INTRODUCTION
THE CRACKED ART WORLD

Imagine: you are an anthropologist. Picture yourself set down, not on a tropical island, nor in a mud hut, nor even in a faraway slum to whose sounds you slowly acclimate yourself, the white interloper. Instead, you are cold and it is dark and you are waiting in a long line outside a public park two nights before Halloween. You are two short bus rides away from the university where you study; in a different city it would only be one bus, it is that close, but Belfast is funny like that, its bus routes fanning out from City Hall like spokes in a crooked wheel. It is 2015, after all, and you have been assured that it's okay to do anthropology close by, where people speak the same language as you and look like you – where you can blend in, as you are doing tonight. Sort of. Also you are broke, and you couldn't afford to travel somewhere more distant for fieldwork even if you wanted to. You begrudgingly exchange a pound coin for the metallic wristband that will let you into the park – broke, remember? – and then you wait. And wait.

While you wait, you realize that you're not doing as good a job at blending in as you'd like. You're there by yourself: strike one. Everyone else is in groups. Strike two: you're an adult alone. Every adult you see is there with a child or two or three. Thank goodness you're a woman, you think; if you were a man alone they might think you're some sort of pervert. You worry they might be thinking that anyway. You keep your eyes on the ground, or off in the distance, just in case. Through the ornate metal bars that fence the Waterworks Park – a relic of its nineteenth-century origins, nothing like the angry metal fencing that separates neighbourhoods one from another in this city – you can see black-clad workers scurrying along the paths as they finish stringing white Christmas lights, hanging decorations, and doing other mysterious things you can't quite see. You hear the soft swish-swish of the river, low and constant, beneath the sounds of children's laughter and adult chatter.

At long last, the park gates swing open. Hundreds of children barrel through, screaming happily; it feels more like something out of a film than real life. They race through the path that circles the park, passing along a narrow bridge whose railings have been interwoven with strands of Christmas bulbs, through a stand of trees lit by brightly coloured spotlights and populated by stilt-walkers in top hats, and along the edge of the reservoir that lends the park its name. You, in turn, circumnavigate the park at a much more sedate, adult pace. One stilt-walker stoops down to give you an enthusiastic high five; the others ignore you. You have to stoop awkwardly low to walk beneath the clear umbrellas strung from the trees, dangling pink-plastic jellyfish tentacles the right height for a child's head, but too low for your five-and-a-half-foot frame. As you circle along the reservoir's edge, enjoying the peaceful sounds of the water and the faint starlight you can see beyond the city's brackish orange glow, you spot the park's playground, in whose towering metal structures the children seem far more interested than the enchanted forest landscape, the under-the-sea decorations, the food trucks, or the music emanating from the white marquee at the water's edge.

As you approach the marquee, the band, all young, mid-twenties it looks like – your age – draw their song to a close. The young woman singer, billowy pink skirt, flower in her hair, smiles as she addresses the small gathered crowd of mostly children:

'Some of you may know this next song. If you know it, sing along. This is "Tainted Love"'.

A record-scratch sound in your brain. What the hell? Surely you must have misheard, but no, there are the clearly recognizable opening bars. You gape at the stage, unsure what to think. You like the song on its own, but it wouldn't be your first choice for a children's festival. Or your tenth, or your hundredth, really, given its fairly obvious sexual themes. The audience are less than enthusiastic about the performance. A woman tries to dance to the song with her daughter, who looks to be about 8, but their attempt doesn't last long; the two are going for an upbeat, swinging type of dancing that simply doesn't match the song's heavier, slower beat. The number of children and parents in front of the stage dwindles to under ten. The song draws to a close – mercifully, in your opinion – but the band is not done. The singer surveys what is left of the crowd and addresses them – you – again, this time asking,

'Does anybody know what ingredients go into a martini?'

Wait, what?

The band launches into their final song, an original, which includes such lines as, 'Gin – you make me happy'. ('What a terrible lesson to teach children; vodka martinis are clearly the superior drink', the former bartender in you snarks. You write this observation down in your fieldnotes later. You think yourself rather clever.) The audience don't respond to this song either; they are bored, listless. No one tries to dance this time. The band is skilful, you must admit; if you close your eyes and pretend you're elsewhere,

somewhere more appropriate, you think you would enjoy their performance. But you're not there; you're here. The applause at the song's close is lacklustre, sparse. It's pretty much what you'd expect of a band playing a song about martinis at a children's festival.

However, as the song draws to a close, something else happens. As the band members wind cables and stow instruments, a group of young teenagers begin to array themselves at the rear of the stage, lying down as though dead. Their heads are wrapped in toilet paper, their faces painted haphazardly with dark eye makeup. Some have Frankenstein scars on their cheeks or foreheads. Most are wearing black. The white stage spotlights are shaded with reds and greens. An adult voice announces that the next performance will be that of the New Lodge Arts dance troupe. You know New Lodge Arts, at least by reputation; they are a well-established community arts organization here in North Belfast, and the co-sponsors of tonight's Halloween festival, so it makes sense that they would be represented on the performance stage.

The music starts – 'Thriller', naturally. The teenagers slowly rise from the floor of the stage. Some extend their arms in the classic zombie-movie walk as they move into their formation. Bits of 'Thriller' are poorly spliced together with other popular Halloween-themed songs – 'Monster Mash', that sort of thing. The teenagers are not the most coordinated or practiced dancers: a girl with dark lipstick and black-lined eyes walks the wrong way and bumps into another dancer; a boy with toilet paper wrapped around most of his head periodically looks to the others to remind him of the moves, rendering him a step or two behind everyone else. The rapid jumps between songs seem to confuse them; they often pause when a new song starts, taking a beat (or three) to remember what to do next. There is some quiet giggling among the audience at the more visible gaffes. However, a crowd begins to gather, watching far more intently than they did the preceding act. You start to feel bodies – adults mostly – pressing closer around you, and you see spectators fill up much of the cement area in front of you. When the group finishes their routine, they are met with the sound of thunderous applause. You turn around and see, to your surprise, that many more still have gathered behind you, jamming the audience area. More than a hundred spectators have gathered in the five minutes or so of the performance, and all are enthusiastically cheering the dancers.

Imagine: you are an anthropologist. What do you make of what you have just witnessed?

Researching Community Arts in Northern Ireland

The research interest that took me to the Waterworks Park that night was the genre most commonly glossed as 'community arts' in Anglophone countries. From October 2014 through May 2016, I conducted ethnographic research on community arts in Northern Ireland, with a particular focus on

the city of Belfast, where much of the region's arts activity is concentrated. The social-historical-political backdrop to this research was, firstly, the implementation of austerity measures by the UK government in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. As Colin Coulter notes, Northern Ireland was, and continues to be, 'especially vulnerable to the new age of austerity', given the region's high level of dependence on public funding from the UK treasury, as well as the relatively large percentage of the population who claim state benefits (2014: 770).

The second key context for this research – much longer-lived, having spanned many centuries of the region's history – is the ongoing ethnopolitical tension between the 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' communities, which deeply entrenched social divide has led scholars to class Northern Ireland as a 'deeply divided society'. The division between Catholic and Protestant populations – which maps onto the named religious groups, but primarily signifies ethnicity and politics – arises from the region's long history of colonization and conflict (Tonge 2002). This division has resulted in multiple periods of sustained violent conflict throughout the region's history, most notably (and best known to an international audience) that from 1969 to 1998, known colloquially as 'the Troubles' (ibid.). Though the region is not, of course, entirely free of violence, nor of political turmoil, the first decades of the twenty-first century have been significantly more peaceful than their predecessors. Today, the ethnopolitical divide both manifests as and is exacerbated by high levels of segregation in housing and education (Jarman and Bell 2012; Borooah and Knox 2015; Hansson and Roulston 2020). The divided, 'two-community' understanding of Northern Ireland society, while still dominant, has been increasingly problematized in recent years as post-1998 migration has led to greater numbers of Northern Ireland residents hailing from neither ethnopolitical background (McVeigh and Rolston 2007) and as increasing numbers of residents choose to self-identify as belonging to neither community (Bull 2006).

Two major political events that occurred shortly after the period of research are also worthy of note, as the trajectories that led thereto were already in motion during this period and thus affected the context within which I was researching. The first of these was the June 2016 'Brexit' referendum vote, in which a majority of UK voters opted to leave the European Union. The campaigns for 'Leave' and 'Remain' served as the backdrop to my final months in the field, and many of my research participants expressed anxiety about the upcoming vote. Northern Ireland is set to be uniquely affected by the 'British exit', given not only its particular history of conflict and the belief of much of the population that the North should rightly be part of the Republic of Ireland rather than the United Kingdom, but also the fact that that it shares a land border with the Republic, which remains within the European Union. The second event worthy of note, which occurred seven months after the Brexit referendum, is the collapse of Northern Ireland's devolved power-sharing government in January

2017. The region lacked a sitting government and Assembly for three years; devolved government of Northern Ireland was finally restored in January 2020. The collapse of power-sharing and the difficulties in restoring it revealed ongoing social, cultural, and political tensions within the region.

This, then, is the particular – and some might add peculiar – political landscape within which I carried out ethnographic research on community arts for a year and a half between 2014 and 2016, and which I continued to watch unfold first-hand as I began analysing the research data. As an outsider (originally from the United States), my interest in community arts arose, first and foremost, in relation to the region's relatively recent history of violent conflict. Before arriving in Northern Ireland, and admittedly knowing quite little of the region's history, I had read that community arts and community artists had played an important role in Northern Ireland's peace process. And I certainly found this to be the case; as I will discuss in Chapter 1, the history of community arts in Northern Ireland is inextricably bound up with that of the Troubles. However, this is by no means the whole story, for the reality of community arts in Northern Ireland is far more complex, comprised of numerous actors with many different aims, sometimes working together and often at odds with one another.

In this volume, I seek to examine the complexities of community arts participation and practices within the particular context of contemporary Northern Ireland: a Northern Ireland twenty years distant from the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, but still living and dealing with the long shadow of the Troubles; a Northern Ireland vulnerable both to economic crisis and to its chosen solution; a Northern Ireland whose face is rapidly changing as the first post-Troubles generation comes of age, and as new migrants from Europe and beyond change its demographics; a Northern Ireland with a close-knit artistic community that extends and expends itself to speak into these complex realities – a community that is simultaneously vibrant and struggling. This introduction and this volume seek to present and interrogate community arts in contemporary Northern Ireland as an art world: as a collection of individual and organizational stakeholders of different means and aims, all working within what the majority identify as a single artform which can be labelled (and is known locally) as community arts. In this introduction, I present the analytical model through which community arts is examined in this volume, using the story that opens this chapter to demonstrate how the model might be useful, and what new insights it might proffer for the anthropology of art. Throughout this text, I argue that art worlds are not static things, but are rather ongoing processes: art worlds are continually being made, unmade, and remade.

Art Worlds Are Made

Relationality and interconnection within and among the social groupings in which art is made have for many years constituted a key interest in

the study of art. Authors in multiple disciplines have offered a number of models for describing and discussing these connections: Bourdieu's (1983) 'cultural fields', Becker's (1974, 1982) 'art worlds', Brinner's (2009) ethnomusicological adaptation of network theory, Ingold's (2011, 2015) 'lines' and 'meshwork', various adaptations of rhizomes (e.g. Ferreira and Devine 2012) and actor-network theory (e.g. Jurkowlaniec, Matyjaszkiewicz, and Sarnecka 2018), and so forth (cf. van Maanen 2009). Each approach is valuable, and any one of them would provide a strong basis for an analysis of community arts in Northern Ireland. From among them, I have chosen 'art worlds' as the foundation on which to build my approach, primarily given the relative accessibility and reader-friendliness of Becker's approach.

While this is of course an academic book, it has been my goal from the beginning of the research to write a text that is accessible to my research participants and other community arts practitioners, both within and beyond Northern Ireland. When presenting my initial, tentative analyses to research participants, I found that many were already familiar with Becker's approach, and that explaining my work in those terms provided opportunities for their critical, informed feedback on my research. In selecting a sociological text as an anthropologist, moreover, I hope to demonstrate the interdisciplinary possibilities for the approach I have chosen, inviting arts researchers from other disciplines to join me in this conversation. Finally, I have found Becker's more open-ended, unbounded understanding of art worlds, which accounts for the presence of relatively peripheral persons and institutions, to be particularly well suited to the Northern Ireland context with its dense web of interconnections at individual, institutional, and political levels. Recognizing the significance of relatively peripheral art world players and how their experiences and motivations may or may not affect community arts practices has prompted me to consider how community arts affects and is affected by politics and policy, religion, urban spatial organization, and other seemingly non-arts factors.

In what follows I will introduce the art worlds concept and use it to explore the meanings of the audience reactions to the two performances during the Halloween festival at the Waterworks Park. In the subsequent sections of this introduction, then, I will demonstrate the ways in which that model presents only an incomplete picture of community arts in Northern Ireland, and I will set forth an alternative model for analysis that might further and expand our anthropological understandings of the work of art.

Becker's chief aim in *Art Worlds* (1982) is to dismantle the 'romantic myth of the artist' as the solo, unfettered genius; he seeks instead to situate those who make art within the social and relational contexts that make their works possible (ibid.: 14–24). The art world is fluid in shape, perhaps best illustrated as the ripples that emanate from a disturbance in a pond. Artists or makers – 'originators', as Becker calls them – are located at the core of the art world, which then expands outward into ever more peripheral circles, comprised of the various and numerous individuals, groups, and

institutions who contribute, to differing extents and in diverse ways, to the artworks' conception, creation, circulation, and criticism (ibid.: 2–4). The art world is unbounded – we could extrapolate the ripples ever outward, to those who hear of a work of art in passing or read about it online, for example – and its substance is comprised not of the works produced and circulated, but of the ever-shifting intersubjective formations that make these works possible (ibid.: 35).

To place an artistic product (object, performance, or otherwise) within its art world is to understand it to be more than the sum of its parts. In the story with which this chapter begins, the teenagers' Halloween-themed dance could very easily be understood as something other than art, whether due to the apparent lack of skill among the dancers, or to the work's unoriginality (i.e. its utilization, and even copying, of the creativity of others), or even to a continued prejudice in other art worlds against amateur or community-based performance (Jacob 1995: 55–56). Anthropological understandings of art that focus on the nature of art, taking as their primary question the boundary between art and not-art, or those that focus on aesthetics and the physical and performative qualities that make art 'good', are all largely indifferent to mundane performances like this one, despite the fact that this is the primary way in which most humans interact with art during their lives: the simple, the amateur, the perhaps-slightly-silly. An art world perspective, however, allows us to place this dance performance within its own particular web of interrelationships and interconnections – between New Lodge Arts and its local community, between the well-known pop songs and their listeners, between the dancers and their friends and family members in the audience. Extrapolating the art world further, following its ripples outward, the dance performance also exists within local and international flows of ideas about community and youth arts, and especially about the ways in which music and movement can be deployed for social purposes among the youth populations of economically disadvantaged areas like the New Lodge. And suddenly, the audience's disproportionate response to the dance performance begins to make sense. The onlookers are vociferously cheering neither the physical skill nor the aesthetic value of the dance, but rather the social and relational context within which the dance was made, and which it represents for them on stage. Thus, for community arts, we cannot understand or make sense of the 'thing' of art – the object, the performance – without understanding the art world within which it is situated.

This understanding fits well with anthropological views of art that have come to the fore since the publication of Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency* (1998).[1] In that seminal volume, Gell works to move the anthropology of art away from a view of art as symbolic or representational – as 'having semantic and/or aesthetic properties that are used for presentational or representational purposes' – and away from the dictates of 'the institutionally recognized art world' (ibid.: 5). Instead, Gell proffers an '"action"-centred approach to art', in which the focus is on what humans *do* with

art and how it makes and mediates their social relations (ibid.: 6–7). His analytical focus is on movement, change, and causation: becoming rather than being. In Gell's understanding, anything can be art, provided it acts as art – that is, that it fulfils art's purposes in social processes. Such an understanding is especially useful for genres like community arts, where appeals to aesthetic properties or institutional ideas of art will most likely fall short in explaining what art does and how it is enacted and received as meaningful by members of the art world. Taking a processual approach to art, following Gell, allows us to better see and understand the total shape of art worlds. A focus on the artist as solo genius neglects the work's post-production lives and mediations, and the creativity involved therein (Ingold and Hallam 2007; Svašek 2016) – such as the appropriation and use of a classic pop song by a teenage dance troupe. It also valorizes the labour of the work's 'originator' – in this case Michael Jackson and the team behind the original 'Thriller' song and video – and marginalizes the labour of others further along in the performance's post-production life cycle (Jackson 2014: 224–30). Thus, to fully understand the work of the community artist, the various groups and organizations with whom the artist engages, and the art world(s) within which the artist labours, a processual approach is not only useful but also, in fact, vital.

At the same time that art worlds provide the social and relational spaces within which art can be reused, remixed, and reappropriated, they also set boundaries around the art that is made and remade. More specifically, art worlds provide the structures and strictures within which artists both conform and innovate (Forge 2017: 82–85). Successful innovations, which is to say those that are accepted or generally approved by a majority of other art world members, can move an art world's tastes and aesthetics in new directions (Bolton 2017), while less successful ones may be deemed 'not art' or assigned to alternative (art) worlds, such as 'craft' or 'pornography' (Svašek 2007: 154–90). Jason Toynbee (2000), an ethnomusicologist of popular music, examines the ways in which art worlds serve to bound and constrain these possibilities. Drawing on the work and language of Bourdieu (1983), Toynbee argues that an artist chooses from among a series of limited 'possibles', each of a varying degree of 'likelihood' or 'likeliness' determined by habitus, historical precedent, and hierarchical relations among members of the art world. While all possibles are technically possible at any given moment within an art world, 'some possibles are more likely to be selected than others' (Toynbee 2000: 39–40; cf. Becker 1974: 770–74). In Toynbee's example, a rock guitarist will most probably select chords based on stylistic convention and artistic self-presentation; while a certain amount of innovation is possible, choosing chords or chord progressions too far outside the art world norm renders a work 'hard to hear' (Toynbee 2000: 39–40). Other researchers have observed and commented on similar processes in jazz improvisation (e.g. Faulkner and Becker 2009; Svašek 2016: 3–6). Artworks or performances that tread outside the usual

art world boundaries can be experienced as awkward or uncomfortable, such as that in this chapter's opening scene, in which the band stepped not outside the boundaries of what is considered art, but rather those of what is considered appropriate or tasteful for the specific context.

Choice-making and navigating possibles is not, however, a democratic or equal process. For example, innovations from established artists or proven innovators are more likely to receive art world acceptance than those proffered by newcomers, outsiders, or marginal art world members. Certain art world players wield significantly more power than others. The facilitator of a community arts project, for example, typically gets more say in the tools and methods used and the goal of the collaboration than the project participants, thus influencing significantly the shape of the final work (cf. Kothari 2001: 149). Funding bodies and their bureaucracies are particularly powerful within art worlds, dictating goals, constraints, target audiences, and even new innovations. (Arts funding in Northern Ireland will be discussed briefly below, and at length in Chapter 5.) And this is where we begin to see the limitations of the art worlds perspective, for while it enables us to better understand the interconnections among stakeholders, it does not, on its own, provide sufficient language or breadth for discussing these inequalities, these lopside shapes that the art world so often takes. Those theories and models of interconnection which have been having their heyday for a while now, both within the anthropology of art and beyond (Der and Fernandini 2016), are simply insufficient to describe the unequal social and relational milieux within which humans live, move, labour, and create meaning. They are, as Elizabeth Roberts puts it in her incisive critique of the entanglement paradigm, 'an extremely imperfect means for understanding unequal lifeworlds' (2017: 596). This prolonged focus on connected relationality, while useful, has managed to eclipse its opposite: that is, the disconnected relationality, the ruptured sociality that characterizes many art worlds. Anna Tsing argues similarly, noting, 'Ten years ago social analysts were impressed by the size and power of newly emergent global connections, so they focused on global coherence, for better or worse. Now it is time to turn attention, instead, to discontinuity and awkward connection, as this proves key to emergent sources of fear and hope' (2005: 11). In her book *Friction* (2005), Tsing focuses on what she calls 'zones of awkward engagement' – spots of 'friction' that arise in human relational contexts (ibid.: xi). For Tsing, these zones of friction present a way forward for studying 'global connection', highlighting as they do 'the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference' (ibid.: 4; cf. Appadurai 1990).

To focus on the art world only as a space of connection, to map out the interconnections among arts stakeholders, while a useful and instructive exercise, would be to miss the point entirely. My research participants' primary affective experience of their art world at this moment in time is not one of networks and interconnections and entanglements, but rather one of

conflict, disconnection, and disjuncture. What we need, then, in the anthropology of art is a model for discussing the 'friction' that Tsing identifies in the midst of interconnection, as well as the conflicts, both major and minor, macro and micro, that are visible in the everyday workings of art worlds. In the second half of this chapter, I propose a new model of analysis for the anthropology of art, one that might account for these missing pieces, for these aspects of art world – and indeed *life* world – experience that do not fit so neatly into existing models.

Art Worlds Are Unmade

To this end, I propose a new model for discussing and analysing these points of rupture, an approach that I, taking my cue from Becker (with just a touch of James Joyce),[2] have termed the 'cracked art world' (see also Rush 2020b). The art world, I argue, is a fundamentally misaligned thing. It is like a mirror with a crack in it: while still legible, still reflecting back an image to the viewer, the versions of the image on either side of the crack will never quite line up. They are disjointed, off-kilter; they have the potential to create a jarring effect in the viewer, not unlike the jarring effect I felt at the Waterworks that night, or that which my research participants felt when they protested at Parliament Buildings, or received the fateful notice in the post telling them that their Arts Council funding had been denied this year (see Chapter 5). The cracks in an art world – and I say 'cracks', plural, for they are always multiple – occur when one art world stakeholder's goals, directives, desires, or means differ from those of others. The mirror as metaphor is particularly apposite, as the mirror has long been used in both art and anthropology to symbolize the ways in which each of those disciplines interacts with culture and seeks to tell us something about ourselves (e.g. Danto 1964; Ruby 1982; Turner 1982: 103–5; Madison 2010: 12; Schneider 2017: 15). Furthermore, playing with the popular notion that art 'holds a mirror up' to culture, the image of the cracked mirror has been widely used in artistic works to signify that something is wrong, that something has been broken – in short, to argue that the image reflected is imperfect and troubled. To apply the metaphor of the cracked mirror to the art world, then, is to focus on its disjunctures, on the places in which perspectives or practices, discourses or values, goals or priorities, do not exactly align.

Since there will almost always be some level of disjuncture when any two individuals or groups meet, a point that Erving Goffman argues in his *Frame Analysis* (1974), this state of crackedness is the usual state of any art world, or any social world at all for that matter. There exist no uncracked or 'pure' art worlds. Rarely is the art world irrevocably, incontrovertibly broken, but neither is it ever whole. To focus on these conflicts, on these ruptures within art worlds, is in many ways emblematic of our contemporary time: readers will certainly be aware of cracks in current social and

political worlds, educational and research institutions, and everyday social lives. Despite their prevalence and relevance, however, disconnections are understudied and undertheorized within the anthropology of art and within anthropology more generally. Entanglement has eclipsed its other, and in the process we have lost something that is vitally important to the everyday lived experiences of those with whom we research. The cracked art world model seeks to recapture this aspect of social life, both as it relates to art and as it relates to human sociality and relationality more generally.

So what might this look like in practice? What everyday art world experiences might the cracked art world illuminate for both researchers and art world participants? In the vignette with which this chapter opens, the cracks in the art world are relatively benign. They are, nonetheless, instructive for examining how the model might be applied to the everyday. I argue, moreover, that this event might be usefully viewed as a microcosm of cracked art worlds, a small slice of the art world fractal that reproduces itself, cracks included, in self-similar ways at various levels of analytical focus (cf. Strathern 1991; Green 2005: 128–58; Mosko 2005). Paying attention to cracks, to friction, to conflict or discomfort or awkwardness, calls attention to the differences of interest, means, and desires among art world stakeholders. In the Waterworks Halloween festival example, the wildly different audience responses indicated an obvious divide between the type of music and performance the band wanted to present and the type that the majority of the audience wished to see and hear. There is also a divide between the two performance groups, in terms not only of skill and musical choice, but also of connection with the audience, a crack that certainly influenced the differing audience responses. There is, moreover, still another crack based on the level of institutional backing (or lack thereof), which affects such factors as funding and pre-festival advertisement or promotion.

The cracks apparent in this event, already many in the initial recounting, are not so neatly split as this description, this first attempt at analysis, might suggest. Cracked art worlds are further complicated by intra-group splinters, by differences among individuals within a group. When we take these into account, the model begins to resemble more a splintered web than a straightforward fracture. For example, my own less-than-positive response to the band's song about martinis was based in my internalized perceptions of what is and is not appropriate performance material for a children's festival and my anticipation of how those attending with children might feel. Those attending the event with children – those whose concerns are for the well-being and experiences of actual, specific children, rather than a set of hypothetical others – will certainly have had a different response. This is not to advocate a model based entirely in individuality. Those within a given group often have significant commonalities in their perceptions and opinions; this is why we can speak of groups at all within anthropology. In this case, the other festival attendees' responses clearly mirrored my own, at least to an extent, as evidenced by their lacklustre applause and

general disinterest. But we can certainly both perceive and imagine smaller splinters within that group, based on parenthood or lack thereof, age of the child(ren) present, musical tastes, attitudes towards alcohol consumption, and so forth.

Identifying and probing the cracks within an art world is both an intellectual and an affective pursuit, inasmuch as affects can point us towards cracks that are perhaps not immediately apparent. The affective is the indicator, the emotional and sensorial seismograph pointing to the less visible subterranean cracks. This is particularly useful for those of us who begin our research as relative outsiders to the art world under study: affect provides vital clues for us to follow in identifying and querying the cracks in the art world. A feeling of awkwardness, of social 'friction', whether felt inwardly, observed outwardly, or a combination of both, is an affective signal that something is not quite right – that some social thing is cracked. Anger can likewise point us towards significant cracks in art worlds, as can anxiety. Recognizing such affects among our research participants, particularly where they are especially strong or widely shared, can illuminate vital aspects of the art world's shape, as well as conflicts, inequalities, and ruptures that bear further attention. Thus, a cracked art world analysis, while certainly possible as a purely intellectual pursuit, calls for a sensorial dimension, attending to the feelings and emotions experienced and expressed by art world stakeholders.

One of the most noticeable and strongly felt set of cracks in Northern Ireland's art world, one towards which I was pointed by the strongly vocalized collective anger of my research participants, has to do with the effects of austerity policies on arts funding. As Becker points out, '[T]he state always plays some role in the making of art works' by providing the legal and governmental 'framework' in which the members of an art world live, work, and exchange the items necessary for the creation and circulation of their art (1982: 165). He adds, 'Like other participants in the making of art works, the state and its agents act in pursuit of their own interests, which may or may not coincide with those of the artists making the works' (ibid.).

Public funding for the arts, and the bureaucratic bodies responsible for awarding it, are especially powerful within cracked art worlds, wielding an ability to guide or entirely change their shape – a power to which relatively few individuals, or even individual artistic organizations, have access. For example, the vicissitudes of government funding are counted responsible for both the rise (van Erven 2001: 209–10) and fall (Hunter 2001: 326–27) of community theatre in Australia, while funding priorities at the National Endowment for the Arts have long shaped the historical trajectories of community arts in the United States (Cohen-Cruz 2005: 55–58). The situation is exacerbated still further in Northern Ireland, given the heavy reliance of the local arts sector on public funding, alongside 'the overarching dominance of public funding' in the region's economy more generally (Coakley and O'Dowd 2007: 18), and thus the art world's increased vulnerability

to austerity measures. As Becker notes, 'Government support takes on importance as it becomes a larger proportion of the available support for the arts' (1982: 184), and in a place where government has long provided the majority of arts funding, austerity measures threaten the art world status quo in a way that has consistently roused strong emotional responses from affected art world stakeholders.

Cracks within art worlds, moreover, may map onto, mirror, and potentially even exacerbate cracks within the wider social world, such as larger-scale sociopolitical divides and socio-economic inequalities. In the Northern Ireland case, this includes the existing, long-standing divide between the region's two main ethnopolitical identities. While many of the artists, particularly community artists, with whom I researched work to 'rise above' what they perceive to be sectarian division, they cannot entirely escape this crack in the art world, as no one in Northern Ireland can escape it entirely. This is especially true for organizations and individuals whose art forms are traditionally associated with Protestant or Catholic culture, such as Irish traditional music, marching bands, Irish or Ulster-Scots language and heritage initiatives, and so forth. It is also seen in the perception – less prevalent now than during the Troubles, but still reported by community artists – that theatre is a Catholic pursuit, which notoriously makes it more difficult for community artists to engage the Protestant community, especially working-class Protestant men (Grant 1993: 41; Hamayon-Alfaro 2011: 124; 2012: 43–46; but see Parr 2017 on the rich and varied history of Ulster Protestant working-class playwriting, and on the complicity of academics in perpetuating this myth).

Cracks in the art world often mirror social inequalities as well, falling all too often along lines of social class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, citizenship, education, and more. The cracked art world model, in fact, provides a language for incorporating an understanding of these inequalities into the discussion, and more broadly into the anthropology of art, in a way that existing models do not, or only allow for to a very limited extent. That I am proposing this model at a time when art world commentators in the UK are noting both increased barriers of entry to art world jobs for those from working-class backgrounds and the decreasing diversity of the artistic workforce (see e.g. Friedman, O'Brien, and Laurison 2017) is telling. While I suggest that the cracked art world has always been the case – that is, that crackedness has always been the nature of art worlds – the cracked art world is also a model for our time, and for a shifting state of affairs for which the anthropology of art has not, to date, been entirely able to account.

As with the making of art worlds, their breaking, their cracking, their unmaking, is also processual. Art worlds are entropic, generally trending towards disintegration. The cracks in an art world, in other words, if left untended, will not only remain cracked, but will also tend to splinter further, to widen the existing rifts. An emphasis on making, on production – against

which processually inclined anthropologists of art have tended to argue – elides the entropic nature of the artwork's post-production afterlife. Objects tend to break down, either rapidly or over the course of millennia, depending on their materials, their uses, and the preservative activities afforded to them (Jackson 2014). Art-as-experience – that is, live performance – though it only exists momentarily, also undergoes a type of breakdown as its memory fades, or as the temporary relationships it created disintegrate and those who engaged in the artwork go their separate ways. So too art worlds: while their making is more gradual, and perhaps less fixable to a particular moment, the connections within the art world also break down over time.

Entropy does not, however, march forward unimpeded; cracks are not a death knell for the art world, and broken things do not always stay broken. For example, retouching and repair have become a vital part of the post-production lives of famous paintings, and in the experiential realm, entropic memories of fleeting performances are archived through recordings, performance notes, and exhibition booklets, and even, increasingly, through ethnographic accounts. So too art worlds: cracked relationships can be left untended, or they can be mended. This, then, is the final step in the tripartite conception of art worlds that I have presented here. Art worlds, being constantly, perennially, eternally made and unmade, are also simultaneously being remade, repaired, and restored by their actors.

Art Worlds Are Remade

The cracks in the art world, then, are not the whole story, even as interconnections are not the whole story. If we end our analysis with cracks, we have a better understanding of the disagreements and conflicts that pervade art worlds – divergences that prior theorizing has tended to elide. However, if we cease our analysis here, with a view of cracks within cracks within cracks, we are left wondering how anyone in the art world ever manages to get anything done. For in spite of the splintered, fragmentary nature of their interconnections, art worlds ultimately continue to produce art, a feat that Becker tells us is impossible without at least tacit cooperation among the art world's various players. They manage to organize, sometimes on grand scales, for art to continue to be made, taught, exhibited, collected, and critiqued. Organization of this sort, of any sort, requires a level of active collaboration, of working within and against cracks in the art world.

In theorizing this phenomenon, I take my cue from science and technology scholar Steven Jackson's (2014) essay on what he calls 'broken world thinking'. In this piece, Jackson emphasizes the processual nature of the world. While his focus is on technology and technological objects, his analysis might be easily applied to sociality within art worlds. Jackson argues that the general state of the world – technology, material objects, relationships, and so forth – is entropic: '[T]he world is always breaking; it's in its nature to break' (ibid.: 223). At the same time, these constant breaks

are also constantly being attended to – treated, mended, realigned. While the world is forever breaking, 'it is also being recuperated and reconstituted through repair' (ibid.). We know this, I think; we recognize this already in our studies of art. A painting's nature is to decay; its vibrancy is regularly maintained by carefully trained restorers. Likewise, links between artists and, say, gallery owners, buyers, and suppliers of artistic materials must be regularly maintained through communication; otherwise these connections wither and die. Jackson describes this dual state of the always-in-process world: 'Here, then, are two radically different forces and realities. On one hand, a fractal world, a centrifugal world, an always-almost-falling-apart world. On the other, a world in constant process of fixing and reinvention, reconfiguring and reassembling into new combinations and new possibilities … The fulcrum of these two worlds is *repair*' (ibid.: 222; emphasis in original).

So while the world is always breaking, it is also always under construction, being attended and maintained and repaired. There is intentionality in such actions, and there is also love. Repair is, fundamentally, an act of care (Jackson 2014: 222); repair grows out of emotional attachment to the breaking-down art world, out of a conviction that there is something important and worthy of preservation. It is repair that keeps art worlds intact, keeps them moving forward and producing art in spite of their cracks, in spite of their tendency to break down.

Let us return one last time to the vignette with which this chapter commenced. We have examined and explored the art world made and unmade, but if we look closely, we can see that it was also subtly remade. Here the action is passive, but still intentional. While viewers could have taken action to more noticeably exacerbate the cracks – protesting vocally, taking their complaints to social media, or even the old, clichéd standby of hurling vegetables at offending performers – the audience remained silent, allowing the band's faux pas to go largely unremarked. Of course, the spectators' passivity, including my own, speaks more to social norms and niceties than anything else; to cause a scene would have been the greater social blunder. But it also speaks to their priorities: those spectating were clearly far more interested and invested in the success of the festival and of the New Lodge Arts group's dance performance than in responding to the awkward song choices of the young band. In other words, they cared about their art world – the specific art world, and indeed social world, which had allowed that night's festival to occur – and within that moment they acted subtly, and most likely even unconsciously, to preserve the art world's functionality, to allow it to do its work in continuing to produce its art.

Care can also be undertaken more actively, more noticeably. In the case of arts funding cuts and austerity, Northern Ireland art world stakeholders recognize that a more active response is needed if the art world is to be maintained in something resembling its current form. Acts of repair to the cracks caused by austerity-led funding cuts come in numerous forms. Many

arts organizations facing cuts choose to streamline their budgets to allow themselves to continue delivering the same programmes and services as before. Many seek alternative funding, both public and private, to make up the lost revenue; in the cases of several high-profile institutions, for example, Belfast City Council has stepped in to replace lost Arts Council funding, thus allowing the organizations, which had been faced with imminent closure, to keep their doors open (Taggart 2015; D. Young 2018). Interest in funding from private foundations has been on the rise, with more arts organizations looking to diversify their revenue sources to protect against anticipated further cuts to public funding. Northern Ireland's artists have also formed an active social movement advocating against austerity-led cuts and calling for increased state funding for the arts (Rush 2022); one of this movement's protest actions is examined in detail in Chapter 5. Protest, too, is an act of care for an art world perceived to be under threat; accounts of such protests reveal individuals deeply invested in the care and maintenance of their art worlds (Serafini 2014; Serafini, Cossu, and Holtaway 2018).

It is important to add, as Jackson notes, that 'repair is not always heroic or directed toward noble ends' (2014: 233). Acts of repair can just as easily be harnessed for nefarious ends, or against the continuing functionality of an art world, as when art world members band together to denounce or exclude new innovations that they deem upsetting or aesthetically displeasing (e.g. McLoughlin 1995). Austerity, for example, can be read as an attempt at the repair of a cracked and breaking-down economic system. Or to take a related example, the repeated insistence of Carál Ní Chuilín (Northern Ireland Culture Minister from 2011 to 2016) that austerity was neither her nor her party's choice but rather the dictate of Westminster (Rush 2022), can be read as an attempt to repair and maintain relationships with her constituents, her party, and (some of) her fellows in the Northern Ireland Assembly. It must also be noted that repair is not the same as full restoration. While historical or past cracks can certainly be reconciled, they are not removed as though they never existed; their legacy remains within the art world, not unlike the ways in which the legacy of the Troubles remains in Northern Ireland in the present day. And art world repairs can create cracks of their own, either offshoots of the originals or new, unexpected ones entirely.

Repair, then, is complex and unstraightforward. It is also an act of creativity (Jackson 2014), as artists, arts workers, and other stakeholders invest themselves into the continued functioning of their art world. The acts of care by which cracks in the art world are repaired are bursting with creative potential: the thornier the problem, the more jagged the crack, the more creative the solution must be. Tsing calls this 'the productive friction of global connections' (2005: 3), while Jackson remarks that '[b]reakdown disturbs and sets in motion worlds of possibility that disappear under' more 'stable or accomplished' conditions (2014: 230).

And here at last is, I believe, where we can begin to speak of community arts and similar socially motivated endeavours: not only as aspects of a complex, breaking-down art world, but also as attempts at relational repair. It is a response to relational entropy on a larger scale: an entropy that has always existed, though perhaps it has been exacerbated by, or at least manifested more visibly under, regimes of industrialism, capitalism, and globalization. Art which takes as its primary substance the relationships among individuals can be read as a response to the perpetual breaking down of the world – an artistic mode of repair, a response to a world in whose nature it is to break.

Notes

1. Cf. Pinney and Thomas (2001); Chua and Elliott (2013). Gell's approach, while deeply influential in the anthropology of art, has of course not gone uncontested; see e.g. Morphy and Perkins (2006: 12–16); Morphy (2009); Derlon and Jeudy-Ballini (2010).
2. 'It is a symbol of Irish art. The cracked lookingglass of a servant' (Joyce 1993: 7).