OCTOBER

PAUL CHAN

The appearance of art is itself social.

Art participates in the world as a medium of transfiguration.

Every artwork is socially defined more by what it anticipates than what it is, none more so than ones that expect revolutions tomorrow.

From heap to whole: that is the social promise of art.

What gives art quality is the force of its non-judging judgment.

Art becomes spiritualized when what is made is more real than reality.

Those who misunderstand, denigrate, or ignore what is made are also collaborators in making it.

What does not belong to this world is the only thing worth making.

A thing is a web of relations at a standstill.

An artwork is a form of relating as both instant and process.

Art tends toward worldlessness because it is more and less than a thing.

Expression is engagement as interference.

Politics is art's exchange value.

The most useful art is advertising.

The most useless political activity is advertising.

Practically speaking, the art of politics consists of organizing somebody before somebody organizes you.

To be obsessed with politics in art is to forsake society. The revolution without people. A movement without members. A community without community.

Art exhibited as a solution to political conflict is an illness offering itself as medicine.

The worst sort of artistic egoism masquerades as aesthetic altruism.

You must know politics to be able to prevent it.

Speed and mystery make up for the lack of materials and resources.

When you are anxious to produce something, let no one perceive it until it is made.

There is nothing practical about praxis.

Critique is colorless kitsch.

The cunning of art is how it manifests the irreconcilability of it all without resorting to myth or nihilism.

Art made that is complete is ideological in nature.

What passes for engaged art is often just ambition dressed up as redemption.

When art is presented as evidence of social truths, it usually gets everything wrong.

Only outsiders produce new ideas.

Hope in art often masks a secret despair.

A political aesthetic divides the adversary in order to gain time.

Social engagement is founded on a community of shared risk.

A public is never found: it is always built.

The more a form mimics social reality, the less hold it has over people's minds, and the farther it is from it being a practical activity.

A composition is organizing by aesthetic means.

Using people as artistic material enlivens art but strips them of personhood.

In matters of art, humankind is always absent. Present is man, this fellow or that.

The nature of nature is law as tendency.

An artwork is a model for a new nature.

PAUL CHAN lives in New York.