

The Apparatus

by

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Dedication

For my Father, who taught me everything I needed to know to start building. I am continuously humbled by your skill, dedication to your craft and to your family.

For my Mother, whose compassion and love brought me to the place I am today. Without you I would be half the man that I am.

For my Partner, who sacrificed countless hours we could have spent together so I could pursue a dream. Your patience, humor and brilliance saw me through this and are a constant reminder of why I love you.

Abstract

This document, in conjunction with the body of work within the exhibition *The Apparatus*, challenges the dichotomy of practical and theoretical definitions of utility. Presented in two opposing formats, the work within this thesis attempts to re-examine the concept of utility as a spectrum, rather than in the binary structure of the practical (functional) and theoretical (aesthetical) methods of encounter.

Preface

The body of work presented in this document is explored through the two main methods of encountering: the tangible experience (or practical function) and the intangible experience (or theoretical function) of the object. These opposing positions of interacting with the object are presented in two main sections of the document; the Operator's manual (practical interaction) and the User's manual (theoretical interaction). The Operator's manual presents the work in terms of its practical application and utility. Each object is broken down into its individual working parts and described in terms of its practical utility. The description of the work within this section directs the reader to engage with the object in terms of objective practicality, that is, how this object is useful based on the function of its working parts. This is the practical method of encountering the object. On the other hand, the User's manual presents the work in terms of its theoretical application and utility. Within this section the work is broken down not by its physical working parts, but instead by its conceptual underpinnings and aesthetical functions. This section directs the reader to an engagement with the object, which is beyond its physical parts and materials and focuses instead on the conceptual and abstract method of encounter or use of these objects. The User's manual is concerned with exploring the objects subjective utility – how the object may be useful to the individual for determining meaning, purpose, or intangible concepts. The primary way in which this document explores the practical and theoretical interpretation and encounter of the objects within it, is through the concept of utility¹. We often relate to the world around us through the perspective of utility²: making 'use' of things is a common method in which we develop our understanding of the world. The works supported by

¹ That is, "the quality or state of being useful".

² "[Martin] Heideggers phenomenology of the ways we customarily relate to the things in the world simply assumes that we treat them as "to hand", [that is, we view] them from the perspective of utility and [relate] to them in terms of what we can do with them" (Parkes 110)

this document operate in a similar fashion, each sculpture makes use of material in order to further develop and explore the physical and conceptual framework of the world; however, these objects also develop into their own objects of utility, becoming tools and objects which contain functional and conceptual qualities and uses.

The formatting of this document is arranged in such a way that each sculpture is described by its practical and theoretical utility. The purpose of this formatting is to emphasize that each object may be interpreted with equal value as an object useful for a practical function, as well as an object useful for theoretical function. By placing neither interpretation as superior to the other, this document attempts to explore a full spectrum of encounter, free from restrictive hierarchies. In addition to this, my intention is to disrupt the prevailing dichotomies of practical and theoretical interpretations of the object by dismantling the notion that an object's utility must be either practical (functional) or theoretical (conceptual) and instead propose the idea that the position of the object's utility lies somewhere along a vast spectrum of utility which operates simultaneously between, beyond and within the practical and theoretical.

Introduction

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger determined that there are two fundamental ways in which we encounter an object of use: practical or theoretical³ (Parkes 115). The hammer in the woodshop has a practical usefulness – to hammer nails into wood – and so the utility of the hammer in the woodshop is its practicality; however, the hammer could also be useful for theoretical or abstract purposes. For instance when the hammer is laid across a sickle, it becomes a representation of an “authoritative icon [and] a symbol for the essence of communist ideology” (Wharton). In this form the hammer is no longer defined only by its practical usefulness, instead its utility conveys more than its practicality, it conveys meaning, values of strength, solidarity and reference to abstract concepts outside of itself. The context in which the hammer, or any object, is used can drastically change its perceived usefulness. Within the simple exchange of context presented above, the hammer is capable of being interpreted on either end of the spectrum of encounter – the hammer is both an object of practical and theoretical utility – yet this definition is still restrictive in labeling the utility of the hammer as it acknowledges it as being either one or the other. Is it not possible for an object to be simultaneously practical and theoretically useful? In Heidegger’s conclusion on the context of encounter, he appears to suggest that the objects utility is always relative to the context in which it is encountered (Parkes 113), so how can we determine with certainty that the object of encounter must be either practical or theoretically useful? We determine our approach in several ways, but one of the main ways we do so is by following the guidelines established by categorization and definition, which often predetermine the ways in which we approach an object.

³ From this point on I will refer to these as “the methods of encountering”.

We categorize and define things for many different reasons, but generally speaking we do so in order to mediate our interaction with objects and the world around us and “render comprehensible this otherwise bewildering diversity, allowing us to generalize across experiences, because categorization relates each experienced entity to an extant representation (Bornstein and Arterberry 1). Categorization and definition of any object’s utility – how it should be used, where it should be used, what it is capable of doing and the limitations of its use – is a method humans use to comprehend the diversity of the world and the objects surrounding them. The problem with these methods occurs when the categorization or generalization of an object’s utility begins to stick to it regardless of any attempts to redefine it or expand its utility, and its usefulness becomes solidified as a singularity rather than recognized for its diversity. If the hammer in the woodshop is defined concretely as an object useful for *only* hammering nails, then it ceases to be useful for any other application. Considering the implications of categorizing utility within the context of hand-held tools hardly seems fundamental to the well-being of society at large. If the categorization of an object was only a problem for hammers and nails, then there would be no need to carry on any further; however, defining utility, categorizing the purpose of an object and establishing limitations in diversity of meaning, also contaminate contemporary art practice and the purchase these practices have on any critical engagement with the world around them. If the art object is simply an object of theoretical usefulness (that is, an intangible conceptual idea or suggestion useful for only distant admiration), restricted to its definition, can it have any real impact when challenging the structures or institutions within the realm of practicality?

In his *Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant became what Stephen Wright refers to as “the greatest architect of the conceptual edifice of modern, autonomous art” (Wright 20) by

establishing foundational theories for the conceptual and physical architecture of the modern art museum: that is, purposeless purpose and spectatorship. For Kant, the function of art is aesthetic contemplation, whereby the spectator exists entirely within the realm of theoretical contemplation, having no other subjective or physical interaction with the work. For Kant, art can have no practical purpose, its purpose is to be purposeless – that is, its purpose is to have no usefulness outside the realm of aesthetic contemplation. In fact, Kant felt that the spectator should always remain autonomous, never engaging with the object in subjective experience, in order to preserve their position of theoretical contemplation, a position Kant argued the participant could not obtain. Kant’s conceptual edifices of “purposeless purpose” and “spectatorship” established an enormous generalization of the function of art and art practice, whereby art is alienated “from being taken seriously as a proposition having consequences beyond the aesthetic realm” (Wright 12). The limitation of arts’ function as a strictly aesthetic practice allows no purchase in any realm outside that of the art world – “art judged by arts standards can be easily written off as...well, just art. Of contemplative value to people who like that sort of thing, but without teeth.” (Wright 12).

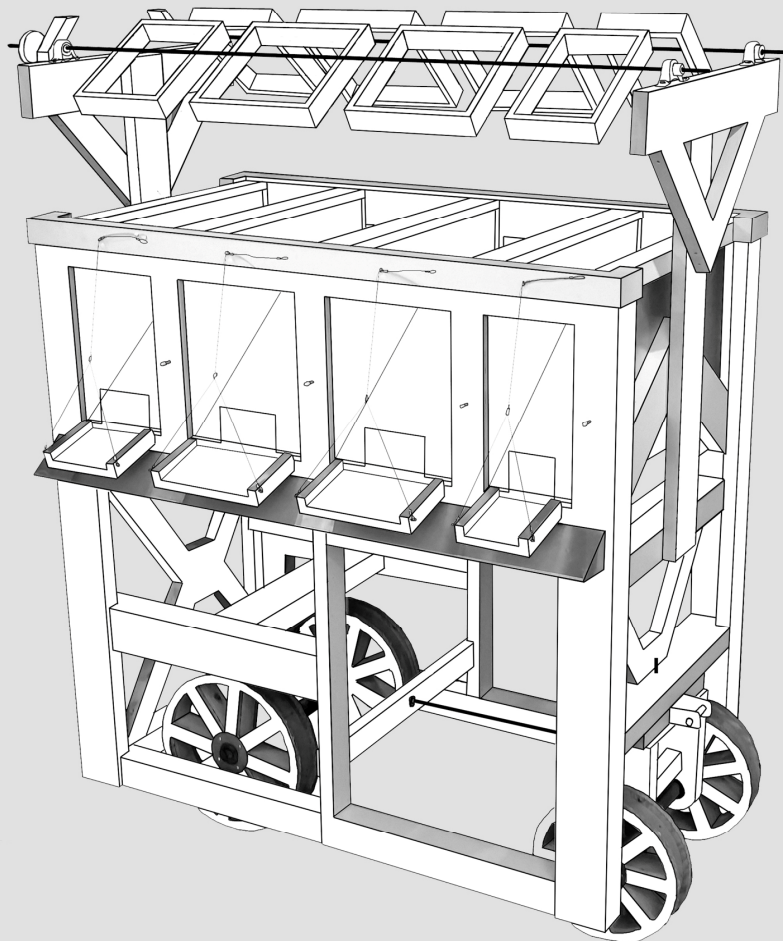
The purpose of the work within this document is to knowingly occupy a position somewhere between the realm of the aesthetic (theoretical) contemplation and the functional (practical) application of the object, operating within both realms simultaneously and perhaps beyond. My intention is to expand our encounter with the art object beyond the restrictive qualities of categorization and function and open up our encounter to a wider, more diverse spectrum of interaction and experience.

The Apparatus Instructional manual

Operator's Manual

User's Manual

For Apparatuses: AD-15, AD-16, AI-15, AR-15, AC-15



Retain these instructions for future reference

Read all instructions carefully before operating the Apparatuses

[1] The scenario of Martin Heidegger’s hammer applies to all physical objects of utility, but it should be clarified that an object of utility is not limited to tangible objects. In fact, thoughts, words, gestures or concepts, are all objects of utility, both practically and theoretically. In this sense any object, tangible, intangible, or metaphysical, is determined as an object of utility. It should be noted that throughout the following Instructional Manual there are several references to all objects of utility as ‘things’. For the readers understanding it is important to note that the word ‘things’, when placed in quotation, is interchangeable with the phrase “all objects of utility”.

[2] The term *User* is used frequently throughout this manual and refers directly to Stephen Wright’s emerging theories regarding the category of political subjectivity known as *Usership*. For Wright these concepts refer to the hands-on, task specific activities of the everyday individual (or User) who takes part, as a co-author with other Users, in the self-regulating mode of operation and engagement with the world around them⁴. The Users agency exists in the everyday experiences – the here and now operation and engagement with objects of use – and encompasses the population who know the world around them not through its ownership, but through its experience.

[3] Both the Operator and User manual explore specific uses for each machine, however, the uses explored should not be considered as the only interpretation of their usefulness. It is both recommended and necessary that Users also interpret these devices in their own terms, for their own purposes. The uses described within these documents are interpretable and necessary in order to address a variety of practical and theoretical applications, but are by no means limited to these uses.

*The use of this manual constitutes acceptance of the above terms of use and condition

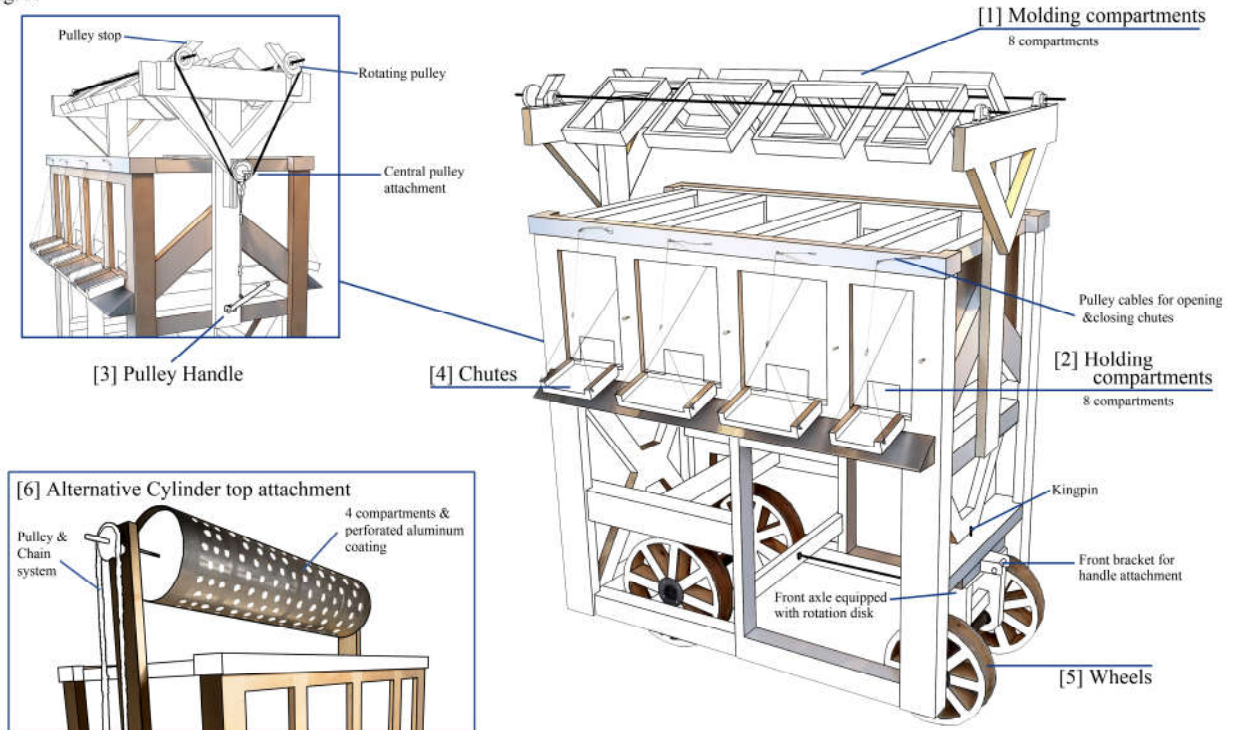
⁴ The terms *User* and *Usership* and the description of them within this section are drawn from Stephen Wright’s text, *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*.

Operator's Manual

FOR USE WITH APPARATUSES: AD-15, AD-16, AI-15, AR-15, AC-15

WARNING: Read all instructions carefully before operating the Apparatuses

Fig. A



The *Apparatus for Distribution*, or the AD-15, is a mobile distribution system modeled after the patent drawings for a 1903 gravel sorting machine⁵ and designed to either mold or distribute objects. Equipped with modern features and designs, the AD-15 improves on its predecessor by providing a more efficient and sleek mobile distribution system. The AD-15 includes the standard eight molding compartments (Fig. A.1), which can be fitted with a variety of interchangeable cast moulds (*recommended moulds include the standard brick, traditional wooden baton and standard glass bottle)⁶. After the casts have dried the User pulls the pulley handle (Fig. A.3) and dumps the cast objects into the holding compartments (Fig. A.2). The holding compartments are kept secure by the chute doors (Fig. A.4) so that no objects fall out

⁵ D.B. Cook ,US Patent #770,353

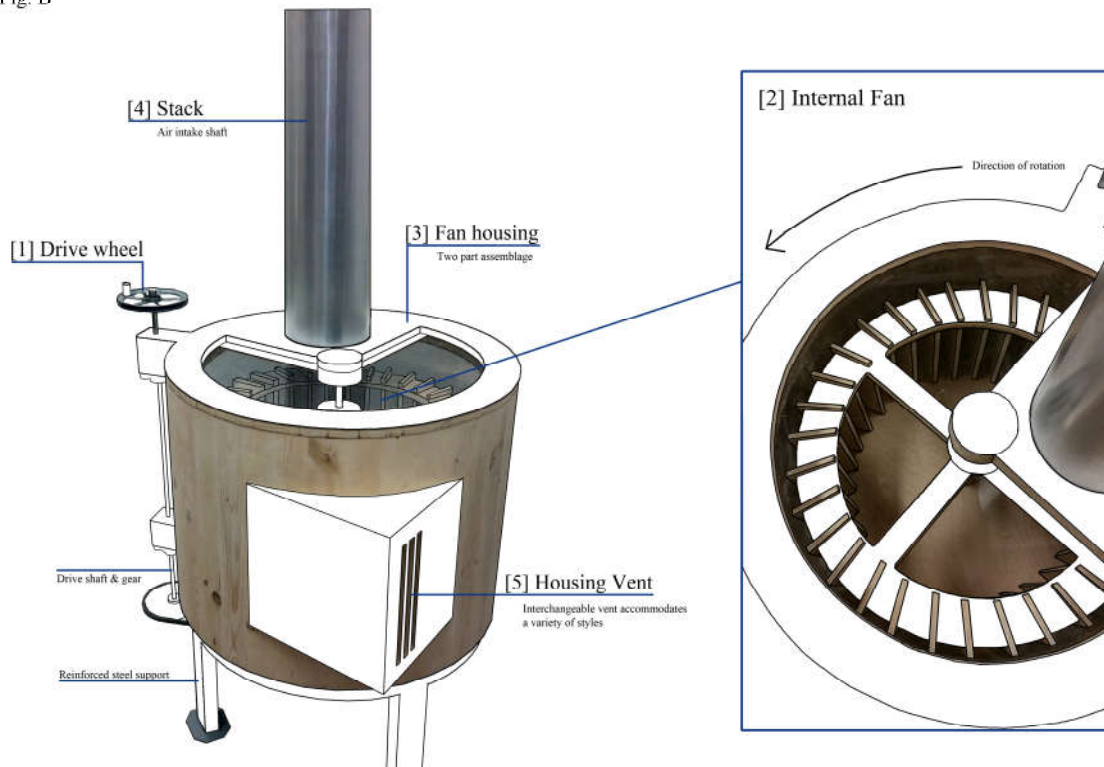
⁶ The molding compartments can also be replaced with an alternative Cylinder attachment which operates by a spinning pulley, gear and chain system, and sorts various sizes of round objects into the corresponding holding compartment. This setting is preferred in locations with an abundance of usable stone or rocks. (See Fig. A6)

while the *Apparatus* is in motion (Fig. A.5). The chutes can be opened to distribute the sorted material by releasing the pulley cables.

3.2 Apparatus for Displacement

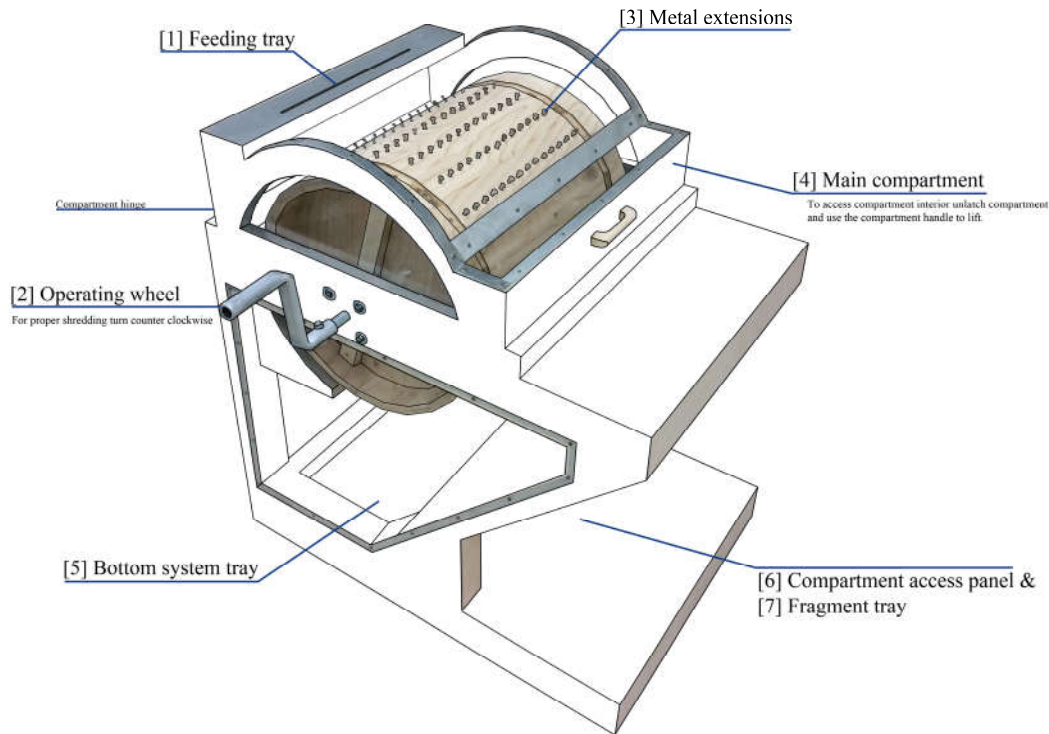
AD16

Fig. B



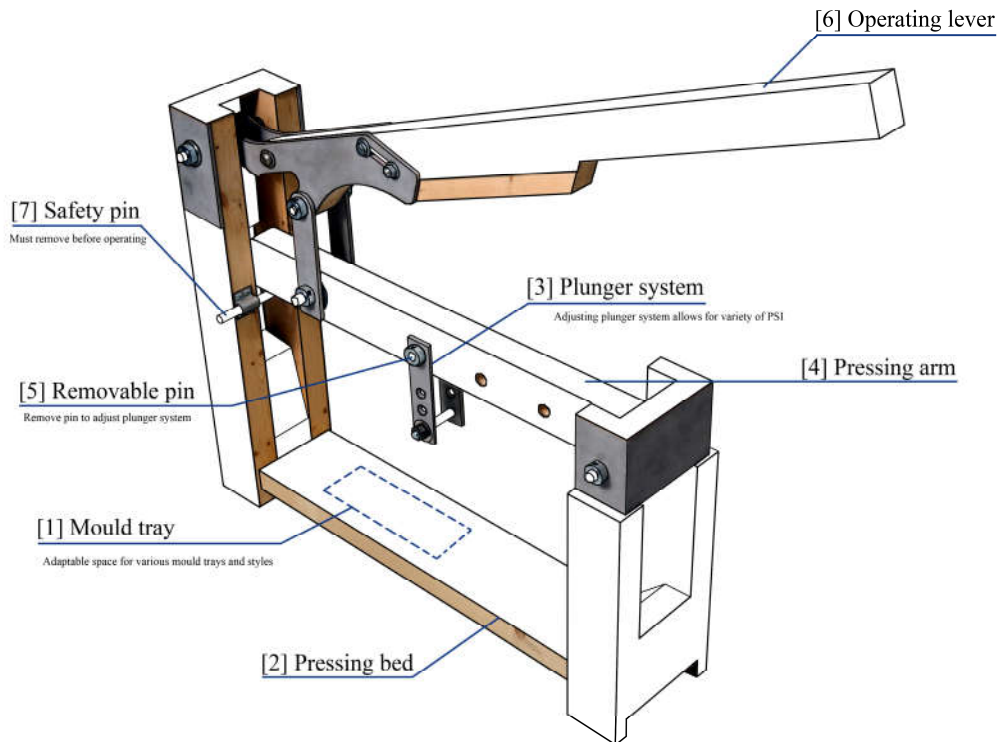
The *Apparatus for Displacement*, or the AD-16, is a machine designed for changing the airflow, or air quality, of any given space. To operate the device, the User turns the Drive wheel clockwise (Fig. B.1). The Drive wheel is attached to a gear and chain system which spins the upright shaft of the internal fan (Fig. B.2) located within the main fan housing (Fig. B.3). If the User spins the operating wheel continuously the air within the space is pulled through the AD-16's stack (Fig. B.4) into the fan housing. As the air is pulled into the fan housing it is accelerated radially and exits through the housing vent (Fig. B.5). The air movement through the AD-16 creates a change in the airflow of any space it is installed in. With the additional set of specialized filters, it is capable of both cleaning and refreshing the air within the room.

Fig. C



The Apparatus for Instrumentation, or the AI-16, is a machine designed to fragment or shred any variety of legal documentation regarding ownership, trademarks, or terms of use. The User inserts a legal document into the AI-16 feeding tray (Fig. C.1) and turns the operating wheel continuously (Fig. C.2). While the User turns the wheel, the drive train rotates a large drum punctuated with sharp metal extensions (Fig. C.3). As the drum spins in the main compartment (Fig. C.4), the metal extensions run through an opposite set of metal extensions attached to the inner wall of the main compartment. The drum is able to move freely through this labyrinth of sharp extensions. The legal document is ripped apart and the fragments fall into the bottom system tray (Fig. C.5). The User is able to open the main compartment access panel (Fig. C.6), pull out the fragment tray (Fig. C.7) and access the shreds of paper.

Fig. D



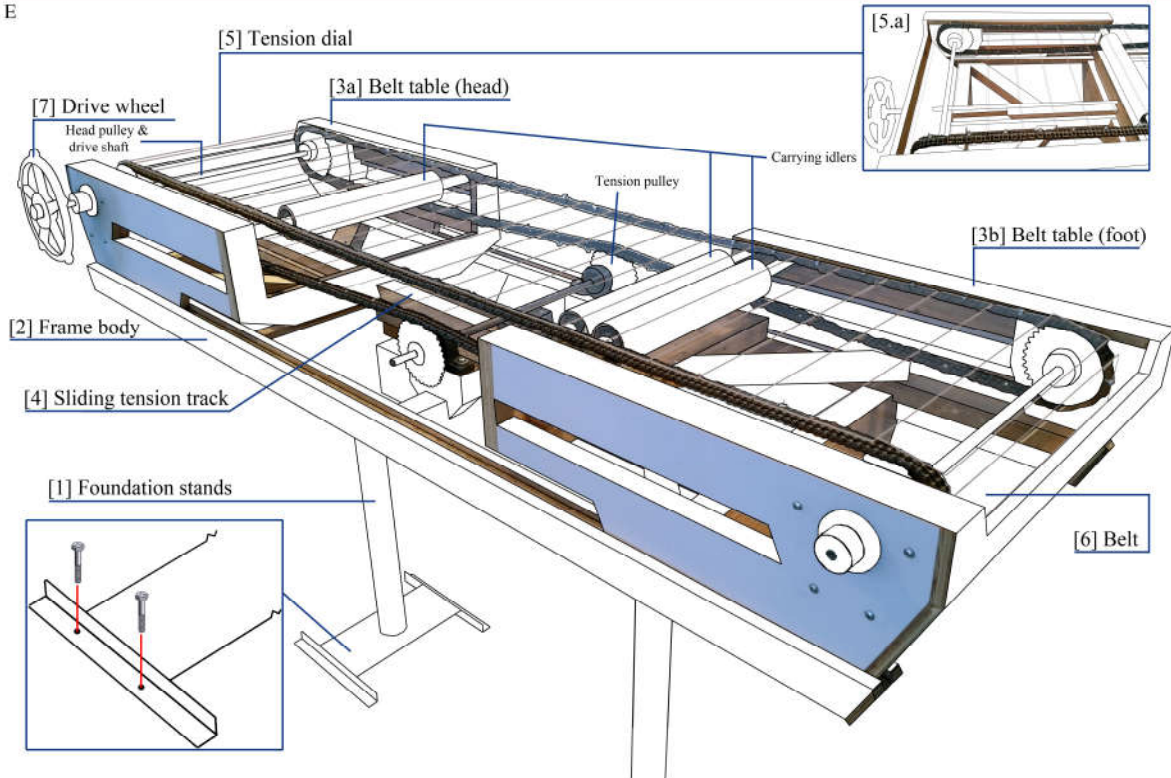
The Apparatus for Repressing or the AR-15 is a hand and lever press designed for repressing any written documentation (especially useful in conjunction with the Apparatus for Instrumentation. *See section 3.3 Fig C.). The User first inserts material into the mould tray (Fig D.1) then places the tray on its corresponding position on the pressing bed (Fig. D.2). The plunger system (Fig D.3), located above the pressing bed is responsible for applying the pressure required to compress the documentation into the mould. The plunger system is connected to the pressing arm (Fig. D.4) through a single removable pin (Fig. D.5), designed to insert into one of several holes in the arm. The variety of holes allows the User to adjust the level of pressure the plunger exerts on the mould. The operating lever (Fig. D.6) is where the User will provide the necessary force to push down the operating arm and plunger. It is important that the User remove the safety pin (Fig. D.7) located just under the pressing arm before attempting to operate the

lever, as failure to do so will result in a jammed operation. When the object has been pressed the User should replace the safety pin and remove the mould tray and the freshly pressed object.

3.5 Apparatus for Conveyance

AC15

Fig. E



The *Apparatus for Conveyance*, or the AC-15, is specifically designed to move objects from one place to another. The AC-15 is separated into four main components. The AC-15 is supported by two steel stands (Fig. E.1) which can be attached directly to the floor for additional support. The second component of the AC-15 is the Frame (Fig E.2), which acts as the foundation for the third component, the Belt table (Fig. E. 3). The Belt table is a two-part system, one end is bolted directly to the main body (E.3a) while the corresponding end (E.3b) is attached directly to the Sliding Tension Track (Fig. E.4) to provide movement back and forth via the adjustment of the Tension dial (Fig. E.5). The Belt (Fig. E.6) is a slat conveyor, built with clear

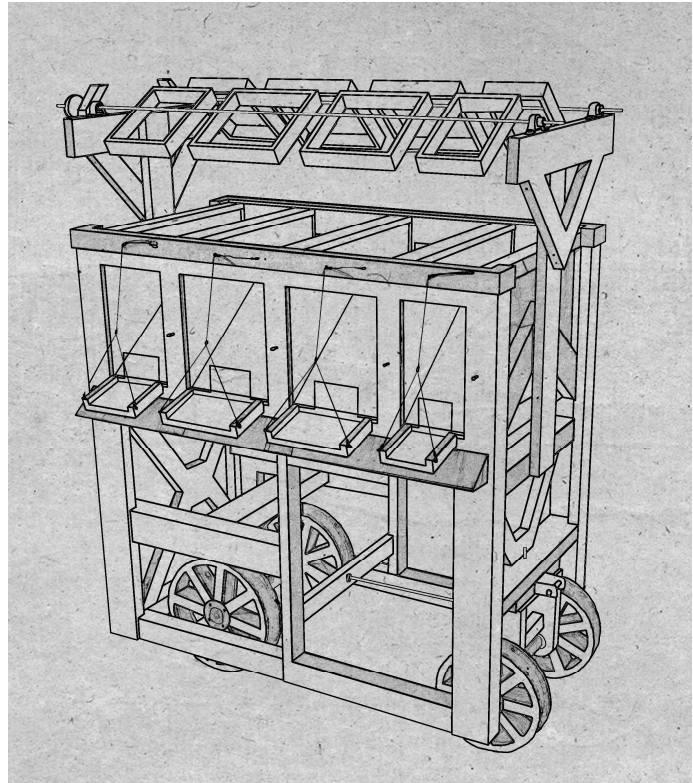
Plexiglas slats attached firmly to a gear and chain system. In order to operate the AC-15, the User spins the operation wheel (Fig. E.7) continuously. The User is then able to place 'things' on the conveyor belt to move from one location to another, at a total adjustable distance of 5 to 7 feet in length.

User's Manual

FOR USE WITH APPARATUSES: AD-15, AD-16, AI-15, AR-15, AC-15

WARNING: Read all instructions carefully before operating the Apparatuses

The *Apparatus for Distribution* is unlike any modern day machine or tool. It borrows common parts and assemblages from outdated, turn of the 20th century machines, yet when placed in contemporary settings it strikes the individual as an alien object. It exists outside the realm of “The Master’s tools” because it is an unrecognizable object to the contemporary viewer and its purpose



is clouded under this uncertainty of origin. The intention for the *Apparatus for Distribution* was never to present a final solution to the problem of income disparity and unequal distribution of wealth and resources; its purpose is better served as an additional tool in challenging these concerns and a platform for raising more questions than answers. Distribution is such a politically loaded and complicated system that for most individuals the engagement with any direct tool or machine of distribution is far removed from their daily lives. The *Apparatus for Distribution's* intention was to bring that engagement back to the individual, where they are able to witness firsthand how the object is distributed and perhaps extrapolate their experience to the larger issue of income disparity.

Distribution, as it occurs in economics, refers “to the way total output, income, or wealth is distributed among individuals or among the factors of production (such

as labor, land, and capital).”⁷ According to Marx, under capitalism, distribution is rife with shortcomings; for Marx, the capitalists “do not pay workers the full value of the commodities they produce; rather, they compensate the worker for the necessary labor only (the worker's wage, which covers only the necessary means of subsistence in order to maintain him working in the present and his family in the future as a group)” (Marxian Economics). The workers wage, according to Marx, is only a fraction of the wealth created by the laborer, while the majority of the wealth or “surplus labor” is pocketed by the capitalist. In effect, the workers who produce the object of value are less valuable than those who control the lands and markets that sell the object. Of course the substantial flaw in the capitalist model of distribution is that it completely ignores the fact that all of the world’s wealth is manufactured in part through social participation; “all that we have, all wealth, is the product of the labor of many people, even of many generations. That is to say: all labor and the products of labor are social, made by society as a whole” (Berkman 5). It stands to reason then, by Berkman’s argument, that socially produced wealth belongs to society as a whole and should therefore be distributed as such; of course, under capitalism this has not been the case and while the discourse on socially produced wealth and redistribution is attacked by a slew of political buzzwords, the gap between the rich and poor, the upper and lower class, continues to increase⁸.

Solutions to income disparity are never presented without their own degree of flaws. The structure is too complex and the individual perspective of how to remedy the problem is too diverse for any one solution to apply with any degree of success. This approach has been tried

⁷(“Distribution”)

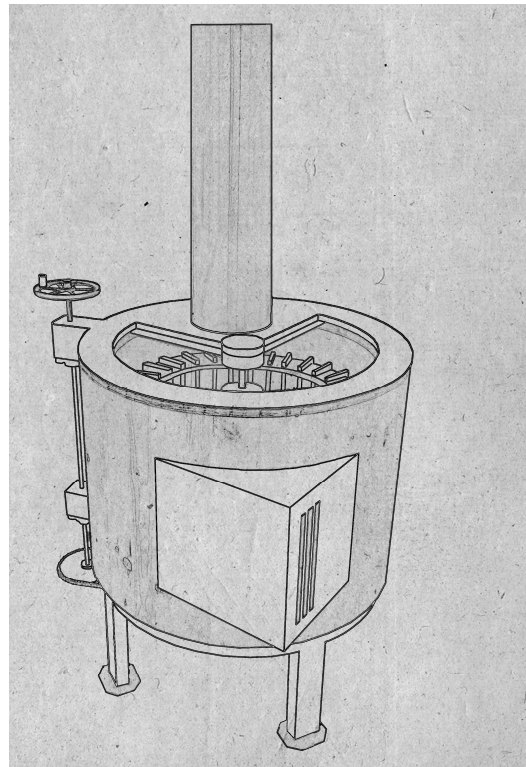
⁸As recently as January 2016, Oxfam announced that the richest 1% of the human population (approx: 70 million) has as much wealth as the combined wealth of the remaining 99% of the world’s population (approx: 6.93 billion) (BBC). This is a scale of income and resource disparity never witnessed in all of human history.

and has failed many times before, often by attempting solutions which are too idealistic or fixated with utopian-esque obsession. Additionally, many movements have failed to establish any degree of significant change because they have attacked these issues with inadequate tools. As Audre Lorde famously scripted, “the Master’s tools will never dismantle the Master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (Lorde). Genuine change perhaps is only available to those who are willing to break into new territory and develop a set of tools not familiar to the Master, or better dismissed by him/her as being useless. The intention for the *Apparatus for Distribution* was to present that type of tool.

4.2 Apparatus for Displacement

Section AD-16

The *Apparatus for Displacement* is based off the mechanical design of a conventional centrifugal fan. Similar to the centrifugal fan, the *Apparatus for Displacement* operates by moving air or other gases through space by the creation of centrifugal power from the rotation of the fan blades. As the air being pulled into the fan housing is rotated by the force of the fan blades inside the fan housing, it is forced through a side vent and into the surrounding space. The centrifugal fan is a constant displacement



device, meaning that when it is operated at a constant speed, the fan will pump, or displace, a constant volume of air⁹. The *Apparatus for Displacement* works in identical fashion and will constantly displace a particular volume of air when in continuous operation. This means that when operated the device has a subtle, but constant, effect on the air movement within the surrounding space. The intention for the *Apparatus for Displacement* was to create a tool which was capable of renegotiating the properties of any given space. In a small and very subtle effect the tool is designed to transfer the control of air movement within the space from the hands of ownership to the hand of the User operating the machine.

In his text, *What is property?*, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon defines property ownership as “a legal institution that codifies a relationship of exclusivity with respect to an object, or any property construed to be an object, in terms of rights and controls” (Wright 45). For Proudhon, property ownership is an absolute dominion— the rights to use and abuse – over one’s own¹⁰. The crux of Proudhon’s argument is that ownership always operates with exclusivity over the access and use of property – it controls and regulates its use, regardless of any objection or concern from individuals who actually occupy and identify with these spaces. When the spray painted tags, inscriptions and markings carved in concrete; the store front signage and the patina of the slow decay of buildings in *Harlem*, give way to the new development of corporate ownership, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s, concern was, “what disappears as development happens?” (Spivak 59). What happens to the identity of the community when the inscriptions – their cultural imprint – on the walls and streets of their community, is demolished and replaced? What happens

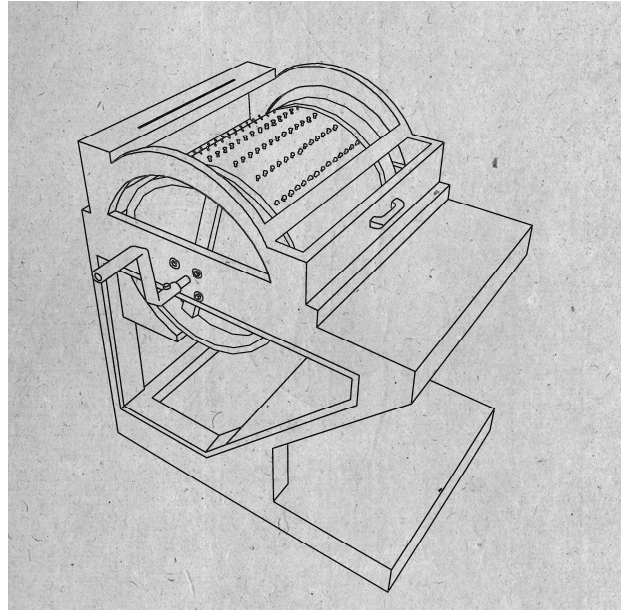
⁹ (“Centrifugal fan”)

¹⁰ “One’s own” refers to the objects, lands, etc. which is considered by law as the proprietors domain. Furthermore, Proudhon establishes that “a justification of the word abuse has been attempted, on the ground that it signifies, not senseless and immoral abuse, but only absolute domain...The proprietor may, if he chooses, allow his crops to rot under foot; sow his field with salt; milk his cows on the sand; change his vineyard to a desert, and use his vegetable-garden as a park: do these things constitute abuse, or not? In the matter of property, use and abuse are necessarily indistinguishable.” (Proudhon what is property?)

to the individual's identity when they are bought out of their own neighborhoods and communities by rich investors? Individual and communal identity is often so intricately linked to the spaces in which they reside and use, that any renegotiation of the space by proprietors evidently results in a renegotiation of identity for the people who use it.

Charles Esche, in his text *Tools and Manifestos*, uses the idea of 'tools' as a method for reinserting the individual voice back into the spaces which have been dominated by ownership. Using tools, Esche proposes that the management of spaces can be destabilized and their purposes changed or renegotiated in order to investigate their possibilities again – to turn back to the common usership what was being reserved for the exclusivity of ownership (Esche). At the core of Esche's argument we find that the best set of 'tools' for this task are hands-on experiences of objects and space through a variety of art practices – which “may exist where institutional critique crosses with individualistic, ironic and perhaps humorous detachment” (Esche). Perhaps the entire approach of the *Apparatus* series could be summarized in this way, but the *Apparatus for Displacements* critique is specific to the control of spatial arrangements. It operates as a tool for exchanging control of space from the hands of ownership to the hands of individuals. While the individual turns the drive wheel the effect created by the movement of the machine changes the cycling of the air throughout the space – it brings back the movement of the unseen – the unheard voice of the displaced identities of the User's – by giving the power to the hand of the individual who spins the wheel.

In a small part, the *Apparatus for Instrumentation* is a continuation of Aaron Swartz's call in his *Guerilla Open Access Manifesto*, for free access to ideas, languages and scientific knowledge, in place of the expanding legal institution of intellectual property rights and copyright. Swartz's manifesto was an open letter addressing the



need to challenge the legitimacy of legal authority over ideas, languages and scientific knowledge by the means of copyrights, trademarks and intellectual property rights. His call was for a guerrilla-style revolution where the illegal distribution of hacked, stolen or shared scientific knowledge, ideas and languages would serve as the primary weapons. The *Apparatus for Instrumentation* was developed in response to similar concerns as Swartz; however, instead of sneaking through the cracks and loopholes to steal, hack, or share information, the *Apparatus for Instrumentation* challenges the legitimacy of copyrights, intellectual property and trademarks by shredding them into bits and returning them to common use in the form of phrases, words and letters.

Throughout the last several decades property ownership has extended much further than the ownership of tangible objects and lands. Property ownership has begun to extend to previously unheard of heights simply because “there isn't much land left to privatize – it's mostly already in the hands of owners – so ownership [has expanded] vertically, codifying the

notion of ‘intellectual property’” (Wright 45). Intellectual property is the property ownership of the 21st Century, where the privatization of the intangible has been made possible by trademarks¹¹, authorship¹² and copyright laws¹³, which have transformed by law the use of floating combinations of symbols, languages, scientific discoveries and rhythms, developed throughout millennia of human history, into owned intellectual property. The use of language, phrases, rhythms, ideas, and scientific knowledge, historically used by all and owned by none, are now accessible only in designated formats or through the cost of purchase. In his “Guerrilla Open Access Manifesto”, programmer and hacker Aaron Swartz called the price for access to this information “too high a price to pay”:

Forcing academics to pay money to read the work of their colleagues? Scanning entire libraries but only allowing the folks at Google to read them? Providing scientific articles to those at elite universities in the First World, but not to the children in the Global South? It’s outrageous and unacceptable... Information is power. But like all power, there are those who want to keep it for themselves. The world’s entire scientific and cultural heritage, published over centuries in books and journals, is increasingly being digitized and locked up by a handful of private corporations (Swartz).

In recent years counter-culture has responded by pushing back on the advancement of intellectual property ownership, copyright laws and trademarks. P2P (peer to peer) sharing of media, programs, documentation, etc, via torrents¹⁴ has become one of the most popular methods of pirating and distributing intellectual property to millions of User’s worldwide. In his manifesto Swartz called for User’s worldwide to “take information, wherever it is stored, make

¹¹ As recently as January of 2015, singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, was granted by the U.S. Government, legal ownership of the trademarks on a variety of words and phrases, such as “Party like it’s 1989” and “nice to meet you, where have you been?”. (Justia)

¹² “Previously, ideas and sentences, rhymes and rhythms were socially available for all to use (modify, or not, and reproduce). Authorship became the name for stabilizing that semiotic swarm, commodifying it by congealing it around a single name – a signature – as if it owed nothing to the contributive usership or society.” (Wright 10)

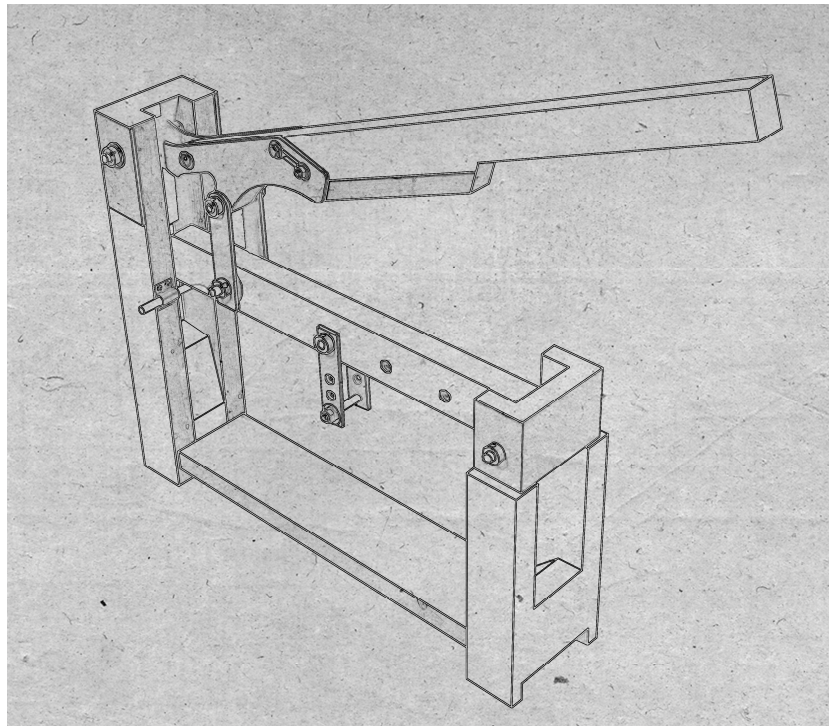
¹³ Covering the form and manner in which ideas are presented, “Copyright is a legal right created by the law of a country that grants the creator of an original work exclusive rights for its use and distribution.” (“Copyright”)

¹⁴ “In the BitTorrent file distribution system, a torrent file is a computer file that contains metadata about files and folders to be distributed, and usually also a list of the network locations of trackers, which are computers that help participants in the system find each other and form efficient distribution groups called *swarms*” (“Torrent file”)

copies and share [it] with the world. We need to take stuff that's out of copyright and add it to the archive. We need to buy secret databases and put them on the Web. We need to download scientific journals and upload them to file sharing networks" (Swartz). Swartz's call was for new action in "the grand tradition of civil disobedience", an opposition to the "private theft of public culture" and free access to the information and knowledge of our world for all individuals. For the law makers and copyright owners this type of action is nothing more than theft and piracy – "as if sharing a wealth of knowledge were the moral equivalent of plundering a ship and murdering its crew" (Swartz) – but for the User these actions are merely a return of public cultural property, human knowledge and language, back to the collective ownership of the public sphere.

The *Apparatus for Instrumentation* is another tool to express Swartz's concern regarding legal dominance and his call for a return to civil disobedience. It is a sculpture that resembles the function of any common office paper shredder which destroys or renders unreadable sensitive documentation before it is recycled or discarded. In this instance however, the documentation being shredded is the various laws, regulations and restrictions of copyright laws, trademarks and intellectual property rights. The purpose of the sculpture is to express the illegitimacy of these types of laws by shredding them into bits and pieces and effectively returning the language in them back to common words, phrases and letters.

The *Apparatus for Repressing* is built entirely out of repurposed material¹⁵ in response to the urgency of addressing the accumulation of global human waste. It takes off immediately where the *Apparatus for instrumentation* left off – that is with a pile of



waste paper – and uses it to press, shape and repurpose it into a new object of use. The act of repurposing becomes a transformative tool, which takes any ‘thing’ from its former ends and renegotiates its utility for new means (Wright 50); this action recognizes waste as a useful and fluid material which can be molded, or redirected, towards another function. The sculpture is also a response to a worldwide culture that has turned increasingly inhospitable to long term use in favor of more immediate and disposable gratification. It is within this cultural attitude we witness the sacrifice of longevity for the “prompt use and speedy replacement” of consumable products (Bauman 31). This shift from reliable, long lasting products, to the immediately gratifying, replaceable object, occurred in combination with consumer culture and the result of

¹⁵ To a varying degree all of the sculptures in this series use materials that have been collected from scrap dumpsters, piles or “garbage” material abandoned by others.

such concepts as ‘planned obsolescence’¹⁶ and capitalism’s necessity for increased profits by consumption. The intention of the *Apparatus for Repressing* is to literally re-press the waste material left over from the *Apparatus for Instrumentation* and to bring attention to the necessity for inventing tools and methods that deal with the excess waste and dangerous fiction of consumer culture.

Consumer culture, hinges on the non-satisfaction, anxieties, insecurities, and fears of its members, making promises which are remarkably similar to the rhetoric of religious ideology – the promise of happiness, fulfillment and the ultimate salvation from the damnation of the social underclass¹⁷. The reward for this membership is the “markings of belonging” (Bauman 83) which are imperative in order to maintain any degree of social relevancy. So the individual is coerced into a relationship of endless product consumption and disposal. As the rate of consumption increased so did the rate of the waste product, garbage, and the size of local landfills, as products needed to be thrown away in order to be replaced. Of course, the increased use of plastic and non-biodegradable material in the products also meant that the vast majority of the objects thrown away continued to exist for decades and began to accumulate not only in our houses and landfills but also in our oceans and natural environments. Present day estimates of the world’s rate of consumption and disposal of plastic garbage states that the amount of garbage and plastic entering into the ocean alone is the equivalent of dumping one dump truck load into the ocean every minute (Kaplan). If our rate of production and consumption of products continues to increase, the World Economic Forum estimates that by the year 2050 the amount of

¹⁶“In industrial design and economics [planned obsolescence] is a policy of planning or designing a product with an artificially limited useful life, so it will become obsolete, that is, unfashionable or no longer functional after a certain period of time. The rationale behind the strategy is to generate long-term sales volume by reducing the time between repeat purchases” (“Planned Obsolescence”)

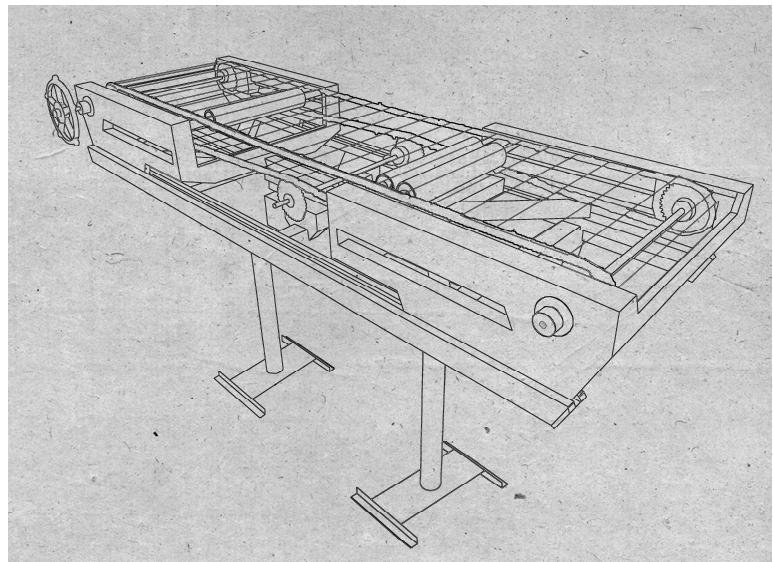
¹⁷“People are cast into the underclass because they are seen as totally useless...In a society of consumers – a world that evaluates anyone and anything by their commodity value – they are people with no market value...[and this] stems from their failure to engage in a fully fledged consumer activity” (Bauman 124)

plastic waste in the ocean will outweigh all the fish pound for pound (Kaplan). The alarming rate in which disposable objects have wreaked havoc on our natural environment is the direct result of the alarming rate in which our culture of consumption has increased its fixation on a constant influx of new consumable and disposable products. The crux of the issue we are facing today is that we must develop a new set of tools to deal with the excessive amounts of consumer waste, as well as the damages created by a culture fixated on establishing individual significance through new consumer goods.

4.5 Apparatus for Conveyance

Section AC15

The *Apparatus for Conveyance* is designed after the mechanical operation of the industrial conveyor belt. Built from repurposed material, plastics, gears and chain, the function of the *Apparatus for Conveyance* is similar to the



standard conveyor belt, in that it functions to transfer an object from one place to another; however, instead of transferring tangible products or objects, the objects which the *Apparatus for Conveyance* transfers are conceptual and nondescript. Transferring by conveyance can refer to any number of definitions, from the legal institutions that transfer property from one individual

to another, to the transportation of individuals via cars, buses, or airplanes¹⁸. Conveyance refers to more than just the physical movement of objects or people from one location to another; it also refers to the communication of conceptual edifices and meaning.

The function of the *Apparatus for Conveyance* is to transfer, or convey, the conceptual edifices of abstraction and imagination to the User. These intangible structures operate within a theoretical framework and closely resemble the realm of the imagination. Ludwig Wittgenstein proposed that the imagination, or the “visual room” is a space which cannot be owned; “I can as little own it as I can walk about it, or look at it, or point to it” (Wittgenstein 121). For Wittgenstein the visual room evades any ownership because its location, and its material, is intangible. Imagination is capable of taking complex issues and concerns and approaching them in the form of abstraction, where they can be shaped and packaged in ways to facilitate their conveyance to others. For centuries story-telling has been the foundation for conveying morality, ethics, emotions and cultural knowledge through a form of imagination turned into language, images or movements. These stories become amalgamations of imagination, abstract concepts and often unrecognizable settings, transformed into a tangible experience for the participant. Because imagination is “not obligated to let practicalities dominate, nor judge itself in terms of dualistic language (true vs. untrue; reality vs. fantasy; possible vs. impossible; good vs. evil, etc.)” (Randolph 2007) its capacity to convey meaning or abstract concepts larger than itself is opened up and freed from restrictions of the tangible world. This makes imagination a particularly important tool when addressing the negotiation of utility, because it is neither bound by ownership, definition, or regulation of the tangible experience; imagination can remain individually interpreted while also being socially shared and experienced.

¹⁸ (“Conveyance”)

While the *Apparatus for Conveyance* is itself an object within the “real”, mimicking a familiar structure of production, it functions primarily for the conveyance of the abstract; it exists between the polarities of the material and the abstract, “between the thing and the idea” (Randolph 2007); it is a proposition of what it is and of what it could be (Wright 3). In this sense, the *Apparatus for Conveyance* is the perfect tool for bridging the gap between the polarities of the practical and theoretical methods of encountering the object. The intention of the sculpture is to expand the ways in which we encounter objects by blurring the lines between the tangible and intangible, the “real” and the “imagined”. Perhaps the blurring of these lines can also replace the restrictive dichotomies of functional and conceptual interaction with a method of encountering the object which is more open to the diversity of interpretations.

Concluding statement

The Apparatus is a body of work that blurs the distinctions between the polarities of practicality and theory; the work is neither one nor the other and sometimes it is both simultaneously. In many ways the body of work presented here is a mirror of my shifting, often contradictory, position within the realm of practicality and theory, function and aesthetics.

My time working within the construction industry, tinkering with small projects around the house and garage, or as a “maker” of things, has deep roots within the practical, whereby the objects, materials and tools are valued for their practical utility, for their immediate and specific functions; however, within these environments of the practical there is often little room for the theoretical, as contemplation, meaning and purpose, appear to create no additional value to the utility of these objects. Yet, I find myself using these identical objects, tools, and materials within my art practice, where the environment often favors aesthetics and theoretical contemplation over the practical and functional object. The fine line between the practical and theoretical utility of tools and materials I use becomes fragmented and I am often left attempting to define the line where my “work” ends and the “art” begins, where the practical meets the theory.

This thesis and the body of work in the exhibit *The Apparatus* is an examination of where that line is located, but perhaps more importantly it is also a consideration as to whether or not that line needs to exist.

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