The Factory and its Memories

Matthew Galloway's residency at Cripta747

by Kari Schmidt

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Kari Schmidt visited artist and designer Matthew Galloway during his residency at Cripta747 in Turin, Italy, developing a project about a local former type factory. Since the residency, Galloway launched a new publication at the end of September with artist-run space MAL in Spain, which acts as the starting point for a new project project investigating new state-of-the-art factories located on historic shipping yards in Sevilla, Spain.

The Nebiolo factory building sits 800 metres from Cripta747, the project space in Turin, Italy where New Zealand-based artist Matthew Galloway undertook a residency from June to July 2019. A former type foundry established in 1852, Nebiolo was once alive with the work of technicians and designers producing metal typefaces for distribution in Italy and beyond. The factory now houses a local government office and sits as a relic of its former glory, the Nebiolo branding on its façade heavily obscured with black paint.

Despite having shut down in 1978, the factory as a physical space still remains (as does its legacy, with graphic designers from local studio Archivio Tipografico having collected the metal type of Nebiolo for use in their workshop). Galloway came across Nebiolo in his research on Turin prior to his arrival, having successfully

applied to undertake the two-month residency at Cripta747, a space that's previously presented an exhibition programme and that now focuses on providing residencies and studio spaces to visiting and local artists. With the intent of deepening his research-based practice in an international context, Nebiolo immediately sparked Galloway's interest due to its proximity to Cripta747. Nebiolo's design and typeface history (a history that resonates with the artist, given his own background in graphic design and given that the subject of production in a globalised context plays an integral role in a number of Galloway's previous projects), and the manufacturing issues it poses are particularly engaging.[01] In *The Factory and its Memories*, the project he developed during this residency, Galloway considers the Nebiolo factory and what we might "excavate from its ruins."[02] The notion of things coming to an end while having a rich after-life threads its way through Galloway's project, which culminated in a publication produced by the artist and an exhibition in the artist's studio space at Cripta747. Both the publication and the exhibition could be viewed by the public for the final week of Galloway's residency.

The exhibition comprises a number of elements. Four marble works are prominently presented, their composition and the manner in which they've been cut suggesting the appearance of ruins. Engraved by a local artisan, each slab of marble bears a single word on its face: 'Morte', 'Futuro', 'Memoria', 'Eterno', meaning, *death, future, memory* and *everlasting*. Above the marble slabs, the sentence 'You will need both hands to walk' is shakily drawn on the gallery wall, alongside annotated posters featuring an essay by Czech-born philosopher and writer Vilém Flusser entitled 'The Factory'. A banner further abstracting the annotations on Flusser's essay and three metal casts of an original Nebiolo metal typeface are displayed on a concrete slab.



Matthew Galloway, open studio, Cripta747, Torino, June 2019. Photo: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano.



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When I walked through Turin with Galloway at the early stages of the residency, prior to the production of any of the final works, the artist noted his wish to abstract the ideas and issues associated with Nebiolo in the exhibition, with the show speaking to the universal and poetic – as opposed to the historical and specific. This latter function was ostensibly served by the publication, which was placed outside the main exhibition and studio space on a set of concrete slabs. Intended to complement the exhibition, the publication documents and contextualises the history of Nebiolo with essays in both English and Italian. It includes an introductory text by the artist, writing by ex-Nebiolo employee Gaenato Donato, [03] an interview with Archivio Tipografico, and Flusser's 'The Factory' essay.

Installed in the centre of the room and framed by empty space, the marble slabs are perhaps the first work to strike one encountering the exhibition. The Nebiolo typeface employed by Galloway for the text engravings, called *Augustea*, was originally based on Roman inscriptions carved on marble throughout Turin (for example, on memorials, buildings and statues). Galloway gives the Nebiolo font a new life through this use, thereby expanding the lifespan of type and its applications – historical, social and political – in differing contexts. He also provides archival examples of this in his

introductory essay to the publication, which references the fonts *Veltro* and *Microgramma* and their uses by printers adopting the Nebiolo typefaces outside the context of the factory producing them. *Veltro* (otherwise known as 'Mussolini', due to the similarity between its capital M and Mussolini's signature) was designed in the 1930s by the factory's first artistic director, and it was subsequently used during the post-war years primarily for Italian holiday-destination postcards. Similarly, the typeface *Microgramma*, designed in 1952, was eventually used in a plethora of sci-films and television shows, including 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Star Trek* (in numerous episodes and in a number of the Star Trek films), *Doctor Who* (1993) and *Alien* (1979). The artist considered the latter well suited for the science-fiction format, with the font being "inspired by the rounded windows of aeroplanes, trains and in the concrete facades of modernist tower blocks; embodying a utopian vision for the future that has been and gone."[04]

Galloway's use of *Augustea* in the publication, and his examination of *Veltro* and *Microgramma*, demonstrates his interest in type as a form of memory, which is also reflected in his use of the Italian words inscribed on the aforementioned marble stones. Death, Future, Memory, Everlasting. A factory may become obsolete, but it still has memories that feed into our thinking and practices in the future, thereby remaining eternal. Such notions are also demonstrated in the contemporary use of Nebiolo typefaces at Archivio Tipografico, whose team, by carefully collecting typefaces from small print shops in Turin, have amassed a nearly complete set of Nebiolo factory typefaces. These are used in the studio's workshop, which sits alongside a library and an archive, the designers maintaining an uninterrupted connection to the past:

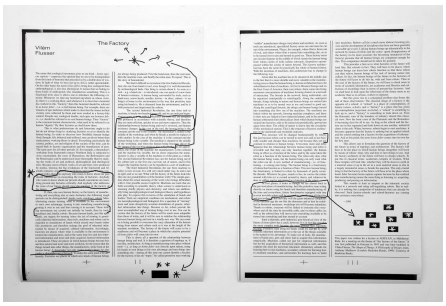
> "We are constantly reminded of how things used to work, and we are constantly asking what we can learn from this… And this also connects us with a larger history, because we can't forget that whatever was happening at Nebiolo during a certain moment is tied to the trends and activities of other foundries around Europe. So yes, the typefaces are memories, they are ways to understand the context in which they were born."[05]

The idea that a factory has memories and that these memories are worth keeping is further explicated in Flusser's essay 'The Factory', the fourth essay in Galloway's publication. Flusser examines the manner in which factories identify human beings and the science, politics, art and religion with which they are associated. The author considers manufacturing – the act of 'turning' one object into another – as fundamental to human nature. In his view, "anyone who wants to know about our past should concentrate on excavating the ruins of factories."[06]

Flusser carves out four periods in the history of manufacturing: hands, tools, machines and robots. He considers that each period (and every factory for that matter) produces "new kinds of human beings", which – as we move along the chain – become increasingly more alienated from nature and even culture. In Flusser's view, this alienation will continue until such time as humans and robots merge in this practice of 'turning' to create the factories of the future.



Matthew Galloway, open studio, Cripta747, Torino, June 2019. Photo: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano.



Matthew Galloway, open studio, Cripta747, Torino, June 2019. Photo: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano.



Sara Ravelli, Lorenzo Monnini, Matthew Galloway, open studio, Cripta747, Torino, July 2019. Photo: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano.

Galloway picks up on these notions in his depiction of the words 'You will need both hands to walk', writ large on the gallery wall. Galloway first heard this phrase in 2015 at a two-day graphic design intensive in Karekare, New Zealand, where participants were warned of the steep terrain on the property and the need to use all extremities in navigating the surrounding bush. Galloway co-opted the phrase, representing it in a poster that he produced during the intensive, with the letter forms having been sourced by tracing the shapes of Manuka tree limbs located onsite. The artist

has re-used this image within the context of this exhibition as a response to Flusser's essay, in particular Flusser's articulation of the hand as the first phase in the history of manufacturing and the phase most closely associated with nature. The wording and the naive and almost primitive way in which it has been rendered brings to mind our origins and the evolution of human beings over time: "we crawl before we walk, the hands being the first things we have in nature".[07] The image presents a contrast with the cold marble and metal of the other works in the exhibition, suggestive of the distance between us and nature that has resulted from the stages of the factory outlined in Flusser's essay.

The Nebiolo factory itself also provides an example of the inevitable changes and transitions in manufacture (and therefore human civilisation), which Flusser's essay outlines. The closure of Nebiolo represented an inability to adapt to changing circumstances as well as new printing technologies, such as phototype. This failure was in large part due to its size, which prevented Nebiolo from taking a more nimble and dynamic approach in regards to its processes and equipment. As the biggest type and printing equipment manufacturer in Italy for a time, the Nebiolo factory was considered integral to Turin and its economy. That such a large and powerful factory could so suddenly become redundant in the wake of emerging technology resonates today in light of the impending obsolescence of our own methods of working. This is in the wake of artificial intelligence and automation, which prominent historians, such as Yuval Noah Harari, predict having massive disruption to jobs in the near future as a result of the "robot revolution".[08]

Flusser's essay is the only one to be displayed as part of the exhibition proper, with Galloway having annotated sections of the essay with asterisks and further abstracting these annotations onto a fabric banner following a precise method:

> "The first asterisk is the human hand alone in nature, the second is the human in the middle with tools all around it, the third one is where the black square represents the machine and humans are smaller and located around the

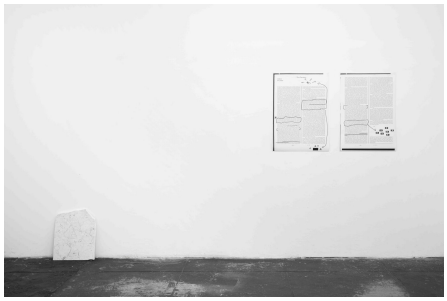
machine, and the fourth is a synthesis of machine and human into the robot-person."[09]



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Matthew Galloway, open studio, Cripta747, Torino, 2019. Photo: Matthew Galloway.

In this way, the banner, although derived from the annotated poster of Flusser's essay, is a more visual and final work that Galloway told me could be read as a schema of human history – with manufacturing being at its core. As Flusser's essay outlines, to understand who we are, and to gain authentic insight into human civilisation, one has to look to where we made the objects of which our lives consist. Galloway provides an example of this in a sentence underlined in the poster in the exhibition: "A shoemaker not only makes leather shoes; he also makes a shoemaker out of himself.". This notion is further demonstrated in another essay included in the publication, by former Nebiolo employee Gaenato Donato.

Clearly, Donato's fifteen years at Nebiolo heavily informed his identity. In his essay, Donato traces the arc of his personal history at the factory, from his first day in 1963, to the factory's closure in 1978. He describes the machines and processes they used and

fondly recalls his teacher and workmates, lunchtime siestas, and the factory environment in general. His recollections seem to negate Flusser's notion that the present-day factory is a madhouse, where human beings are imminently replaceable and alienated. Donato's memories of the 1960s and '70s at the factory are nostalgic and loving, even sensuous:

> "The atmosphere on the factory floor was permeated by a light mist that came out of the crucibles, where the ingots, made of an alloy of lead, tin, antimony, zinc etc. were slowly consumed, as they turned from raw material into perfect movable type for printing. The sweet smell of molten metal could be felt in the air."

The images generated here speak of a different time, when craft, tactility and apprenticeships were highly valued and practised daily. By the 1960s and '70s, printmaking in this format had a long history, coming in at about 500 years old. Donato's essay is suggestive of what we may lose when a factory becomes defunct – in this case tradition, belonging, and economic support for the wider community. As Galloway told me, these themes continue to resonate with the local community, residents having lived with the obsolescence of factories and what becomes of their remains. The inclusion of Donato's essay provides an important human element to this project, connecting us in an emotional way to lived, human experiences of the factory.

Donato's vivid descriptions of Nebiolo, and the techniques used during his time there, also partially inspired Galloway's decision to re-create the processes of the factory and cast some of the original typefaces made there. Sat in front of the banner work, almost akin to an altar, are the three metal casts resulted from this process. They are derived from a metal typeface which Gaetano worked with, called *Forma*. In this way, a piece of the factory and the metal type it produced are included in the exhibition as a work in its own right, as distinct from the metal type operating as an archival piece (as in Archivio Tipografico's collection). These casts are derived from the original metal typeface, and each successive cast utilises less material. Throughout the process, the typeface therefore becomes increasingly less clear, the work evoking

memory and the ways in which memories remain but also fade and become less accurate over time.

The melting of metal employed at Nebiolo to produce these heavy metal casts also demonstrates the artist's preoccupation with formalised language. In Galloway's view, there is a material heat and weight to this process, the casting feeling "very finite, definitive and authoritative".[10]

This interest in language and how it can hold authority is also evident in Galloway's use of the aforementioned marble slabs, inscribed as they are with monumental words and the relatively formal and austere typeface *Augustea*. In this way, Galloway links the power of written language to the historical manner and materiality of its production – as well as to the formal and aesthetic components of writing, as may be determined by one's choice of font.



Matthew Galloway, open studio, Cripta747, Torino, July 2019. Photo: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano.



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Visiting Galloway in Turin, I was struck by the relative emptiness of his studio. Sat in the corner of a white, spacious and well-lit room are a desk, chair and laptop, a copy of Bruno Munari's *Design as Art* (1966), and a small pool of hardened metal and miniature

blowtorch. This scene reminded me that Galloway's artistic practice is not about the physical act of making, as such. Though a tactile publication and exhibition are the ultimate products of his residency here, Galloway's methods are more intangible and as much about the process as the product, being oriented towards research, writing, engaging with others, and using digital processes and outsourcing in order to produce the objects we see before us.

These processes are also always heavily oriented towards a sustained engagement with the local, as well as with issues of production, manufacturing, national identity and the political landscape. Galloway's residency at Cripta747 facilitated a continuation of this practice within the context of Turin, a city that was once demonstrative of the Industrial Age of both Italy and worldwide. This is evident in the production methods Galloway's utilised, and the community of local producers and consumers with whom Galloway has engaged. For example, his outsourcing of engravings, banner work and printing of the publication, his inclusion of essays with and by locals Archivio Tipografico and Donato, and his offering of a publication to the local community in their native language. As Matt states:

> "My project and practice is very location based. I'm very interested in uncovering what I'm finding in the places I'm interacting with and I think that means I've done a lot of projects that deal with issues of identity in relation to NZ but it's really worthwhile to step outside of that location and see how that same way of working can operate in a different place."[11]

However, *The Factory and its Memories* also evidences a subtle shift in Galloway's approach. Galloway has always used the tools and methodologies of graphic design to navigate his artistic practice. We can see this in the publications he's designed in association with his previous exhibitions, as well as in his use of frames, rods, vinyl logos, posters and other graphical elements. *The Factory and its Memories* does utilise some of these techniques (such as a designed publication); however, the exhibition itself is more pared back than previous iterations of Galloway's work, with a greater emphasis on sculpture and installation. Conversely, although this

project *is* about the factory and its memories, about history, locality, economy and so on, it's also about graphic design, typefaces and fonts. In this way, Galloway has 'turned' his own artistic practice to provide a new dimension to his interdisciplinary practice.

Footnotes

01. For instance, in 'The Ground Swallows You' (2016), Galloway investigated the sale of blood phosphorus in Western Sahara to producers in New Zealand. This project has had a number of iterations, with the chimney stacks at Ravensdowne Factory in Dunedin (a factory which receives this phosphate) having featured in his 2019 exhibition 'Endless' at Laurel Project Space in Dunedin.

02. Early version of the 'The Factory and its Memories' exhibition publication, Introductory Text by Matthew Galloway, 2019.

03. This was originally published as a blog post in 2013 by Gaenato Donato in Italian. This blogpost can be found here: www.gaetanodonato.blogspot.com/2013/10/

04. Matthew Galloway, exhibition publication 'The Factory and its Memories', 2019, p 2.

05. Interview with Archivio Tipografico, Exhibition Publication, 'Closure / Memory / Legacy…', 2019, p 6.

06. Vilém Flusser, 'The Factory', Exhibition Publication, 2019, p 7.

07. Interview conducted with Matthew Galloway in Turin, July 2019.

08. Francesco Marconi, 'Historian Yuval Noah Harari on the Robot Revolution', *Wall Street Journal*, 2018 accessed at www.wsj.com/articles/historian-yuval-noah-harari-on-the-robot-revolution-1538057544

09. Interview conducted with Matthew Galloway in Turin, July 2019.

10. Ibid.

11. Interview with Matthew Galloway, 2019.



Matthew Galloway was born in New Zealand in 1985. In 2012 he graduated with a Master of Fine Arts (Distinction) from the University of Canterbury's Ilam School of Fine Arts. His research-based practice employs the tools and methodologies of design in an editorial way, and within a gallery context. This way of working emphasises design and publishing as an inherently political exercise and involves an interdisciplinary approach to producing publications and art objects.

In 2019 he was a selected participant in the Cripta747 Studio Programme in Turin, Italy. In 2016 he was a selected participant in Talente International Craft Fair, Munich, Germany; and ARTifariti 2016, Tindouf, Algeria. He was awarded with a Merit Award at the 2016 National Contemporary Art Awards for *Fountain is a Copy?* – a collaboration with Ella Sutherland. Galloway is currently based in Dunedin, New Zealand. Recent exhibitions include, *The Freedom of the Migrant*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery (2018) and The Physics Room (2019); *The Factory & its Memories*, Cripta747, Turin, Italy (2019); *Provincia 53. Art, Territory And Decolonisation*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Leon, Spain (2017); *Melfas. Línea orgánica*, Museo de arte contemporáneo del Sur, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2017); and *This Time of Useful Consciousness*, The Dowse Art Museum, Wellington, New Zealand (2017).



Kari Schmidt is a writer, curator, researcher and facilitator with an interest in art and the social, public and legal realms. She has an LLB (Hons) and a BA (Hons) in Art History, and wrote her LLB dissertation on the conflict between Copyright Law and Appropriation Art (an updated version of which she recently presented at the AIMAC Arts Management conference in Venice, Italy in 2019), and her Art History dissertation on art and social change in New Zealand via the strategy of participation.

Recent exhibitions with which she has been involved as either a curator, facilitator or writer include, *I Understand If You're Busy*, RM, Auckland, New Zealand and Tacit, Hamilton, New Zealand (2018); *Intersectional Feminism in Dunedin*, Geoff's and Studio2 and the Margaret Freeman Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand, sponsored by Suffrage 125 (2018); *Intersecting Architectures*, Dunedin School of Art, Dunedin, New Zealand, sponsored by Dunedin City Council and Graduate Women Otago (2019); and *Analogue*, Olga, Dunedin, New Zealand (2019). She has also written art criticism for the Pantograph Punch and Eyecontact. Kari is currently practising as a lawyer at law firm Galloway Cook Allan, co-facilitating Laurel Project Space in Dunedin, and working on a research report for the New Zealand Animal Law Association on farmed animal welfare law in New Zealand, funded by Lush and the Law Foundation.

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