rightful owners',[6] the British government co-ordinated an international boycott of Iranian oil. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill recruited the US president Dwight Eisenhower to deliver a *coup d'état* and remove Mosaddegh from power. Mosaddegh was overthrown in August 1953; he was held in prison for three years and then kept under house arrest until his death in 1967; the state ordered his burial to be held in his home for fear of a public outcry. BP began life intertwined with British military activity; it survived thanks only to British imperialism, and at the start of the twenty-first century it again sought British government intervention to secure access to oil in the Middle East.

After over a century of quests for oil and disputes over access, Big Oil companies have begun to escalate environmental risk-taking, since the remaining or available sources of oil are more remote and increasingly difficult to seize. Oil rigs that once populated shorelines creep further out to sea into deeper waters that bring an unknowable host of new safety challenges. Drilling methods compete with millennia-old geologies to crack oil and gas shale rock in vast swathes of land and below the seabed, as part of a highly controversial drilling process known as hydraulic fracturing or fracking. Canadian tar sands are potentially unprofitable when the global oil price dips due to the high cost and increased carbon emissions involved in the production of synthetic crude. The continuation of the practice illustrates another facet of the scramble to procure oil: the devastation of precious landscapes. In Canada tar sands strip mining decimates the ancient

boreal forest to below ground level and leaves the land contaminated with a toxic sludge industrial waste product which is laid to rest in tailing ponds the size of large lakes. Further towards the polar north, companies try their hand at grasping oil reserves deep beneath the icy Arctic waters, nonchalant in the face of the extreme risks of a spill in isolated locations and sub-zero temperatures.

At a time when extreme weather events are increasing and scientists agree that climate change is one of the biggest threats we face, oil companies are not only directly responsible for a significant amount of global carbon emissions – since 1854 almost two-thirds of industrial carbon pollution emitted into the earth's atmosphere can be traced to fossil fuel companies and extractive industries – but certain companies have been exposed as silent funders of climate science denialists. In 2009 *The Guardian* newspaper revealed ExxonMobil had continued support for groups that promote climate science denial despite a public pledge to withdraw funding. In 2010 the Brussels-based NGO Corporate Europe Observatory disclosed BP's admittance that it provided funds to the Institute for Economic Affairs even though the company was fully aware of the organisation's denial of climate science.

The unethical singularity of oil company arts sponsorship reeks of the industry's spills, tailing ponds and contaminated rivers. Yet oil sponsorship is commonly regarded as unchangeable, just as petrol is considered to be a fixed facet of modern life. The perceived immutability of oil is used as evidence that no change can take place. And yet the question of oil is answered daily by British government civil servants writing foreign policy documents for North Africa and the Middle East, by fumbling diplomats in powerful cliques at unwieldy global climate policy summits, by power company executives as they bask in multiplying profits: these are not predestined outcomes, but decisions taken and enacted. Critics of the oil industry regularly meet the objection that anyone who has used oil or its products is in no position to challenge the industrial practices of Big Oil. This support for oil is short-sighted; if there is a power profiting from the infrastructure that makes up – and concurrently risks – our entire lives, we must interrogate it. When the widespread harm of the oil industry is pushed

aside in this way as merely a collateral damage of a necessary act, a war mentality demanding collective amnesia in pursuit of a greater goal dangerously pervades our daily existence.

The tides are hesitating however – aching to ebb. Investment bankers raise eyebrows as many join the chorus warning that oil stocks are approaching their sell-by dates. A societal shift from oil is a broader question, but it is crucially linked to that of sponsorship.

The petrol station scene is a familiar one, in film and in art. The car pulls in and the viewer knows the ritual instantly and intimately, whether the setting is a dusty North American desert or a beating European metropolis. But growing oil consumption in post-industrialised countries is not inevitable. Alternative sources of heat, transport and power both exist and evolve. Despite its mundane regularity, oil is historically peculiar and not essential to human life on earth. Oil dependence is a social standard constructed daily by those who benefit from the vast profits made possible by extreme risk and exploitation of land, homes and habitats. In the global casino that is the international oil industry, arts sponsorships play a vital role in securing access to power and acceptability in the eyes of consuming publics. Through the arts the oil industry embeds itself in cultures, as the creator of our lives, a disguise to mask its shadowy presence as a threat and force of destruction. The ending to the story is as yet untold however, and the script remains open to edit. The use of oil can be questioned, and so too can oil sponsorship of the arts.

Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo* and *This Changes Everything*, succinctly points out in response to the climate challenge, that: 'Humans have changed before and can change again.'[7] Art galleries house a visual history of cultural shifts, turns and re-awakenings. In every difference from one generation and school of thought to the next, the museums suggest change is a core part of what societies are, and that culture itself is a process of change. As cultural shifts take place, the arts play a role in shaping, articulating, understanding and embedding those changes. Galleries and museums are important cultural sites in which we understand our lives and society – and in which we imagine the future.

Art and performance are therefore both the subject and object of *Artwash*. The arts are the location and the method to be examined: the performative manoeuvres of oil companies on site at the art museums are under examination. Associations with high art are sought by oil companies in their mission to perform a role of Corporate Citizen. Therefore to 'artwash' is to perform, to pretend, to disguise. As a verb it resembles several other laundering processes: 'whitewash', to cover up, or 'greenwash', to make polluting appear environmentally friendly. BP are familiar with greenwashing: their advertising campaign for a new millennium, 'BP: Beyond Petroleum', presented the oil company as undergoing a transition to producing renewable energy instead of fossil fuels, despite a minimal investment in renewables that was cut from the company portfolio altogether shortly after the brand revamp. Also in cultural parlance is 'pinkwash', a publicity campaign for governments to appear liberal by way of promoting policies around LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) issues, for example the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition's support for gay marriage during social spending cuts. Like all these various washes, to artwash is to do one thing in order to distract from another.

But it is more than this too. The wash is made possible in the act, the performative moment in which companies take on a thoughtful, refined, cultured persona deigned for an audience of special publics – opinion-formers occupying influential positions in the media and politics. Not only does art cover up the negative attributes, but the company re-performs its brand in a new disguise. Tina Mermiri, previously a researcher with the corporate sponsorship lobby group Arts & Business, coined the term artwash as a caution to indiscreet sponsors, when she said: 'Businesses that simply try to art wash themselves in order to restore trust, will not always succeed.'[8]

Performance is a core part of communications. This rule applies from public relations to protest. To artwash is therefore part public relations and part theatre. Well before Erving Goffman, Shakespeare's *As You Like It* described the aspects of performance in everyday life in Jaques' famous soliloquy:

All the world's a stage
And the men and women merely players.[9]

Stemming from Goffman, Judith Butler and others' analysis of social performance, performance studies looks at human existence in the world as a large-scale piece of theatre. Oil companies' practice of artwashing places its characters on the stages of art museums around the world to play out a persona that can bring material effects. The performance of Corporate Citizen is a necessary act to maintain a guise of social acceptability.

And yet the visual image of oil company logos in gallery spaces jars nonetheless. Imagine any Tate gallery littered with British American Tobacco logos. The picture alerts suspicion. Where oil companies seek to polish brands in the gallery, Big Oil in fact sets up a dialectic between art, environment, ecological destruction and ethics. While sponsorship serves to artwash oil companies, it concurrently evokes negative reactions to the industry. The stage is set with multiple players who shape the drama in opposing directions.

Both inside and outside the international art museum, arts funding is a hot topic. Oil sponsorship arrives in a story already thick with characters and sub-plots that shape how artwash works for the oil industry. Chapter 2, 'Big Oil's artwash epidemic', paints a picture of oil sponsorship around the globe, and considers previous incarnations of debates on ethical funding in the arts by looking at tobacco and arms sponsorship.

Across Europe, corporate sponsorships have been framed as a perfect plug to fill the gap left by government arts spending cuts, despite counting for relatively little of many large organisations' income. Chapter 3, 'Capital and Culture', dissects narratives that present corporate funding as vital in the current economic climate, or acceptable in light of government agreements and galleries' ethical policies.

Oil company spokespeople often claim to be fans of the arts. Their claimed calling to sponsorship is however belied by senior figures in public relations and high-level corporate staff themselves. Despite making appearances at opening nights and private views, comments recorded at annual general meetings and business sector events unsettle the still façade. Chapter 4, 'Discrete logos, big spills', sheds

light on the PR strategy that evolved to manage public perception of the oil company brand, in lieu of actually altering operational standards.

Chapter 5, 'The impact of BP on Tate', uses Tate's mission to increase the public's 'understanding and appreciation of British and contemporary art'[10] as a frame to investigate the impact of oil sponsorships on galleries around the world. Many of the art museums that oil sponsors select are public galleries, which as such hold a special place in the national imagination. The juxtaposition of specific galleries and exhibitions with Big Oil catalyses an uncomfortable tension for audiences, disrupting and inhibiting the real work of the gallery.

Chapter 6, 'Opposition to oil sponsorship', looks at performance protest, critical museology and institutional critique to consider artist strategies to affect change in galleries. Corporate – including oil – cultural sponsorships have previously been subject to artists' scrutiny across the world over several decades. A genealogy of creative disobedience in gallery spaces has cross-fertilised to challenge corporate power and gallery ethics. This global beehive of creative intervention shares some stamps of parallel practices. Where the art has been used in an act of dissembling, performances of public rejection of oil expose the disguise for what it really is. The potential efficacy of these groups gives rise to the unravelling of artwash.

The role of art in society is a hotly contested territory, from debates about censorship to concern around instrumentalism, but the playing out of a corporate agenda within the territory of arts and culture is an important dimension to this debate. The case against oil sponsorship is part of broader resistance to corporate power in public spaces and over public and political life. All the main characters in this story are interested in art, what it is and what it can be. As artists strive to express their ideas, and community arts workers around the world seek to use the arts to enable others to find fulfilment in their lives, the insidious co-optation of the arts by Big Oil looms as an ugly stain on our cultures.

In late 2013 John Keeling's graph of rising carbon dioxide levels in the earth's atmosphere marked the point many had wished it would never reach. Carbon dioxide reached 400 parts per million (ppm). The safe level was back at 350 ppm, and climate scientists warn 400

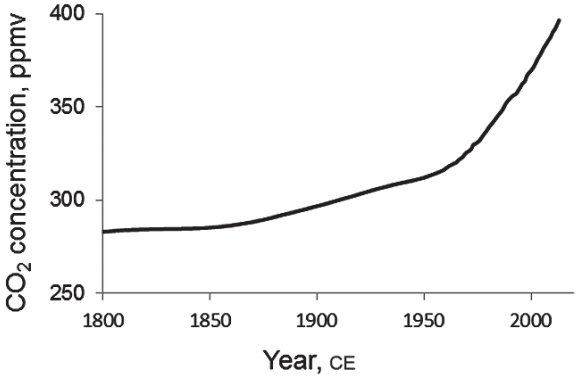

Figure 1.3: *Carbon Dioxide Concentration* ©Simon Lewis, 2014.

Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, measured in parts per million by volume, 1800–2013. Data from 1959 onwards is the Keeling Curve, of direct measurements of atmospheric CO2. Data: annual measurements of CO2 in the atmosphere from 1959, from Mauna Loa, Hawaii, and from 1800 to 1955 from air bubbles trapped in ice, from the Law Dome ice core from East Antarctica (version with seventy-five-year smoothing).

ppm risks irreversible and dangerous changes. The Keeling Curve is an artwork in itself: historical projections followed by painstaking measurements plotted conscientiously over a fifty-year-and-counting duration, each dot signifying a new set of possible challenges. The shape of the curve in its full eight million year mapping is swift and unforgiving, the upward route in recent times looking skyward, questioning the gods. Many galleries profess their concern about global warming and publicly announce their carbon dioxide reduction schema. But do influential actors like Nicholas Serota and Lord John Browne begin to consider the detrimental impact on climate action embodied by oil sponsorship of the arts? If we are to dream, to sketch and to create ways of living that reduce human impact on the planet's ecosystems, we cannot allow our imaginations to be filtered by Big Oil. Galleries' associations with oil companies are not financially inevitable or otherwise beyond challenge. It is a choice that must remain open to question, and therefore to change.

At Tate's Summer Party 2010, at around 7.45pm security staff were ready to conduct Anna and me out of the building. Two burly

men brought over large black screens to surround us and our messy molasses spill: we thanked them for helping with the clean-up and cover-up operation. Upon being calmly ejected from the building, we could see the artists' protest continuing and Tate cleaning staff beginning to reckon with the twelve oil barrels' spill – some of whom were Colombian emigrants and said they understood fully why people might object to BP. The events continued inside, but the morning's newspapers told the spill story first, and pictures from Liberate Tate's performances appeared in print and on websites around the globe.

It was Tate's party, it was BP's – but it was ours too. We were all there at that moment: the naysayers, the stunt-makers, the corporate lackeys, the undecided and the stuck-in-the-mud, the hard-working staff and the ones who call the shots. We've been crossing paths and debating the issues ever since.

2
Big Oil's Artwash Epidemic

Whenever arts sponsorship enters the conversation, someone is sure to pipe up, given a downbeat, with the history of arts patronage and the Borgia dynasty: when monies made by mafia-like factions in the upper echelons of fifteenth-century European society shaped Renaissance artists' endeavours. Although a popular television drama in the USA, Rodrigo Borgia's influence over artists in the fifteenth-century papal fiefdoms that make up modern-day Italy is probably not the best social standard to measure gallery practices by today. Rodrigo, as Pope, was only answerable to himself for his morals; now, five hundred years on, ethics are debated publicly.

Most galleries around the world now inscribe appreciation for donors – from foundations and individuals to corporate sponsors – on the walls of their foyers and entrances. Before marching into line for a ticket, dropping off coats, hitting the shop or nipping for coffee, stop off at these monuments to funders and bask in the display of elite graffiti yelling: I was here. Mark the difference between donors who choose to remain anonymous and those that prefer to be singled out as primary sponsors. Note the surprise candidates, the sharp guttural reactions, and the warm fuzzy feelings in response. These revered tags at the gates of cultural institutions become a seed of hope not to be forgotten in the history books.

The array of names has shifted between different sectors over decades. Various industries have experienced successive urges to seek peace with a critical public. While family endowments and legacies continue, company sponsorships shift and swap with the changing weather of public opinion. But positions on the list are not to be taken for granted by corporations: an offering ultimately invites rejection.

Tobacco and arms manufacturers: ethics and sponsorship

The story of ethical dilemmas around corporate sponsorships has been played out before – with a different cast, but on similar stages. In place of BP and Chevron were Imperial Tobacco and British American Tobacco, antagonists in the tobacco-advertising saga that spanned the second half of the twentieth century. Challenges to oil sponsorship resonate with questions of ethics in the arts raised by people around the world in a bid to end tobacco and arms sponsorship of cultural institutions and events.

Tobacco sponsorship saw the final loss of social licence when, following decades of limitations on advertising, sponsorship of arts and sports events was banned in several countries including the UK, Canada and Australia. With a new millennium came a bounty of legislative ambition. Government passed the UK Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act in 2002, comprehensively banning the advertising of tobacco products and commencing a phase-out of brand promotion through cultural and sports sponsorships by 2005. The European Parliament and Council swiftly followed with a directive in 2003 to regulate tobacco sponsorship across member states. That same year, a Canadian policy passed in 1997 came into effect prohibiting the display of tobacco sponsors' branding at arts or sports events. Australia legislators orchestrated the full eradication of tobacco sponsorships by 1996.

Policy follows the people in moments of cultural change. These laws did not presuppose public anxiety around the association of tobacco with major cultural events, but were shaped by a tidal shift in public opinion that pushed tobacco sponsorship to the margins of social acceptability. A cultural artefact that was once background noise became a screaming anathema over the course of a twenty-year period of intense debate and criticism. When proponents of oil sponsorship claim the arts-oil deals are merely lawful, end of story, they sidestep an essential part of the democratic process that guides social policy change: public opinion.

Cultural institutions often manifest public opinion. The National Portrait Gallery amplified the sea change in public feeling towards

tobacco sponsorships in the UK when in 1992 it cut its ties with Imperial Tobacco. The company had sponsored what was first known as the Imperial Tobacco Award, which it later retitled as the John Player Portrait Award to promote a new brand of cigarettes. As a parting gesture the National Portrait Gallery held an exhibition commemorating the sponsorship entitled 'The Portrait Award 1980–1989: Ten Years of the John Player Portrait Award', marking a certain finality to the relationship. The academic Chin-tao Wu's meticulous documentation of two decades of corporate sponsorship in the USA and the UK, *Privatising Culture*, offers insights into gallery strategy, political influence and corporate involvement in the arts on both sides of the Atlantic. Wu infers the subtext in the director's decision to delegate the word of thanks to the sponsor in the exhibition brochure to an outside critic: 'The director's silence eloquently articulated the fact that the heyday of tobacco arts sponsorship was now over.'[1] BP succeeded Imperial Tobacco as the sponsor of the Portrait Award in 1989.

In other frames of public life, campaign groups nudged the tides to turn. Action on Smoking and Health (Ash) offered government a health warning, that the 2002 Act would save 3,000 lives a year.[2] Ash countered ministers' fears that sports events might struggle to replace tobacco sponsors, arguing that sponsorships would necessarily find substitutes due to the existing market value of the original deals. By the very attractiveness of associations for the tobacco industry, it was certain fellow corporate 'malefactors' would snap up tickets to the sports sponsorship party. When the laws were finally passed, the government gave companies and cultural events alike a five-year notice period – in motion from 1997 – to bring sponsorship arrangements to a close. Ash argued that this allowed sufficient warning for both sponsors and arts or sports organisations to amend their contracts and build relationships with alternative donors. They questioned government proposals to offer state-aid for large sponsorship deals, arguing that the size of certain contracts only served to demonstrate the value of the association to the tobacco company in question, and signalled the appeal of the arrangement for other potential sponsors. In all the countries that took up the ban, another chorus line was waiting in

the wings. Corporate sports sponsorship actually increased following the tobacco bans, with multiple sectors dashing to grab the valuable asset the tobacco industry desperately sought to retain. The higher the price of the ticket, the better the seat at the table of access, influence and brand-promotion. The withdrawal of tobacco sponsorship did not leave arts and sports events wanting.

In 2003 Ash supported an artist who forced British American Tobacco (BAT) out of sponsoring an exhibition at the Old Warehouse, London.[3] As part of an exhibition of new work by contemporary artists in association with the London Open House annual weekend event, titled 'We love to kill what we love' – bearing immediately painful implications when juxtaposed with tobacco sponsorship – Simon Tyszko inserted anti-tobacco messages into his video installation to alert audiences to BAT's presence, following which BAT withdrew its sponsorship. It was a low profile exhibition, enjoying the dirty glamour of a temporary gallery space. BAT's choice to sponsor the event reveals a keen eye for the opportunity of association with young emerging artists, the kind who must surely smoke socially, and who could tie the sponsorship arrangement up in neat smoke rings at the private view. The new branding strategy post-advertising ban – before the introduction of laws around sponsorships – backfired for BAT.

Large sports events became symbolic of the wider issue. What took place on the grand stages of global sporting arenas would shape changes across the board. For Ash, specific companies' influence on sports events hindered the organisers' aims:

> We believe there is not a single Formula One team that could not replace its tobacco sponsorships by 2004. In fact, it would probably benefit the sport by breaking the stranglehold of Marlboro/Ferrari/Schumacher partnership, which has turned the Grand Prix into a tedious spectacle.[4]

Beyond characterising sponsorship as simply replaceable income for sports organisations, Ash called out sponsors' potential to stifle the event atmosphere. Formula One had announced in 1998 that it could replace tobacco sponsorship within four years, bolstering the case for

phasing out the deals, which ultimately ended due to an EU ban in 2007.[5] Nonetheless, Ferrari continues to accept funds from Phillip Morris – Marlboro's parent company – having signed a contract that extended to 2015.

As tobacco sponsorships came to a close, Ferrari began a partnership with Shell. Having started in 1995, the promotion was significantly ramped up in 2004 with the end of tobacco deals and the launch of Shell's 'V-Power' fuel. Like the move from Imperial Tobacco to BP at the National Portrait Gallery, Formula One's seemingly natural step from tobacco to oil sponsorship demonstrates the similar value of such associations for Big Oil as was for tobacco: both are operating at the margins of social acceptability. A person smoking a cigarette in an advert from 1975 now looks dated and uncomfortable, just as billboards advertising car manufacturers that once bore slogans selling high speeds and roaring engines now claim fuel efficiency and ever-improved emissions standards.

The health impacts of tobacco which shaped public perception of the product have been widely documented from the 1960s onwards. Oil occupies a somewhat different role in the daily life of industrialised societies, but due to the harm to human health of car emissions, power pollution and smog, petrol-related sectors have faced policy restrictions in the EU and North America since the 1990s. The ecological damage of oil is significantly worse than tobacco, and Big Oil's associations with human rights abuses further singles out the industry for concern.

Tobacco is not the only sector to have been cast out: arms sponsorship has been deemed an inappropriate arts funding source in the UK by numerous institutions including Tate and the National Gallery. Like tobacco, discussions around ethics and sponsorship have found fault with any allegiance between art and armaments. Again, the logic flows like water now – of course arts institutions would draw the line at associations with industries that profit from death and destruction, and such sectors are unfit for the opportunity to mop up their sullied image in the stately galleries of the capital city.

Tate withdrew from a deal with arms manufacturer United Technologies in 1986 after artists objected to the arrangement.[6] Tate followed up this move with a statement drawing a clear line at arms –

and tobacco – as sources of corporate sponsorship it would not revisit: 'It [Tate] does not accept sponsorship from tobacco companies or companies dealing in armaments.'[7]

By making this statement over fifteen years before tobacco sponsorship was outlawed, Tate played a role in the growing cultural shift away from arms and tobacco sponsorship, influencing public policy rather than adhering to laws only once in effect. The social stigmatisation of arms sponsorship continues. Member-funded civil society organisation Campaign Against Arms Trade, among others, accelerates the ethical journey of institutions that hold arms sponsorship deals, which includes the London Transport Museum and the Imperial War Museum, in a project they call 'Disarming the Gallery'.

Faced with this kind of opposition, the Italian arms manufacturer Finmeccanica withdrew sponsorship from the National Gallery in London. Criticism from the writer Will Self and the artist Peter Kennard sparked the break. Self and Kennard joined other artists calling for an end to the deal because they felt there was a conflict between art and arms:

> How can an institution which celebrates the creative spirit of humanity open its door to those dealing with products designed to kill and destroy?[8]

Kennard's work in particular reflects the sentiment expressed in the artists' objection. Tate holds fifteen of Kennard's artworks, including *Haywain with Cruise Missiles*, an early work from 1980, which exemplifies the artist's style and focus. The serene pastoral landscape of John Constable's *Haywain*, painted in 1820–21, is rudely interrupted by Kennard's positioning of missiles on the delicate horse-drawn cart paused crossing a ford in the centre of the painting. The first *Haywain* revelled in the beauty of a tiny village in East Anglia; in the second, Kennard critiqued the arrival of a US military base in that same location. The dissonance between the military and the agricultural mirrors the disjuncture between arms manufacturers and the National Gallery. As part of the widespread reaction to arms sponsorship at the National Gallery, in BBC 3's *The Revolution Will Be Televised* the actors Heydon

Prowse and Jolyon Rubinstein installed a *Haywain with Cruise Missile* print on one of the gallery's walls.

The three-year deal was terminated in 2012 after running for two years only. The contract contained a cancellation clause making it possible to end the arrangement part-way through the intended time period. This is significant for oil sponsorship: even if a deal is made in the long term, either party can break it off under the ordinary terms regarding return of unspent funds or waiver of obligations in *force majeure* cases – extreme weather events, strikes, protests and so on. According to standard sponsorship contracts, if the sponsor cancels the contract it would usually be expected to maintain payments during the current financial year, conversely if the sponsored organisation drops the deal, further years' funding is forfeited. Finmeccanica brought the arrangement to a premature end weeks before the end of year two of the contract, which may have allowed them to avoid obligations to pay the final annual sum.

Connections between the two industries run deeper than sponsorship contract terms. Oil and arms have a history, from the origins of BP and Shell to current security demands of oil extraction, transport and processing. The escalation of conflict in oil-rich regions is one facet of what is now widely referred to as 'the resource curse'. In another connected industry, oil and chemicals transport company Trafigura faced intense criticism amid revelations of its toxic waste dumping in Côte d'Ivoire – and objection spread to the Trafigura Arts Prize. In 2009 the Cynthia Corbett Gallery in London dropped the sponsor in response to public concern about the company and the competition, which ramped up at the announcement of the 'Alternative Trafigura Arts Prize' in direct opposition to Trafigura sponsorship. Another arts competition faced criticism from entrants in 2011: the TS Eliot Prize was revealed to include prize money from the hedge fund manager Aurum, to which high-profile poets Alice Oswald and John Kinsella objected and duly boycotted the competition – Oswald having commented: 'Poetry should be questioning not condoning such institutions.'[9]

Artists and cultural workers in London and Sydney have questioned sponsorship of the arts by the multinational migrant detention centre contractors Transfield and Serco. In both cases political protest in

reaction to the tightening immigration policies and terrible living conditions inside detention centres drew attention to the companies' attempts to artwash. Criticism of sponsorship and government policy in both countries intensified when the detainees rioted in an offshore Australian detention centre on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea (which Transfield was in the process of taking over, alongside another offshore centre on Nauru Island), in the same month as protests were held at the Home Office in the UK to highlight the treatment of female detainees in the Serco-operated Yarl's Wood detention centre in Bedfordshire, England. Cultural sponsorships were the next port of call for objections: artists boycotted the Sydney Biennale because of Transfield's sponsorship, and activists criticised Serco's sponsorship of the London Transport Museum's Prize for Illustration.

In both cases the discord between creative freedoms and incarceration is as sharp as smashed glass in a picture frame. Liberate Tate's statement of support for the Australian artists' boycott echoes the sentiments resounding around the Finmeccanica deal:

> Thinking of the many refugee artists who have been able to practice and make work only by finding asylum and continuing to work in exile – Lucien Freud, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Max Ernst, Marc Chagall, Anish Kapoor, Mona Hatoum, the list goes on – is it not a disrespect to their memory, story and experience for the Sydney Biennale to accept funds from a sponsor currently engaged in the incarceration of exiled people?[10]

Freedom of movement and freedom of expression are intertwined questions which arts sponsorship by a detention centre operator bludgeons through destructively. The weight of this contradiction was felt by those connected to the Biennale in all respects, from staff, volunteers, artists and curators, and the directors ended the Transfield sponsorship within weeks of the boycott.

As organisations that carefully reflect on politics and social practice, and that share a commitment to the public, evidently arts institutions of all shapes and sizes see a need to draw a line at what constitutes ethical sponsorship. Patrick Steel, part of the Museums Association (MA) in

the UK, recommends a cautious approach to sponsorship: 'Commercial sponsors have an agenda to promote and are answerable to private interests. The first responsibility of museums is to the public.'[11]

The oldest organisation of its kind, the MA was set up in 1889 and remains entirely member-funded. Conversations around sponsorship concerns are part of the water-cooler improvisational script for staff working in the cultural sector. A boundary tape has been pulled around various issues by different organisations at numerous moments in history making the process a familiar one: it can and will happen again.

Oil sponsorship of the arts around the world

Imagine a globe garnished with silky black ribbons, each tying a connection between oil companies' headquarters, the many locations of their drilling apparatus, and the numerous cultural institutions the companies sponsor. A pattern emerges threading regional arts centres with local sites of extraction in some parts, and knitting together blockbuster museums with financial and political hubs on other shores. Big Oil's allegiance with the arts is now a global phenomenon.

In Europe, oil companies sponsor the arts in Italy, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Ireland, the UK and Russia. The French company Total forms allegiances in the persona of its subsidiary the Total Foundation. The trust funds exhibitions at several Parisian museums including the Louvre and supports the work of the Fondation du Patrimoine (Cultural Heritage Foundation), which operates across France. It has a special programme titled 'Sharing the world's cultures' through which Total brands exhibitions of art from the various regions of the world in which it also holds stakes in oil fields. Numerous oil companies follow this trend to collect art or sponsor exhibitions in the places the company extracts oil.

Italian oil company Eni has sponsored exhibitions at the Louvre, as well as other international art museum heavyweights including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and theatre events at the Barbican, London. Eni is associated with a wide range of arts and classical music sponsorship deals in Rome, Milan and Bologna. So far

Eni and Total sponsorship deals have evaded criticism and protest. Russian, Norwegian and Swedish oil companies have not been so lucky. Gazprom (the Russian oil major that gained unwanted notoriety after Russian authorities arrested Greenpeace activists aboard its rig in the Arctic in 2013) sponsors a number of arts and sports events in Russia, China and across Europe. The member-funded global direct action organisation Greenpeace has targeted Gazprom at several of the European Champions League football games at which the brand appears.[12]

The Norwegian oil company Statoil sets up sponsorships that, it says, 'build our brand'; this includes a number of arts and music sponsorships, especially focusing on projects involving young people. Statoil is also an art-buyer, and uses its offices to hold regular exhibitions in the oil capitals of Oslo, London, Calgary, Baku and Houston. Alongside this, the company sponsors exhibitions at the Oslo Gallery for Contemporary Art and, akin to the twenty other arts festivals in Norway that receive oil sponsorship from various companies, Statoil stamps its name on the Festspillene i Nord-Norge (the Festival of North Norway) and the Bergen International Festival.

The latter event drew significant negative attention for the oil company in the national press.[13] The drama of the debate mounted when the opening act at Festspillene i Nord-Norge, Amund Sjølie Sveen, asked the audience to vote on whether Statoil sponsorship should continue.[14] More was to follow: a singer from Norwegian pop band Team Me, Synne Øverland Knudsen, joined the throng and argued:

> Experience shows that it is possible to survive as a festival without oil sponsorship. It is a shame that these arrangements put both volunteers and the public in a moral dilemma. With all we know now, there are nothing but valid reasons to have a discussion about the choices Statoil and other oil companies are making today.[15]

Statoil's six-year deal with rock and pop festival By:Larm ended in the wake of critical statements from the artist group Stopp Oljesponsing av Norsk Kulturliv (Stop Oil Sponsorship of Norwegian Cultural Life).[16] Led by the musician Maja Ratkje and the artist Ragnhild Freng Dale,

the group encourages critical evaluation of any link between oil and the arts, lifting their gaze beyond Statoil. A similarly cold reaction met the Swedish oil company Lundin when it began a sponsorship deal with the Astrup Fearnley Museum in Oslo. The editor of arts magazine Kunstkritikk called for a boycott of the closing reception of the Norway Cultural Council's conference, held at the museum, in defiance of the deal.[17] As perspectives coalesce from myriad artistic fields, the climate around oil sponsorship in Norway has shifted. For a nation so closely aligned historically with the evolution of the oil industry, the rising temperature of public thinking on the issue is a sign of considerable change.

Lundin is not the only neighbouring national oil company to sponsor the arts in Norway. The largest German oil company Wintershall sponsored an exhibition of German artist Emil Nolde at Norway's National Gallery. Lundin and Wintershall each operate Norwegian oil licence blocks in the North Sea, therefore social capital in Norway is important. Wintershall similarly sponsors arts and music events in Russia to solidify its important relationship with Gazprom. In Germany, Wintershall has sponsored the Kulturzelt Kassel for twenty years.

Back on home turf in Sweden criticism also greeted Lundin when the subsidiary Bukowskis art auctioneer struck a deal with the Tensta Konsthall in Stockholm. At a gallery event which was focused on arts funding,[18] dissenting voices expressed concern around human rights abuses associated with Lundin's extraction projects in Sudan.[19] Controversy surrounding the oil company follows swiftly in the wake of their positioning on museum signage.

The technique of sponsoring cultural events in the vicinity of extraction projects at first aims to secure brokerage of deals, but all too often it becomes an attempt to rebuild trust following an accident or opposition. Shell sponsors the folk festivals Féile Iorrais and Geesala in rural Ireland. There has been an unshakable campaign against Shell's Corrib gas pipeline at Rossport in County Mayo for over a decade.[20] The Rossport Five were jailed for ninety-four days in 2005 following activities interfering with Shell's attempts to lay the pipeline through land which the five men own and have lived on, variously, for around fifty years. Protests across Ireland disputed the group's imprisonment,

and eventually Shell withdrew the injunction on which their conviction was based. Since that time, Shell has attempted to set up cultural sponsorships – and in the process has come under further public scrutiny. Academic staff at the Dublin Institute of Technology raised concerns when the Shell Corrib Community Gain Investment Fund offered money for an academic course.[21] The organisers of Fleadh Cheoil, a major Irish music festival in Sligo, elected to return Shell sponsorship money and end a pre-existing deal just days before their 2014 gathering, citing their wish to remain 'an inclusive, community driven and family focused event'.[22]

In Canada local and global companies vie for entry into the tar sands, using sponsorships to build cultural capital as part of their endeavour. The licencing season sees state oil companies from Norway and China launch courtships of civil servants in parallel. Statoil sponsors the Calgary Stampede (a festival celebrating nineteenth-century settler colonial lifestyles), and the Chinese National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) has set up several sponsorship deals. CNOOC supports the University of Alberta Museum, holds the position of title sponsor in Calgary Central Library's planned redevelopment, and sponsored a special exhibition 'The Forbidden City' to bring exhibits that had never left the Beijing Palace Museum (as The Forbidden City was officially renamed in 1925) to the Vancouver Art Gallery.

First Nations groups and environmentalists have built legal and protest campaigns against tar sands extraction and associated industrial projects in Canada, following which the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers commenced a multifaceted public relations campaign that included sponsorships of the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau and the Canada Science and Technology Museum in Ottawa. Politicians, artists and activists alike criticised the move. Elsewhere in Canada the musicians from the Godspeed You! Black Emperor band, after winning the prestigious Polaris Prize, released a statement querying the composition of the award ceremony:

> Asking the Toyota Motor Company to help cover the tab for [this] gala, during a summer when the melting northern ice caps are

live-streaming on the internet, *IS FUCKING INSANE*, and comes across as tone-deaf to the current horrifying malaise.[23]

As a part of the oil economy, the reaction to Toyota amplifies the concurrent criticism of oil sponsorships at Canada's largest museums.

Oil sponsorship of the arts is by definition closely comparable to the cultural associations of other corporations operating in the extractive industries, and the similarities are most notable in oil's sibling fossil fuel: coal. The carbon cousins are jointly responsible for the majority of rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Coal has historically played a fundamental role in the economies of Australia and Brazil. In both countries national companies mingle with global ones in arts deals that see oil, gas, coal and mineral sponsors sitting side by side.

In Brazil, the national oil company Petrobras sponsors a range of arts, music and theatre, while mining company Vale has a close association with photographer Sebastião Salgado. Vale and Petrobras both sponsor the Museu Casa do Pontal in Rio de Janeiro, and their connections to the Museu de Arte Moderna ignited criticism from local artists. The Australian picture is an assemblage of several mining conglomerates. Rio Tinto and Chevron both sponsor Black Swan State Theatre Company. QGC sponsors the Queensland Ballet, and BHP Billiton sponsors the Bangarra Dance Theatre. Oil companies also feature: Chevron sponsors the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, alongside ConocoPhillips and Shell. The front row of the theatres must be frequently populated with corporate staffers competing for recognition.

The photographic endeavours of John Gollings in Australia (2010) and Sebastião Salgado in Brazil (1986) revealed the vulnerability of human workers in the face of their own society's vast devastation of the landscape. Cultural workers, artists and academics in Australia have widely criticised mining sponsors and *Artlink* magazine ran a special edition on the issue. *Mining: Gouging the Country*[24] features Charmaine Green, an Aboriginal artist whose article, 'Breaking my country's heart', illustrates the lamentable harm caused by mining sponsors of Aboriginal arts events. Sponsorship of an Aboriginal Australian art exhibition in Perth, titled 'Good Heart', from Oakajee Port and Rail (OPR) mining consortium purports to demonstrate Aboriginal support

for mining projects, but Green points out that the funding deals are in fact evidence of just how little acceptance of the mines exists. In the negotiating process companies divide communities as they damage the land. With 'Breaking my country's heart', Green explains the deep interconnections between land and culture for her as a Yamaji Aboriginal Australian, and the risk posed by arts sponsorship of Aboriginal artists' work by mining companies:

> One of the strongest cultural values instilled into my family is the importance of 'country' to Yamaji. It is because of this that I understand and value the importance of 'country' to our spiritual, emotional and social wellbeing … A social licence to operate would ensure 'country' was once again stolen, with minimal fuss from traditional owners and no costly delays to the resource sector. There is hypocrisy in this because on the one hand OPR gives artists the opportunity to paint about 'country' and on the other hand they will destroy that same country. This access to temporary monies will never compensate for the ongoing and future destruction of country.[25]

Green's specific analysis resonates with art galleries around the world housing centuries of landscape paintings. The internal contradiction of bearing the name of a mining company – be it coal, oil or minerals – beside a celebration of the careful craft of finding visual languages for sacred and splendid landscapes is unfortunately widespread.

Controversies around cultural sponsorships are not limited to those occurring in regions where the extraction takes place, but also reach the financial centres of the country. Public outcry over mining for coal seam gas in Australia has also ignited criticism of arts sponsorship deals. The art-activist group Generation Alpha created several performance interventions in the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, in protest of the gallery sponsor Santos and that company's use of hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking', a mining process which some scientists say risks water contamination with toxic chemicals.[26]

The USA is a considerably different arts funding environment compared with Canada and most Asian, European and Latin American

countries. Corporate philanthropy by way of private endowments forms the basis of arts funding and sponsorships naming specific companies are much more frequent. This is largely a consequence of the nation having been founded on settler colonial wealth and of a political ideology that valorised individual freedoms over state influence, but it is also a product of a careful process initiated by Standard Oil's owners the Rockefeller family to fund civil society as an attempt to embed the company within the fabric of society and suppress the power of labour unions in the early twentieth century.[27] Oil sponsorship in the USA therefore occurs within different conditions to similar practices in Canada, Australia, Europe and Brazil.

Texan oil wealth supplied Houston with patrons that gave to the arts in the early twentieth century; now Chevron funds the Houston Grand Opera programmes. Shell also sponsors culture in the oil state, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, where Saudi Aramco and ExxonMobil have together sponsored exhibitions. In 2013 ExxonMobil set up a donation-matching programme to raise funds for Houston-area cultural institutions such as the Alley Theatre, the Houston Ballet and the Houston Symphony. In Louisiana, which is not only an important market but also a point of extraction (in offshore deep-water oil licence blocks), cultural sponsorships seek to repair relationships with communities harmed by oil: even before the BP catastrophe in 2010 the region suffered ecological damage to the wetlands caused by the numerous oil industry giants operating in the coastal state. When the Gulf Restoration Network protested against Shell's sponsorship of Jazz Fest in New Orleans by flying a banner reading 'Fix the coast you broke' in 2009, the jazz musician Dr. John spoke out against the oil sponsor – although he later retracted his words following pressure from unnamed sources.[28] In later years, Greenpeace has joined in the creative protests that accompany the festival atmosphere at which Shell's shadow looms.

Meanwhile in the political centre Washington DC, US-based and international oil companies mark their status by sponsoring galleries. As well as sponsoring the Smithsonian in DC, the Shakespeare Theatre and the Washington National Opera,[29] ExxonMobil is working alongside Russia's largest oil company Rosneft (part-owned by the Russian state and partly by BP), who together sponsor the National Gallery of Art –

where Chevron, BP and Shell have all also made deals.[30] In California as in Louisiana, oil sponsorship has not found casual acceptance. When BP announced sponsorship of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), a journalist for the *Los Angeles Times* commented: 'Putting an oil company's name on LACMA's doorway brings an unusually high potential for controversy.'[31]

Similarly in New York, where BP and Eni have sponsored exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, artists and activists have objected to the museum's connections to the oil industry: three members of the artist group The Illuminator were arrested during a protest at the Met's opening of the David H. Koch Plaza, in honour of funders of climate science denial, the Koch brothers.

In the UK, Shell and BP dominate the oil sponsorship of the arts landscape, as the next section will explore. There is some intermingling by BP with their partners in business and patronage Rosneft: together the two closely connected companies sponsored the UK–Russian Year of Culture 2014 at events in the UK. The method here – akin to ExxonMobil's co-promotions with Saudi Aramco and Rosneft – is to offer a display of working together in harmony and secure a venue for opposite staff from both companies to familiarise themselves ready for a switch from competition to collaboration. In the UK, almost every single one of BP and Shell's sponsorship arrangements has received critical attention.

In some countries, these deals appear to be a recent trend, but in others the relationships have been built over the course of twenty or thirty years. During this time, however the social and environmental political landscape has shifted. Local, regional and sometimes international resistance has increasingly greeted oil extraction and transportation projects in all parts of the world, and concurrently public attention in many cases has encompassed the arts organisations in receipt of funds from oil corporations. Any association with oil has started to gain attention and lose acceptability.

If in the 1980s, when some deals began, the conditions mixed by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan felt warm and comfortable for a high profile business partnership, the atmosphere is somewhat altered after a decade of World Trade Organization protests, the surge

of the Occupy movement following the financial crises of 2008 and 2009, and the associated public questioning of multinational corporate activities. As the reaction to oil sponsors in many of the cases mentioned demonstrates, the arts territory for Big Oil may not be as solid a ground as it once appeared. Attitudes and expectations evolve over time, and oil sponsorship will soon find itself to be a relic of a bygone era.

The international oil economy and the BP Ensemble in London

Oil is a truly transcontinental business operation. Hundreds of oil companies operate on land and at sea; the smaller ones – the 'minnows' – explore and test, and then pass over the lucrative fields to their bigger siblings to swing into full production. Enrico Mattei coined the title 'Seven Sisters' in the 1950s to describe the absolute power of the largest international oil companies that dominated ownership of licence blocks and market share of sales at the time. Of the original seven, only four large companies remain influential – Chevron, ExxonMobil, BP and Shell – and now the industry has defined a new line-up, including Saudi Aramco, Gazprom, Petrobras and Petronas. All these companies hold reserves of oil across the globe, and it is this access that secures their share value. Each day a machine of international finance deals, legal arrangements, political lobbying, transportation (from tankers to pipelines), sales, marketing and public relations whirs into action to keep the companies operational and profitable. Platform's patient disentangling of this 'Carbon Web' over a twenty-year period has resulted in numerous publications diligently dissecting this highly advanced game of Risk.[32]

In this global business in which companies have offices and subsidiaries scattered around the globe – for reasons of both gaining proximity to oil fields and making nuanced tax arrangements – several cities are of supreme strategic importance. Currently the business district of Calgary, Canada, is viscous with oil companies' presence, all seeking a stake in the tar sands. Since it opened its doors to oil majors in 1995, Baku, Azerbaijan, has welcomed regular arrivals of oil companies eager to gain access to new fields. Houston, Texas, in the USA is another

centre of commerce for petroleum. Cities close to production have a certain value, but so also do the financial and political centres. London, unlike its financial counterpart in the USA, New York, mixes access to financial, political and cultural power in one place. Whereas in the US oil majors manoeuvre between finance in New York and politics in Washington DC, London offers the full spread of business meetings in one city.

London's strategic importance as a centre of the oil economy may have been bolstered by the discovery of oil in the North Sea in the 1970s, but its position of power in global economies of exploitation stretches back further. The trade in human lives that began in the sixteenth century was started in London and fuelled the city's growth. More than that: profits made in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the exploitation of slave labour in the colonies built the banks and monuments; paved the streets of the city; and created industries, railways and trading centres across the UK. London established itself as a global financial centre in the founding of insurance companies, such as Lloyd's of London, that insured the ships on which people were abducted – the Middle Passage during which an estimated nine million people died. London's political power is similarly connected to old empire: the invasion of the English language, the connections of the 'Commonwealth' – wealth stolen and protected for the few – the legal and political structures that mirror its own by the force of imperial settlement. The arts and culture have a history intertwined with politics and economics. The buildings, collections, content and discourses of art galleries and museums all relate to the colonial empire, whether by theft or by theme.

In *World City* social geographer Doreen Massey considers the specificity of London's cultural and political infrastructure, and reveals the singularities of this global city despite the similarities between rapidly growing and increasingly economically divided cities around the world. A series of post-World War Two governments from Harold Wilson to Margaret Thatcher to Tony Blair have promulgated a neoliberal political agenda in the city that has national and global impacts.[33] For international oil companies the amalgamated access to financial, political and cultural capital is unparalleled. So although BP and Shell are undoubtedly global companies with roots in many

corners of the world's oil economy, the strategic importance of London, and of securing adequate cultural capital in the city, should not be understated. Both companies rely on the political support of successive British governments to assist in securing licences and contracts from Canada to Russia to Iraq. Although Shell, or Royal Dutch Shell to give the company its full name, was 40 per cent British-owned and 60 per cent Dutch-owned from inception in 1907 until the final complete merger in 2005, it has always had headquarters in London as well as in Amsterdam – when it opened in 1963 the Shell Centre was the tallest multi-storeyed building in the city, a title BP would steal four years later. And while BP's immersion in North American finance, markets and oil reserves means it relies heavily on the US political administration, the influence of the British government in this relationship is vital. The specific allure of British cultural institutions – the largest and most internationally influential of which are found in London – to both BP and Shell, is the connections to political, financial and consumer market power that the city provides.

Nationally, neither company has sponsored the arts – except BP's association with Tate as a national group of galleries and its brief sponsorship of the Royal Shakespeare Company, based in Stratford-upon-Avon, but regularly performing in London. The focus on the arts is absolutely on the capital. In the past decade Shell has sponsored the Southbank Centre, the National Theatre, the National Gallery, the Science Museum, the Royal Opera House, the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) and the Natural History Museum. BP briefly sponsored Almeida Theatre, but has held longer attachments to the Science Museum, the National Maritime Museum, Tate, the British Museum, the Royal Opera House and the National Portrait Gallery. The latter four are of especial interest to the analysis of the impact of Big Oil on the arts here due to both their presentation of national identity and the particular way in which spokespeople from these four institutions have bolstered BP.

A press conference was held in late 2011 to announce the renewal of BP sponsorship deals at British Museum, Tate, Royal Opera House and the National Portrait Gallery. It was an unprecedented move. Previous deals had been signed without the sing-song. This was to be a more

ceremonial occasion however: only select journalists were invited to the confidential, embargoed announcement. It was held at the British Museum and invitees arrived for a business breakfast accompanied by the London Sinfonietta. My heart aches that no one in the press team thought to invite Liberate Tate, who might have responded creatively to the spectacle.

The arrangement was exalted by the four institutions, despite many of them having received sums of money from BP for over twenty years. They were presenting a united front: during the previous eighteen months criticism of BP arts sponsorship had gained international media attention, and the corporate sponsorship lobby had rallied supportive voices in the national press to defend the company's association with the arts. Despite accounting for a minimal slice of each of their annual budgets, the deal was made to seem bigger than it really was. In the press release the figure was put at £10 million, however in fact each organisation would only receive around £500,000 per year – much less impressive. The press conference manifested precisely what BP's slim contribution buys the company: support, approval and solidarity.

BP's choice to strike a deal with these four institutions out of the wider group it sponsors was carefully stage-managed. In 2004, BP spent over £136 million developing and rebuilding the brand of its new logo, the 'helios'.[34] Their previous coat of arms logo spoke a little too strongly of old boys' networks and empire, of nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideas of Britain. BP changed its logo in 2000 in preparation for its first centenary celebrations. It switched from a coat of arms branded BP to a green and yellow shape given its own name, 'Helios', after the sun god of ancient Greece. According to the PR department the new logo represented the 'company's aspirations … beyond petroleum',[35] and was followed by the aforementioned advertising campaign under the same banner. But BP is an oil company, not a solar panel manufacturer. The company sought to reinvent itself for a second century, but its business remained the same. The resonances of old boys' clubs and empire in the previous coat of arms persist in its practices, despite the new look. Perhaps it can lay claim to the twentieth century; the twenty-first century, however, is still up for grabs.

The new logo and the expanding arts sponsorship are part of the same programme of rebranding and finding a place in the new millennium. The 'Britishness' of the cultural institutions offers a positive slant on this part of the company's full title. British Petroleum wants to be intertwined with the *British* Museum – similarly last century but secure in the new; aligned with the prestige of the *Royal* Opera House; connected to ideas of identity of the *National* Portrait Gallery; and intimate with the home of British art Tate – originally the *National* Gallery of British Art – and now including Tate *Britain*.

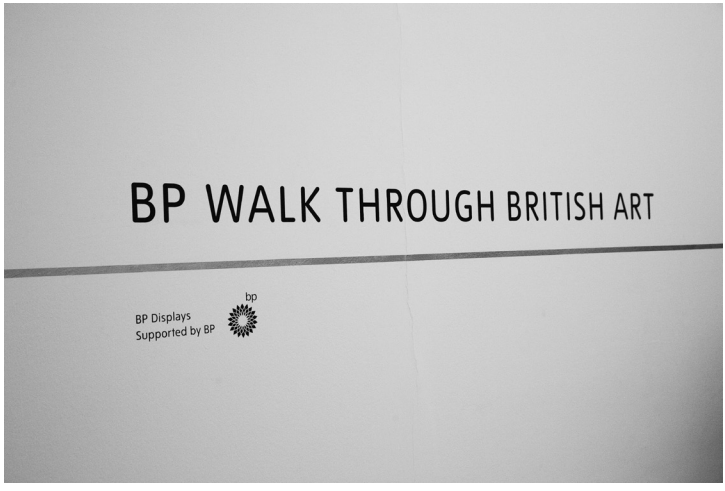

Figure 2.1: 'BP Walk through British Art' – BP sponsorship in Tate Britain. Photo credit: Martin LeSanto-Smith, 2013.

Its intimacy with British art at Tate Britain as the sponsor of the BP Art Displays and BP Walk through British Art is invaluable in this sense – with every regular press release regarding a new exhibition opening, BP's cultural 'Britishness' is further embedded. BP started to sponsor the permanent exhibition as part of its own PR plan for a new millennium at the same time as Tate Gallery at Millbank became Tate Britain in the year 2000, with the opening of Tate Modern. Immediately before that, in 1998 under John Browne's new leadership of the company, BP took an opportunity to influence gallery visitors' perceptions of the sponsor. On Tate's display list of donors the BP logo

appeared neatly beside The Heritage Lottery Fund emblem, and in a special tribute BP described itself:

> BP is one of Britain's leading sponsors of the arts and has supported the work of Tate Gallery since 1990. BP is proud of its close association with this important national collection and has recently extended its sponsorship at the Tate by supporting the creation of the Tate Gallery of British Art at Millbank.[36]

BP continues to chant a similar line in response to all questions on sponsorship to this day. For BP, the 'close association' with British art is a beneficial one.

With the four cultural institutions British Museum, Tate, Royal Opera House and National Portrait Gallery – the BP Ensemble, if you will – BP seeks to achieve a renewed vigour to the British, or brutish, in its name: a clean association for what would otherwise remain a complicated association, to say the least, with imperialism (past). Without these associations, BP is not all that British. Majority-owned by US banks, institutions and individuals, the company that once was nationalised needs to maintain home-grown political support by alternate means. The British government gradually privatised BP between two symbolic events of the era: Margaret Thatcher's inauguration as prime minister in 1979, and BP's purchase of the Rockefeller family's company Standard Oil in 1987. The largest stakeholder is now JPMorgan Chase bank; its offices spread across all continents; and BP has 605 high-secrecy subsidiaries registered in tax havens.[37] BP is global, but like so many transnational corporations its worldwide success is totally dependent on national support. It is useful for the company to retain its historical national identity, and so it seeks to soak up a sense of place in the public consciousness via proximity to the cultural institutions.

Each institution has its own specific benefits of association, but Tate makes an especially interesting case study of the effects of BP sponsorship in motion. Home of 'modern and British art', it brings together the old and the new ideas of Britishness, and presents a politically progressive persona that can soften the edges of BP's threatening corporate demeanour. Furthermore, Tate is hugely

influential on the global modern art scene, and director Nicholas Serota was ranked number one in a top 100 of powerful figures in the art world in 2014. Ethical standards at Tate will be mirrored elsewhere – if oil is safe at Tate, it is secure across continents. When Tate – alongside the Guggenheim, New York – initiated a call for support of Ai Weiwei following his arrest in 2012, art museums round the world took heed and signed up in an unprecedented display of political action from the art world.

Lastly, the former BP CEO Sir John Browne chairs the Tate Board of Trustees. Browne is a key protagonist in this chronicle of art and oil. Before Tate, Browne sat on the British Museum's board from 1995–2005 and, professing a profound love of opera, he regularly attends Royal Opera House performances, where his former close colleague Peter Mather holds court as Honorary Director. Browne undoubtedly maintains connections at all four of the institutions that make up the BP Ensemble. His position of power at Tate during a period of questioning and criticism of oil sponsorship renders an especially clear picture of the inner workings of corporate arts sponsorships.

Where Statoil's sponsorships in Norway and Canada have specific regional goals, BP and Shell's sponsorships in London have global ambitions. These London-based case studies offer examples that reflect the issue more broadly. There are many parallels to be drawn between the patterns at Tate, the BP Ensemble, and the two international oil companies' activities in London with other global examples of oil sponsorship of the arts. Certain chapters in this examination of oil sponsorship of the arts will therefore pay particular attention to these sites and examples in the UK, alongside wider international references, due to the relevance of London to the global oil economy, the tight allegiances within the BP Ensemble, and the influence of Tate on contemporary art museums worldwide. The bigger picture of how oil sponsorship plays out will appear like Russian dolls each with a new verse to the narrative, a series of microcosms contained one within the next. Just as other global deals will terminate, the deal struck in 2011 will at some point lose steam for renewal. The current trend towards oil sponsorship will soon reach the end of the line.

4
Discrete Logos, Big Spills

BP describes itself as 'a major supporter of the arts with a programme that spans over 35 years, during which time millions of people have engaged with BP sponsored activities.'[1] The latter part of the assertion is quietly revealing. The real purpose of sponsorship is the opportunity to gain access to important audiences either during their engagement with cultural activities that are linked to BP or through wider awareness of the associations. Oil companies claim affection for the arts because doing so establishes their position as heroes rather than parasites. But an expression of love is at odds with an act of exploitation.

BP's association with Tate, the Royal Opera House, the British Museum and the National Portrait Gallery fulfils a vital function for the company. Public promotion of the relationship sits within a set of strategies BP undertakes to maintain its own survival, profitability and deeper embeddedness in the minds of its consuming publics. BP, and oil companies like it around the world, needs these arts associations to cover up the very harmful activities that, once connected to specific galleries, undermine the role and purpose of those galleries to serve their publics. The negative image oil companies wish to mask is then placed in the gallery and has its own impacts.

BP has problems. Its business model causes harm to workers, local communities, and the ecologies vulnerable to industrial oil extraction's every risk and mishap. Within the industry climate change receives occasional mention, but otherwise it remains an unspeakable collateral of daily operations. Various practical challenges are mitigated by engineering where possible, but public relations concerns are quick to escalate, and over the past thirty years the global press and latterly social media have tracked and shared every misdemeanour

with dizzying speed, exposés frequently equipped with alarming photographic evidence.

An intangible risk requires a more versatile mitigation. To survive an international onslaught of criticism and anger following a crisis, oil companies must first develop a relationship with the core values, experiences and highest held beliefs of a culture. As the threads of the sail come loose in the storm, the company must have a firm knowledge that the vessel is well anchored. When things go wrong, the company needs to maintain and reaffirm its position in the eyes – and hearts and minds – of its consuming publics. By seeding itself into our homes, sports events, work places, streets, galleries and museums, Big Oil convinces us of its own worthiness and centrality to our ways of life. Despite all the harm it may cause, it is still welcome in our lives. This process is called, in the PR world, a 'social licence to operate'. The social licence is everything to the business: it is fundamental; it is built and repaired daily; and it is a kind of insurance against expected negative impacts and crises of confidence.

The arts are prized within international oil companies' social licence to operate strategies. Cultural institutions offer access to high-level government figures at special events and on guest lists; and the association with the prestige and national pride of society's bedrocks gives a sense of security, and the idea that the company is as fundamental to what is public and shared as the histories and ideas embodied in the art itself. Companies sponsoring the arts freely acknowledge their support is rooted in an operational need and does not imply interest in specific arts or audiences, despite marketing attempts to suggest otherwise. As oil companies are increasingly losing social acceptability, the arts become more important to their survival.

Disaster is fundamental to business

Recent decades in the life of BP have been muddled and fraught with crisis and catastrophe. Accidents, legal challenges and political scandals have arisen on almost every continent. Shell, too, has followed a similar pattern. The list of some key contemporary manifestations of

context of this murky painting of its global activities is obvious. But on top of all this, even if every accident was prevented and all potential involvement in human rights abuses was contained, there is still a fundamental problem inextricable from BP's operational model. With each drop of oil unearthed and burned, the cloud of carbon dioxide wrapping itself around the planet thickens. There is no going back from this. There is only the option to minimise and curtail. In its current mode of production, for BP to pay a dividend to shareholders it must wreak havoc with the climate and holding shares in sixteen wind farms globally – BP's renewables assets in 2014 (discounting dubious biofuels projects) – cannot alter this fundamental aspect of its business model.

A social licence to operate

BP is not the first British-based oil company to face massive international public protests due to the potential human rights and environmental impacts of its operations. Shell's crises in 1995 in relation to the execution of the Ogoni Nine in Nigeria, activists against Shell's operations, and the Greenpeace blockade of the dumping at sea of the Brent Spar oil rig triggered decades of campaigning against the oil industry and informed corporations' public relations (PR) strategies and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes worldwide.

In 1995 Shell was accused of collaborating in the execution of nine community organisers who had been involved in protests against the company, including the internationally celebrated writer Ken Saro-Wiwa. The Ogoni Nine, as the men came to be known, were Baribor Bera, Saturday Dobee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbooko, Barinem Kiobel, John Kpuine, Paul Levera, Felix Nuate and Ken Saro-Wiwa. With Saro-Wiwa as president, they were active in the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). As part of the group, the nine men had mobilised opposition to Shell's operations in the Niger Delta since 1990, organising protests and campaigns that had the support of over half the population of Ogoniland. Ken Saro-Wiwa nurtured national and international solidarity activities through his poignant writing. The Ogoni Nine were hanged on 5 November 1995: the charges

were spurious, the trial named unjust and questions were raised over Shell's awareness of the decision to prosecute the men. After the executions, global public scrutiny on the cause and Shell's operations in Nigeria intensified. Over the following fourteen years family members rallied support in cities around the world from Lagos to London to Liverpool. In New York in 2009 Shell settled out of court with the Saro-Wiwa family in a legal action brought against the company for conspiring with the military government that hanged the activists.[34]

Shell ultimately changed its plans to sink the Brent Spar at sea following Greenpeace's unshakable occupation. In the early 1990s Shell had gained approval from the British government to sink the 14,500 tonne oil storage and tanker loading buoy off the coast of Scotland in the North Sea, but once Greenpeace activists started their occupation the world's media spotlight shone on the Brent Spar's decks. As activists were attacked with water canon, public support for Greenpeace's demands mounted. Although Shell continued to claim its plan to sink the Brent Spar was environmentally sound, the decision was made to take it to shore in Norway to be broken up for scrap metal.

The company faced two incidents that suddenly displayed the underside of its everyday operating practices for the world to see. Shell did not, however, decide to set out stricter operating guidelines to prevent further tragedy, but instead it focused full steam ahead on its public relations recovery plan. John Jennings, then Chair of Shell Transport and Trading, wrote in 1996: 'The events of the past year demonstrated the degree of complexity in the multinational operations of Group companies and the need to gain … licence to operate.'[35]

The idea that companies need a level of social acceptability in countries where their sales are located in order to continue their profitable operations began to be articulated in corporate contexts by Shell. The strategy developed here underpins their current sponsorship of the arts, and informs other oil sponsorship deals including those maintained by BP, and set up more recently by Statoil, Lundin, Total and others.

Jennings' concern was echoed in the following year by Jim Cooney, who extended the phrase to '*social* licence to operate' during his speech at a World Bank meeting in 1997. At the time Cooney was Vice-President

of International Government Affairs for Placer Dome, a gold mining corporation; he has since been involved in CSR programmes worldwide. The use of the phrase 'social licence to operate' had been seeded within the language and culture of the extractive industries. Rooted in Jennings' earlier reference, the idea became influential to PR thinking and practice by those involved in Shell's 1995 fallout and – crucially for the PR professionals – its recovery.

In late 1996 Shell launched what it called the 'Society's changing expectations programme',[36] a year-long piece of research to examine public perceptions of the company that would shape its PR and advertising strategies to come. This process brought together Tom Henderson, Shell's Project Director for External Affairs, whose work involved 'reputation management, corporate identity' and who specialises in looking at 'society's changing expectations of multinational companies', and John Williams, co-founder and chair of corporate PR firm Fishburn Hedges, and leader of the Shell team. Together they moulded the Shell crisis into a PR management framework. Henderson and Williams describe the diversity of the audiences that must be reached to obtain a 'licence to operate':

> Shell had to acknowledge that its stakeholders were now a much wider, more diverse and influential group than before. It had responsibilities that stretched beyond its traditional core of shareholders, customers, business partners and employees. It was this wider group that together granted Shell its 'licence to operate'.[37]

Shell's public image research sought to establish the breadth of possible audiences in a position to influence the success or failure of the company. Shell began to see that the 'licence to operate' was as fundamental to successful operations as any other aspect of the business, and could not be employed or outsourced – it had to be acquired quite differently. Henderson and Williams do not hesitate to emphasise just how important the 'licence to operate' would be to the company, and prescribed for Shell 'a global reputation management programme to "build, maintain and defend Shell's capital"'.[38]

Shell's assessment, led by Henderson in close collaboration with Williams on behalf of Fishburn Hedges, identified seven key audiences and set objectives for the desired responses from each of these groups following the upcoming advertising campaign, including responses such as 'You can be sure of Shell'. They decided that certain audiences held more sway over wider public opinion and that the company must hone its message to these influencers to then secure a licence to operate from a broader public.

These influential audiences are known as 'special publics' and include business people, media executives, civil servants, high-level civil society and public sector officials, target readers of the *Financial Times* and *The Economist* and anyone else in a position to bear weight on major political and economic decisions. This group was isolated for attention, as they continue to be, because if the company can reach special publics, its message will be passed along the line to wider audiences:

> The key target audience should be special publics. It is opinion-formers that grant the licence to operate and often set the tone for how the general public hears about and assesses companies. The goodwill of customer audiences could be disproportionately affected by an adverse reputation among special publics.[39]

The distinction here between customer audiences and special publics is important: special publics are a vehicle to wider social acceptability. Henderson and Williams separated the audiences they wanted to focus on into three groups: commercial interest such as shareholders and investors; public interest (the ubiquitous phrase applied here in reference to the public sphere but not necessarily taking a particular slant on what is good for the public) including lobby groups, NGOs, politicians and the media; and personal interest – staff and possibly families of staff. Clearly two of these groups are more accessible to direct communication from Shell, but the jargonistic 'public interest special public' is necessarily a trickier target. This group is therefore the bull's eye for companies seeking to establish social licence.

Mass advertising was rejected because 'key external audiences needed a greater degree of personal communications before any mass

media were employed. Shell called this a PR-led approach.'[40] As such, the PR team sought to stage a new narrative around Shell, engaging audiences in this alternative story, showing Shell as they wanted people to see the company, rather than simply telling them information about Shell. Their 'report to society' entitled *Profits and Principles* incorporated events, briefings and print advertising. It was a kind of performative advertising: presented as a public opportunity to gain access to a genuine internal debate, Shell performed the question 'Can you seek profit without compromising your principles?' Audiences were presented with a Shell that is honourable, thoughtful and reflective in its business practices. None of these characteristics needed to be verifiable for the PR strategy to work, and indeed many of the same criticisms continued to plague the company over the following decades – but now it knew better how to maintain its social licence to operate despite any controversies.

The 'PR-led approach' saw Shell quickly seek out artistic means. As Henderson and Williams describe, Shell created a:

> Joint writing prize with *The Economist*, the first such joint marketing activity *The Economist* had undertaken. 'The World in 2050 Writing Prize', it has been aimed at opinion-formers across the world, inviting them to submit essays about how the world might develop in the next fifty years and the implications for public policy decisions to be taken today.[41]

Shell was asserting its own relevance and position in future economies through a PR strategy that sought to 'defend Shell's capital'. Like its 'report to society', this project gave Shell space to perform a persona of a responsible corporation with an important role to play in shaping society's outlook and principles. Henderson and Williams congratulate themselves on having attained for Shell a 'licence to communicate' as a means to be granted a licence to operate.

But the crises Shell was involved in remain unresolved or have been repeated in different places at other times. Greenpeace continues to campaign against Shell's environmental impact at sea, calling attention to the company's plans and attempts to drill in the fragile, melting

5
The Impact of BP on Tate: An Unhappy Context for Art

The Turner Prize winner Grayson Perry said of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad: 'The texture of the Olympics is not a happy context for art. It is too corporate and too governmentally organised. Art is such an organic process that you can't really corral it.'[1] Perry's artworks are notoriously unbridled, and it follows that the artist would be sensitive to enclosure. Although he sees a disjuncture between art and corporate interests in the case of the Cultural Olympiad, Perry refrained from making a similar judgement on BP sponsorship at Tate. After the 2010 Tate Summer Party oily splash, he commented, 'I don't think that when people come out of an exhibition, they think "Oh, wow, I'm going to buy BP petrol now."'[2] Neither do I, because advertising usually has a more subtle persuasive process. For Perry the Olympics is a distant territory safe for comment, however Tate is too close to home to criticise. But BP's presence in galleries is also not a 'happy context for art'. His criticism applies to corporate sponsorship of the arts more broadly: the presence of a corporate sponsor confines artistic possibility. Beyond the advertising benefit for the company, oil sponsorship impacts on curating, artists and their artworks, and audience experience.

Tate makes an interesting and important case study to consider this question not only due to its influential position within a global network of modern art museums, but also because Tate's policies, public statements, and progressive persona illustrate the many internal contradictions of Big Oil in the gallery. Tate's Ethics Policy states that

funding will be reconsidered if association with the sponsor might 'detrimentally affect the ability of Tate to fulfil its mission'.

Tate's mission, like that of the other London galleries, is essentially to keep an open door to anyone wishing to look, learn and experience. The British Museum's funding agreement describes the institution as 'a space for the benefit of the general public'.[3] The National Gallery seeks to 'provide access to as much as possible of the collection' and is committed to finding 'imaginative and illuminating ways to nurture interest in the pictures among a wide and diverse public'.[4] The DCMS–Tate Terms of Reference say that the purpose of the gallery is 'to increase the public's understanding and enjoyment of British art from the 16th century to the present day and of international modern and contemporary art.'[5] Offering access to art is an enormous undertaking fulfilled by numerous departments: curating, learning, events, conservation, marketing and fund-raising, among others. As teams seek to achieve the agreed goals, patterns emerge displaying how BP hinders these endeavours.

Curating with BP in the picture

In 2012 Tate took part in an online event called *#AskACurator* on Twitter. Over a two-hour period one afternoon Twitter users could post their questions to three key curators at Tate, among staff from other galleries. A barrage of tweets came in from those concerned about BP's presence at Tate. Helen Little, the only Tate curator to respond to the questions, rejected the proposition that sponsorship was part of her domain, saying (in 140 characters or less): 'Corp sponsorship is important to arts & allows us to do what we do, but my area is C20th Great British art – any Qs on that?' (sic)[6] Little put up the smokescreen: she presented corporate sponsorship as an enabler of Tate's work, when in fact the sponsorship is a tiny percentage of income. She also distanced her role and expertise away from the issue raised. For Little, there was no question to answer about the impact of the BP logos in the gallery spaces where artworks within her specialism of twentieth-century British art are on display.

But the logos are up to something in the gallery. Advertising executives extol the repetition of a small logo, such as a tick or a green mermaid, on the bodies or in the hands of numerous people walking down a street. These small signifiers are powerful beyond their size. The effect is multiplied by their repetition around the gallery and the specific context of the exhibitions through which the company is promoted, such as the *BP Walk Through British Art*. By suggesting that the BP logo is either irrelevant or discrete and therefore acceptable, curators ignore the advertiser's argument that when the logo appears inside the gallery space and at each entrance to an exhibition, it is well placed to register certain associations with the visitor. BP logos impact upon visitors' experiences in the gallery.

The art historian Brian O'Doherty's description of museums as being hermetically sealed, cut off from the outside world, was met with criticism as curatorial styles and thinking moved on. The curator Iwona Blazwick, Head of Exhibitions and Displays at Tate Modern from 1997–2001, and later director of the Whitechapel Gallery, shaped Tate differently to O'Doherty's clinical look and feel. Blazwick writes, 'The exhibition space, be it museum or laboratory, can no longer be understood as neutral, natural or universal, but rather as thoroughly prescribed by the psychodynamics of politics, economics, geography, and subjectivity.'[7] No place is without its own resonances, and the space in which art is displayed plays an important role in how audiences understand the artworks. Blazwick continues, 'Works of art are rarely encountered in isolation. They are experienced in relation to each other and articulated by the architectonics of a building and the unconscious choreography of other people.'[8] Rather than being completely set apart, various aspects of the space impact upon the art and its reception. Blazwick's argument troubles Little's comment dismissing the BP question – so as to suggest the logos have minimal impact on visitor experience – because all of the features of the building and the space are given significance in Blazwick's understanding of the gallery.

Nicholas Serota, Tate director from 1988, has had associations with the gallery since he joined the Young Friends of Tate aged twenty-three. As chair of the group in 1969, Serota staged experiments in the role of art in society by squatting buildings in South London where they

Figure 5.1: BP flag at Tate Britain. Photo credit: Mel Evans, 2014.

held art classes and lectures for young people. The autonomous activity challenged management, and when staff asked that Tate's name be dropped from the project, the group Young Friends of Tate folded. Questions around art and interpretation remained however. In his work and writing on galleries and exhibitions Serota offers a theory of curating that looks for conversations between artworks and the ways curators' choices amplify cross-referencing. He calls this creating 'climatic zones', saying in a 1999 lecture,

> Artists are generally represented by several works presented as clusters, which has the effect of creating overlapping and merging

> zones of influence. As a result unexpected readings and comparisons occur.[9] In my view we need a curator to stimulate readings of the collection and to establish those 'climatic zones'.[10]

Serota aims to generate understanding in connection rather than in isolation, in the space between artworks rather than focusing only within the frame.

Nicholas Serota has worked in curating and leadership in art galleries across the UK including Modern Art Oxford, where National Portrait Gallery director Sandy Nairne worked alongside him as an undergraduate volunteer, and as director of the Whitechapel Gallery in London, where he preceded Iwona Blazwick. Serota and Blazwick are significant characters not only in their power and influence over the feeling in the art community around oil sponsorship, but also in their direct power over the current situation and what follows from here. Where Serota has a history of encouraging cultural sponsorships and his position on BP doesn't stray from his current path, Blazwick is more of an unknown sum – and given her career path so far, it is possible she will follow in Serota's footsteps to the top spot at Tate. The views on curating, which both of these important figures present, raise key concerns about oil branding in the gallery.

Blazwick and Serota's analyses taken together provide an understanding of the role of the curator in relation to the presence of the corporate sponsor. Logos are architectural features, and are also powerful symbolic objects. The BP helios enters the visitor's conscious or subconscious imagination and becomes one thing the artworks 'are experienced in relation to'. Whether located beside a painting, in the title of a gallery set in stone above the entrance arch, engraved in frosted glass walls, or noted by a guide or in audio-description, the physical allusion to the oil company BP is present, and the works of art are experienced in relation to this presence. Visitors hold the BP logo in their awareness as they encounter the artworks, the building and the other people in the gallery.

Furthermore, art audiences usually go to museums geared up to interpret what they see or hear about on the walls in front of them, often expecting that interpretation to be shaped by description panels

or audio guides. In any new space, people analyse the signs and signifiers in their vicinity to understand what is happening around them. Declining to attend to influential factors in any given context or neglecting to unpack meaning from significant elements present is no way for curators to be excused from an ethical responsibility to consider the impact of a sponsor in a gallery. For Tate curators and learning department staff, the questions which Blazwick and Serota raise about context do not go away if they do not engage with them but they are more at risk of their curatorial decisions being limited, or being thought to have been limited by BP, if they dismiss the logos' significances. The curator's role in arranging the space and considering the multiple readings generated by the proximity of elements in 'climatic zones' means that the powerful intervention the logos make in the gallery places BP branding firmly within the territory of curatorial consideration.

In 2012 the British artist Patrick Keiller had a commission at Tate Britain in which he installed a version of his broader project *The Robinson Institute* inside the full glorious length of the Duveen Galleries. It made for a wonderful meander through Keiller's exploration – via the fictional character Robinson, previously evolved through his films *Robinson in Ruins* and *Robinson in Space* – through factual histories and geographies of south and south-west England, using his own and other works in Tate's collection. The stories Keiller weaved together linked sites including the Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment with the history of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company now known as BP.

The Duveen Galleries are directly adjacent to the exhibition at that point titled *A Walk Through the Twentieth Century*, 'supported by BP'. Visitors stepped from being guided by BP in one part of the upper floor at Tate Britain, to being confronted with anti-war art by Peter Kennard and vintage BBC documentaries about oil extraction in Iran. The list of exhibits in one area of the gallery illustrates the kind of climatic zones created by Keiller as artist-curator:

> British Council, *Potential War Areas*, 1942 (English version), 1945 (Arabic version). Oilfields and pipelines marked in red.
> British Pathé, *Oil for the 20th Century*, 1951.

Patrick Keiller, *Footage from Robinson in Ruins*, 2010. RAF Brize Norton, Harwell, Greenham Common, the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston and the Government Pipeline and Storage System.
Peter Kennard, *Haywain with Cruise Missiles*, 1980.

The proximity of the exhibition to *A Walk through the Twentieth Century* in the adjacent rooms created a climatic zone in which audiences read the BP logos prestigiously branded on the walls in conversation with Keiller's offering of content readable as deliberately antagonistic to BP. There was a subtle challenge to the sponsor. Keiller uncovered the controversies of the company within the building and provided an antidote to broader silence on BP's activities.

Serota's 'climatic zones' are therefore also a space opened up by the very differences between things positioned in proximity to each other: 'unexpected readings' includes conflicting messages. The US art critic Barry Schwabsky describes a curator as,

> Someone who brings things together in a considered way, taking into account everything that is antagonistic as well as compatible in the things brought together … how do things fit together? What is the space created by the differences among them?[11]

The BP logo is officially endorsed at Tate, and this act carries meaning: Tate gives BP a nod of approval as it says to visitors, check out this art. Audiences experience the art at the same time as interpreting Tate's relationship with BP. If the art relates to the oil industry or the environment in any way, a conflicting dynamic arises between artwork, gallery and sponsor.

In the early 2000s Tate consulted with a major audience research analyst to look into what its audiences sought from their encounter with Tate. The report found four motivations for a museum visit: social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual, all of which can give rise to 'cognitive dissonance' if the visitor experiences something antagonistic during their visit. Leon Festinger defined cognitive dissonance in 1957 as 'being psychologically uncomfortable'. He said that, 'in place of

dissonance one can substitute other similar notions such as "hunger", "frustration" or "disequilibrium".[12] Festinger noted that the person experiencing cognitive dissonance would seek to resolve it in some way, by avoidance of the cause or by a change in opinion, but that this process might be troubling or insurmountable. Like the jarring image of British American Tobacco logos in the gallery, for some Tate visitors the presence of BP blocks their intellectual, emotional and spiritual engagement with art at Tate. BP undermines the very things Tate's audiences seek out in their visit.

When Sebastião Salgado's exhibition *Genesis* opened at the Natural History Museum the association with the mining conglomerate Vale was quickly picked up on as an unfitting choice for a collection of work seeking to capture the landscapes and wildlife least affected by industrial expansion. Barely a single review of the photography was made without reference to the harsh contradictions of the mining company. Obviously Salgado, having accepted the sponsorship, was unwilling to criticise Vale's role in the ecological destruction of the kind he meanwhile sought to curtail in his self-identified environmentalist work. The curator of the exhibition and the artist's wife, Lélia Wanick Salgado, has a long-term relationship with Vale – her father worked in the company from its early beginnings. The contrast between content and sponsor almost seemed to cynically provide the exhibit with a highly charged and popular press story angle. For the company, it seemed a careful play to redeem its image following receipt of the notorious 'Public Eye Award' in 2012 for having the 'most contempt for the environment and human rights'[13] in the world. Yet the fact remained for some visitors, that the cognitive dissonance between the artwork and the sponsor aroused a sense of shock and betrayal: the lasting impression became one of hypocrisy rather than the intended call to conservation.

The Natural History Museum had a comparable previous case of mixed messaging when it accepted Shell sponsorship of its Wildlife Photography of the Year exhibition. Shell brought with it associations of harm to wildlife and habitat destruction from Nigeria to the North Sea, while the exhibition itself seeks to celebrate life on earth, with specific commendation of photography that captures wildlife in danger

or under threat of extinction. The sponsorship only lasted three years – for the consecutive awards given in 2006, 2007 and 2008 – before the weight of cognitive dissonance became too much to bear.

The BP name or logo becomes an antagonistic element in a Tate exhibition or institution in a similar way. BP carries associations of ecological damage, loss of life and livelihood, and threatened human rights. Therefore the conflicts between Tate's exhibitions and BP are multiple, enveloping genres such as landscape and single form sculpture, including exhibitions of anything from political art movements to *Energy and Process* (to quote the title of a Tate Modern exhibition) and monographs of artists such as Joseph Beuys. The celebrated works of Joseph Beuys in the Tate collection are testament to Beuys' influence as an ecologist who explored land, resources and labour in his art practice. One of Beuys' famous performances was the planting of *7000 Oaks* as a gesture to reforest the industrial town of Kassel in Germany. Beuys was notoriously specific about how his art should be displayed, and although it is impossible to say since Beuys is sadly deceased, it seems unlikely that a co-founder of the German Green Party would have been comfortable for his art to be exhibited in association with BP. For audiences, situating Beuys' work in a gallery that is sponsored by BP creates an uncomfortable contradiction.

These conditions ask audiences to endure a feeling of cognitive dissonance in order to 'access and appreciate' the art on display. The cognitive dissonance BP causes through its presence at Tate is best exemplified when BP assumes the role of curator in the *BP Walk Through British Art*. BP is in an influential position over the artworks in the gallery and, thereby, the social narrative of the twentieth century and subsequently of Britishness – rather than the curators, artists and visitors solely defining their own understandings of cultural history. The frequency with which BP's name, logo and guidance appear in this gallery crystallises the concern, but the repercussions remain relevant throughout all of Tate's galleries due to the broader association.

Many of the paintings in *BP Walk Through British Art* are given new readings when placed in a BP-guided context. The beautiful landscapes of Thomas Gainsborough, George Stubbs, John Constable or William Holman Hunt painfully resonate with news images of oil

> During my time as an exhibition's curator and organiser at the Hayward Gallery corporate sponsors often had stipulations that impacted on curatorial decisions. In one particular instance a work of art was censored as it was felt that it would reflect negatively on the sponsors' image.[22]

In Canada Imperial Oil and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers were found to have attempted to remove exhibits from a display at the Canada Science and Technology Museum in Ottawa because they felt their industry was presented 'too harshly'.[23] Journalists and activists made critical comments when, at the Science Museum, London, Shell sponsorship of the climate change gallery commenced with a statement from the museum 'neither confirming or denying' that climate change was real, with minimal attention paid to the role of fossil fuel companies in creating the crisis.

At the University of Wyoming Art Museum, British artist Chris Drury's sculpture *Carbon Sink: What Goes Around Comes Around* was taken apart and removed after fossil fuel industry executives complained that the artwork was too critical of the coal industry. Drury's log sculpture in a whirlpool arrangement was intended as a

Figure 5.2: *Carbon Sink: What Goes Around Comes Around*, Chris Drury, University of Wyoming Art Museum. Photo credit: Chris Drury, 2011.

comment on global warming and Wyoming's changing climate. The artist said the sculpture was 'intended to return to nature through decay' and would 'probably be gone in 5–20 years'[24] – had it not been for the coal industry's intervention. The energy department in the university has touted vice-presidents from companies including Marathon Oil and Arch Coal. Marion Loomis, director of the Wyoming Mining Association, voiced industry concerns about the artwork, saying, 'They get millions of dollars in royalties from oil, gas and coal to run the university, and then they put up a monument attacking me, demonising the industry.'[25] Apparently royalties and sponsorship come with a hefty cost in censorship.

As well as direct censorship, sponsors can inhibit curators and learning department staff in myriad informal ways. Jude Kelly, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre, describes how sponsors influence curatorial decisions even without limitations drawn up in contracts or objections in response to specific artworks: 'Edicts from on high are not necessary; it functions more subtly, in an "everyone knows BP won't like this" kind of way.'[26] Kelly made this statement in a frank and honest tête-á-tête at an event hosting top figures from a range of arts organisations. The event centred on the risks of censorship in the arts and was hosted by London-based NGO Index on Censorship. This comment from Kelly carries significant weight. Hugely respected in her field, she has directed over one hundred theatre productions and before Southbank was a theatre director at the West Yorkshire Playhouse and Battersea Arts Centre; she has also consulted on government policy for learning and the arts. The informal, self-censoring system Kelly highlighted is necessarily hard to measure, but is nonetheless evident.

When James Marriott and Jane Trowell of Platform were invited to speak at a London Literature Festival event at the Southbank Centre in 2010, the duty manager attempted to censor the reading materials which the speakers had made available to the audience. The staff looked through the reports, looking for content critical of Shell – who was still a sponsor at the time – which they deemed unacceptable for the Southbank Centre. Senior staff later apologised for the incident, but nonetheless it demonstrates exactly the subtle power Jude Kelly was talking about.

Tate staff effectively brought Liberate Tate into being in January 2010 during preparations for an event titled 'Disobedience Makes History'. John Jordan from The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, the artist invited to give the workshop, was told by Tate staff not to bring up the subject of Tate sponsors. The artist Amber Hickey, who at the time was working in collaboration with Tate learning department on the event, describes the situation:

> As the days of the workshop came closer, one of the curators sent an email stating, 'Ultimately, it is also important to be aware that we cannot host any activism directed against Tate and its sponsors, however we very much welcome and encourage a debate and reflection on the relationship between art and activism.'[27]

These limits to 'debate and reflection' reveal that Jude Kelly's intuition was correct. BP's powerful presence subtly and effectively undermined the original intention behind the workshop programme. In fact, the attempt to close down a questioning of BP brought it closer into the spotlight: Jordan presented the email to the workshop participants and they made the first performance as Liberate Tate on that day.

These incidents of BP, Shell and others either censoring or influencing staff decisions are only a dusting from a hidden story. In fact, it is impossible to know exactly how many curatorial decisions at Tate have been influenced by caution around BP. Any works looking at ecological damage, resistance to oil resource land grabs, or works from parts of the world in which BP has a complicated history will likely arouse hesitancy for a curator or someone in the learning department of a BP-sponsored space. As Jude Kelly put it, however interesting and important the artworks might be, 'everyone knows BP won't like this.'

Numerous high-profile international artists including Ben Jones, Matt Vis and Tony Campbell have made artworks in direct response to the BP Gulf of Mexico disaster. It seems unlikely that a Tate curator would propose the purchase and exhibition of such works, for fear of challenge from the sponsor, and yet such works offer curators a particular opportunity to connect art with the social history of oil. Tate holds ten of Conrad Atkinson's works in its collection, but so far no

6
Opposition to Oil Sponsorship and Interventions in Gallery Spaces

In 1791 the French revolutionary assembly decreed that artworks held in King Louis XVI's and other royal collections were to be publicly owned, and in doing so founded the Louvre art museum in Paris. The Louvre's first governors were the painters Hubert Robert and Jean-Honoré Fragonard, the sculptor Augustin Pajou and architect Charles de Wailly. While the King was held prisoner in the adjacent building, the newly named Museum Central des Arts was opened up to the public in 1793. Artists were given priority over mere mortal members of the public, who were only granted entry at weekends. Decades earlier in 1753 the British Museum had opened to the public, but access was only granted on weekdays and on receipt of a written letter of request, which limited accessibility for the vast majority of people who were both illiterate and worked six days a week. The French revolutionary assembly reclaimed art for public benefit and made more intimate the relationship between art collections and national or international publics. It opened out questions about the public relationship with art that continue to this day in various debates on the role of art in society.

Relationships between art museums, their artists and audiences have adjusted from the first public galleries to the twenty-first century era of online audience–museum interaction on social media. Nowadays, Tate, the British Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the Royal Opera House and other museums ask audiences 'What do you think?' via

response cards and digital technologies inside its galleries, Twitter and Facebook profiles and email newsletters. These invitations could elicit a multitude of responses. Members, artists and activists who object to the implicit propping up of the oil company by the nation's largest cultural institutions are part of a diverse response to a conversation initiated by the cultural institutions themselves.

The Guardian's culture editor Jonathon Jones reacted to objections to BP and Shell arts sponsorship demanding, 'Why not do something useful like join Occupy?'[1] His blasting was misplaced: activities challenging corporate power in gallery spaces interlink with similar tactics in other arenas and the strategies are mutually reinforcing. Performance protest in gallery spaces is part of a diverse range of political arts practice because it seeks to intervene in social and political spheres at the same time as taking a distinct focus on the practices of art galleries. The content of performance interventions, commentary, revelations of internal documents, petitions and membership resignations all make up a burgeoning movement to eject BP and Shell from the arts and culture. Together, these many actions open out a critical new angle on the presence of BP and its implications: these practices represent the potential for change.

Performing protest in gallery spaces – a growing global movement

Artists have stirred up questions around ethics, equality and social justice in direct challenge to galleries and museums for several decades and creative responses to oil sponsorship resonate with a history of varied artistic practice in confrontation with the art museum. The different groups that have made work inside galleries to challenge the institutions – on a range of different issues from sponsorship, the actions of board members in their wider political roles, to the gender split of artists exhibited – have all used and countered the conventions of the gallery space to make it a contested site. These works respond to the space both physically and conceptually, and often take place within a wider context of artistic activity or action within artist communities.

This activity situates itself both inside and outside the museum; both within and outside of understandings of 'art'.

Many artists were critical of the New York Museum of Modern Art's relationship with Governor Nelson Rockefeller during mass protests against the US military attack on Vietnam. The Guerrilla Art Action Group formed in 1969 and made a series of spectacular unsanctioned performances inside gallery spaces that challenged those museums' sponsorship deals and trustees, and urged the art world to join the public call to end the war. On 18 November 1969 the group made a performance intervention in the gallery space in which they strapped bags filled with pig's blood beneath their clothes and spilled them in the gallery. The performance was called *Blood Bath*. Printed papers were thrown up and floated down to the pools of blood on the gallery floor: the group's *Call for the Immediate Resignation of All the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of The Museum of Modern Art* read as follows: 'There is a group of extremely wealthy people who are using art as a form of social acceptability. By accepting soiled donations the museum is destroying the integrity of art.'[2] They went on to point out that 'the Rockefellers own 65% of the Standard Oil Corporation' among other concerns that the donations were 'soiled'.

Just days earlier the group had made a performance at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, to highlight the gallery's refusal of the Art Workers' Coalition's request for galleries to close for Moratorium Day – the day on which two million people protested against the war, believed to be the largest protest in US history at that point in time. Four performers created a circle of red pigment on which they threw a bucket of water. By beginning to clean the area, they encompassed more space in the gallery with their red, bloody mess. In an art action one month earlier the group questioned Xerox sponsorship of the Metropolitan Museum of New York; in another unsanctioned performance at MoMA two months later they positioned parents and children in front of Picasso's *Guernica* in a 'memorial service for dead babies'.[3] The Guerrilla Art Action Group was active until 1976, with an evolving practice of political art that frequently questioned the ethics of museums by intervening in gallery spaces.

Gustav Metzger is famous for his practices of 'auto-destructive' art and his engagement with environmental concerns but most notoriously he called for an Art Strike from 1977–80. Metzger's project was – and continues to be – critical of the commercialisation of art objects by way of being placed in private galleries for sale, and he argues that art will only flourish once it is liberated from auctioneering and private sale. By withholding his labour from the art market during this period, Metzger made an intervention in the industrial institution of art that expressed his concerns about waste and environmental damage.

The Guerrilla Girls are an artist group who have heeded their calling to act as 'the conscience of the art world'.[4] The group got together in 1984 after curator Kynaston McShine commented at the opening of the New York Museum of Modern Art's exhibition that any artist not included in the show should reconsider 'his' career. White male artists were overwhelmingly represented in the works on display. Frida Kahlo, a Guerrilla Girl (the group preserves members' anonymity by using deceased women artists' names, reinforcing those artists' presence in art history), describes their collective action after the exhibition opening:

> We decided to find out how bad it was. After about five minutes of research we found that it was worse than we thought: the most influential galleries and museums exhibited almost no women artists. We decided to embarrass each group by showing their records in public. Those were the first posters we put up in the streets of SoHo in New York.[5]

The Guerrilla Girls' humorous posters have called out sexism and racism at galleries and exhibitions on numerous occasions. Their tactic is to plaster nearby streets or use billboards and banners to embarrass the art museum on their own turf. Their work has also included unsanctioned performances and events inside and outside galleries, as well as feminist gallery-goers guide books and other publications. In 2013, their work was included in *Art Turning Left: How Values Changed Making 1789–2013* at Tate Liverpool, and in a monograph exhibition at the Alhóndiga cultural centre in Bilbao.

The Art Not Oil Coalition first drew public attention to oil-art sponsorship deals in London by holding creative protests outside the National Portrait Gallery on the opening nights of the BP Portrait Award over several years from 2004. Then in 2006, the group took on the Shell-sponsored Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition at the Natural History Museum and poured a black oily substance on several exhibits, without damaging any photographs: the mucky oil dribbled down the striking back-lit images of vivid wildlife scenes. In 2008 the Natural History Museum looked for an alternative sponsor, the conflict between Shell and wildlife photography having been made uncomfortably public by Art Not Oil.

A quick glance around London revealed more galleries with oil sponsorship. The art collective Liberate Tate – the group that I am part of – was formed in 2010 to focus on Tate's relationship with BP by making unsanctioned live art inside Tate spaces. Liberate Tate describe their/our work as 'creative disobedience': artwork that enacts an antagonism and challenges power. Iwona Blazwick wanted the gallery to be a site of 'social and political debate' and the discussion the group catalyses around BP sponsorship at Tate certainly achieves this – although perhaps not quite in the way she intended.

Since the beginnings described in Chapters 1 and 5 – the attempt to censor mention of sponsorship at a Tate workshop, and *Licence to Spill* where oil-like molasses was poured and spilled at the Tate Summer Party – Liberate Tate has made many more performance interventions in Tate spaces. In September 2010 *Sunflower* was performed in Tate Modern. A halo of oil reminiscent of the BP 'helios' logo was painted on the Turbine Hall slope. The circular shape emerged as, one by one, forty figures in black expelled black paint from tubes adorned with the BP logo.

On the first anniversary of the start of the BP Gulf of Mexico disaster, in April 2011, Liberate Tate questioned how to respond to the loss of life incurred by the oil industry. The resulting performance *Human Cost* was a durational piece in the Duveen Galleries at Tate Britain: a male performer (often gendered as female by audiences in the context of Tate's exhibition *Single Form* that was largely made up of female nudes) undressed and lay naked on the gallery floor in the foetal position,

Figure 6.1: *Human Cost*, Liberate Tate, April 2011, Tate Britain. Photo credit: Amy Scaife, 2011.

covered in oil poured by two veiled figures, for 87 minutes – one for every day of the BP spill. The tender, tragic image of the performance has been seen and shared thousands of times globally.

In 2012 Liberate Tate gave Tate *The Gift*: over a hundred people carried and assembled a 16.5 metre wind turbine blade at the foot of the slope of the Tate Modern Turbine Hall. When security staff attempted

Figure 6.2: *The Gift*, Liberate Tate, July 2012, Tate Modern. Photo credit: Martin LeSanto-Smith, 2012.

to block the blade on entry, performers beguiled them with the calm determination that comes with the knowledge that a plan is safe and good and will take as long as it takes, and as the final piece was put into place the crowds gathered at every balcony began to cheer. The blade lay across the full width of the space like a beached whale; a polished bone-like object holding sadness and beauty, lay on its side as an offered alternative to oil: use me instead.

The artworks make distant events feel present in the gallery, intangible data is teased out to become visceral and meaningful, and Tate's own programming is prodded with a questioning critique of BP's associations. On a dark winter's evening in January 2012, following news of BP's plans to drill for oil in the Arctic, four veiled figures carried a 55 kilogram piece of Arctic ice on a palanquin – with lights beaming up through the large, crystal-like block – from the recent site of Occupy at St. Paul's cathedral, across Millennium Bridge and into Tate Modern where it was laid down to melt. During the BP Gulf of Mexico trial in New Orleans, the group streamed a live video feed of performers whispering the trial transcript online over a week at Tate Modern in a performance titled *All Rise*. When Tate Britain held an event to re-open the chronological rehang of its permanent collection in 2013, renamed the *BP Walk Through British Art*, fifty Liberate Tate performers in black veils formed a procession through the gallery spaces, stopping in different choreographed formations in each decade to count, in unison, the increase in *Parts Per Million* of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Days before a tribunal hearing to consider Tate's withholding of BP contractual information, Liberate Tate made *Hidden Figures*, a participatory performance involving hundreds of performers and visitors playing with an eight metre by eight metre square of black cloth, in conversation with Tate's exhibition of Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square*. Performance documentation of *The Gift* is held in Tate's archive, and the group has presented their work at numerous events including the Live Art Development Agency's Trashing Culture and (Re)Fresh, V&A's Disobedient Objects exhibition debates, as well as at the academic conferences Performing Protest and To Hell With Culture.

More groups sprung up to join the campaign led by Art Not Oil, all of which, like Liberate Tate, make performance interventions that

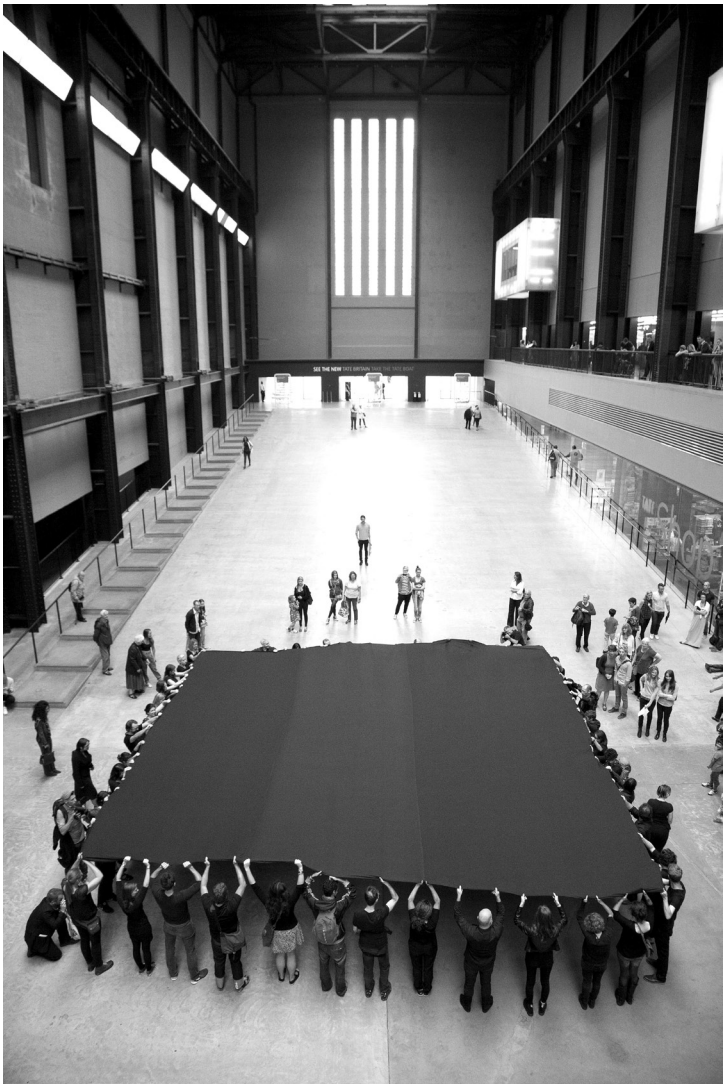

Figure 6.3 (above and opposite): *Hidden Figures*, Liberate Tate, September 2014, Tate Britain. Photo credit: Martin LeSanto-Smith, 2014.

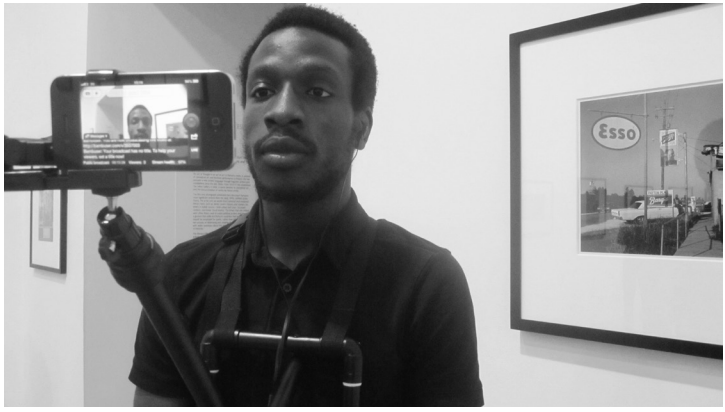

Figure 6.4: *All Rise,* Liberate Tate, April 2013, Tate Modern. Photo credit: Mel Evans, 2013.

resonate with the art form of the cultural institutions they seek to challenge. In 2011 and 2014 dancers performed at screenings of live opera BP Big Screens events in Trafalgar Square, London, to protest against BP sponsorship of the Royal Opera House. Shell Out Sounds, a participatory guerrilla choir, sung their opposition during the orchestra's interval at the Shell Classic International Series concerts at the Southbank Centre until the deal ended in 2013. Their dissenting songs were backed up by a group of artists and writers who had exhibited or presented at the Southbank Centre and wrote a letter in collective criticism of Shell sponsorship – Mark Rylance, Mark Ravenhill, Labi Siffre, Helon Habila and the Guerrilla Girls were among the chorus of Shell's critics. Among various other tricks, Science Unstained entered a Fracking Quiz at the Shell-sponsored Science Museum in London with the playful objective of linking each one of the compere's questions to Shell's involvement in fracking around the world. Art Not Oil continues to challenge the National Portrait Gallery: in June 2014 twenty-five performers spread throughout the gallery poured oil on their faces and tweeted photographs of *#25PortraitsInOil* days before the opening of the twenty-fifth BP Portrait Award and months later the group visited the National Gallery to stage songs and dramas in opposition to Shell sponsorship of the Rembrandt exhibition.

Figure 6.5: *Parts Per Million*, Liberate Tate, December 2013, Tate Britain. Photo credit: Martin LeSanto-Smith, 2013.

Art Not Oil has a theatrical wing: the Reclaim Shakespeare Company formed in 2012 in response to BP sponsorship of the Shakespeare Festival; they took to the stage before the Royal Shakespeare Company's performances began to express their objections to BP sponsorship in iambic pentameter. By intervening on stages – including the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon – before the lights dim to signal the start of the official piece, the performers confront the

institution in its own recognisable theatrical form without distracting the other actors. The group has been well received by audiences who have in the main applauded them – except on the evening when the crowd was made up largely of BP staff. At the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Much Ado About Nothing* in the West End of London, two performers took the roles of BP and the Royal Shakespeare Company and performed the script:

> RSC: You seek my help in being virtuous?
> BP: Nay, I seek your help in *seeming* virtuous.
> For a thousand ducats, thou shall proclaim
> My innocence to these simple people,
> To wash away the memories of my misdeeds,
> Distract them from the destruction of the earth.
> RSC: A thousand ducats: 'tis a fine price! *(aside)*
> BP: By your reputation, I will mine own mend.[6]

The support from actors and audiences was vital to the group's impact: the Royal Shakespeare Company is said to be reconsidering any future BP sponsorship.

With one oil sponsorship deal down, the Reclaim Shakespeare Company switched focus to the British Museum, where the contract has been significantly more long-standing. In April 2014 Norse gods invaded the BP-sponsored Vikings exhibition and later that year hundreds of 'actor-vists' staged a Viking 'flash-horde' inside the Great Court of the museum. Props for the latter performance included a fifteen-metre fabric longship and decorated cardboard Viking shields, some of which were confiscated when police arrested one performer at the entrance. The performer was released without charge, but the police kept the shield: the group remains confident of designing and constructing all the props it needs for future performances.

Creative interventions to end oil sponsorship are going global. Stopp Oljesponsing av Norsk Kulturliv are a group of artists and musicians who set up public debates and activities to challenge Statoil sponsorship of cultural events: in 2013 the group pushed the oil company to step back from one music sponsorship deal. In Brazil in 2011, a group of

Figure 6.6: 'Viking Flash-horde', Reclaim Shakespeare Company, June 2014, British Museum. Photo credit: Hugh Warwick, 2014.

artists spilled oil outside the Museu de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro to protest all oil and mining arts sponsorships, including deals with Vale, Petrobras and Chevron. The large pool of oil lay in wait by the entrance, inviting visitors to walk through the spoils of sponsorship as they entered the gallery. In Canada, when the Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec announced it would accept funds from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers an unlikely objector set up camp outside the Gatineau museum holding a placard reading 'CAPP pollutes snow',[7] which turned out to be the material out of which the figure had been made.

Artistic strategies to intervene in sponsorship arrangements are currently being employed on issues other than oil, too. Boycott the Sydney Biennale, a group of artists whose work was to be exhibited as part of the Biennale that joined together to take a stand against sponsor Transfield, started their campaign by addressing the Biennale directors:

> We appeal to you to work alongside us to send a message to Transfield, and in turn the Australian Government and the public: that we will not accept the mandatory detention of asylum seekers, because it is ethically indefensible and in breach of human rights; and that, as a network of artists, arts workers and a leading cultural organisation, we do not want to be associated with these practices.[8]

At first the directors' response was minimal, so the group stepped up its strategy and a number of artists pulled their work out of the event and rescinded their fees, including Libia Castro, Nicoline van Harskamp, Sara van der Heide, Nathan Gray, Ahmet Ögüt, Ólafur Ólafsson, Agnieszka Polska, Charlie Sofo, and Gabrielle de Vietri. The strategy of building resistance among the exhibited artists led to the collapse of relations between the Biennale and the sponsor, and the directors ended the deal two weeks before the opening. Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, chairperson of both the Biennale and Transfield, immediately handed in his resignation. In their actions the group of artists and cultural workers were able to challenge the Biennale's ethics, the company's operations and government policy.

In 2014 several groups in New York took action to confront gallery ethics. Not An Alternative – following their challenge to Tate around BP – created the *Natural History Museum*, a two-week long event questioning oil sponsorship of science and culture held at Queens Museum. Months earlier across town at the Guggenheim Museum, the Global Ultra Luxury Faction (G.U.L.F.), in collaboration with an offshoot from the Occupy Wall Street movement, Occupy Museums, made an unsanctioned performance intervention to criticise the labour conditions in the construction of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. The groups hung banners and a manifesto made from aluminium foil along the famous inner ring of balconies inside the gallery. They then showered illustrated bank notes resembling US dollars, instead inscribed with the mantras 'Speculative global museum' and 'No sustainable cultural value'.

Of all these many interventions from different decades, cities and subjects, some are more and some less recognisable as art, or equally as protest: some groups are thought by audiences to have been invited, others are assumed to be unsanctioned. The positioning of the confrontation both inside and outside the gallery manifests different potential strategies for change. These artists all sit both inside and outside the museum, and it is this boundary that holds space for the sparks of social debate to catch fire.

Institutional critique and the sponsor

Criticism of gallery sponsors has arrived by invitation as well as unsanctioned intervention. Institutional critique began to be outlined as an artistic practice in the late 1960s through the work of artists including Hans Haacke, and was later redefined by Andrea Fraser and others. The hallmark of this kind of work is a querying of power within the museum: power over content, display, history, politics and meaning-making. Several artists have selected sponsors as the target of their institutional critique in artworks commissioned by the galleries themselves.

Hans Haacke's renowned body of work questions power, challenges galleries and implicates sponsors to examine corporate influence and

control. In a work at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1970 that reinforced the message of the Guerrilla Art Action Group six months earlier, Haacke invited visitors to vote by placing a slip of paper in a transparent perspex voting box, making visible the responses to the question: 'Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina Policy be a reason for your not voting for him in November?'[9] The work was part of the *Information* exhibition curated by Kynaston McShine – who a decade later unwittingly sparked the formation of the Guerrilla Girls. At the time, the Rockefellers sponsored MoMA, and while the Governor Nelson Rockefeller was no longer chair of the board of trustees of MoMA, his brother David Rockefeller now held the position, and their sister-in-law Blanchette Rockefeller would later become president of MoMA from 1972 until 1985. *Moma Poll* occurred during an intense period of protests against the US attack on Vietnam, and was not available for viewing by the curators before the opening of the exhibition. The following morning David Rockefeller demanded Haacke's work be removed from the exhibition. The gallery director John Hightower refused, and David Rockefeller himself claims to have pushed for Hightower's dismissal eighteen months later.[10]

In 1990 Haacke made *Helmsboro Country*, another artwork dissecting the relationship of corporate sponsors with the arts. In this piece, Haacke constructed a two-metre-long cigarette box filled with rolled Bills of Rights marked to look like enormous cigarettes. As well as several arts sponsorships, Phillip Morris contributed financially to Senator Jesse Helms' election campaign, who in 1989 had accused the US state arts funding body the National Endowment for the Arts of 'soaking the taxpayer to fund homosexual pornography.'[11] The cigarette box resembled a Marlboro packet, and was accompanied by the full Helm's quote, the details of Phillip Morris' electoral campaign support, and quotes from Phillip Morris' advisor George Weissman on the value of arts sponsorships for corporations (that it is in their best 'self-interest') – all used to demonstrate the disdain for artistic freedoms that underpinned the corporate sponsor's financial support for the arts. Haacke's work entered the cultural dialogue around tobacco sponsorship of the arts at the same time as, across the Atlantic, Conrad

Atkinson's painting *The Art of Tobacco* (another newspaper poster, this one bearing the words 'PORTRAIT OF LUNG CANCER VICTIM WINS JOHN PLAYER PORTRAIT PRIZE') was exhibited at galleries in London and Edinburgh, months before the Imperial Tobacco sponsorship ended at the National Portrait Gallery. The artistic responses to tobacco sponsorship fed changes in the public mood.

In that same year, 1990, Haacke made an installation in Berlin critical of Daimler-Benz arts sponsorships in Germany and Mercedes sponsorships in New York, on account of Mercedes' manufacture of engines for Nazi military vehicles and Daimler-Benz's use of forced labour in concentration camps, and furthermore the company's supply of vehicles to the South African military and police during apartheid. The installation positioned a rotating Mercedes logo atop a remaining watchtower in the 'death strip'[12] between East and West Germany. The work was commissioned by the municipality and opened several months prior to reunification.

Following the successes of works including Haacke's, the notion of 'institutional critique' as a genre of artistic practice came under criticism itself. The curator Iwona Blazwick describes how the celebration of such works within the institution of art could undermine their potential for effective or genuine critique: 'These deconstructive tendencies have created a genre known as "institutional critique" which, ironically, has itself become the subject of museum shows. In such ways museums absorb their critics.'[13]

The potential for co-optation is not a predetermined result however. The performance artist and theorist Andrea Fraser continues a critical evaluation of the impact of this kind of practice, and says that institutional critique must be understood as the examination of social relations with the objective of affecting change. Fraser's definition of 'critically reflexive site specificity'[14] can be applied to any of the performance interventions made by groups outside of commissioned works, which are necessarily less susceptible to absorption by the institution.

Patrick Keiller's *The Robinson Institute* exhibition at Tate Britain in 2012 could be considered as an example of institutional critique in a number of ways, including the positioning of the exhibits in the space

and the choice of objects for the exhibition, which included books and maps. Keiller created an exhibit that was both carefully ordered and confusing at the same time: rather than leading the audience with clear prioritisation of hundreds of objects in a chronological or narrative structure, visitors were left to stumble across linkages and meanings themselves. The physicality of the exhibition is an institutional critique by refusing to adhere to the convention of hanging artworks on walls – instead Keiller carefully arranged them on metal frames and tables in numbered areas that invited cross-readings between works.

The Robinson Institute could also be read as an institutional critique of BP sponsorship because there was the potential for a critical reading of BP's operations inside a BP sponsored space. However, Keiller's position as a commissioned artist gave him a sanctioned platform. By curating the debate inside the gallery for itself, the institution was able to control the discussion around BP and its practices. Any potential to criticise BP was matched with the risk that the exhibition became a display of Tate's capacity to question BP while simultaneously upholding the company.

The limitations of commissioned critical practice within the gallery give rise to the need for challenge that arrives unsanctioned from outside the gallery programme, in the form of the performance interventions previously described. These activities are a kind of institutional critique, but from a position which is less easily absorbed or co-opted. Fraser extrapolates on the issues resulting from programmed criticism and addresses possible, more effective, alternatives and Anna Cutler, Director of Learning at Tate, links Fraser's argument with the French psychotherapist and philosopher Felix Guattari's principle of ecosophy to conclude that any institution is created by all the people who make themselves part of it – as staff, visitors, members and indeed critics.[15] Cutler asks artists to see themselves as part of the whole and Fraser calls for a reassertion of our agency in reproducing the institution:

> Every time we speak of the 'institution' as other than 'us' we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its conditions. We avoid responsibility for, or action against, the everyday complicities, compromises and censorship – above all, self-censorship – which

are driven by our own interest in the field and the benefits we derive from it.[16]

When the group Boycott the Sydney Biennale invited exhibited artists to speak out, it claimed the institution as its own: the artists work is the body of the biennale, and as such they spoke from a position of 'us' and 'we' when they took the sponsorship deal to task. Each time artists signed letters calling on Tate and the Southbank Centre to drop BP and Shell sponsorship, they asserted their role as part of these institutions' wider social body, and similarly the performance interventions made by Liberate Tate and Reclaim Shakespeare Company have addressed Tate, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the British Museum as critical friends.

Practices of institutional critique were founded in a desire to change the art museum; and performance interventions share this desire to confront and alter the gallery. Both artistic methods and strategies also share similarities with the academic discipline of critical museology. Where some sites within the academy seek to replicate existing structures within the art institution, a growing body of discourse has developed in parallel to critically reshape working practices in art museums. Andrew Dewdney describes critical museology as: 'The effort to change the practices of museums along the path of their "democratisation", or, put another way, towards the realisation of the museum as fully public.'[17]

Criticism of galleries' ethics and sponsors, whether made as commissioned artworks or as unsanctioned performances, fit within this idea of democratisation. Concerns around the power of the sponsor or the gender split of exhibited artists relate to broader political movements for social change. To assert the museum as something which we are part of, as Fraser outlines, is part of making the museum 'fully public'; so, too, is the challenge to separate oil sponsors from the gallery, out of concern that their presence limits both the appreciation of art and the imagining of a culture beyond oil. The practices of institutional critique, critical museology and performing protest all operate from inside and outside the art institution in different ways

and the power of these strategies lies on a threshold, a liminal space both within and without.

Making space for change: the 'deviant art institution' and interstitial distance

Artworks like Haacke's *Moma Poll* and Guerrilla Art Action Group's *Blood Bath*, or Keiller's *The Robinson Institute* and Liberate Tate's *Human Cost*, share political concerns despite arriving in the gallery space differently by invitation or intervention. The commission or lack thereof affects the possible ripples caused within the status quo of the institution in relation to the political issue raised.

The efforts of artists to reason with galleries via formal letters is a strategy widely used to address the art museum from within – as part of a broader community of artists – at the same time as approaching from outside the gallery. Likewise performance interventions take a discussion that is taking place in various social spheres right to the heart of the gallery in question. Between Blazwick and Fraser's two analyses – that the museum 'absorbs its critics' versus 'our role in the creation of its conditions' – there is an opening of potential efficacy: to avoid co-optation, but to act from a position of care and responsibility for the whole, of which the friendly critic is a part. The position of institutional critics 'inside' or 'outside' the museum – and crucially how far in either direction – is central to the effectiveness of their strategy. These artworks' impact as institutional critique, be it by commission or unsanctioned, can be extended or limited by the positive reception of the gallery.

These tactics are both *inside* and *outside* the gallery and can open a new space. Emma Mahony analyses strategies for political change in the art museum and proposes that one technique for what she calls the 'deviant art institution' – a grouping that could encompass collectives such as Liberate Tate or G.U.L.F. – is to challenge the larger institutional body from within, but at an 'interstitial distance' to it. Mahony sees the public art museum as a structure that is susceptible to public political will. She takes the political philosopher Simon Critchley's strategy of

assuming an interstitial distance and applies it to the art institutional landscape. The 'interstice', or crack, becomes a critical action neither wholly reliant on state apparatus, nor entirely secluded from it. Mahony defines Critchley's interstitial distance in the context of art as follows:

> An interstice is an empty space or non-space between structured or established spaces. In effect, it is a space that does not exist. It needs to be created through political articulation, by working within the state to open a space of opposition against the state.[18]

To make an effective challenge to the ethics of the art museum, a confrontation needs to be made from within the gallery. This might mean from within a community of artists who hold a stake in the formation of the institutional politic, from within the public realm that can claim the museum as a public space, or, to be sufficiently confrontational to pose opposition, from physically within the galleries. This sheds light on the space to be opened out by artists wishing to create institutional critique in their work: not too close yet not too far, seeking to open up an 'interstice', or crack, of dissent within the institution. This opening is forged at an 'interstitial distance' between the inside and the outside of the institution.

Sometimes art as intervention might not have the proximity to the subject to give sufficient leverage to create a space within it, at other moments too great an intimacy and acceptance by the gallery might limit efficacy. A tightrope must be walked, or a route in especially carved. In this understanding, artists are critical friends of the larger institution: part of Cutler's Guattarian ecosophic whole, but acting at enough critical distance to make an effective challenge. In this way artworks can open up an interstice of opposition to the status quo of the gallery.

The work of the Guerrilla Girls exemplifies interstitial distance in relation to the art institution. The group surrounds their target gallery with billboard posters to communicate their concerns with visitors as they arrive, and shame the museum to change its practices. The group's proximity to the institutions it targets is further maintained by an increasingly warm reception and reinforcement by the global art

establishment, demonstrated by Tate's exhibition of the group's work in *Art Turning Left*, or Yoko Ono's inclusion of members on a panel during her curatorial programme of *Meltdown* at the Southbank Centre. Blazwick might argue that this reification is a sign of absorption by the institutions the Guerrilla Girls set out to critique, but according to Fraser's proposal that effective institutional critique must be 'critically reflexive', this participation and shaping of artistic standards and practices is precisely what enables their work to create an interstice in which to change the art museum.

Interestingly, when Hans Haacke's artwork *Moma Poll* was rejected by the chair of the MoMA Board of Trustees – and ultimately led to the dismissal of gallery director John Hightower – these consequences, if seen as part of the artwork rather than separate to it, enabled Haacke to open an interstice on the issue of the war and government policy more so than GAAG's art actions months earlier. The board discussed Haacke's work, but there is no evidence that GAAG's challenge was taken seriously. Although an artist group, GAAG positioned itself too far from the institution to effect change. The group's performances were too few and infrequent to open an interstice within the gallery. In parallel, Keiller's exhibition although similarly commissioned like Haacke, was insufficiently confrontational, and too well upheld by the institution to exert much influence. Tate was able to contain dissent around BP's activities without threatening to destabilise the status quo on the issue of BP sponsorship.

Liberate Tate's artwork *The Gift* employed a legal strategy as part of their performance. The 16.5-metre wind turbine blade was formally offered to Tate as a Gift to the Nation under the Museum and Galleries Act 1992. Under this guidance, artists may offer works to any public gallery that then must be considered by the board for inclusion in the collection. Documents obtained by the group show that their activities had previously been discussed at board level, but this legal strategy ensured that the board had to respond more publicly. It was rejected as such by the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of Tate senior curators, but the performance documentation of Liberate Tate's 2012 work *The Gift* is now held in Tate's archive.

To be selected for archiving is often seen as a mixed blessing for artists: it doubly recognises the significance of the work and devalues it in the same moment, by not being placed in the collection proper. It could be seen as an attempt by Tate to 'absorb its critics', yet the archiving also emphasises their impact as an art collective. As such, this piece of work demonstrates how an interstitial distance can be achieved in line with French philosopher Michel de Certeau's thinking in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. By utilising a legal strategy to reach the board of trustees, Liberate Tate was able to 'manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them.'[19]

The archiving strengthens Liberate Tate's position in making an institutional critique from both outside the specific gallery and also from inside the broader institution of 'art' in Fraser's understanding. This position holds power because it locates an interstitial distance from which to challenge and seek to change the institution. Between the risk of speaking from too much distance to be heard, and the danger of being absorbed or appropriated, is a thin line on which effective institutional critique can tread. As described, the origin of the group occurred inside a Tate space as part of a workshop programmed by Tate, and this starting point partly enabled the collective to find an interstitial distance. The performance interventions the group went on to create are made in response to this internal decision and are therefore actions taken within the wider body of Tate. *Liberate* Tate, even in name, performs both from within and without, like *Reclaim* Shakespeare Company, Art *Not* Oil, Shell *Out* Sounds – each are within and without, opening up an interstice. By making institutional critique at an interstitial distance these groups spark off each other and ignite a flame of potential change in the gallery.

Locating this threshold sufficiently within Tate is also evident in the way that Liberate Tate foreshadowed Tate's own focus on live art in the opening of The Tanks in 2012–13. The Tanks' arrival as an alleged home for live art was preceded by Liberate Tate's practice of unexpected artworks in Tate spaces. The theatre-maker Andy Field articulates the necessary homelessness of live art in relation to Liberate Tate's work, describing the group's work as more fitting to the tradition of live

art than Tate commissions precisely because the performances are unsanctioned. Talking about *The Gift* Field comments:

> The performance demonstrated not only the subversion that remains an integral part of live art but also the challenge faced by the Tate in attempting to reproduce such a quality when it remains bound to sponsors like BP.[20]

The aesthetic dialogue between Liberate Tate's performances and Tate's programming again opens a potential site of interstitial distance. The group made an 'action to turn their own weapons against them', as recommended by Pierre Bourdieu in a discussion of Hans Haacke's work, echoing Michel de Certeau.

Unlike visual art, which places exponential financial value on the object, or theatre, which emphasises the importance of precise repetition, live art only exists in the live moment. Even if artists repeat performances as advertised there is usually an expectation for them to be iterative, and variation is designed into the performance. Live art photography often conveys a sense of the experience at the same time as leaving the viewer wanting more. All of the groups – Liberate Tate, Reclaim Shakespeare Company, Art Not Oil, Shell Out Sounds – make live art, because integral to the intervention is the location and the live moment of confrontation in a specific space. The work of these groups therefore fulfils Fraser's demand that effective institutional critique practises 'critically reflexive site-specificity': by opening a new space of dissension at an interstitial distance within the space of the gallery or museum they wish to change in some way.

The power and importance of institutional critique that operates at an interstitial distance is to start from a position within the gallery, and from that place to bring in questions from outside the gallery, arts centre or theatre – questions in which the cultural institution is directly implicated. The presence of BP and Shell inside London's largest cultural institutions brings with it a whole range of concerns over the companies' global operations. Artists whose performance interventions seek to, like the academic discipline of critical museology, effect the full democratisation of the gallery, act from within at an interstitial distance.

They follow Cutler's illustration of Guattari's principle of ecosophy: affecting change on the greater body of which we are a part. Critchley argues that the creation of interstitial distance is what engenders democracy, and proposes that such practices articulate Marx's notion of 'true democracy'. In the broader process of the democratisation of the twentieth-century art museum, performance interventions in gallery spaces may have a vital role to play.

7
Conclusion

The story of oil sponsorship in the art museum brings with it histories, politics and power plays that have been choreographed for centuries. The contemporary playing out of these dances reveals specific challenges around a cultural response to climate change and a new chapter in the building of a democratic museum. For oil companies, the line between positive and negative publicity associated with the deals is sometimes hard to trace. For artists, the need for freedom of expression will always be brought into sharper focus in light of the possible impact of sponsors' influence.

The story is told that the arts desperately need oil sponsorship to exist. But funding for large cultural institutions is diverse and oil sponsorship is minute compared to other sources. Sponsors proclaim that they adore the arts, yet Big Oil's purpose in sponsorship is evidently self-serving: the companies simulate an authenticity at the galleries to build the trust of special publics in order to maintain the social licence to operate that is vital to the industry's survival. Artwash, the other show in town, inhibits staff in their attempt to fulfil the organisational mission, and undermines visitors' engagement with the collection. But now artists around the world are gathering creative momentum in their call on the institutions to change.

Both inside and outside the gallery, space is being opened up to see some shifts on the issue. The cultural institutions of the BP Ensemble – Tate, the British Museum, the National Portrait Gallery and the Royal Opera House – are large organisations with over a thousand permanent staff. The first to break rank could emerge from any doorway. In the galleries' corridors and meeting rooms individual voices of change will find each other and turn up the volume.

The effect of Big Oil branding on learning departments' realm of activity warrants a co-ordinated response by staff looking at visitor engagement and critical thinking. When Anna Cutler was appointed Director of Learning at Tate in 2010, Serota professed that 'under Anna's leadership we aim to bring learning to the heart of what Tate does in the future.'[1] In a role encompassing all the learning processes within the gallery, cognitive dissonance in reaction to sponsors falls well within Cutler's turf. Curators like Penelope Curtis, director of Tate Britain and curator of a *BP Walk Through British Art*, shape how artworks from the collection are presented and how visitors experience the gallery, and could therefore choose to exercise influence over oil sponsors' logos in the space.

The fund-raising team's vital work does not occur without careful consideration of possible funding sources: not all sources of funding are welcome. Development officers draw ethical lines daily and one day oil will fall outside that line. Press and media departments deliver stories according to the public relations strategies agreed by the organisation. For these staff members there is an opportunity to present climate leadership positively by stepping away from oil sponsorship. Contracted staff employed by art museums' subsidiaries are equally invested in the policy of the galleries they work in and have possible recourse through trade unions. Gallery invigilators are the face and voice of the institution to the visiting public. Their particular experience of cognitive dissonance when paying lip service to sponsors they abhor could catalyse resistance within the institutional staff body.

At the 2013 Tate Members' annual general meeting Bridget McKenzie – a previous Tate learning department employee of ten years – Jamie Kelsey-Fry and Sunniva Taylor delivered their decision to resign as members because of BP, saying on behalf of fifteen members in total who felt compelled to boycott:

> We can no longer justify to ourselves being members of an organisation that is in bed with BP – an oil corporation whose very business model is reliant on destroying the climate, and thus life on earth as we know it.[2]

Visitors and members who shape galleries through various feedback mechanisms, are the audience body that give the BP Ensemble purpose, and in the case of members, offer funds for specific purchases. Their perspective is crucial. The artists – from those with work in the collection, to those with new commissions or events, all the way to the volunteer performers or assistants – whose art and labour give galleries life, may feel inhibited up to the final hurdle to raise their voice against the sway of an institution on whom their success or survival is dependent. Artists like Raoul Martinez, Matthew Herbert and Sonia Boyce speak out to defend the ethical character of their own community and sphere of existence. For many, the pressure to toe the line and preserve support within the art establishment is silencing. Where public figures in theatre, such as Caryl Churchill and Mark Ravenhill, have been outspoken on the issue, equally notable figures in the visual arts community have been less vociferous. Art galleries are currently significantly more splattered with oil sponsorship than theatres and visual artists may fear that speaking out could put relationships across the cultural estate at stake.

All these groups of artists, members, staff, cultural workers in the field, art history students, tourist gallery-goers, journalists, departmental officials, together make up part of a broader community of stakeholders that is fundamental to the being of the art museum, without whom there is no such thing. Each can query the ethics of the institution body of which they are part, via unions, members' boards, and by using other strategies of their own concoction. And likewise, the organisation has no choice but to move if and when the mood of its community reaches a tipping point.

Merely artwash

The position of an oil company is specifically precarious in a post-modern world of jostling economies, environmental regulations and wars that have cost elections. In her book charting the entire history of petroleum, Sonia Shah closes by saying: 'The end of oil's story is still being written, but it is clear that the conclusion nears. Much will

depend on how a thousand other stories end.'[3] One of those stories is cultural sponsorship, and the signs of a growing lack of acceptance of Big Oil can be seen clearly in products of popular culture today. Pop culture has always had an interchange with the high culture housed at Tate and other galleries, but by definition it offers a more cohesive temperature check on coming cultural shifts than the more conservation-focused museums are able to provide.

The 2011 *Muppet Movie* was met with fierce criticism by Fox news commentators, who reacted to the positioning of oil tycoon Tex Richman as the film's villain. Hollywood was accused of promoting liberal, anti-corporate, anti-oil politics. The oil executives in the playful children's story came with requisite 'baddie' pantomime cackles, and the mission of the Muppets is to overcome these enemies to save their theatre, underneath which the oil men want to drill. Whatever the film-maker's political intentions, the movie capitalises on a new version of the evil antagonist as provided by oil executives like Tony Hayward making catastrophic errors in the eyes of, primarily, the American public. The physical risk to the Muppets' theatre neatly mirrors the conceptual conflict between art and Big Oil.

In 2014 The LEGO Movie followed suit: the villain President Business was head of an oil company and his evil plan involved freezing creativity and play. The message was muddled by LEGO's concurrent co-promotion with Shell in which sixteen million Shell-branded toys made their way into playrooms around the world via Shell petrol stations, and following Greenpeace's creative tactics highlighting this contradiction in the same year as the film's release, LEGO ended the contract with Shell. The 2010 film Avatar tells a story analogous to struggles against Big Oil by frontline communities in Colombia, West Papua and Alberta, Canada – to name but a few sites of ecological destruction where fossil fuel companies have harmed the Indigenous Peoples' lives and livelihoods. Again, the fight to save a sacred site is fought against corporates who want to mine and drill the land.

These stories are taken up by film-makers and greeted warmly in the pop-cultural landscape not because of a political agenda as the Fox commentators fear. The widespread conviction in such narratives signifies a shift that has already taken place: that despite everyday

consumption of oil and its products, there is a tangible popular critique of extractives and their methods. Whether or not oil remains embedded within post-industrial cultures, it has still become precarious in its social acceptance as neutral or benign.

Even critiques of oil sponsorship have been replicated in pop culture. Anna and my performance as Toni and Bobbi described in Chapter 6 was reincarnated in a 2012 episode of Channel Four sitcom 'Fresh Meat' – the costumes were somewhat improved with a quick-release cord sewn into the actor's dress for easy spilling. The episode focused on an oil company's attempt to recruit undergraduates as part of their mission to gain the confidence of a new generation, a topic mirrored by BP's endeavours to integrate itself into the secondary school science curriculum. The sitcom closes with the performance as a rejection of the oil company and the wrongs associated with its operations. The critical chorus has expanded from famous artists and playwrights to A-list celebrities: in a BBC Radio 4 interview, actress Emma Thompson said 'Tate is sponsored by BP, these companies bury themselves into our culture, they must be challenged.'

The feeling of precariousness oil companies experience on the precipice of popular critique is replaced by a sense of security in being embedded at the cultural foundations of the nation. The British Museum, Tate, The National Gallery and the Royal Opera House all now carry the emblems of BP and Shell, situating the companies as part of the establishment and as part of culture at the start of a new millennium. This comfortable support may soon dissipate however. Just as pop-cultural signs herald a shift in public acceptance of Big Oil, a global campaign to mobilise investors and shareholders in major oil corporations has emerged that similarly stigmatises oil through the financial tentacles of the industry. So far fourteen universities in the USA and Europe have committed to divest their shareholdings in fossil fuel companies – millions of pounds worth of investments – big hitters include Glasgow University and Stanford. Cities, foundations and religious institutions are signing up too. The fossil fuel divestment movement demonstrates the lack of support among the sector that is perhaps most intertwined with the oil economy's survival. When one pound in every seven in pension pots goes to BP, it has significant

ramifications for pension providers to consider divesting from oil. Desmond Tutu pointed out the valuable similarities between the campaign to divest and movements to end oil sponsorship, saying:

> We need an apartheid-style boycott to save the planet. People of conscience need to break their ties with corporations financing the injustice of climate change. We can, for instance, boycott events, sports teams and media programming sponsored by fossil-fuel energy companies. We can encourage more of our universities and municipalities and cultural institutions to cut their ties to the fossil-fuel industry.[4]

The picture he paints is one version of the story of how oil ends that Sonia Shah predicted. The ending is now being written, in art, action, performances and intervention.

Signs of change

Chin-tao Wu challenged that an international movement was necessary to address the problems associated with corporate sponsorship of the arts. Her projection was quietly optimistic:

> Signs of impending strain and rupture within the system are admittedly few and far between, but it may well be that one day sites of resistance form to question and challenge what for the present remains the dominant order.[5]

With the emergence of groups like G.U.L.F., Stopp Oljesponsing av Norsk Kulturliv and Art Not Oil, Wu's premonition seems to have come to pass. The various interventions, protests and public statements that have been made in opposition to oil sponsorship have started to tip the balance. As the movement opening these 'sites of resistance' grows, so too does the possibility of revolutions in the art museum.

Even if not always intended as such, museums and galleries can still be claimed as democratic institutions. The Whitechapel Gallery opened

in 1901 with the sole purpose to 'bring great art to the people of the East End of London'.[6] The potentially paternalistic programme was later usurped for other purposes. In 1939 alongside the Stepney Trades Council, artist Roland Penrose of the English Surrealist movement – who was also a Quaker pacifist and prominent member of the anti-fascist Artists' International Association – organised the display of Picasso's *Guernica*. The painting told the horrors of the civil war and its exhibition raised money for the Spanish Republican government. Those involved swiftly made autonomous use of the Whitechapel as they saw fit and made it a recruiting post for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. Earlier exhibitions on the continent had raised money for Spanish Relief; here the price of admission was a pair of boots in a fit state to be sent to the Spanish front. When an art gallery is said to be for the people, there is no telling what they will do with it.

Picasso's *Guernica* has, of course, been connected to subsequent wars and moments in military history. As described in Chapter 6, the Guerrilla Art Action Group chose to hold a protest outside its exhibition at MoMA, New York, during the Vietnam War. *Guernica* prints have seen many sides of humanity: painted in 1937 and toured to mobilise against the fascist army in Spain, invoked as part of the call to end the attack on Vietnam, a copy now hangs outside the UN Security Council debating chamber. During the US and UK hijack of the official process to legitimise their invasion of Iraq a curtain was pulled over *Guernica* for the duration of the resolution meeting at the request of the US representatives. This darkly ironic act of blinkering revealed a fear of war, of accountability, of pacifism, and indeed of art. The artwork intervened in the process by its mere presence despite its redaction.

The political role for artists in shaping culture has long been debated. François Matarasso and David Batchelor engaged in a dialogue in which Matarasso rejected Batchelor's claim that 'artists have a responsibility to art, not to anything or anyone else', countering in *Freedom's Shadow* that:

> Far from being detached from any social or moral ties to the rest of humanity, artists live within a complex network of responsibilities. Some of these – arising from personal relationships or the condition of citizenship itself – are common to us all, but other issues emerge

> from the responsibilities of the artist and the State to one another and the ethical framework within which artists work.[7]

Matarasso draws out a political and ethical role specific to the artist. In Batchelor's reply, he quotes Don Judd, 'Of course artists should oppose US involvement in Nicaragua just as dentists should.' This seems to miss Matarasso's point that artists have significantly more profile and influence in shaping culture and politics than dentists would ordinarily expect to have. Furthermore, what when the political battle in question is fought on the artist's territory, the gallery? Artists have a clear stake in the way in which their work and their inspirations are used for corporate gain.

Many artists make work to challenge oil culture. The African-American artist Ben Jones' collection of paintings *Thank You BP* has been exhibited globally, asking audiences to sit with the loss experienced by communities on the Gulf Coast following the BP disaster. As a monument to the Nigerian activists that were executed in 1995 following their protests against Shell, Nigerian-born British artist Sokari Douglas Camp made a sculpture called *The Battle Bus: A Living Memorial to Ken Saro-Wiwa*. Ruppe Kosselleck is a German visual artist who for over five years has collected the residue of oil spills found on beaches around the globe, and used it to make oil paintings. Kosselleck sells the artworks and uses the profits to buy shares in BP Plc – the entire project of heroic dedication and optimism is titled *Takeover BP*.

Visual artist, photographer and data visualisation designer Chris Jordan has explored numerous ways of viscerally communicating the devastation of oil as part of his *Counting the Numbers* series, which included a dizzying image of the fifty-one million barrels of oil consumed in the USA every minute. Russian artist Andrei Molodkin has been exhibited in the USA and Europe in a work confronting his own nation's relationship with oil. *Crude* was exhibited at a gallery in the oil state Texas that works specifically to build an artistic community critiquing the oil industry rather than uncritically co-existing.

The academic Viv Golding describes the changing kind of power represented by the modern museum:

> I contend the museum has a part in a history of power. Museums have demonstrated the power of wealth and privilege – of the church, the king and the merchant since their inception. A new power – of the Nation and the citizen – can be traced to the establishment of the Louvre, to 'stand for the Republic and its ideal of equality'.[8]

It is the museum as the site of this power, of the citizen, that the founding of the Louvre so succinctly embodies, and that corporate sponsorship so casually undermines. Suggestions the corporate sponsor is neutral, or financially essential, or an innocuous figure – all are directly contradicted on a daily basis by oil sponsorship.

This undermining of democracy is echoed in corporate control of different public spaces, and in a tug of war between corporate practices of 'power over' that work against the idea of democratic public practices of 'power with'. Galleries and the state will continue to be moulded by corporates despite fundamental responsibility to the public, unless the public makes a challenge to this process. Where art for many is a sacred ground of reflection and expression, it has also become a battleground in a political war for corporate control in neoliberal democracies. When London hosted the Olympics, the Cultural Olympiad played a role in the displacement of homes, livelihoods and communities. Brisbane's municipal plans for the G20 to be held in the central business district in 2014 included an arts festival specifically designed to draw tourists and residents alike out of the exclusion zone, which dwellers would also be moved out of for the duration of the talks. The liberatory malleability of the arts can see them exploited by elites: the G20 will continue their talks undisturbed and dissent will be pushed out of an exclusion zone in a violent act that is made to look acceptable by the offering of art.

In the recent Tunisian uprisings, the wave of political action that ignited the Arab Spring of 2011, revolution was nurtured by activist artistic practices of iconoclasm against the existing political regime and the creation of a new political iconography to catalyse a new politics. Those in power manage art and culture in various insidious ways, but the people, too, use art to shape history. During the political protests around the meeting of the G8 in 2005, the feeling on the ground was one of being tightly stage-managed in a military drama of herding dissenting

cats. But by engaging in the performance of power it is possible to use art to rewrite the script in these moments. Art interventions in gallery spaces with the intention of evicting oil sponsors, challenging the ethics of the art museum and confronting racism and sexism in the art world are one creative act among many that seek to build real democracies and perform the power of the people. In the face of Big Oil's artwash, the arts are being reclaimed to confront corporate power.

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