

Fossil Free Culture NL:
A Case Study

Pia Fritsch

Thesis Block

Thesis Supervisor Vasiliki Belia

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Student number: 5829704

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Introduction

The climate crisis has once again risen to the forefront of international concern, as seen in the 2019 Climate Action Summit meant to catalyze action towards the Nationally Determined Contributions established in the Paris Agreement. However, while the Paris Agreement focuses on reducing climate change based on reductions of country emissions, a 2017 report reveals that “just 25 corporate and state producing entities,”¹ or “Carbon Majors,” as the report calls them, “account for 51% of global industrial GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions. Given this staggering contribution to the climate crisis, more attention should be paid to these corporations in the context of climate action than has been given thus far. The Amsterdam-based collective, Fossil Free Culture NL (FFC NL or FFC),² who identifies as “an intersectional, queer, feminist collective,”³ is one example of a group that enacts activism recognizing the heavy responsibility of fossil fuel corporations to the climate crisis. They have specifically targeted Shell, or Royal Dutch Shell, for the corporation’s funding of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam as a marketing ploy to gloss over their culpability regarding the climate crisis. Shell in particular is the eighth largest corporate producer of greenhouse gas emissions,⁴ and Fossil Free Culture NL argues that Shell’s funding of the Van Gogh Museum is a misleading marketing tactic saying,

For a tiny slice of their enormous PR budgets, oil and gas companies are able to buy a false image of cultural and societal generosity. Their motivation has nothing to do with cultural benevolence; it is a strategy to secure the social respectability they desperately need to continue their destructive business as usual.⁵

FFC claims that this marketing tactic is a practice known as ‘artwashing,’⁶ which I will explain in depth in Chapter 1, but for the purpose of explaining my argument, artwashing means to cover over as well as to clean or wash away harmful consequences of a corporation’s business while intending to make stakeholders and the public believe that the company is socially conscious by funding the arts. Fossil Free Culture NL’s activism specifically targets Shell’s artwashing through their institutional relationship with the Van Gogh Museum saying,

Through unsolicited art performances in institutions that accept such sponsorship, we expose the ecological and social devastation that the fossil fuel industry inflicts on the planet, and lay bare the way these cultural institutions actively sanitise the reputation of companies like Royal Dutch Shell.⁷

¹ Paul Griffin, *CDP Carbon Majors Report 2017* (London: CDP Worldwide, 2017), 8.

² I abbreviate Fossil Free Culture NL throughout the paper with either FFC NL or only FFC. I abbreviate this acronym to FFC for the sake of simplicity while I want to note that the group calls themselves FFC NL in order to distinguish themselves from other groups with the name Fossil Free Culture with the different designations of FFC such as Fossil Free Culture Belgium. In this paper, I only refer to FFC NL when I use the shortened acronym of FFC.

³ “Climate Racism,” Fossil Free Culture NL, last modified March 8 2019, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/news/climate-racism/>.

⁴ Griffin, *CDP Carbon Majors Report 2017*, 8.

⁵ “About Us,” About, Fossil Free Culture NL, accessed March 24, 2020, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/about/>

⁶ “About Us.”

⁷ “About Us.”

FFC aims to influence the fossil fuel industry at large by directing their action to a specific, achievable target which enables them to know when that goal has been met and that it influences the fossil fuel industry as it is one mechanism to bolster and support the industry's reputation. The industry's reputation is tied to the concept of social license to operate.

Social license to operate is a business term belonging to extraction industries and which was established after a fifteen-year study of community response to a mine.⁸ The common definition of the term emerges from that study which defines social license to operate, or SLO, as “a community's perceptions of the acceptability of a company and its local operations.”⁹ The authors later expand the concept of community to include stakeholders which “could include many parties outside the geographic community” naming different kinds of activists as prominent parties.¹⁰ These non-local stakeholders can also be in both “developed and developing countries.”¹¹ One multinational advising firm, while advertising their services to oil and gas companies, stress that social license to operate is “no longer granted by only local communities. It extends to a potentially more powerful group of largely urban dwelling broader society.”¹² FFC's activism qualifies them as one of these stakeholders, both as urban dwellers in a developed country and as an activist group. The efficacy of FFC's activism hinges on the idea of the social license to operate, using the fossil fuel industry's own designation of this concept FFC declares, “Our goal is to confront oil and gas sponsorship of public cultural institutions in the Netherlands. We are committed to eroding the fossil fuel industry's public image and their *social license to operate* [emphasis added].”¹³ FFC's activism targets Shell's social license to operate, but by exposing Shell's harmful social and economic impacts, it also works to chip away at the fossil fuel industry's social license to operate.

FFC's main strategy is to stage “unsolicited art performances”¹⁴ in the Van Gogh Museum. They staged six different performances from May 2017 until September 2018, until the Van Gogh Museum decided to discontinue its funding from Shell, ending their 18-year sponsorship deal.¹⁵ While the Van Gogh Museum maintained in their official statement that their decision to discontinue Shell's funding was purely coincidental timing¹⁶ and a Shell Nederland

⁸ Ian Thomson and Robert Boutilier, “Modeling and Measuring the Social License to Operate: Fruits of a Dialogue Between Theory and Practice,” (2012): 1.

⁹ Thomson and Boutilier, “Modeling and Measuring the Social License to Operate,” 2.

¹⁰ Ibid, 2-3.

¹¹ Ibid, 1.

¹² Amber Johnston-Billings, Mike Kaiser, and Louise Pogmore, *Strengthening social license in today's context* (Australia: KPMG, 2019), 3.

¹³ Johnston-Billings, Kaiser, and Pogmore, *Strengthening social license in today's context*, 3.

¹⁴ “About Us.”

¹⁵ “Shell Dropped,” Fossil Free Culture NL, last modified September 14, 2018, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/news/shell-dropped/>.

¹⁶ Fossil Free Culture NL, “Introductory Informal Interview,” interview by author, Amsterdam, March 25, 2019; This statement is no longer available from the Van Gogh Museum itself.

spokeswoman said it was a “mutual decision,”¹⁷ funding decisions for museums are informed different forms of societal pressure and FFC’s activism is one form of such pressure.

The main research question this study explores is as follows: How might FFC’s anti-artwashing culture jamming activism weaken Shell’s social license to operate through the redirection of shame? I also explore several sub-questions relating to the academic theories and activist strategies that I use to understand Fossil Free Culture’s activism which are as follows:

- How do artwashing and social license to operate function?
- How may Fossil Free Culture NL’s performance activism be considered culture jamming? How does FFC NL critique and intervene in artwashing, the Van Gogh Museum and Shell through their culture jamming?
- What does shame do? How does FFC NL’s activism redirect the movement of shame between FFC NL, the Van Gogh Museum, stakeholders and Shell in a way that may ultimately destabilize Shell’s social license to operate?

I analyze my main research question using the novel combination of the concept of artwashing, the extraction industry management model of social license to operate, the activist style of culture jamming, and theorizations of shame to address my research question. This a novel framework also serves as my academic contribution to investigate the niche and relatively understudied activist form which FFC practices. In the first analysis chapter, I explain the concept of artwashing and the industry model of social license to operate which are the concepts on which my argument is based. This then serves as a foundation around which FFC’s activism can be better understood. In the second analysis chapter, I explore the activist tradition of culture jamming and why FFC can be understood as a contemporary sub-style of culture jamming. I then present each performance that FFC staged in their campaign to end Shell’s artwashing at the Van Gogh Museum and illuminate what critique each performance launches as well as what demands they make. In the third analysis chapter, I situate FFC’s activism as a form of emotional labor by exploring affect theory and theorizations of emotion on shame and shamelessness to see how shame moves between FFC, the Van Gogh Museum, stakeholders and Shell and how that potentially explain actions and motivations by each party. I especially explore shame and shamelessness in relation to interest and explore how artwashing related to the element of concealment and exposure involved in shame. I explore how shame can be considered a contagion transmitted through the gaze and how FFC’s activism can be considered a form of emotional labor that shifts the gaze causing different shame responses. Finally, in the conclusion I bring together each argument presented in the different chapters to see how they relate to one another to answer my main research question.

Beyond answering my research questions, investigating how FFC influenced the Van Gogh museum to drop funding from Shell can illustrate to other potential activists how they might reproduce similar results by adopting FFC’s tactics at other institutions and contribute to undermining the fossil fuel industry’s social license to operate. The purpose of this study overall

¹⁷ “Shell sponsorship deal with Amsterdam’s Van Gogh Museum ends,” News, The Art Newspaper, last modified August 19, 2018, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/shell-sponsorship>.

is to better understand how FFC's performance art activism pressured the Van Gogh museum to drop funding and what greater impact this institutional disassociation could have on the social license to operate of Shell and the fossil fuel industry at large.

Theoretical Framework

For my theoretical framework, I combine conceptualizations of artwashing, the extraction industry management model of social license to operate, the activist style of culture jamming and theorizations of shame which make up a unique framework as they have not been combined in this way before. I situate my understanding of artwashing based on the way that Chin-tao Wu describes the process of corporations infiltrating cultural institutions as vehicles for public relations.¹⁸ I also significantly draw on the work of Mel Evans who describes artwashing from the perspective of an artist engaged in the same niche activist style as FFC. To define artwashing, I draw on definitions of 'greenwash' which means "activities by a company or an organization that are intended to make people think that it is concerned about the environment, even if its real business actually harms the environment"¹⁹ as well as definitions of 'wash' (*noun*) which mean to apply a thin paint to a surface as well as "an act of cleaning something."²⁰ I combining these definitions to define artwash as: to clean, or wash away, as well as to cover over harmful consequences of a corporation's business by funding the arts with the intent to make stakeholders and the public believe that a company is socially conscious even though the business is socially and environmentally harmful.

Social license to operate (SLO) is a common term in the oil industry whose definition consistently references authors Ian Thomson and Robert Boutilier who produced the foundational model for this concept. They define social license to operate as "a community's perceptions of the acceptability of a company."²¹ SLO is also defined as the "*continuous acceptance or approval or both of a project* by the local (host) community and other stakeholders."²² Thomson and Boutilier are joined by Leora Black in another paper where they "claim that the level of SLO granted to a company is inversely related to the level of socio-political risk a company faces."²³ I largely reference these definitions and authors because they produced the defining model of this concept. By inverting the original intent, I apply this model in a new way to understand how FFC may destabilize the social license to operate.

¹⁸ Chin-tao Wu, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980's* (London: Verso, 2002).

¹⁹ "greenwash *noun*," Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/greenwash?q=greenwash>.

²⁰ "wash *noun*," Oxford Advanced American Dictionary, accessed May 19, 2020, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/wash_2.

²¹ Ian Thomson and Robert Boutilier, "Modeling and Measuring the Social License to Operate: Fruits of a Dialogue Between Theory and Practice," (2012): 2.

²² Robert G. Boutilier, Ian Thomson, Simon Fraser University, and Shinglespit Consultants Inc., "Social License to Operate," in *Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Ethics*, Deborah C. Poff and Alex C. Michalos (Springer International Publishing, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-23514-1_127-1.

²³ Thomson and Boutilier, "Modeling and Measuring the Social License to Operate," 2.

I also argue that FFC's activism, along with similar activist groups, represent a contemporary sub-style of culture jamming. Culture jamming "refers to a range of tactics used to critique, subvert, and otherwise 'jam' the workings of consumer culture."²⁴ I argue that FFC uses culture jamming tactics in order to 'jam' the power dynamics of artwashing. I draw on *Culture Jamming: Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance* as it collects early foundational essays²⁵ as well as more contemporary works on culture jamming that reflect the changed media landscape.²⁶ FFC's activism along with the other groups have not thus far been understood as part of culture jamming which lends my work a fresh lens to understand their activism.

Shame is largely discussed in relation to morals.²⁷ I diverge from this discussion on shame as shame in relation to morals is unproductive in the context of FFC's activism as it would present the work as overly moralistic when their work in actuality can be understood much more productively by focusing on shame in relation to the presence or absence of interest as well as exposure and concealment. I also greatly consider the contagion effect of shame as transmitted through the gaze. Silvan Tomkins argues that "activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest,"²⁸ and he also produced a theory arguing for an "extreme contagion of affect in the shared interocular exchange."²⁹ I largely base my discussion on shame in relation to exposure and concealment on Sara Ahmed's assertion that "in shame, one desires cover precisely because one has already been exposed to others."³⁰ I define shame both as an emotion and an affect that is evoked in relation to an object or an other,³¹ presupposed by interest,³² which is an evaluation³³ of the shameful quality³⁴ of one's actions and catalyzed by the actual or potential

²⁴ Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink, "Introduction," in *Culture Jamming: Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance*, ed. Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 6.

²⁵ This includes Mark Derry's foundational 1993 article on culture jamming, "Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs."

²⁶ This includes works such as "From Culture Jamming to Cultural Acupuncture," by Henry Jenkins.

²⁷ Raffaele Rodogno, "The Moral Shadows of Shame and Contempt," in *Shadows of the Soul: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Emotions*, ed. Christine Tappolet, Fabrice Teroni and Anita Konzelmann Ziv (New York: Routledge, 2011); Krista K. Thomason, *Naked: The Dark Side of Shame and Moral Life*, (Oxford University Press, 2018), DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190843274.001.0001; Julien Deonna, Raffaele Rodogno and Fabrice Teroni, *In Defense of Shame: The Faces of an Emotion* (Oxford University Press, 2012), DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199793532.001.0001; John Sabini and Maury Silver, "In Defense of Shame," in *Emotion, Character, and Responsibility*, ed. John Sabini and Maury Silver (Oxford University Press, 1998), DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195121674.001.0001.

²⁸ Silvan Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition: Two Volumes*, (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008), 353.

²⁹ Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 373.

³⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 104.

³¹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 6; Deonna, Rodogno, Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 5; Tappolet, Christine Tappolet, "Nasty Emotions and the Perception of Values," in *Shadows of the Soul: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Emotions*, ed. Christine Tappolet, Fabrice Teroni and Anita Konzelmann Ziv (New York: Routledge, 2011), 21, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.4324/9781315537467>; Seigworth and Gregg, Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Duke University Press, 2010), 2, DOI: <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1215/9780822393047>.

³² Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 353 – 354.

³³ Deonna, Rodogno, Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 6.

³⁴ Tappolet, "Nasty Emotions and the Perception of Values," 21.

gaze of another³⁵ resulting in the impulse to hide.³⁶ By focusing on the less commonly discussed aspects of shame, I bring an unusual lens to FFC's work, positioning it as emotional labor.

Methodology

The research design for this paper is a case study on the creative campaign led by Fossil Free Culture NL to pressure the Van Gogh Museum into severing their artwashing relationship with Shell. I define case study as “a method of studying social phenomena through the thorough analysis of an individual case.”³⁷ I analyze FFC NL to illuminate their work as an “intersectional, queer, feminist collective”³⁸ who instigate change by mobilizing intersectional, grassroots activism against the hegemonic power dynamics between fossil fuel corporations and cultural institutions that enforce environmental destruction and environmental racism. FFC's work is also feminist in the way that the group is led by a core group of three women and because their performances feature more women than men.

I use the method of literature review which brings together a representational body of literature, synthesizes and critically analyzes that literature for potential gaps in knowledge or steps for further research.³⁹ The *Encyclopedia of Research Design* defines literature review as a “systematic syntheses of previous work around a particular topic.”⁴⁰ I use this method in order to build a knowledge base on the subjects of artwashing, social license to operate, culture jamming and shame as a foundation on which to explore my research question. I use a representative sample of literature, not intended to be exhaustive, which enables me to hone in on a few key authors in each area whose works have been especially influential or bring out especially instrumental points.

Another method I use is feminist media analysis in which I describe and then interpret the meanings of FFC's performances which are documented through videography presented on their website. I also supplement my interpretation of their performances with accompanying media also found on their website.⁴¹ Feminist media analysis “aims to place central focus on the lives

³⁵ Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 373.

³⁶ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 103; Sabini and Silver, “In Defense of Shame,” 84 – 85; Rodogno, “The Moral Shadows of Shame and Contempt,” 116; Thomason, *Naked*, 26 – 27.

³⁷ Shulamit Reinharz, “Feminist Case Studies,” in *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, ed. Shulamit Reinharz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): 164.

³⁸ “Climate Racism,” Climate Racism, Fossil Free Culture NL, last modified March 8, 2019, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/news/climate-racism/>.

³⁹ Noel A. Card, “Literature Review,” in *Encyclopedia of Research Design*, ed. Neil J. Salkind (SAGE Publications, 2010), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412961288.n222>.

⁴⁰ Card, “Literature Review.”

⁴¹ All available performance videos, press releases and booklets can be found on FFC's website, fossilfreeculture.nl. The “Shells Everywhere” press statement is only available on their Facebook page, and neither “End the Fossil Fuel Age Now” nor “Blackout Shell” were accompanied by press releases. Some additional information on the group such as more of their activities outside of their performances can be found on their Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/FossilFreeCultureNL/>.

of women and members of other groups who have not traditionally held cultural and political power.”⁴² My interpretation of FFC’s media content qualifies as feminist media analysis because I focus on a grassroots, women-led, queer and intersectional collective engaged in power disrupting environmental activism who present an empowered representation of the politically engaged work of persons whose identities have not traditionally been associated with cultural and political power.

For the performances “Blackout Shell,” “Drop the Shell,” “Shell’s Dirty Hands” and “End the Fossil Fuel Age Now,” I analyze FFC’s videos and website statements. I also analyze the performance video and website statement for “[Sp]oiled Landscapes,” in addition to the performance booklet. For “Shells Everywhere,” I analyze the pictures of the installation as well as the website statement. My understanding of each of the pieces is enriched and informed by the associated press releases and booklets as well as by social media content when available, though I do not always explicitly analyze those materials.

Chapter 1: Artwashing and Social License to Operate

In this chapter, I define artwashing and outline the ways in which it functions. Through the argument I construct in this chapter I answer the question, ‘how do artwashing and social license to operate function?’ This explanation of these concepts serves at the foundation to understand the power dynamics at play that FFC seeks to unravel. I argue that artwashing is a public relations mechanism that involves funding cultural institutions in strategic locations, funding blockbuster exhibitions and gaining access to special publics through the museum. I also argue that the oil industry’s current heavy investment in the arts follows the marketing strategy first paved by the tobacco industry along with other industry’s with tainted reputations. I then explain the definition and model of social license to operate in detail, situating FFC as a stakeholder within the social license to operate framework.

Artwashing

In this section, I uncover the mechanisms of artwashing that are at play in Shell’s artwashing at the Van Gogh Museum. I largely draw from Chin-tao Wu’s book, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s*, as this book offers a thorough investigation on how corporations came to hold the vast amount of influence that they have today in the art world. Her account interrogates the inception of corporations into the arts and for that reason I reference her work extensively. I also engage heavily with Mel Evan’s book, *Artwash: Big Oil and the Arts*, because of her background in Liberate Tate, a group that pressured the Tate Museum in the UK to discontinue funding from BP and one of the most prominent examples of anti-artwashing activism also cited by FFC as a significant inspiration.⁴³ In this argument, I approach artwork and the arts through the lens of how corporations use it to their advantage. I

⁴² Heather McIntosh and Lisa M. Cuklanz, “Feminist Media Research,” in *Feminist Research Practice*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014), 268.

⁴³ Fossil Free Culture NL, “Introductory Informal Interview,” interview by author, Amsterdam, March 25, 2019.

focus on the exchange of monetary and image value between the arts sponsoring corporation and the cultural institutions.

What is Artwashing?

A relatively recent term, artwash⁴⁴ emerges from a branch of activism that protests corporate sponsorship of museums in exchange for positive publicity. This definition of artwashing⁴⁵ was brought out by Evans in *Artwash* who asserts that the term plays off of the similar term, ‘greenwash,’ which means “activities by a company or an organization that are intended to make people think that it is concerned about the environment, even if its real business actually harms the environment.”⁴⁶ Artwash and greenwash both earn the partial moniker of ‘wash’ by functioning as another way to both sanitize as well as to conceal something. This comes from the definition of ‘wash’ which means “a thin layer of a liquid, especially paint, that is put on a surface” as well as “an act of cleaning something using water and usually soap.”⁴⁷ In using wash, artwash implies to cover as well as to clean. The first part of the term refers to that which covers, which in this case is art. Combining the definitions of wash and greenwash, artwash then means to cover over as well as to clean or wash away harmful consequences of a corporation’s business while intending to make stakeholders and the public believe that the company is socially conscious by funding the arts. In the case of Shell, artwashing sanitizes the company’s image by washing away as well as covering over the company’s many public grievances such as oil spills, implication in human rights abuses or their disproportionate contribution to the climate crisis.

Public Relations

Corporations have sought out sponsorship agreements with arts museums and other cultural institutions since the 1980’s when the practice became a commonplace vehicle for public relations campaigns. Chin-tao Wu argues in *Privatising Culture* that corporations came to infiltrate the arts so much so that “By the end of the 1980’s... art museums had become just another public-relations outpost for corporations.”⁴⁸ It is through arts-based sponsorship that “corporations present themselves as sharing a humanist value system with museums and galleries, cloaking their particular interests with a universal moral veneer.”⁴⁹ Thus, a main

⁴⁴ “Artwashing, or, Between Social Practice and Social Reproduction,” Fertile Ground, A Blade of Grass, last modified February 1, 2017, <https://www.abladeofgrass.org/fertile-ground/artwashing-social-practice-social-reproduction/>. Another definition that falls outside the scope of this paper comes from activist groups protesting artwashing as a marketing strategy for art museums that move into low income areas which gentrifies the area and displaces many low-income residents.

⁴⁵ Mel Evans, *Artwash: Big Oil and the Arts*, (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 13. Evans attributes the coinage of the term artwash to an former researcher for a corporate sponsorship lobby group who used 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.’”

⁴⁶ “greenwash *noun*,” Oxford Advanced American Dictionary, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/greenwash?q=greenwash>.

⁴⁷ “wash *noun*,” Oxford Advanced American Dictionary, accessed May 19, 2020, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/wash_2.

⁴⁸ Chin-tao Wu, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980’s* (London: Verso, 2002), 122.

⁴⁹ Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 125.

advantage of funding cultural institutions is the elevated moral value that gets conferred to the sponsoring corporation without having to make any other alterations. While Wu's argument analyses corporations and the arts in the U.S. and U.K., we can nonetheless see the practices replicated in Shell's funding of Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum beginning with the choice of location.

Strategic Locations

Corporations choose to fund cultural institutions in strategic locations as a means to maintain the public relations benefits of museum sponsorship with minimal expenditure. Particularly because Shell and other Carbon Majors most often operate globally or at least trans-nationally, their public relations are better reinforced on a global level by funding cultural institutions in significant cities in both upstream and downstream the supply chain which means locations in influential cities in developed countries in addition to arts in communities near extraction sites. Evans explains this strategy saying, "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."⁵⁰ Capital cities are especially important as they are often rich in financial resources and business networks. This is demonstrated through the number of museums in London that Shell has sponsored including "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."⁵¹ In addition to London, Shell has also made at least one sponsorship deal with the National Gallery of Art in the political hub of Washington, D.C.⁵² Adding the high visibility tourism hub of Amsterdam, we can see how each city and location offers strategic benefits which demonstrates that funding these institutions is not a purely altruistic or generous gesture but a calculated public relations move.

Blockbuster Exhibitions

Corporations especially choose to fund exhibitions that attract the highest number of people, often referred to as 'blockbuster' exhibitions, which enables the largest volume of eyes to absorb the display. This grants the sponsoring company a moment to occupy the mind of every visitor of the show, even if only momentarily. Whether "Emblazoned all over exhibition leaflets and banners"⁵³ or "discreet" and "small,"⁵⁴ the sponsoring company receives positive publicity whenever people see "the epigraph of gratitude: 'The exhibition is made possible by a generous grant from Corporation X.'"⁵⁵ While the sponsorship is represented as an altruistic gesture, this publicity serves the corporation's self-interest through enhancing the corporate image to as many people as possible. It is important not to underestimate the impact these logos leave on the minds of museum visitors because "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

⁵⁰ Evans, *Artwash*, 26.

⁵¹ Evans, *Artwash*, 36.

⁵² Evans, *Artwash*, 32 – 33.

⁵³ Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 154.

⁵⁴ Evans, *Artwash*, 7.

⁵⁵ Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 154.

few words, ‘sponsored by BP’, ‘supported by Shell’, ‘in association with Chevron.’”⁵⁶ What we can see from the favoring of blockbuster exhibitions and the sponsorship statements and is that these all serve to boost the image of the corporation as widely as possible which serves as a potent instrument of public relations.

Access to Special Publics

Public relations strategies have thus far demonstrated that corporations target the most influential locations, but it is just as important for corporations to reach influential persons. Arts museums and other cultural institutions offer a privileged space to reach ‘special publics’ who offer an effective way to reach wider audiences, enabling enhanced marketing efficiency. Special publics can include opinion formers,⁵⁷ influencers,⁵⁸ politicians, senior civil servants,⁵⁹ business people, media executives, “target readers of the Financial Times and The Economist and anyone else in a position to bear weight on major political and economic decisions.”⁶⁰ Arts museums provide the space and ambiance where sponsoring corporations representatives can mingle with these special publics at special events⁶¹ and exhibition openings, especially those with “carefully vetted invitation lists.”⁶² The key demographics that make up special publics are a powerful source to disseminate a perspective that favors the sponsoring corporations, which is another reason why companies such as Shell seek out sponsorship arrangements.

The Shared Path of Big Tobacco and Big Oil

The oil industry, especially represented by Oil Majors Shell, ExxonMobil and BP among others, are substantially invested in the arts,⁶³ but even before the fossil fuel industry was involved in sponsorship, the tobacco industry had already paved the way. The tobacco industry realized that the arts were an effective way of scrubbing away the image of the consequences of their products. A tobacco executive for Phillip Morris made an especially bald statement of tobacco’s interest in the arts saying, “Let’s be clear about one thing. Our fundamental interest in the arts is self-interest. There are immediate and pragmatic benefits to be derived as business entities.”⁶⁴ This statement spells out the tobacco industry’s interest in the arts as one that is fundamentally self-serving. This self-interest is shared by the alcohol industry, led in particular by Absolut Vodka.⁶⁵ The reason for companies such as Phillip Morris and Absolut Vodka’s interest in arts sponsorship is because it is an especially effective method for corporations in industries “whose image is in need of some polishing” which also includes the petroleum and weapons industries.⁶⁶ Imperial Tobacco was especially invested in the arts launching and then

⁵⁶ Evans, *Artwash*, 7.

⁵⁷ Evans, *Artwash*, 87.

⁵⁸ Evans, *Artwash*, 79.

⁵⁹ Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 133.

⁶⁰ Evans, *Artwash*, 79.

⁶¹ Evans, *Artwash*, 71.

⁶² Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 134.

⁶³ Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 129.

⁶⁴ Evans, *Artwash*, 88.

⁶⁵ Wu, *Privatising Culture*, 156.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 129.

funding the “longest-running portrait award in Britain, held at the National Portrait Gallery.”⁶⁷ Imperial Tobacco funded this award for ten years and until it was replaced by BP, and Wu notes both corporations have “particularly tainted images.”⁶⁸ This example shows how the oil industry succeeded the tobacco industry’s place in this particular arts award as well as how the oil industry effectively succeeded the tobacco industry in the role of major cultural sector sponsorship.

Social License to Operate

In this section, I explain the concept and model of social license to operate. I situate FFC in relation to that model where Shell and the oil industry are working to enhance and solidify their social license to operate and FFC works to destabilize Shell’s social license to operate. I base my discussion of this model on the authors, Ian Thomson and Robert Boutilier, who conducted the study that established the concept as a measurable model for operations management who are widely cited across the mining and oil industries in addition to Thomson and Boutilier’s joint paper with Leeora Black.

Definition and Origins

Social license to operate was originally a metaphor, similar to a legal license, for how communities could either prevent or permit the functioning of an extraction site.⁶⁹ Most common definitions cite Thomson and Boutilier who assert that “a social license to operate (SLO) is a community’s perceptions of the acceptability of a company and its local operations.”⁷⁰ The *Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Ethics* defines social license to operate as the “continuous acceptance or approval or both of a project by the local (host) community and other stakeholders.”⁷¹ Although the term originated from the mining industry, it has since been adopted in industries such as “fracking, oil and gas exploration and production, pipelines”⁷² and others. Thomson and Boutilier developed this definition and their corresponding model through “extensive interviews with resettled villagers about the ups and downs of their relationships with a Bolivian mine over a 15 year period”⁷³ with additional studies being conducted later. Thomson and Boutilier expanded their concept expressed in, “Modeling and Measuring the Social License to Operate: Fruits of a Dialogue Between Theory and Practice” where they assert that SLO is granted on a continual basis and can move up or down the levels of their model. The goal of extraction-based corporations is to increase the level of SLO in order to ensure that they can

⁶⁷ Ibid, 166.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 166.

⁶⁹ Robert Boutilier, Ian Thomson, and Leeora Black, “From metaphor to management tool: how the social license to operate can stabilise the socio-political environment for business,” *International Mine Management 2012 Proceedings* (2012): sec. 2, para. 1.

⁷⁰ Ian Thomson and Robert Boutilier, “Modeling and Measuring the Social License to Operate: Fruits of a Dialogue Between Theory and Practice,” (2012): 2.

⁷¹ Robert G. Boutilier, Ian Thomson, Simon Fraser University, and Shinglespit Consultants Inc., “Social License to Operate,” in *Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Ethics*, Deborah C. Poff and Alex C. Michalos (Springer International Publishing, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-23514-1_127-1.

⁷² Boutilier, Thomson, Simon Fraser University, and Shinglespit Consultants Inc., “Social License to Operate.”

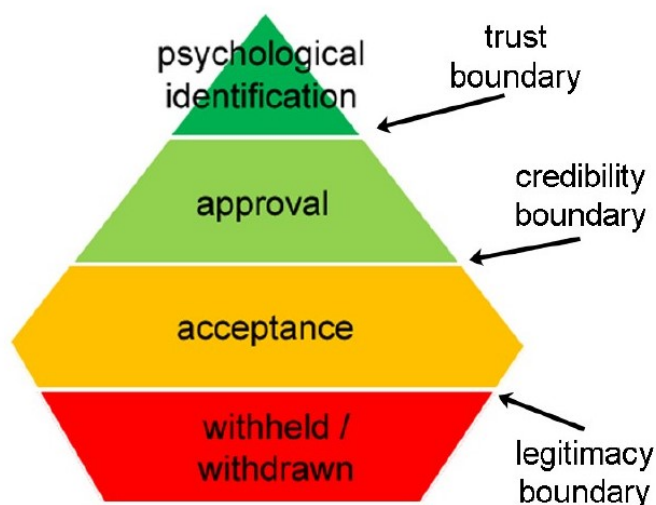
⁷³ Thomson and Boutilier, “Modeling and Measuring the Social License to Operate,” 2.

access essential resources in and near extraction sites including “financing, legal licenses, raw material, labour, markets, [and] public infrastructure.”⁷⁴ The core essence of social license to operate is the power of a community or stakeholders to allow or block extraction operations as well as a model of levels of acceptance of a company and its’ operations.

Thomson and Boutilier’s Social License to Operate (SLO) Model

There are four levels of the social license to operate model which are organized in a pyramid shape starting at the bottom level shown in Figure 1. At the first level, SLO is withheld or withdrawn meaning that the community or stakeholders do not grant the corporation social license to operate and will substantially obstruct business. At the second level, the community or stakeholders grants acceptance to the corporation for their activities, and the community or stakeholders will exert little to no effort to obstruct business practices, although not holding positive views of the corporation. This is also the most common level of SLO granted to corporations. Next there is the approval level of SLO where community members or stakeholders do not obstruct business and express some views of the corporation slightly above the level of strict tolerance. Finally, at the highest level of SLO communities or stakeholders can have psychological identification with the corporation which is where the corporation has gained “institutionalized trust.”⁷⁵ This is considered the ideal level of SLO for proponents of the model for the use by extraction corporations, although least common.

Figure 1: The “pyramid” model of the SLO proposed by Thomson & Boutilier (2011)



Thomson and Boutilier are joined by Leeora Black in “From metaphor to management tool: how the social license to operate can stabilise the socio-political environment for business.” In this paper, the authors “claim that the level of SLO granted to a company is inversely related

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 4.

to the level of socio-political risk a company faces.”⁷⁶ From this statement we can see that the greater the SLO level a community or stakeholders grant to a corporation the less socio-political risk the corporation will face. Articulated differently, the higher the SLO level communities or stakeholders grant to an organization, either by passivity or by actively facilitating the extraction processes, the less socio-political risk the corporation faces. The inverse of that statement is also true meaning that the less SLO communities or stakeholders grant to an organization the more socio-political risk the corporation faces and the less secure its operations and essential resources.

This model, generated by proponents of extraction industries to facilitate their business, can equally be applied for the inverse of the original intent and be used instead by activists to undermine the social license to operate. Thomson, Boutilier and Black state that their intentions for the model were, “to develop a globally reliable and valid measurement tool at the project and industry levels, validated in studies in Australia, Bolivia, Mexico and the USA.”⁷⁷ Later elaborating on the validity of the model on the global level saying, “As of this writing, the measure has been used with 595 different stakeholder groups at 24 different mining projects on three continents.”⁷⁸ The extent to which this model has been tested for the purposes of advancing the aims of the oil industry, combined with the inverse relationship between SLO and socio-political risk, makes this an advantageous framework to understand activism against the oil industry. This is further supported by Thomson, Boutilier and Black’s intention for the measure to be used “at the project *and industry levels* [emphasis added],”⁷⁹ meaning that their model has implications beyond specific extraction sites to the industry itself. Further discussion on the utility of this model to understand the implications of FFC’s activism against Shell is facilitated by better understanding how stakeholder(s) are defined.

FFC as a Stakeholder

Within the framework of the social license to operate model, FFC NL positions themselves as an activist stakeholder group that deliberately works to undermine Shell’s social license to operate at the industry level. The concept of stakeholder is important to social license to operate as SLO “integrates concepts from stakeholder theory.”⁸⁰ The *Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Ethics* holds that “The original definition of stakeholders is those groups or individuals who can affect the firm or who can be affected by it.”⁸¹ Thomson and Boutilier also maintain this definition of stakeholder and discuss stakeholder networks which “could include many parties outside a geographic community, such as ethical investment funds, international human rights activists, international financial institutions, and national

⁷⁶ Ibid, 2.

⁷⁷ Boutilier, Thomson, and Black, “From metaphor to management tool,” ab.

⁷⁸ Ibid, sec. 2, para. 7.

⁷⁹ Ibid, ab.

⁸⁰ Boutilier, Thomson, Simon Fraser University, and Shinglespit Consultants Inc., “Social License to Operate.”

⁸¹ Boutilier, Thomson, Simon Fraser University, and Shinglespit Consultants Inc., “Social License to Operate.”

governments.”⁸² Defining stakeholder networks in this way expands the utility of their model to include SLO levels of non-local stakeholder groups like FFC.

The *Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Ethics* expands the definition of stakeholders with words of caution saying that “A common mistake in identifying stakeholders is to assume that the company can decide unilaterally who its stakeholders are. It is more accurate to say that a company tries to discover who all its stakeholders are.”⁸³ FFC thus identifies themselves to Shell as a non-local stakeholder by staging their performance demonstrations at the Van Gogh Museum in which they denounce Shell. However, the encyclopedia again warns against underestimating stakeholders saying, “What makes the social license different from exhortations to stay within the ambit of socially acceptable activities is the recognition that stakeholders can have power.”⁸⁴ The encyclopedia thus recognizes that stakeholders are constitutive of social license to operate, are self-defining and that they hold power. That power can be used at the project site to make “operations more costly or even shut them down.”⁸⁵ Stakeholders’ power can also be exerted at the industry level to undermine the social license to operate thus increasing a corporation or industry’s socio-political risk as “Instability at higher levels of socio-political organisation has impacts at the project level.”⁸⁶ Through these conceptualizations of stakeholders understood as part of the social license to operate model, FFC can be considered a self-defined stakeholder that holds power to destabilize SLO at the industry level, which also holds implications for project level operations.

As artwashing works on the level of the corporate image to wider consuming publics, artwashing can be considered an industry level mechanism for promoting higher levels of SLO such as acceptance, approval, and potentially even psychological identification. Understood in the context of the relationship between artwashing and social license to operate, FFC has more leverage to impact Shell than it might appear without understanding how FFC sends signals through this network of power. This interaction is even more clear if we revisit FFC’s statement defining themselves as specifically positioned against the fossil fuel industry’s social license to operate.⁸⁷ With this assertion, FFC clearly defines themselves as a stakeholder who can affect the fossil fuel industry by pressuring institutions such as the Van Gogh Museum to sever their sponsorship agreement with Shell. In ending that sponsorship, the museum is no longer complicit in artwashing. By undermining the public relations mechanism of artwashing, FFC can destabilize the industry level social license to operate.

Artwashing and Social License to Operate Conclusion

In this chapter, I answered the question of how artwashing and social license to operate function which brings me close to answering my main research question by establishing clear outlines for what these concepts and mechanism are and how they function. As these are both

⁸² Thomson and Boutilier, “Modeling and Measuring the Social License to Operate,” 2 – 3.

⁸³ Boutilier, Thomson, Simon Fraser University, and Shinglespit Consultants Inc., “Social License to Operate.”

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Boutilier, Thomson, and Black, “From metaphor to management tool,” sec. 6, para. 4.

⁸⁷ FFC NL, “About us.”

mechanisms that FFC seeks to combat, these understandings are the basis for the remainder of my argument. To reiterate, I defined artwashing as a method of sanitizing and covering over the harmful aspects of a corporation's business with the intent to make people believe that the corporation is socially conscious when in reality its' practices remain unchanged. Artwashing functions as a form of public relations to promote an improved image of a corporation by sponsoring cultural institutions in strategic locations with an emphasis on funding blockbuster exhibitions. Through arts sponsorships, corporations also gain access to special publics from whom they can gain favor with a wider audience. The self-interest of arts funding over the projected image of generosity is demonstrated through the tobacco industry's former role as a major funder of the arts and the way that the oil industry succeeded them in this role. This section defined the concept of artwashing in order to understand what FFC's activism works against and why it is important.

I defined the concept of social license to operate as the perceptions of a community or of stakeholders of the acceptability of a corporation and its operations. I also outlined the model which presents different levels of acceptance or non-acceptance which are inversely related to the level of socio-political risk that a corporation faces. Within this framework, I argue that FFC fits within this model as a self-defined stakeholder who has the power to influence the industry level social license to operate. I present the SLO concept and model in order to understand how FFC might interact with the dynamics of this model in order to erode Shell's social license to operate.

Chapter 2: Culture Jamming

In this chapter, I first define culture jamming drawing from texts written about when it was at its height which present culture jamming in its original context. I also situate culture jamming in today's media landscape and discuss the contextual differences from early to later culture jamming. I discuss how culture jamming can still be useful and applicable in the changed media landscape. I then discuss how FFC's activism fits the parameters of culture jamming and how it is an appropriate and useful framework to understand FFC's activism. Next, I delve into FFC's culture jamming performances at the Van Gogh Museum and discuss what critiques they launch as well as what demands they make to the Van Gogh Museum and Shell. Finally, in the conclusion, I discuss how their culture jamming activism works as a counterforce to artwashing.

Defining Culture Jamming

In this section I present a background on culture jamming in order to situate FFC's work within this activist style in the next section. Culture jamming enjoyed a brief heyday in the late 1980's and 1990's, though, even at its peak it remained a small subculture that was not extensively researched or written about, nor has it been extensively analyzed in retrospect. This means that the pool of writing to draw from is limited leading to potential gaps in knowledge of the subject as well as undocumented cases of culture jamming. My argument draws significantly from the book, *Culture Jamming: Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance*, which compiles some foundational writing on culture jamming such as Mark Derry's article, "Hacking, Slashing,

and Sniping in the Empire of Signs,” widely considered to have defined culture jamming relatively early in its development. The book also adds more recent pieces such as “From Culture Jamming to Cultural Acupuncture” that reconfigures the concept of culture jamming in today’s context which I draw from for the culture jamming today section.

Culture Jamming Then

As a term, culture jamming was first coined in 1985⁸⁸ and came into popularity in the 1990’s⁸⁹ to refer to a practice of consumer resistance to corporate advertising, branding and consumerism. Alluding to ‘jamming’ a radio broadcast or communications by disrupting the signal and interjecting an alternate message,⁹⁰ culture jamming “refers to a range of tactics used to critique, subvert, and otherwise ‘jam’ the workings of consumer culture.”⁹¹ It emerged as resistance to the mediatization of the world and the strong corporate presence that was increasingly merging into everyday life at the time. Mark Derry in “Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs” wrote that culture jamming opposed top-down corporate advertising largely broadcast through radio, billboards, and television “whose operant mode is the manufacture of consent through the manipulation of symbols.”⁹² Derry discussed culture jamming as “semiological guerilla warfare”⁹³ and as an alternative to passively accepting the role of consumer. Techniques to conduct this ‘semiological guerilla warfare’ include “media pranks, advertising parodies, textual poaching, billboard appropriation, street performance, and the reclamation of urban spaces for noncommercial use.”⁹⁴ These tactics made up the toolbelt of culture jammers during its’ most prolific time as an activist style.

Culture jamming follows an even earlier consumer opposition tactic of *détournement* employed by Situationist International who were “a collective of radical intellectuals and avant-garde artists who critiqued the ‘society of the spectacle’ during the 1960s.”⁹⁵ *Détournement* is a technique of finding something in mainstream culture and appropriating and revising it for an alternate semiotic agenda, often in a way that critiques the original message. Kalle Lasn, founder of *Adbusters* Magazine, one of the most frequently cited and well known examples of culture jamming that still operates today, wrote in his foundational book, that the earlier tradition of *détournement* was “Literally a ‘turning around,’ *détournement* involved rerouting spectacular images, environments, ambiances and events to reverse or subvert their meaning, thus reclaiming them.”⁹⁶ The tradition of *détournement* shows that even in the 1960s, a time where advertising

⁸⁸ Mark Derry, “Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs,” in *Culture Jamming: Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance* ed. Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 46.

⁸⁹ Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink, “Introduction,” in *Culture Jamming: Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance*, ed. Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 6.

⁹⁰ Mark Derry, “Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs,” 46.

⁹¹ DeLaure and Fink, “Introduction,” 6.

⁹² Derry, “Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs,” 46.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 46.

⁹⁴ DeLaure and Fink, “Introduction,” 6.

⁹⁵ DeLaure and Fink, “Introduction,” 13.

⁹⁶ Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge--And Why We Must*, (New York: Quill, 2000), 103.

space was extraordinarily less pervasive than it is today, people were already resisting the trend of corporate encroachment into everyday life.

Designed as an opposition to a top-down and one-way corporate advertising milieu, some critics consider culture jamming to be a thing of the past⁹⁷ and that it has been easily and productively co-opted by marketers to sell the very consumer culture that culture jammers critique.⁹⁸ Some even say this co-opting goes as far back as the 60s in the creative revolution of advertising that has led the direction of advertising ever since.⁹⁹ This is a critique I will revisit in the the conclusion to discuss why FFC's culture jamming, at least partially, circumnavigates this pitfall. In terms of current media saturation, it seems like a moot point to try to 'jam' a media system that feeds on user generated content. I will next discuss why culture jamming hasn't entirely disappeared in the context of an online world that is never not 'on.'

Culture Jamming Today

One way to reconsider culture jamming in a time defined by social media is expressed in "From Culture Jamming to Cultural Acupuncture" by Henry Jenkins. Jenkins discusses the antiquated tactics of original culture jammers saying that the "tactics were premised on limited access to communication resources and thus the need to disrupt the power of mass media."¹⁰⁰ Before computers and smartphones were the norm, the lack of voice that ordinary people had against the one-way communications of corporate advertising was part of the stimulus for culture jammers to modify mass media messages as a form of reclaiming power and voice. However, pasting an alternate message over a billboard seems quaint when compared to targeted ads, native advertising and influencers along with established as well as new social media platforms being generated. Considering the flow of social media, Jenkins suggests an alternate idea of "Cultural acupuncture [which] seeks to reshape and redirect circulation, rather than block or jam the flow."¹⁰¹ Jenkins' metaphor for contemporary culture jamming as a redirection of media flow recontextualizes the semiotic work of culture jamming as part of the flow of media. While the media environment has changed, culture jamming does not have to be defined by the media environment in which it developed. There is still room for the disruption of consumer culture through culture jamming tactics which now can simply add the use social media to spread their message.

FFC NL as Contemporary Culture Jamming

⁹⁷ DeLaure and Fink, "Introduction," 6.

⁹⁸ Jennifer Sandlin and Jaime Callahan, "Deviance, Dissonance and Détournement," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 9, no. 1 (2009): 81 – 82; Vince Carducci, "Culture Jamming: A Sociological Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 6, no. 1 (2006): 125, DOI: 10.1177/1469540506062722.

⁹⁹ Nicholas Carah and Sven Brodmerkel, "Critical perspectives on brand culture in the era of participatory and algorithmic media," *Sociology Compass* (January 2020): 3 – 4, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12752>.

¹⁰⁰ Henry Jenkins, "From Culture Jamming to Cultural Acupuncture," in *Culture Jamming: Activism and the Art of Cultural Resistance* ed. Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 156.

¹⁰¹ Jenkins, "From Culture Jamming to Cultural Acupuncture," 143.

I argue that Fossil Free Culture NL's activism is an expression of culture jamming, and considered with similar anti-artwashing activist groups,¹⁰² represents a contemporary sub-style of culture jamming. This sub-style works with the flow of media to disrupt the capitalist message of artwashing by reclaiming capitalist space in cultural institutions to spread their anti-capitalist and anti-artwashing message that ultimately combats climate change by disrupting the industry level social license to operate of Shell and other Carbon Majors. These groups instigate socio-political unrest by pointing out the illusion that artwashing casts and pressure cultural institutions to discontinue their complicity in artwashing.

In considering FFC as part of a contemporary sub-style of culture jamming, I do not negate FFC's self-definition asserting that their work "merge[s] aesthetics and poetry with the audacity and commitment of activism to create boundary-pushing interventions."¹⁰³ I argue that FFC's activism fits the parameters of culture jamming and analyze it as such because culture jamming provides a useful structure in which to situate FFC's activism. Additionally, FFC cited culture jamming as one of their inspirations¹⁰⁴ along with the Guerilla Girls who are well known for their culture jamming techniques.¹⁰⁵ FFC members also participated in a Beautiful Trouble workshop¹⁰⁶ which is considered contemporary culture jamming,¹⁰⁷ that encourages grassroots activists to make their movements "more creative and more effective."¹⁰⁸

The introduction of *Culture Jamming* by Marilyn DeLaure and Moritz Fink lays out a set of qualification that further clarifies how FFC's activism fits into culture jamming. According to DeLaure and Fink, culture jamming appropriates forms of dominant consumer culture.¹⁰⁹ FFC frequently appropriates Shell's logo incorporating it into their performances using real scallop shells along with appropriating themes from the Van Gogh Museum. As a collective of artists who produce work outside of their FFC performances, FFC meets the criterion of culture jamming as "artful."¹¹⁰ FFC "operates serially" as does culture jamming¹¹¹ as they staged a number of different performances until their goal is met. FFC also created a "DIY Disobedience Kit" encouraging others to engage in DIY disobedience¹¹² which matches the "participatory"¹¹³ style of culture jamming.

¹⁰² "About Us," About, Fossil Free Culture NL, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/about/>. FFC collaborates with groups with similar agendas including "groups in the UK, like BP or not BP? and Culture Unstained; France, Libérons le Louvre; Norway, Stopp oljesponsing av Norsk Kulturliv; USA, Occupy Museums and The Natural History Museum, among others."

¹⁰³ "About Us."

¹⁰⁴ Fossil Free Culture NL, "Introductory Informal Interview," interview by author, Amsterdam, March 25, 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Fossil Free Culture NL, "Introductory Informal Interview."

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Jenkins, "From Culture Jamming to Cultural Acupuncture," 136.

¹⁰⁸ "The Project," About, Beautiful Trouble, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://beautifultrouble.org/faqs/>.

¹⁰⁹ DeLaure and Fink, "Introduction," 12.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 14.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 21.

¹¹² Fossil Free Culture NL. *Fossil Free Culture NL Portfolio*. Amsterdam: FFCNL, 2018, 20.

¹¹³ DeLaure and Fink, "Introduction," 17.

One of the most significant reasons to consider FFC as a culture jamming group is because of their reclamation of the museum space as culture jamming “often infiltrate[s] the spaces governed by consumer capital.”¹¹⁴ Culture jamming is also political in the sense “that it critically engages narratives of the dominant capitalist culture. At its most trenchant, culture jamming challenges existing structures of power, seeking to reveal hypocrisy and injustices, spark public outrage, and promote collective action.”¹¹⁵ FFC is political in that it critically engages the narrative of artwashing and demands that the Van Gogh Museum discontinue Shell’s sponsorship agreement, and in doing so, ruptures the power dynamic within artwashing. In addition to these characteristics, the way that FFC communicates their message deliberately, clearly and boldly is characteristic of culture jamming which often uses brief and unambiguous language to convey their message. As a contemporary form of culture jamming FFC uses social media to spread their message such as with the hashtags #DropShell and #FossilFreeMuseumplein. While FFC predominantly fits within culture jamming, I argue that FFC and similar groups represent a sub-style of culture jamming because they diverge on the tone. Culture jamming often takes an ironic, playful or prankster-like tone while FFC’s work has capacity to communicate more affective complexity. They express this complexity in in “Drop the Shell” when they call on Van Gogh’s words to his brother on “courage in the face of danger.”¹¹⁶ Affective complexity is also expressed in the “mournful” demeanor of the performers in “Shell’s Dirty Hands”¹¹⁷ and the way that the protesters in “End the Fossil Fuel Age Now” are “extremely fucking angry. And deeply scared.”¹¹⁸ FFC’s inclusion of a specific goal also sets it apart as a sub-style of culture jamming as it avoids the critique that culture jamming can be an end in itself which fails to generate tangible reform.¹¹⁹ Now that I have situated FFC within culture jamming, I will move on to analyze how FFC launches critiques and makes demands through their culture jamming performances.

FFC’s Critique

In the following section, I analyze each of the performances FFC staged at the Van Gogh Museum in chronological order before the museum announced its discontinuation of their sponsorship agreement with Shell. I especially observe how the critiques expose the aspects of Shell’s business that it seeks to hide and exposes the museum’s complicity in the artwashing.

Blackout Shell

FFC’s first work directed at Shell’s artwashing in the Van Gogh Museum is a video called, “Blackout Shell.” The video is a fictional depiction of activists sneaking into the Van Gogh Museum and destroying Van Gogh’s Sunflower painting by throwing oil on it. “Blackout

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 22.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 19.

¹¹⁶ “Drop the Shell,” Performances, Fossil Free Culture NL, last modified May 30, 2017, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/portfolio/drop-the-shell/>.

¹¹⁷ “Shell’s Dirty Hands,” Performances, Fossil Free Culture NL, last modified May 13, 2018, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/portfolio/shells-dirty-hands/>.

¹¹⁸ Fossil Free Culture NL. *Art Storm*. Amsterdam: FFC NL, 2018, 2.

¹¹⁹ DeLaure and Fink, “Introduction,” 27.

Shell” was designed as a hoax to pose questions about Shell’s pollution by juxtaposing the ‘destruction’ of the cherished artwork with Shell’s destruction of the environment. Similar to culture jamming hoaxes which generate fabrications designed to garner media attention in order to publicize a larger critique,¹²⁰ FFC defines a hoax as “a deliberately fabricated falsehood to make the invisible visible.”¹²¹ By creating and presenting this hoax, FFC makes the environmental destruction of Shell visible on the artwork Shell uses to clean-up their corporate image. The hoax is intended to provoke debate and questions about Shell’s connection to the Van Gogh Museum which, as a first performance, is meant to generate interest in Shell’s artwashing at the Van Gogh Museum.

Drop the Shell, From Prestige to Disgrace

FFC’s performance, “Drop the Shell, From Prestige to Disgrace,” featured seven performers, or “muses,”¹²² wearing white dresses assembled on the museum stairs performed a reading of a paragraph from Van Gogh’s letters to his brother “on the subject of courage in the face of danger.”¹²³ During this reading the other muses sipped an “indigestible oily amuse-bouche from a scallop shell”¹²⁴ as the black, oil-like substance drips from their mouths, runs down the front of their white dresses and leaves droplets on the floor. In a final gesture they raise the oiled scallop shells, evoking a tainted version of Shell’s logo. The muses are symbolically poisoned by the oil representing the toxic relationship between Shell and the Van Gogh Museum. The ‘oil spill’ left by the droplets from the performers’ scallop shells recalls Shell’s own catastrophic oil spills. FFC draws attention to the way Shell’s reputation tarnishes the museum saying, “While the few drops of glucose syrup on the museum floor are long gone, we believe that the stained reputation of the museum will take much more effort to restore.”¹²⁵ This performance and statement draws attention to the exchange of reputational value that is the core of artwashing. The performers play off the idea of a ‘stained’ reputation through the imagery of the white dresses and white shells both stained with black oil. This imagery highlights the reputational damage the museum risks with their sponsorship agreement with Shell, presenting the museum with a challenge to wash the stain off of their own reputation and to ‘drop’ Shell’s funding.

Following the brief, non-violent and peaceful performance, the activists were arrested. All of the demonstrators spent the night in jail and four who refused to identify themselves as an act of “solidarity with undocumented migrants” were detained for two additional nights.¹²⁶ A “‘wake’ for justice” was organized on the second day with #VanGogh8 circulating in response to the detainment, and the last demonstrators were ultimately released on the third day.¹²⁷ The

¹²⁰ Derry, “Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs,” 50 – 51.

¹²¹ “Blackout Shell,” Portfolio, Fossil Free Culture NL, last modified May 14, 2017, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/portfolio/1700-2/>.

¹²² “Drop the Shell.”

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

critique that FFC launches through their performance and the heightened attention it received due to the detainment presents a public relations situation that is difficult for the museum to ignore. Through this piece the performers present the museum with a dilemma showing the museum how it is engaged in a toxic relationship with Shell and that it ‘stains’ its own reputation in the process.

[Sp]oiled Landscapes

The “[Sp]oiled Landscapes” performance involved twenty performers dressed in black holding up black, broken and ragged umbrellas. The performers “enact an oil-soaked, dried-up, burnt-down forest” while whispering “Shell spoils landscapes” until their voices “crescendo to a windstorm.”¹²⁸ This performance plays off of the “In the Forest” exhibit that celebrates Van Gogh’s inspiration from ‘unspoiled landscapes’ calling out the hypocrisy of the museum’s celebration of nature while simultaneously accepting money from a fossil fuel corporation that destroys nature.¹²⁹ This performance reveals the incongruity of the mission and image of the Van Gogh Museum with Shell. FFC also denounces the museum’s complicity with Shell’s artwashing in their press release,¹³⁰ portfolio statement¹³¹ on their website and the accompanying booklet.¹³²

FFC also presents photos of some of the many oil spills in the Niger Delta in their booklet and expose the environmental racism inherent in this separation of pollution and human cost across countries explaining, “By polluting places that are largely ‘invisible’ to the Western media and public, and damaging the health and livelihood of people without a voice, Shell commits environmental racism.”¹³³ This statement reveals how human rights abuses often have the greatest consequences on people of color who disproportionately represent communities near oil extraction sites, pipelines and other oil infrastructure. FFC specifically references pollution in Ogoniland, Nigeria,¹³⁴ an especially poignant example of human rights abuses in and around downstream oil operations. The Ogoni people led protests against the excessive and harmful pollution from Shell’s operations and formed the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).¹³⁵ The protests and formation of the activist group was followed by a brutal crackdown by Nigerian armed forces which led to mass killings and other human rights abuses

¹²⁸ “[Sp]oiled Landscapes,” Portfolio, Fossil Free Culture NL, last modified September 13, 2017, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/portfolio/spoiled-landscapes/>.

¹²⁹ *[Sp]oiled Landscapes*, 2017, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/portfolio/spoiled-landscapes/>.

¹³⁰ *[Sp]oiled Landscapes*, 2017.

¹³¹ “Fossil Free Culture NL,” Fossil Free Culture NL, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/>.

¹³² Fossil Free Culture NL. *[Sp]oiled Landscapes*. Amsterdam: FFC NL, 2017.

¹³³ Fossil Free Culture NL. *[Sp]oiled Landscapes*.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ “Nigeria: Shell complicit in the arbitrary executions of Ogoni Nine as writ served in Dutch court,” News, Amnesty International, last modified June 29, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/06/shell-complicit-arbitrary-executions-ogoni-nine-writ-dutch-court/>.

including detainment, torture and rape.¹³⁶ The culmination of the conflict resulted in the execution of nine MOSOP leaders in 1995.¹³⁷

By referencing this especially gruesome conflict that evolved in reaction to the pollution from Shell's operations, FFC brings in an intersectional critique of Shell and of the Van Gogh Museum's involvement with Shell. FFC, as an "intersectional queer feminist collective,"¹³⁸ demonstrates both the environmental and racial injustice perpetuated by Shell. This performance highlights the racism that underlies the "6,817 oil spills between 1976 and 2001"¹³⁹ in the Niger Delta which does not have a parallel in a more white community or country. In this instance, FFC's activism was protesting environmental destruction, the artwashing that conceals that destruction as well as the environmental racism that can sometimes make that destruction 'invisible.' FFC considers that "The fight against climate change cannot be separated from the fight against racism and other struggles against systemic inequality, injustice, exploitation and oppression."¹⁴⁰ This position can be seen in the way that FFC makes both environmental activism as well as anti-racist activism demonstrated in "[Sp]oiled Landscapes." The significance of this intersectional critique cannot be understated as FFC argues that the climate crisis substantially exacerbates "other structural crises, deepening inequality, injustice, racism, and exploitation."¹⁴¹ In order to make effective environmental activism, activists have to also protest the racism that asymmetrically distributes environmental hazards disproportionately endangering people of color and people in developing countries.

Shell's Dirty Hands

FFC's performance, "Shell's Dirty Hands," was the first piece of FFC's three part "Art Storm" that delivered three art demonstrations in six weeks, seeking to replicate the success of similar strategies elsewhere.¹⁴² "Shell's Dirty Hands" sought to make Shell's influence on the Van Gogh Museum visible and expose the relationship as a mechanism of artwashing. To demonstrate this message, thirteen performers dressed in black slowly approached a glass wall of the Van Gogh Museum in a "mournful" manner and pressed their hands covered in an oil-like substance against the wall leaving a dark, oily handprint.¹⁴³ Shortly after the performance was over museum staff came to wash away the prints. The leaving of the oily handprint and the quick removal reveals Shell's influence as something that needs to be hidden or washed away. The performance issues a challenge to the Van Gogh Museum: will they wash away Shell's

¹³⁶ Amnesty International, "A Criminal Enterprise? Shell's Involvement in Human Rights Violations in Nigeria in the 1990s," (2017): 8.

¹³⁷ "Timeline: Shell's operations in Nigeria," Environment, Reuters, last modified September 23, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-shell-timeline/timeline-shells-operations-in-nigeria-idUSKCN1M306D>.

¹³⁸ "Climate Racism," Climate Racism, Fossil Free Culture NL, last modified March 8, 2019, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/news/climate-racism/>.

¹³⁹ Fossil Free Culture NL. *[Sp]oiled Landscapes*, 2.

¹⁴⁰ "Climate Racism;"

¹⁴¹ "Manifesto," Fossil Free Culture NL, accessed May 19, 2020, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/manifesto/>.

¹⁴² "End the Fossil Fuel Age Now," Portfolio, Fossil Free Culture NL, last modified June 9, 2018, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/portfolio/end-the-fossil-fuel-age-now/>.

¹⁴³ "Shell's Dirty Hands."

influence? This performance exposes the artwashing relationship and is primarily directed at the museum calling on the it to ‘wash away’ Shell’s contaminating influence.

Shells Everywhere

The second performance of the ‘Art Storm’ was “Shells Everywhere” where FFC installed 411 scallop shells marked with a “‘carbon black’ ink spill” throughout the Van Gogh Museum. The 411 shells represented the 411 parts per million of CO₂ that were in the atmosphere on that day.¹⁴⁴ This installation also makes the reach of Shell’s influence visible and points to the consequences of that influence through the representation of the escalation of carbon in the atmosphere. FFC describes, “Behind closed doors, under the boardroom table, at a museum near you. Shell have positioned their influence widely. Sometimes hidden, sometimes in plain sight, but always toxic.”¹⁴⁵ The subtlety of the piece demonstrates how Shell’s logo and influence can almost go unnoticed. However, the subtle presence, if fully recognized and interrogated, reveals an alarming power. The placement of the shells calls forth a disturbing revelation to an attentive viewer that there is something present which should not be there. That something which is out of place is not necessarily the innocuous shells themselves but Royal Dutch Shell’s quiet influence in the Van Gogh Museum and the dangerous amount of 411 parts per million of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

End the Fossil Fuel Age Now

The third performance of the art storm and last performance at the Van Gogh Museum before it announced that it would no longer accept Shell’s funding was titled, “End the Fossil Fuel Age Now.” In this performance, approximately 40 performers assembled on the landings of the museum staircase.¹⁴⁶ One activist performed a recital of FFC’s Manifesto as the other demonstrators rolled out segments of a banner to hang from the balconies. A visible back and forth between the demonstrators and the museum security ensued as one side tried to unfurl the banner while the other tried to take it down. Towards the end of the manifesto reading the activists succeeded in unfurling the whole banner. The words took over the whole staircase and read in all caps, “END THE FOSSIL FUEL AGE NOW.” This performance was a bold statement where FFC made their demand to the Van Gogh Museum known in a way that was impossible to ignore. Rather than launching a new critique and presenting a new argument as to why Shell’s influence at the museum is harmful or showing how the museum is complicit with Shell’s damaging business, this performance instead demands that the museum ‘end the fossil fuel age now’ by dropping Shell’s funding. Through this performance FFC also demonstrates that they are serious and will not stop until their aim is met. Shortly after this performance the Van Gogh Museum announced that it would discontinue accepting funding from Shell.

Culture Jamming Conclusion

¹⁴⁴ “Shells Everywhere,” Portfolio, Fossil Free Culture NL, last modified May 15, 2018, <https://www.fossilfreeculture.nl/portfolio/shells-everywhere/>.

¹⁴⁵ “Shells Everywhere.”

¹⁴⁶ “End the Fossil Fuel Age Now.”

In this chapter, I answered the question of how FFC can be considered part of culture jamming by arguing that it is a contemporary sub-style of culture jamming. I made this argument by first presenting an overview of culture jamming briefly depicting early culture jamming which sought to ‘jam’ consumer culture by using techniques such as “media pranks, advertising parodies, textual poaching, billboard appropriation” as well as performance, especially those that reclaim space governed by capital.¹⁴⁷ This style followed the earlier tradition of *détournement*, and both styles sought to speak back to the one-way capitalist messaging that was encroaching into everyday life. In a media saturated world, contemporary culture jamming now uses social media to recirculate anti-capitalist messages rather than simply blocking or reversing messages. I then situated FFC as a contemporary form of culture jamming because they seek to ‘jam’ the capitalist mechanism of artwashing and recirculate their anti-artwashing message against the Van Gogh Museum and Shell. They also fit the criteria of culture jamming through reclaiming the capitalist space of the museum as well as the aspects of being artful, operating serially, being participatory, as well as challenging the power structure of artwashing while delivering their message clearly, boldly and unambiguously.

I then presented all of the performances staged at the Van Gogh Museum and discussed what critiques they launch as well as what demands they make. Every performance, in at least one of their mediums, critiques artwashing. Some performances focus their critique more on the dangerous aspects of Shell’s business such as the environmental destruction or environmental racism, launching an intersectional critique essential for the efficacy of the climate movement and FFC’s work as an intersectional, queer feminist collective. Other performances like “Drop the Shell” and “Shell’s Dirty Hands” use oil to reveal the harmful ‘stain’ of Shell’s influence. Both performances call on the museum to sever their financial ties with Shell. The final performance demanded that the museum end their funding agreement with Shell by reciting their manifesto along with a banner drop.

These culture jamming interventions work as a counterforce to artwashing through repeatedly invading capitalist space and ‘jamming’ the mechanism of artwashing. They perform this ‘jam’ by making the power dynamics visible and launching different critiques such as pointing to Shell’s dangerous business consequences as well as the hypocrisy of the Van Gogh Museum for being complicit in this cover-up. FFC’s expression of culture jamming distinguishes it as a sub-style through setting their specific target to pressure the Van Gogh Museum to end their funding agreement with Shell. FFC can better measure the efficacy of their culture jamming by knowing when they have met this goal, as they ultimately did shortly after the final art storm performance. I will explore one possible explanation in the following chapter for the conspicuous absence of mention of FFC in the announcement to discontinue Shell’s funding, even though this announcement came shortly after heightened pressure of the art storm. FFC sought to influence Shell’s social license to operate through staging culture jamming interventions at the Van Gogh Museum since this was a more accessible point of entry to influence the oil behemoth that is Shell.

¹⁴⁷ DeLaure and Fink, “Introduction,” 6.

Chapter 3: Shame

I begin my discussion on shame in the context of FFC's activism by discussing various definitions of emotion and affect which creates the foundation for understanding shame. I then distinguish the primary characteristics and put forth a definition of shame on which I base my discussion. I then argue how Shell is shameless as demonstrated through a statement from Shell CEO Ben Van Beurden and discuss how Shell's rejection of shame is redirected towards witnesses of Shell's shameful behavior and shameless demeanor. I explore how FFC's activism is a kind of emotional labor that works by redirecting the gaze of stakeholders back towards Shell's shameful business and reveals the Van Gogh Museum's shameful connection to Shell. FFC's redirection of the gaze towards the museum, induces a shame response which prompts the shame response of hiding in the museum which they do by ending their sponsorship agreement with Shell. After the Van Gogh Museum follows through with the shame response of severing their ties to Shell, Shell is then exposed by their loss of the cover-up that artwashing provides. Without concealing the harmful aspects of Shell's business through artwashing, Shell is revealed in their shame to stakeholders who are then no longer sedated by the false image of generosity presented through artwashing. The absence of passivity of stakeholders creates the conditions for socio-political unrest at Shell's shameful business practices which destabilizes the industry level social license to operate that Shell needs in order to continue to function. This chapter will help explain how shame moves between FFC, the Van Gogh Museum, and Shell in a way that could explain the Van Gogh Museum's decision to discontinue accepting Shell's funding and how that influences Shell's social license to operate.

Emotion and Affect

As a foundation for my conceptualization of shame in the context of FFC's activism, I discuss different theorizations of emotion and affect. In, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed seeks to answer the question, "What do emotions do?" Similarly, I seek to answer the question, 'what does shame do?' My argument answering this question largely focuses on the movement of shame between actors. Ahmed's account also "track[s] how emotions circulate between bodies, examining how they 'stick' as well as move."¹⁴⁸ Ahmed positions theories on emotions as divided between those that consider emotions more tied to the body or more tied to cognition.¹⁴⁹ Rather than considering emotions to be within the subject or the object of emotion, she considers them to be orientations towards and away from others¹⁵⁰ and objects.¹⁵¹ This orientation in regards to the object is a process of reading the object.¹⁵² As reactions to objects which circulate between people, Ahmed considers emotions to be relational and social.¹⁵³ Ahmed's theorization of emotion is different from much other thinking on emotion in that it

¹⁴⁸ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 4.

¹⁴⁹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 5.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 4.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 6.

¹⁵² Ibid, 6.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 8.

prioritizes the “sociality” of emotion.¹⁵⁴ While many conceptualizations of emotion consider them to be social, Ahmed’s theory goes further than that arguing that emotions are co-constitutive of subjects and objects as part of their very worlding. While I do not discuss emotions in terms of worlding, I prioritize the interpersonal dynamic of shame which leads me to draw on Ahmed’s articulation of emotion as well as her emphasis on the movement or circulation of emotions.

Another presentation of emotion is articulated in the book, *In Defense of Shame: The Faces of an Emotion*. The authors distinguish emotions from moods based on the way that philosophers commonly “think of emotions as being directed at objects, people, situations, events, etc.”¹⁵⁵ This contrasts with moods which is an appropriate descriptor “when labels such as ‘sadness’ or ‘joy’ are used in reference to affective phenomena that do not exhibit such a specific sort of directedness toward particular objects.”¹⁵⁶ This framework characterizes emotions by their relatedness to other things in contrast with moods which are characterized by their lack of relation to external objects and subjects. Furthering this line of thought, the authors position emotions as evaluations of external objects and subject which come about through reasoning.¹⁵⁷ I do not delve into the reasoning behind emotion, but I embrace the understanding of emotion as an evaluation in reaction to an object or subject. The evaluative trait of emotion is echoed in a slightly different manner in the chapter “Nasty Emotions and the Perception of Values” in *Shadows of the Soul: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Emotions* where emotions are presented as “a sort of perceptual experience that allows us to apprehend an object’s value” such as the “fearsomeness” of a wolf or the “admirableness” of a person.¹⁵⁸ This articulation adds texture to the understanding of emotion in the way that emotion apprehends certain qualities. Between these definitions, I favor emotion as an evaluation rather than a perceptual experience as perceptual experiences are closer to sensory experiences, but I draw on these definitions because each emphasizes the relationality of emotion.

In terms of affect, rather than one unified theory, Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg write in the *Affect Theory Reader* that there is a multitude of theorizations which fall into eight main orientations to affect.¹⁵⁹ Nonetheless, Seigworth and Gregg describe affect in a number of evocative and illuminating ways. Similar to emotion, affects are “*forces of encounter*.”¹⁶⁰ They also describe affects as intensities that pass between bodies, sometimes “sticking” to bodies

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 9.

¹⁵⁵ Julien Deonna, Raffaele Rodogno and Fabrice Teroni, *In Defense of Shame: The Faces of an Emotion* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 5, DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199793532.001.0001.

¹⁵⁶ Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 5.

¹⁵⁷ Deonna, Rodogno, Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 6.

¹⁵⁸ Christine Tappolet, “Nasty Emotions and the Perception of Values,” in *Shadows of the Soul: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Emotions*, ed. Christine Tappolet, Fabrice Teroni and Anita Konzelmann Ziv (New York: Routledge, 2011), 21, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.4324/9781315537467>.

¹⁵⁹ Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” in *Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Duke University Press, 2010), 6, DOI: <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1215/9780822393047>.

¹⁶⁰ Seigworth and Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” 2.

which are also non-conscious forces other than emotions that propel human actions.¹⁶¹ They emphasize the non-conscious aspect of affect and affect's bodily basis. Freud's articulation that affects are "adjacent to thought"¹⁶² compliments the non-conscious reading of affect. In terms of the bodily foundation, the authors emphasize that "affect is integral to a body's perpetual *becoming*."¹⁶³ This statement both emphasizes the body's importance regarding affect as well as affect as something which is ever in motion. Roland Barthes describes affect as "an inventory of shimmers"¹⁶⁴ which captures the perpetual becomingness and movement of affect in reaction to forces of encounter. Hence affect, like emotion, is also about a reaction to something outside the subject, although it emphasizes the body and non-conscious aspect. My articulation of shame draws on the shared element of emotion and affect as arising in reaction to subjects or objects and the shared aspect of movement. I draw on emotion as an evaluation of qualities of that which is perceived, but I also integrate affect theory, especially in regards to the interplay of looks and redirection of the gaze in shame.

Defining Shame

In this section, I define shame in order to use that definition to explain the movement of shame between actors involved in FFC's activism. Shame is widely discussed in terms of its moral implications;¹⁶⁵ however, my discussion diverges from this focus on morals as that would be an unproductive framework for this case study. Instead, I discuss shame as it relates to interest, especially the presence or absence of interest, as well as shame in relation to exposure and concealment, especially since it is most often described as causing the desire to hide or conceal oneself. I also discuss the absence of shame, or shamelessness, in terms of how Shell's shamelessness redirects shame towards those who witness the shamelessness of Shell. I consider shame both as an emotion and an affect that is evoked in relation to an object or an other,¹⁶⁶ presupposed by interest,¹⁶⁷ which is an evaluation¹⁶⁸ of the shameful quality¹⁶⁹ of one's actions

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 1.

¹⁶² Ibid, 2.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 3.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 11.

¹⁶⁵ Raffaele Rodogno, "The Moral Shadows of Shame and Contempt," in *Shadows of the Soul: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Emotions*, ed. Christine Tappolet, Fabrice Teroni and Anita Konzelmann Ziv (New York: Routledge, 2011); Krista K. Thomason, *Naked: The Dark Side of Shame and Moral Life*, (Oxford University Press, 2018), DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190843274.001.0001; Julien Deonna, Raffaele Rodogno and Fabrice Teroni, *In Defense of Shame: The Faces of an Emotion* (Oxford University Press, 2012), DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199793532.001.0001; John Sabini and Maury Silver, "In Defense of Shame," in *Emotion, Character, and Responsibility*, ed. John Sabini and Maury Silver (Oxford University Press, 1998), DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195121674.001.0001.

¹⁶⁶ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 6; Deonna, Rodogno, Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 5; Tappolet, "Nasty Emotions and the Perception of Values," 21; Seigworth and Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 2.

¹⁶⁷ Silvan Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition: Two Volumes*, (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008), 353 – 354.

¹⁶⁸ Deonna, Rodogno, Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 6.

¹⁶⁹ Tappolet, "Nasty Emotions and the Perception of Values," 21.

and catalyzed by the actual or potential gaze of another¹⁷⁰ resulting in the impulse to hide.¹⁷¹ Based on this definition, shamelessness is then the absence of interest. As shame is premised on interest, I will begin by explaining shame from that point.

Shame and Interest

A turning point in affect theory emerged when Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank brought forth the work of psychologist Silvan S. Tomkins on affect in, “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold.” Tomkins takes a significantly different approach than those that consider shame as it relates to morals situating shame as most directly correlated with interest saying shame “operates ordinarily only after interest or enjoyment has been activated, and inhibits one or the other or both. The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy.”¹⁷² This characterization distinctly alters the framework of shame. With the emphasis on interest, we can understand that since emotions are directed towards objects and ‘others,’ interest in a given object or an ‘other’ is then a prerequisite for shame. This then leads to an understanding of shamelessness as the absence of interest. Depending on the cause of shame, shamelessness can also be read as having ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ outcomes which I discuss later.

Ahmed also discusses Tomkins’ articulation of shame and interest, especially concerning the gaze of the other who inspires interest. Ahmed extends this discussion saying, “Only some others can witness my action such that I feel ashamed.”¹⁷³ In relation to the way shame can only be evoked by an other in whom I have interest, she considers that “shame is not a purely negative relation to another: shame is ambivalent.”¹⁷⁴ In other words, it is the interest in the other that retrieves shame from the realm of purely negative emotions, or emotions that are “intrinsically nasty.”¹⁷⁵ Shame understood as premised on the presence of interest can then position shame as an emotion that has the capacity for productivity.

Covering and Un-covering Shame

The shame response is often expressed as hiding or desiring to hide.¹⁷⁶ This impulse can be seen as one of the motivators of actions among different groups experiencing or not experiencing shame, in this case among FFC, the Van Gogh Museum, stakeholders and Shell. The connection of shame with hiding can be seen through the etymology of the word which “comes from the Indo-European verb for ‘to cover’, which associates shame with other words such as ‘hide’, ‘custody’, ‘hut’ and ‘house.’”¹⁷⁷ The etymology of shame stresses that the action

¹⁷⁰ Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 373.

¹⁷¹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 103; Sabini and Silver, “In Defense of Shame,” 84 – 85; Rodogno, “The Moral Shadows of Shame and Contempt,” 116; Thomason, *Naked*, 26 – 27.

¹⁷² Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 353.

¹⁷³ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 105.

¹⁷⁴ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 105.

¹⁷⁵ Tappolet, “Nasty Emotions and the Perception of Values,” 20.

¹⁷⁶ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 103; Sabini and Silver, “In Defense of Shame,” 84 – 85; Rodogno, “The Moral Shadows of Shame and Contempt,” 116; Thomason, *Naked*, 26 – 27.

¹⁷⁷ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 104.

or the desire to hide is integral to the experience of shame. However, Ahmed considers the impulse to hide in terms of duality:

the desire to take cover and to be covered presupposes the failure of cover; in shame, one desires cover precisely because one has already been exposed to others. Hence the word ‘shame’ is associated as much with cover and concealment, as it is with exposure, vulnerability and wounding. On the one hand, shame covers that which is exposed (we turn away, we lower our face, we avert our gaze), while on the other, shame exposes that which has been covered (it un-covers).¹⁷⁸

This passage highlights that, not only does one desire to hide, but shame also implies exposure. This exposure can come in the form of a gaze that sees the other in a shameful activity or sees something in the other recognized as shameful. In whatever way the exposure takes place, we can see that both exposure and covering in a manner to hide are fundamental qualities of shame.

Affect as Contagion Through the Gaze

Tomkins’ writing on shame highlights the importance of the gaze in regards to shame. The gaze alters in reaction to the reduction of interest without the elimination of interest which will “activate the lowering of the head and eyes in shame and reduce further exploration or self-exposure.”¹⁷⁹ Tomkins describes the physical response of shame as one of averting the gaze in a downward direction accompanied by lowering the head. This is especially true when shame is in reaction to an expected interest that is not met such as when “one is suddenly looked at by one who is strange, or because one wishes to look at or commune with another person but suddenly cannot because he is strange.”¹⁸⁰ Again, Tomkins privileges the look between subjects in the transference of shame between persons. This privileging of the gaze closely ties in with Tomkins theory of affect as a contagion which spreads through the gaze saying, “my angry eyes are contagious, so that your eyes may respond with an especially angry look.”¹⁸¹ Tomkins argues that affect as contagion is so powerful that it generates a taboo on looking, “Because of the extreme contagion of affect in the shared interocular exchange, taboos arise lest affects not only occur but spread.”¹⁸² Tomkins posits that both the one-way look of one to another and especially the mutual look as the site of transmission of the affect contagion.¹⁸³ While a compelling and useful theory, there are some issues with affect as contagion. This model takes emotions to be intrinsic which others contest especially since some, including Ahmed, argue emotions are learned to a certain extent through acculturation.¹⁸⁴ I do not argue that emotions are wholly intrinsic, which would be dismissing of acculturation, nor that the gaze is the only modality of affect transmission but that the gaze is one powerful conduit of affect. I favor Tomkins’

¹⁷⁸ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 104.

¹⁷⁹ Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 353 – 354

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 354.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 373.

¹⁸² *Ibid*.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁴ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 6.

contagion model, despite imperfections, because shame is in many ways dependent on the gaze or the potential gaze, and Tomkins' model posits the gaze as the site of transmission.

The Shamelessness of Shell

FFC argues that Shell knew about the role of fossil fuels in climate change and that their business had a role in exacerbating climate change.¹⁸⁵ This knowing is central to the shamefulness of Shell's business and Shell's shamelessness in regards to their conduct. This is demonstrated in a TIME Magazine interview where Shell CEO Ben Van Beurden makes no effort to hide Shell's knowledge, going back decades, of the enormity of climate change and how burning fossil fuels were driving global warming. When asked to respond to activism mantra "Shell Knew" used by FFC and others, Van Beurden replied, "Yeah, we knew. Everybody knew."¹⁸⁶ The absence of any impulse to hide Shell's knowledge demonstrates that Van Beurden is not ashamed of Shell. As CEOs represent the company to the public, Van Beurden's lack of interest in dangers posed by climate change speaks for the lack of interest from Shell as a company towards climate change and thus the shamelessness of Shell towards their role in climate change. Van Beurden's next words are even more telling of the desire to deflect attention and blame saying, "And somehow we all ignored it."¹⁸⁷ This statement performs a kind of sleight of hand where Shell's knowing exploitation of oil at the expense of the climate turns into an ambiguous 'we.' The 'we' obscures the active and knowing role of Shell as a company controlled by individuals who have the ability to make decisions, decisions which can be informed by emotions as evaluations of qualities. Shell then transforms from a company that had the power to act early on climate change and refused action into one of many actors who were all unresponsive to shared knowledge. This statement redirects attention from Shell's culpability and hence Shell's shameful climate inaction. The diversion of attention rather than an attempt to hide tells of Shell's calculated awareness that their climate inaction would be seen as shameful and instead seeks to obscure the shameful aspects of Shell's business.

Shame for the Shameless

Shamelessness can be read in a 'positive' or 'negative' light. If a subject feels shame not because of shameful conduct but because the subject is 'othered' in a given society and seen as shameful based on their mere existence, then feeling shameless about the unjustly conferred shame would be a positive affect or emotion. The lack of shame, or shamelessness, would imply their lack of interest in the othering, and in so doing, they refuse to bear the burden of shame unjustly ascribed to them. However, shamelessness in a negative sense emerges from when a subject is engaged in shameful behavior and, being seen in their shameful behavior, fail to perceive their own shamefulness.

Gail Weiss distinguishes these two versions of shamelessness in the context of a passage from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* focusing on the section "The Look." In that

¹⁸⁵ "About Us;" Fossil Free Culture NL. *Art Storm*. Amsterdam: FFC NL, 2018, 1.

¹⁸⁶ Justin Worland, "The Reason Fossil Fuel Companies Are Finally Reckoning With Climate Change," *TIME*, January 16, 2020, <https://time.com/5766188/shell-oil-companies-fossil-fuels-climate-change/>.

¹⁸⁷ Worland, "The Reason Fossil Fuel Companies Are Finally Reckoning With Climate Change."

section Sartre describes a scene saying, “Let us imagine, that moved by jealousy, curiosity, or vice I have just glued my ear to the door and looked through a keyhole”¹⁸⁸ The self that Sartre describes is wholly focused on an undescribed scene behind the door until a sudden sound in the hallway jars the self into a different awareness saying, “[A]ll of a sudden, I am conscious of myself as escaping myself. . . I have my foundation outside myself. I am for myself only as I am a pure reference to the Other.”¹⁸⁹ In the moment when the voyeur in Sartre’s narration becomes aware of the possibility of being seen in the shameful act of spying, the voyeur experiences a wave of shame by perceiving the discovery of themselves spying as something shameful. Again, it is the gaze, or the possibility of the gaze, of the other that has the power to induce shame. The presumed affective response of shame is an example of shame warranted by actions. From Sartre’s passage, Weiss introduces a different reading arguing that it is not uncommon for persons substituted in the same position to fail to experience shame. Although the shame response is common, not all persons in that position would experience shame even when caught in a shameful act. In other words, the shame response is not universal.

If emotions are evaluations of qualities or values, the people who would not feel shame would be those who do not perceive the shamefulness of their act. Or, the shameless person would have no interest in the gaze that perceived them. Weiss argues that the reason for shamelessness is a rejection of the internalization of shame from the gaze of the other.¹⁹⁰ Whatever the reason for shamelessness, the failure to experience a warranted emotion also fails to inhibit the subject’s shameful action and enables the actions to continue. In the case of Shell, Shell and its’ representatives fail to perceive the shamefulness of Shell’s climate inaction. This shamelessness and the uninhibited shameful action that continues then produces harmful climate fallout. However, Weiss argues that the shamelessness of the subject engaged in shameful activity does not eliminate shame. Instead a subject perceiving the shameful behavior and the shamelessness of the other then takes on the rejected or ‘missed’ shame.¹⁹¹ In this circumstance, the gaze of the observer acts as a conduit for the “displaced” shame where the observer “tacitly accept[s] the moral responsibility” that the shameless subject has in some way rejected.¹⁹² This emotional contagion through the gaze leaves the shame on the observer which represents another unjust burden of shame.

Resistance to Shame vs. Contempt

I argue that FFC’s activism is a form of resistance to the unjustified weight of shame experienced by witnessing Shell’s shameless exploitation of the environment. Weiss argues that “the positive, transformative value of shame is best realized when it motivates public, collective *resistance* both to the shameful conduct and the perpetrator’s shameless response.”¹⁹³ In this

¹⁸⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and nothingness*, Trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (New York, Washington Square Press, 1984), 347, quoted in Gail Weiss, “The Shame of Shamelessness,” *Hypatia* 33, no. 3 (Summer 2018): 539.

¹⁸⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and nothingness*, Trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (New York, Washington Square Press, 1984), 349, quoted in Gail Weiss, “The Shame of Shamelessness,” *Hypatia* 33, no. 3 (Summer 2018): 540.

¹⁹⁰ Gail Weiss, “The Shame of Shamelessness,” *Hypatia* 33, no. 3 (Summer 2018): 544.

¹⁹¹ Weiss, “The Shame of Shamelessness,” 539.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 538.

sense, FFC is performing such a resistance to Shell's shamelessness. This is an important distinction to make as acting against something regarded as shameful could be read as contempt. In "The Moral Shadows of Shame and Contempt," in *Shadows of the Soul* Raffaele Rodogno positions contempt as a "counterpart" to shame saying, "Both emotions involve specific negative evaluations of a self, but while the shameful subject evaluates her own self, the contemptuous subject evaluates another's."¹⁹⁴ It is important not to confuse activism against shameless activities with any form of contempt as contempt is a problematic emotion. Rodogno discusses a variety of reading of contempt as problematic where some which consider it to be an emotion without any redeeming qualities which excludes it from any positive moral status.¹⁹⁵ This could be from the way contempt is dismissive of the other who is held in contempt or the way it involves reading the other as inferior in some way.¹⁹⁶ Others draw on Kant to consider contempt to be immoral because it denies the contempted person "all moral worth" and precludes the possibility of improvement.¹⁹⁷ For these reasons, contempt would be a problematic emotional or affective positionality for FFC to hold as it would undermine the value of FFC's activism. I therefore determine the FFC's motivation, rather than emerging from contempt, is a refusal to passively accept secondhand shame.

Revealing Shamefulness

Artwashing and Shame

As explored earlier, artwashing means that arts sponsorship serves to cover over or to apply a 'wash' to reprehensible corporate action. In this case, artwashing covers Shell's continued pollution. Artwashing also serves to lend the quality of generosity and conscientiousness to the corporate image as a way to conceal Shell's role in the climate crisis. The artwashing 'cover-up' takes on a new meaning when juxtaposed with shame as an exposure which induces the desire to hide. Artwashing covers unseemly aspects of Shell's business. By diverting attention to Shell's sponsorship of the Van Gogh Museum and other prestigious cultural institutions, Shell hides their culpability in obscurity. Despite this diversion, Shell's greenhouse gas emissions are left unchanged and other scandals like their implication in human rights abuses in Nigeria have not been settled by this performance. Shell highlights their apparently societally generous deeds which eclipses their societally damaging, or shameful, practices in terms of publicity. By distracting the gaze of would-be stakeholders at the industry level, Shell is able to avoid being seen as a shameful corporation.

Artwashing is one favored tool for maintaining and improving the social license to operate which, as discussed in the first chapter, is the "*perceptions of the acceptability* of a company [emphasis added],"¹⁹⁸ which also extends to self-defined stakeholders at the industry level. The perceptions of the acceptability of a company does not necessarily mean that the company's practices are more or less acceptable, only that perception of acceptability of the

¹⁹⁴ Rodogno, "The Moral Shadows of Shame and Contempt," 116.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 119.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁸ Thomson and Boutilier, "Modeling and Measuring the Social License to Operate," 2.

company as seen by stakeholders. Thus, the gaze that can confer shame is held by stakeholders at the project and industry levels. If the gaze of stakeholder groups is on artwashing public relations campaigns, then stakeholders can be lulled into acceptance which then grants SLO. With the social license to operate secured, Shell and other fossil fuel companies can continue their operations unchanged besides a negligible amount of funds set aside for cultural institutions.

Revealing and Concealing Shameful Capital

As artwashing conceals shameful aspects of Shell's business and pacifies stakeholders by diverting the gaze, FFC's activism redirects the gaze back towards Shell. This double redirection of the shame-inducing gaze is a power struggle over the covering versus uncovering of the shamefulness of Shell's business activity. This power struggle can also be understood as FFC performing emotional labor by redirecting the gaze of stakeholders. I also argue that FFC undertakes by refusing to bear the burden of the secondhand shame experienced by witnessing Shell's shamelessness. FFC's demonstrations at the Van Gogh Museum reveal different shameful aspects of Shell's business. Illustrating the 'dirtiness' of Shell through their use of an oil-like substance in many of their demonstrations, FFC reveals Shell's influence in the museum and the shamefulness of that influence. FFC then looks to the Van Gogh Museum to recognize the shameful artwashing relationship and to understand the risk to its own reputation in continuing the sponsorship agreement. FFC makes their position known by announcing in their culture jamming their intent to continue to publicize the museum's shameful relationship with Shell. The museum is then put in the position to continue to 'be seen' in their shameful relationship with Shell or acquiesce to FFC's appeal to drop the funding from Shell.

Since the Van Gogh Museum did discontinue the funding from Shell, we can read this action in the context of shame. Considering the impulse to cover oneself in shame, the museum could have dropped the funding in order to avoid receiving more attention that exposed the relationship between the museum and Shell as shameful. Being exposed in the shamefulness of the financial relationship then compels the institution to cover-up their association with Shell as something shameful needing to be hidden. FFC's 'un-covering' of the shamefulness of the Van Gogh Museum's financial relationship with Shell pressures the museum to no longer be complicit in artwashing. This is the route that FFC takes to diminish Shell's social license to operate despite Shell's shamelessness. This is especially true as, in their shamelessness, Shell would otherwise be immune to being seen as shameful except for the interruption in business that occurs when the social license to operate is severely diminished or revoked. Having revealed the shamefulness of the museum's relationship to Shell, the museum then has a shame response experienced by representatives and decision-makers of the institution who are capable of experiencing shame have a shame response which induces the impulse to hide. The shameful thing that the representatives seek to hide in this case is the museum's financial relationship with Shell which the museum hides by ending the sponsorship agreement. In this discontinuation, Shell no longer receives the disproportionate benefit to their corporate image from artwashing. Without artwashing, Shell's industry level social license to operate is threatened by socio-political unrest instigated by FFC and other activist stakeholder groups. It is through this complex interaction of the transference of shame through the gaze in relation to artwashing and

the social license to operate that FFC disrupts the balance of power of Shell which moves them towards their goal of eroding Shell's social license to operate.

Shame Conclusion

In this chapter I drew on various conceptions of emotion to define it as an evaluation of qualities or values of an object or subject. Affect also shares the aspect of arising in relation to an encounter. I drew on both theorizations to conceptualize and define shame which is based on the presence of interest where the absence of interest indicates shamelessness. I also answer the question, "What does shame do?" by discussing the way that shame triggers a hide response based on the way that one is seen in their shame by another, where being seen in shame implies being exposed. I also discuss how shame moves based on Tomkins' model of affect as contagion transmitted through the gaze.

I then shifted my discussion to discover what shame does in the context of FFC's activism to answer the question of how FFC performs emotional labor by redirecting shame between the different actors in a way that may ultimately destabilize Shell's social license to operate. I found that Shell's CEO demonstrated shamelessness and in Shell's shamelessness it rejected shame which then was transmitted to observers of Shell's shamelessness, which includes FFC. I then positioned FFC's activism as a refusal to take on the secondhand shame which distinguishes their motivation from contempt. I also explore how artwashing acts as a cover-up over Shell's shameful business consequences. Despite Shell's shamelessness, the awareness of the way their actions would be perceived as shameful motivates Shell to bolster their industry level social license to operate through artwashing. Artwashing distracts the gaze of stakeholders and pacifies those stakeholders who would otherwise see Shell in its shamefulness and potentially be stirred into socio-political unrest. Hence, FFC's activism performs emotional labor of turning the gaze of stakeholders towards artwashing as a cover-up and the shamefulness of Shell's business practices. The museum's action of dropping funding from Shell can be read in this context as a hide response from being revealed in their shameful relationship with Shell. FFC's activism thus maneuvers around Shell's shamelessness which would otherwise be unaffected and works to destabilize the industry level social license to operate by undermining artwashing as a pillar of the social license to operate.

Conclusion

In the simplest form, my argument for this paper is that FFC works against the public relations mechanism of artwashing as part of the social license to operate that Shell needs in order to continue their business. FCC works against artwashing and SLO by performing culture jamming interventions in the capital-governed space of the Van Gogh Museum where they interject their anti-artwashing message. I argue that FFC is motivated by the refusal to accept shame from witnessing Shell's shamelessness and that they perform emotional labor by redirecting the gaze of stakeholders back to Shell's shameful business practices and the shameful financial relationship between Shell and the Van Gogh Museum. I argue that the artwashing relationship was ultimately ruptured by the Van Gogh Museum's shame response to hide the

shameful financial relationship with Shell by ending their 18 year sponsorship agreement. It is with this argument that I answered my research question, ‘How might FFC’s anti-artwashing culture jamming activism weaken Shell’s social license to operate through the redirection of shame?’ The presentation of my argument in this paper followed the following structure.

In Chapter 1, I defined artwashing as meaning to cover over as well as to clean or wash away harmful consequences of a corporation’s business while intending to make stakeholders and the public believe that the company is socially conscious by funding the arts. I answered the question, ‘How does artwashing function?’ by arguing that corporations use artwashing to strategically fund the most prestigious museums in influential cities, especially using blockbuster exhibitions as a vehicle for public relations. Cultural institutions also give sponsoring corporations access to special publics who are then able to disseminate a more socially conscious corporate image to the wider public. The combination of funding with visibility presents an image of corporate generosity disproportionate to their actual financial contributions. The self-interest of arts funding is demonstrated by the tobacco industry’s history of arts funding as well as blatant statements from former tobacco CEOs. This understanding of artwashing enables us to see how Shell’s funding of the Van Gogh Museum also functions as a vehicle for Shell’s public relations.

In the second part of Chapter 1, I defined the concept of social license to operate and explained how the model functions. I explained that the model has different levels of approval which can be withheld or withdrawn, and when it is withheld business operations and access to resources are severely hindered or even blocked. I defined social license to operate as “a community’s perceptions of the acceptability of a company and its local operations”¹⁹⁹ as well as the “*continuous acceptance or approval or both of a project* by the local (host) community and other stakeholders.”²⁰⁰ This definition is contingent on the definition of stakeholders as “groups or individuals who can affect the firm or who can be affected by it” who do not have to be local, who are self-determined and who have power.²⁰¹ I situate FFC within this framework as a non-local, self-defined stakeholder by positioning themselves as working against Shell’s social license to operate, and as a stakeholder, they have the power to influence Shell’s industry level social license to operate. Chapter 1 thus answered how artwashing and social license to operate both function. It also positioned FFC and Shell in relation to these concepts and models.

Chapter 2 explained the activist style of culture jamming, and I argued that FFC is a contemporary sub-style of culture jamming. I explained that culture jamming is an anti-consumerist activist style that sought to interrupt, or ‘jam,’ consumer culture with an alternate, usually anti-consumerist, message by using a range of tactics. I distinguished contemporary culture jamming from the original through the use of social media to recirculate their message. I then argued that FFC is a contemporary sub-style of culture jamming as it fits culture jamming

¹⁹⁹ Ian Thomson and Robert Boutilier, “Modeling and Measuring the Social License to Operate: Fruits of a Dialogue Between Theory and Practice,” (2012): 2.

²⁰⁰ Robert G. Boutilier, Ian Thomson, Simon Fraser University, and Shinglespit Consultants Inc., “Social License to Operate,” in *Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Ethics*, Deborah C. Poff and Alex C. Michalos (Springer International Publishing, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-23514-1_127-1.

²⁰¹ Boutilier, Thomson, Simon Fraser University, and Shinglespit Consultants Inc., “Social License to Operate.”

criteria of being artful, political, participatory using appropriation, operating serially, reclaiming space governed by capital and using social media to spread its message. I argue that it is its own sub-style due to the its' greater capacity for affective complexity and because it sets measurable goals. I then present each of FFC's culture jamming performance interventions at the Van Gogh Museum and explain what critique they launch and what demands they make to Shell and the Van Gogh Museum. FFC's culture jamming works to 'jam' the capitalist mechanism of artwashing, which is itself a central mechanism to support the social license to operate. In addition, FFC's culture jamming is less likely to be appropriated than other forms of culture jamming because it unveils shameful aspects of Shell and the Van Gogh Museum, which also sets FFC's activism apart as its own sub-style of culture jamming.

In Chapter 3, I presented a definition of shame and explored what shame does. I based this definition on affect theory and theorizations of emotion combined with different conceptualizations of shame to arrive at the definition of shame as an emotion and an affect that is evoked in relation to an object or an other,²⁰² presupposed by interest,²⁰³ which is an evaluation²⁰⁴ of the shameful quality²⁰⁵ of one's actions and catalyzed by the actual or potential gaze of another²⁰⁶ resulting in the impulse to hide.²⁰⁷ I found in response to the question, 'What does shame do?' that shame induces a hide response in a subject who feels shame and shame moves in the form of a contagion transmitted through the gaze. The hide response and movement of shame has greater implications when understood in relation to shamelessness, where shamelessness is the refusal of the internalization of shame the absence of the perception of shamefulness or the absence of interest in the observing gaze.

I then applied that conceptualization of shame to the dynamics of the different actors involved in FFC's activism to answer how FFC's activism redirects the movement of shame in a way that may ultimately destabilize Shell's social license to operate. I found that Shell demonstrated shamelessness through the words of CEO, Ben Van Beurden. I then argued how shame can be transferred through the gaze to the witness of shamelessness and that FFC's activism is a rejection of this secondhand shame. Artwashing conceals the damaging aspects of Shell's business by diverting the gaze of stakeholders towards the projection of generosity presented by artwashing. Through this diversion, Shell is able to obtain at least an acceptance level of social license to operate. I then argue that FFC's culture jamming performs emotional labor of redirecting the gaze of stakeholders to reveal Shell's shameful business practices as well as the shameful financial relationship with the Van Gogh Museum. I interpret the Van Gogh Museum's announcement to end their 18 year sponsorship agreement with Shell shortly after FFC's boldest performance in the context of shame. As FFC revealed the shameful relationship

²⁰² Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 6; Deonna, Rodogno, Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 5; Tappolet, "Nasty Emotions and the Perception of Values," 21; Seigworth and Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 2.

²⁰³ Silvan Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition: Two Volumes*, (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2008), 353 – 354.

²⁰⁴ Deonna, Rodogno, Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 6.

²⁰⁵ Tappolet, "Nasty Emotions and the Perception of Values," 21.

²⁰⁶ Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 373.

²⁰⁷ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 103; Sabini and Silver, "In Defense of Shame," 84 – 85; Rodogno, "The Moral Shadows of Shame and Contempt," 116; Thomason, *Naked*, 26 – 27.

between Shell and the Van Gogh Museum, the museum could have had a shame response to hide. In this desire to hide, the museum ended their financial relationship with Shell in order to hide the shameful of that association.

The destabilization of Shell's social license to operate may have wider implications for the fossil fuel industry. This is because the destabilization of Shell's social license to operate means that other fossil fuel companies can be impacted by similar activist tactics. Also, the damage to Shell's image could influence the wider perceptions disillusionment towards the fossil fuel industry.

In terms of my own approach to this case study, I chose to study the work of this group because they are an intersectional, queer, feminist collective that is led by three core women members and is primarily made up of women activists. I could have chosen to focus more on the elements of feminism in the group's work but instead focused on the message of the group as well as explored potential impacts of their work. This angle was intended to highlight the group's contribution since activists with minority identities are often denied the opportunity to engage in discourses on the basis of their ideas and actions but are often forced to engage in discourses as representatives of their identities. I sought to do justice to this group in my analysis by focusing on their ideas and actions more than their identities, but I also acknowledge that this was a choice and that I could have chosen to focus more on their identities as women and their understanding of their work in relation to feminism.

As this group is one example of a relatively recent niche form of activism, more research could be done on other groups who also perform this style of activism. Also, the theoretical framework that I used in this case study is not the only way to understand this activist sub-style and further research could potentially gain new insight from applying other theories. Further research could also take a different angle of looking more at the internal dynamics of these groups to uncover a different aspect of this activism or potentially use a different research design from a case study.

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