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Immediatism: An Invisible Movement

1. All experience is mediated - by the mechanisms of sense perception, mentation, [language](#), etc., - and certainly all art consists of some further mediation of experience.
2. However, mediation takes place by degrees. Some experiences (smell, taste, sexual pleasure, etc.) are less mediated than others (reading a book, looking through a telescope, listening to a record). Some media, and especially "live" arts such as dance, theater, [musical](#) or bardic [performance](#), are less mediated than others, such as TV, CDs, virtual [reality](#). Even among the media usually called "media," some are more and others are less mediated, according to the intensity or imaginative participation they demand. Print and radio demand more of the imagination; Im less; TV even less; and virtual [reality](#) the least of all - so far.
3. For art, the intervention of capital always signals a further degree of mediation. To say that art is commodified is to say that a mediation, or standing-in-between, has occurred, and that this betweenness amounts to a split, and that this split amounts to "[alienation](#)." Improv [music played](#) by friends at home is less "alienated" than [music played](#) "live" at the Met, or [music played](#) through media (whether PBS or MTV or Walkman). In fact, an argument could be made that [music](#) distributed free or at cost on cassette via mail network is less alienated than live [music played](#) at some huge We Are The World spectacle or Las Vegas night club, even though the latter are live [music played](#) to a live audience (or at least, so it appears), while the former is recorded [music](#) consumed by distant and even anonymous listeners.
4. The tendency of high-tech, and the tendency of late capitalism, both impel the arts farther and farther into extreme forms of mediation. Both widen the gulf between the production and consumption of art, with a corresponding increase in "[alienation](#)."
5. With the disappearance of a "mainstream" and therefore of an "avant-garde" in the arts, it has been noticed that all the more advanced and intense art-experiences have become recuperable almost instantly by the media, and thus are rendered into trash like all other trash in the ghostly world of commodities. "Trash," as the term was redefined in, let's say, Baltimore in the 1970s, can be good fun - as an ironic take on a sort of inadvertent volkkultur that surrounds and pervades the more unconscious regions of "popular" sensibility - which in turn is produced in part by the spectacle. "Trash" was once a fresh concept, with radical potential. By now, however, amidst the ruins of Postmodernism, it has nally begun to stink. Ironic frivolity nally becomes disgusting. Is it [possible](#) now to be serious but not sober? (Note: the New Sobriety is of course simply the ipside of the New Frivolity. Chic neo-puritanism

carries the taint of Reaction, in just the same way that Postmodernist philosophical irony and despair lead to Reaction. The Purge Society is the same as the Binge Society. After the "Twelve Steps" of trendy renunciation in the 1990s, all that remains is the thirteenth step of the gallows. Irony may have become boring, but self-mutilation was never more than an abyss. Down with frivolity - down with sobriety.)

Everything delicate and beautiful, from Surrealism to Break-dancing, ends up as fodder for McDeath's ads; fifteen minutes later all the magic has been sucked out, and the art itself dead as a dried locust. The media wizards, who are nothing if not Postmodernists, have even begun to feed on the vitality of "Trash," like vultures regurgitating and reconsuming the same carrion, in an obscene ecstasy of self-referentiality. Which way to the Egress?

6. Real art is [play](#), and [play](#) is one of the most immediate of all experiences. Those who have cultivated the pleasure of [play](#) cannot be expected to give it up simply to make a political point (as in an "Art Strike," or "the suppression without the realization" of art, etc.) Art will go on, in somewhat the same sense that breathing, eating, or fucking will go on.
7. Nevertheless we are repelled by the extreme [alienation](#) of the arts, especially in "the media," in commercial publishing and galleries, in the recording "industry," etc. And we sometimes worry even about the extent to which our very involvement in such arts as writing, painting or [music](#) implicates us in a nasty abstraction, a removal from immediate experience. We miss the directness of [play](#) (our [original](#) kick in doing art in the first place); we miss smell, taste, touch, the feel of bodies in motion.
8. Computers, [video](#), radio, printing presses, synthesizers, fax machines, tape recorders, photocopiers - these things make good toys, but terrible addictions. Finally we realize we cannot "reach out and touch someone" who is not present in the flesh. These media may be useful to our art - but they must not possess us, nor must they stand between, mediate or separate us from our animal/animate selves. We want to control our media, not be controlled by them. And we would like to remember a certain psychic martial art which stresses the realization that the body itself is the least mediated of all media.
9. Therefore, as artists and "cultural workers" who have no [intention](#) of giving up activity in our chosen media, we nevertheless demand of ourselves an extreme awareness of immediacy, as well as the mastery of some direct means of complementing the awareness as [play](#), immediately (at once) and immediately (without mediation).
10. Fully realizing that any art "[manifesto](#)" written today can only stink of the same bitter irony it seeks to oppose, we nevertheless declare without hesitation (without too much thought) the founding of a "movement," immediatism. We feel free to do so because we intend to practise Immediatism in secret, in order to avoid any contamination of mediation. Publicly we'll continue our work in publishing, radio, painting, [music](#), etc., to be shared freely but never consumed passively, something

which can be discussed openly but never understood by the agents of [alienation](#), something with no commercial potential, yet valuable beyond price, something [occult](#) yet woven completely into the fabric of our everyday lives.

11. Immediatism is not a movement in the sense of an aesthetic program. It depends on [situation](#), not style or content, message or school. It may take the form of any kind of creative [play](#) which can be performed by two or more people, by and for themselves, [face-to-face](#) and together. In this sense it is like a game, and therefore certain "rules" may apply.
12. All spectators must also be performers. All expenses are to be shared, and all products which may result from the [play](#) are also to be shared by the participants only (who may keep them or bestow them as gifts, but should not sell them). The best games will make little or no use of obvious forms of mediation such as photography, recording, printing, etc., but will tend toward immediate techniques involving physical presence, direct communication, the senses.
13. An obvious matrix for Immediatism is the party. Thus a good meal could be an Immediatist art project, especially if everyone present cooked as well as ate. Ancient Chinese and Japanese on misty autumn days would hold odor parties, where each guest would bring a home-made incense or perfume. At linked-verse parties a faulty couplet would entail the penalty of a glass of wine. Quilting bees, tableaux vivants, exquisite corpses, rituals of conviviality such as Fourier's "Museum Orgy" (erotic costumes, poses, and skits), live [music](#) and dance - the past can be ransacked for appropriate forms, and imagination will supply more.
14. The difference between a 19th century quilting bee, for example, and an Immediatist quilting bee, would lie in our awareness of the practice of Immediatism as a response to the sorrows of [alienation](#) and the "death of art."
15. The mail art of the 1970s and the 'zine scene of the 1980s were attempts to go beyond the mediation of art-as-commodity, and may be considered ancestors of Immediatism. However, they preserved the mediated structures of postal communication and xerography, and thus failed to overcome the isolation of the [players](#), who remained quite literally out of touch. We wish to take the motives and discoveries of these earlier movements or their logical conclusion in an art which banishes all mediation and [alienation](#), at least to the extent that the human condition allows.
16. Moreover, Immediatism is not condemned to powerlessness in the world, simply because it avoids the publicity of the marketplace. "[Poetic Terrorism](#)" and "Art Sabotage" are quite logical manifestations of Immediatism.
17. Finally, we expect that the practice of Immediatism will release within us vast storehouses of forgotten power, which will not only transform our lives through the secret realization of unmediated [play](#), but will also inescapably well up and burst out and permeate the other art we create, the more public and mediated art. And we hope that the two will grow closer and closer, and eventually perhaps become one.

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