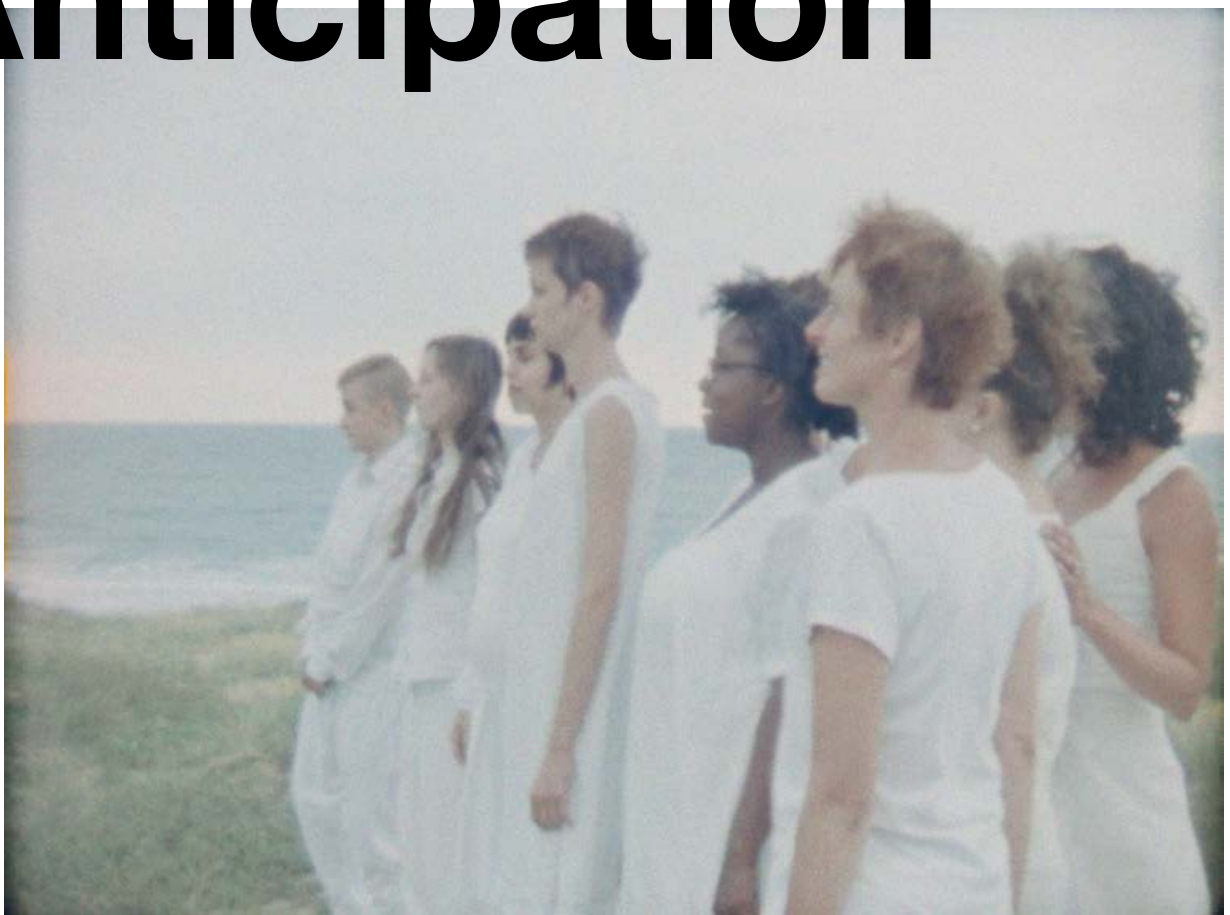


Spaces of Anticipation



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Spaces of Anticipation

Emanuele Guidi and Lorenzo Sandoval

“This future does not have yet a name, but we are standing on its brink. If the last forty years have been marked by ‘posts’ (post-war, post-colonialism, postmodernism, post-communism), then today, at least, we seem to be in a period of anticipation—an era that museums of contemporary art can help us collectively to sense and understand.”¹

Claire Bishop

“The landscape of your word is the world’s landscape. But its frontier is open.”²

Édouard Glissant

“Part of controlling the substance of one’s future would lie in controlling its nomenclature.”³

Betsy Wing

Framing the Research

The present issue of *On Curating* is the fourth iteration⁴ of the research that has unfolded under the title *Spaces of Anticipation*, outlined by artist and curator Lorenzo Sandoval and curator Emanuele Guidi (presently writing this introduction and from now onwards presented as “we”); research that has so far involved various contributors in different formats of discussion and presentation around a notion and a constellation of practices—*Anticipation*—that seem to offer the opportunity to discuss current and future conditions of production within artistic and cultural fields in all their complexities. A notion that we borrowed from a statement by Claire Bishop exactly because, as she frames it, “we seem to be in a period of anticipation.” We felt a certain closeness to this question and a hesitation in terms of the potential it could hold, especially back in 2014 when we started this research and when the echoes of various squares and movements (from Tahrir Square to 15M and Occupy) were still resonating. They were calling for a different kind of responsibility, exactly because of the way those movements were rehearsing different modes of constituting *we’s*. These events were especially interesting for us in terms of spatial organizations—may the seminal image of the square and its capacity of a distributed voice serve as an example. The notion of anticipation turned out to be even more exemplary, calling as a way to navigate within the current political drift, when the “we” is exploited in identitarian terms by extreme-right discourses. The request for a communal entity that is permanently questioned and dissolved, as for example proposed by Jean-Luc Nancy,⁵ became a new urgency.

In this sense, the understanding of anticipation as a constellation of practices, gained a great deal of influence. When Walter Benjamin laid out the notion of “constellation,” he argued this as a discussion of representation: “Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars.”⁶ As Heather Thiessen suggests, Benjamin proposed an understanding of ideas as the underlying essences that govern the meaning of the world of phenomena.⁷

“Ideas once apprehended might, thus, prompt revisions of the conceptual organization of phenomena in a given system or ideology.”⁸ This said, the unintentional “seeing” and description of a context and a situation might also have great potential, which is the power to change that situation (as we conclude perhaps a bit abruptly).

More broadly, we were interested in exploring the mutual influences and relationships of politics and citizenship and related artistic and curatorial research taking place: a reciprocity often fueled by theories of the commons, feminist/queer practices, and post-colonial studies. Therefore, we engaged with areas of research that work towards the construction and production of spatial and temporal conditions, as the main approach to supporting a culture of assembly—as a movement of assembling and dissolving. An effort that begins by acknowledging the complex cartography and the equal agency of the actors through which a cultural institution acts in a determinate context (artists, curators, audience, artworks, display systems, archives, etc.), favoring a progressive blurring of roles and categories that can allow for a collective desire to emerge.

If the squares had, and have, to be the reference for rethinking modes and relations of productions (and representations) in the political and cultural sphere, we also felt the urgency of the question posed by artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles as a way to stress and enhance a permeability between those two spheres: “The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who’s going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?”⁹ This question still resonates today and legitimately calls for forms of extreme care and maintenance to “renovate” the existing cultural—and political—institutions, focusing on the centrality of reproductive labor that needs to become a collective undertaking—a practice that calls for thinking beyond the logic of the “event” (and its spectacle) and to perform a different temporality, which necessarily raises questions about sustainability, fatigue, and the dangers of exhaustion. It also calls for looking for other references as models for institutions. As Helen Hester points out, “If we are seeking to reconsider the possibilities of social reproduction, in the interests of generating a more egalitarian conception of what a contemporary Promethean politics might mean, then we need to move beyond this privileging of the workplace. Indeed, we must turn our attention to the opportunities inherent in the collective reorganization and re-imagination of domestic space.”¹⁰ How to perform this “moving beyond” and “turning” also when thinking about working conditions within the art context? These are questions that, we believe, should inform our practices and that echo many of the texts presented in this publication that explore the processes of institutional work, its precarious structures and complex timings, all of which imply reproductive labor.

Another Take on A New Organization of the Social

On the other hand, this research also takes place in years when the task of *anticipating* is increasingly handed over to predictive algorithms and anticipatory computing that transform the architectures we move through into responsive systems¹¹—from domestic to public spaces, blurring the traditional distinction between the private and public spheres. “In the belly of data centers, machine intelligence is already emerging as a novel perspective on suprahuman and invisible clusters of social data, not as the quality of imitating human features and feelings. Machine intelligence is not anthropomorphic, but sociomorphic: it imitates and feeds on the condividual structures of society rather than the individual ones. [...] Computation is actually an economic process, one that aims at extracting valuable information and discarding useless information. In this sense computation is also a process of capitalization.”¹² As Matteo Pasquinelli suggests, any single part of human existence, and human socialization, are becoming part of a process of commodification; when a “new economy of suggested contents” designs communities of like-minded people and boosts a sense of affiliation with groups that are easily acknowledged as “we”; when, in the words of philosopher Byung-Chul Han, “The harsh logic of capitalism prevails in the so-called sharing economy, where, paradoxically, nobody is actually giving anything away voluntarily”¹³;

when notions such as friendship, hospitality, community, domesticity, and care are monetized and commodified; when “Revolution is not possible among exhausted, depressive, and isolated individuals.”¹⁴ Then, perhaps, we can consider the process of institution-making as one of the places where to counteract the digital cover of life, and its process of omnipresent commodification.

A Shared Lexicon and the Problem of Time

The implicit contradiction is precisely that notions such as friendship, hospitality, community, domesticity, and care form a lexicon common to many of the contributors to this issue of *OnCurating*, because—we could argue—they seem to be the values at stake and the battleground on which to try to resist the isolation and exhaustion imposed by capitalism’s rhythm. They are inflicted by digital social media and their capitalization, but they also seem to be the notions around which we try to re-compose a collective desire, and therefore they have fully entered the grammar of exhibition-making (and institution-making). These notions and contradictions accompany the discourse around many aspects of artistic and curatorial practices, from the production of spatial settings to the politics of display, from forms of mediation and pedagogical formats, to methodologies of audience engagement.

So, if on one hand, all the contributors understand those notions as active tools for rethinking and reshaping structures and infrastructures in order to succeed in establishing a truly situated practice, on the other they don’t hide the fact that they are preoccupied with the temporality that the performing of those values demand; it takes time to host, it takes time to take care, it takes time to share, and it takes time simply to be present, not to mention that this presence is often unpaid: “But presence also means permanent availability without any promise of compensation [...] Presence means to be engaged or occupied with an activity without being hired or employed,” as Hito Steyerl has sharply noted.¹⁵ It seems legitimate to ask: how to establish an economy of co-presence that can be sustainable both for workers and audience, in precarious times and when most of the institutions are suffering from a systemic scarcity of resources?

Anticipation as an Operative Term

To frame the discourse around the “future” of institutions, inspired by thinkers such as Glissant, we proposed *anticipation* as an operative term that offers a different approach to what the most common notion of *future* might imply historically: a linear conception of time tied to an idea of progress that shapes the developments of modernity around utopian models. If we believe that challenging given histories is central when it comes to cultural practices and historiography, then the nomenclature of the possible projections towards different conditions is crucial. Even though we understand that shifting from one term to another is a humble gesture, it might set the basis for imagining other constellations of practices, meanings, and formations. As Siefried Zielinski has written in his proposal *Towards An Institute for Southern Modernities*: “To think in deep time dimensions joins a possible past to a possible future. Just as I do not understand history as a collection of given facts, but as a reality that is perpetually co-produced by historians, I do not believe that the future will automatically be the perpetuation of contemporary conditions and relations.”¹⁶ Following this logic, the term *anticipation* escapes linear narratives and traces more open trajectories that allow for the establishment of oblique relationships, associations, and alliances across time; it is understood in its many-folded meaning of *looking forward*, *taking care ahead of time*, and *enthusiasm*, and therefore as a proposition to reframe the discourse about the times to come of institutions and their, supposedly inherent, nature of

becoming while being grounded in the present. Therefore, in our understanding, it could become a form of “radical hospitality”¹⁷ that makes it possible to draw energy from an encounter with someone, or something, yet to be known and makes of it a driving force of transformation. As feminist theorist Braidotti suggests: “We need to borrow the energy from the future to overturn the conditions of the present [...] to anticipate what we want to become. We need to empower people to will, to want, to desire, a different world, to extract to reterritorialize, indeed—from the misery of the present joyful, positive, affirmative relations and practices.”¹⁸ This seems to be the effort around which to build an institutional practice.

Contributions

Antonia Alampi speaks with **Alec Steadman** about her past and ongoing projects that research experimental models of institutions and programming while implementing them in geographical context afflicted by political and economical instability. In parallel and complementary ways, Cairo, Egypt and Athens, Greece—where, respectively, the projects *Imaginary School Program* (ISP) and *Future Climates* took place—offered the most challenging and appropriate contexts in which to “think about institutional structures”...“from an infrastructural perspective, including economic trajectories, issues of legality, modes of governance and the ideological and cultural frames that existed within them.” A conversation that raises fundamental questions around issues of “economic and ecological sustainability, long-term structural support, low compensation of artistic and intellectual work, precarious labor conditions, problematic legal, political and bureaucratic frameworks” that are intertwined within the act and urgency of building and running small-scale initiatives, but that at the same time are valid considerations that can extend to all art and cultural institutions.

The chapter by artist **Alex Martinis Roe** is extremely relevant in the context of this publication, since many of the contributors to this issue, and the organizations they represent, worked together to support and give continuity to the artist’s research, which goes under the title of *To Become Two*.¹⁹ Correspondingly, the organizations benefit from the profound research that Martinis Roe conducts about (hi)stories of self-initiated feminist philosophical circles, bookshops, and university departments, as it offers an important perspective on ways of working and living together. In fact, the exercises that Martinis Roe proposes in her chapter unfold around the practice of *affidamento*, theorized within the circle of the Milan Women’s Bookstore Collective, as a practice that “facilitates the extension of the radical politics of difference within the group, into its way of working together on the bookstore project, but also further afield into existing institutions and power structures.”

Binna Choi, director at Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht, looks back and through the activities that took place at Casco in recent years under the umbrella of the Composing the Commons inquiry (and more specifically in its latest phase, articulated in the exhibition project *We Are the Time Machines: Time and Tools for Commoning*). While individuating the need for “making time” as the “fundamental condition for commoning,” Binna Choi reveals how this making of time emerges as the critical, and most difficult to accomplish, challenge through which to rethink and recompose the institution itself. In her account, she describes the thinking behind the methodology chosen to anticipate, “within the parameters of the exhibition,” the production of situations where the “tools for commoning” could be made—as they are not pre-existing: a work that weaves together spatial design and facilities with various formats of programming, with the intention of allowing the co-habitation of different temporalities and communities (from the temporary visitor to the Casco team itself).

Binna Choi boldly unveils how this process—driven by the genuine desire of making “reproductive time” to shape the whole exhibition and institution—eventually collides with the organization’s ongoing business-as-usual “busyness,” and she makes clear how this issue will be the central challenge in Casco’s future development.

Céline Condorelli and **Manuel Segade** converse via Skype about various interlinked ideas that present the format of the “exhibition as a set of relationships” within which audience(s) “come with bodies” for which the institution should be responsible. Describing display as something that “*happens during the encounter between bodies and objects,*” they talk about the importance of acknowledging personal references and biographical approaches while “*positioning oneself from the side, or the site, you’re trying to speak with*”—forms of embodiment that seem a necessary effort to establish a genuine practice of support. By referencing *Notes on the Museum Bench* by Diana Fuss, they traverse the history of modern museums, initially designed and furnished as places of/for encounters but that progressively became a more neutral environment, leaving space exclusively for a “visual experience of culture” and excluding forms of social life from its rooms. Letting emerge how the absence of women was a determining point in the construction of those Western-modern places of cultural-symbolic production, the museum is framed as the site where conditions of appearance are produced and where the politics of display govern forms of “relationships and exclusion.” In these terms, throughout the conversation the need to find ways of acknowledging what and who is, or has been made, absent or marginal is a shared concern for Condorelli and Segade. And at the same time, the respective artistic and curatorial practices find in notions such as friendship and desire the *modi operandi* to think about the “future” of institutions, bringing to its center precisely what/who is missing and making of it “*not a place to build a community but a place where a community can be acknowledged as a set of gestures of responsibility.*”

Framing the notion of anticipation between its meanings of potential and expectation, **Jonatan Habib Engqvist** brilliantly guides **Christian Nyampeta** through his own practice and main propositions formulated under the statement of “how to live together.” Nyampeta’s “hosting structures”—spatial arrangements that the artist has produced in various forms and that include objects such as benches, toys, sandals, and musical instruments—are useful tools for discussing the intertwined relationship existing between the artist’s role, the exhibition as format, and the way they affect the institution. In Nyampeta’s words, what is at stake within these structures is “a reserve of a doing, a reserve of encounters,” where “letting” and “resting” become affirmative and operational, and “passivity” is understood as “the passing of one subject into another, including our previous and future selves.” So what emerges is a productive tension within the act of “resting” that is no longer considered “as leisure, or laziness, or inaction but as an action of being sensitive to what is to come.”

The artistic contribution by Vienna-based artist duo **Krüger and Pardeller** relates, in a diary-like chronicle, their direct experience in working with experimental practices within small-scale institutions. Framed under the title of *A Model of Possible Action. An Experiment to Develop a New Methodology of Institutional Cooperation*, which starts from the observation of how “large institutions, parallel to their programmatic critique of neoliberal practices, themselves engage professional coaching firms in order to implement internal organizational development processes,” the artists write about the complexity of their attempt to establish a model of research that could capitalize on and hijack coaching techniques to bring together knowledge and expectations from various stockholders of the institution (from policymakers, to the artistic community

and the team): an act that both makes it possible to guide and accompany the institution through a transformative process towards a new model, while at the same time investigating “the overlap between methods of institutional critique and the techniques of organizational development.”

The editors of this issue, **Emanuele Guidi** and **Lorenzo Sandoval**, guide the Venezuelan, Berlin-based artist **Sol Calero** through some of her main works and undertakings to reveal the role that Latin American culture has in her practice in terms of both political and artistic influence. Attributing a sense of hospitality as an essential part of her background, Calero describes her interest in the production of artifacts, interiors, architecture, and situations of sociality as forms with which to engage with people and often through “*access to other voices, other artists’ works dealing with issues of identity, racism, or the consequences of colonialism*” as “*a way for me to make artwork more inclusive and complex, instead of perpetuating a system that I have experienced as classist and exclusive.*” In these terms, the sort of curatorial attitude that informs her work goes alongside the effort to understand and mediate the notion of the exotic, and how that can become a tool for making the “*cultural appropriation of Latin American art and its reception in Europe*” visible—a critical take on an ongoing colonial legacy that Calero tries to unpack by establishing “*honest*” ways of “*working together.*”

Teobaldo Lagos Preller introduces the work of **Justo Pastor Mellado** during his directorship of the institution *Parque Cultural de Valparaíso*, followed up by a conversation with him. Lagos historicizes the process of how the *Parque* came to be in Valparaíso in the middle of a shift in Chilean politics. The institution was formerly a jail, and prior to the work of Pastor Mellado, it was occupied by local cultural agents. When assuming the direction, Pastor Mellado became a polemical figure, although his practice towards the local community developed a few interesting findings. He applied the concept of the *diagram of work* as a form that could fictionalize a possible practice, and in that way anticipate what an institution could become. He used this technique to introduce his project to politicians and to develop the program of the *Parque*. Another finding was to use the history of the building itself as a *dispositif* through which to reflect upon history and the relationships with the neighbors. In the introductory text and in the conversation, Lagos Preller and Pastor Mellado analyze the potentialities of such an approach and a few of the polemical points of Mellado’s practice.

Through an artistic contribution, **Luis Berríos-Negrón** introduces his project “Earthscore Specularium,” developed at Färgfabriken in Stockholm in 2015. The work of Berríos-Negrón departs from a practice that deals with complexity to reflect upon notions that bring together ecology, art, architecture, science, and social practice. In recent years, he has been developing a set of conceptual devices he ultimately refers to as “social pedestals.” The latter consist of a series of architectural installations that facilitate social encounters by resolving spatial practicalities, and at the same time reflect conceptually upon the dematerialization of sculpture. The “social pedestal” is conceived as a site for networked agency for social transformation, where the roles of the agents involved can permute, and different configurations can be organized depending of the needs of every specific situation. The “greenhouse”—which Luis treats as a *social pedestal* itself as well—is a long-term research site of the artist on the possibility of emancipating this type of technology in order to obtain anticipatory spatial, artistic, and social media. In that way, the project seeks to take inspiration from the functions and metaphors of the greenhouse to reflect upon the contemporary ecological crisis, and its social extensions. By taking the many layers that compose the history of the greenhouse (its relations with colonialism, exploitation, division of nature, labor, and knowledge, etc.) Berríos-Negrón proposes to

retool the technology and the conceptual sets that shape the greenhouse. In his contribution to this issue, the artist incorporates a series of *correspondence* and *drawings* that were the core output of “Earthscore Specularium.” The space of the project, a “model greenhouse superstructure,” was built and inhabited together by Luis, his partner and art historian **María Kamilla Larsen**, daughter **Freia Pilar Negrón Larsen**, and the Färgfabriken curatorial and installation staff. They invited a series of guests to also stay overnight with them to contribute to the project through sharing their knowledge and memories, together creating different artistic elements using Paul Ryan’s techniques of “Earthscore” notation and “Threeing.” The project radically challenged the idea of habitation as performance, where the limits of audience lie, and, through them, which kinds of relationships and exchanges can occur. At the same time, it challenged the divisive colonial past of the greenhouse as a proto-technology that may have presupposed the perceptual separations between being and environment, interior and exterior, nature and knowledge.

Notes

- 1** Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology, Or What’s Contemporary in Museums of Contemporary Art?* (London: Koenig Books, 2013), 62.
- 2** Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 33.
- 3** Betsy Wing, Translator’s Introduction in Édouard, Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, xiv.
- 4** So far, *Spaces of Anticipation* has taken the form of a symposium with the same title at EACC (Castellón, Spain, 2014) (Link: <http://www.eacc.es/en/espai-didactic/espais-danticipacio-simposi/>); the research exhibition *Making Room. Spaces of Anticipation* (link: <http://www.argekunst.it/en/making-room-spaces-of-anticipation/>)(2014), and a second symposium and workshop (2015) (<http://www.argekunst.it/en/spaces-of-anticipation-un-simposio/>) both at ar/ge kunst (Bolzano, Italy). The first two texts are included in this publication.
- 5** Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney, *Theory and History of Literature*, Volume 76 (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
- 6** Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London, New York: Verso, 1998; first published as *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 1963, text from 1924-25), 34.
- 7** Heather Thiessen, *On Walter Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, accessed February 18, 2018, <https://utopaedia.files.wordpress.com/2007/10/benjamin-trauerspiel-notes.pdf>, 2.
- 8** Ibid.
- 9** Mierle Laderman Ukeles, “Maintenance Art Manifesto Proposal for an exhibition “CARE” 1969!”
- 10** Helen Hester, “Promethean Labours and Domestic Realism,” accessed February 18, 2018, https://www.academia.edu/11571359/Promethean_Labours_and_Domestic_Realism.
- 11** “The multiple crises we face, socially, economically, and ecologically (which are impossible to disentangle), are incommensurate with our existing means to justly mitigate them. These crises did not suddenly appear out of nowhere, but are the result of human making; a deeply uneven making, whose acute consequences disproportionately follow well-trodden trajectories of historical domination. Unbridled technological development is partially complicit in amplifying these crises, but this is largely so because it is embedded in particular socio-political diagrams that set far more determinate constraints on what, for example, algorithms do, than what algorithms, as such, could do. The crux here lies in the ‘could,’ which is a question of enablement: in

what conditions can, say, the algorithmic serve us, in what conditions will it devour us for spare parts, and in what conditions does it preemptively criminalize the innocent?" Patricia Reed, "Xenophily and Computational Denaturalization," *e-flux Architecture*, accessed February 18, 2018, <http://www.e-flux.com/architecture/artificial-labor/140674/xenophily-and-computational-denaturalization/>.

12 Matteo Pasquinelli, "Abnormal Encephalization in the Age of Machine Learning," *e-flux* no. 75 (September 2016), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67133/abnormal-encephalization-in-the-age-of-machine-learning/>.

13 Byung-Chul Han, "Why Revolution Is Impossible: On The Seductive Power Of Neoliberalism," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 13, 2014, <http://international.sueddeutsche.de/post/97371820645/why-revolution-is-impossible-on-the-seductive>.

14 Ibid.

15 Hito Steyerl, "The Terror of Total Dasein: Economies of Presence in the Art Field," *DIS Magazine*, <http://dismagazine.com/discussion/78352/the-terror-of-total-dasein-hito-steyerl/>.

16 Siegfried Zielinski, "Towards An Institute for Southern Modernities," Siegfried Zielinski and Eckhard Furlus, *Variantology Vol. 5. On Deep Time Relations of Arts, Sciences and Technologies* (Cologne: Walther König, 2011).

17 Thanks to the organization Lungomare, Bolzano for inspiring this term (link).

18 Rosi Braidotti and Timotheus Vermeulen, "Borrowed Energy: Timotheus Vermeulen talks to philosopher Rosi Braidotti about the pitfalls of speculative realism," *Frieze*, no. 165 (September 2014), <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/borrowed-energy/>.

19 In 2014, Alex Martinis Roe participated in the research exhibition *Making Room – Spaces of Anticipation* curated by Emanuele Guidi and Lorenzo Sandoval; as development of the dialogue generated around *Spaces of Anticipation*, BAR project invited AMR for a residency in Barcelona where she could research and produce a new chapter of *To Become Two*. Eventually *To Become Two* found a final form in the co-commissioned series of exhibitions and public programs by ar/ge kunst (Bolzano), Casco (Utrecht), If I Can't Dance (Amsterdam), and The Showroom (London).

How To Rest Together

A Conversation between Christian Nyampeta and Jonatan Habib Engqvist

Jonatan Habib Engqvist: Let's start with the notion of anticipation. Sifting through the etymology of the word, it basically entails "to cause to happen sooner," or "taking care ahead of time;" This original meaning of literally "taking into possession beforehand" suggests an awareness of something to come. Today, we use the term in the sense of expectation or looking forward, but anticipation has an element of preparation or forestallment that should prevent it from simply being used as a synonym for expectation as representation or assumption of a future act or development as if presently existing or accomplished. So it would seem that we're speaking of potential or prolepsis. This makes me think of how you speak of the physical environments that you create as *tools* that you construct in order to create spaces of encounter. This might seem instrumental, but on the other hand there will always be something that escapes the design. If the instruments you create allow slippages to happen—moments that exist outside of the program or calendar of the institution—perhaps this distinction between "expectation" and "anticipation" could be fruitful?

Christian Nyampeta: Perhaps anticipation is related to a promise? I amuse myself by thinking that, day-to-day, encounters are organized following spoken and unspeakable promises. When an agreement is put into words or made visible in some way, we speak of a contract. Maybe then, once such arrangements are reached intuitively and left unannounced, we may call them expectations. An agreement then is the structuring of contingencies into stabilized codes, and here resides the tension.

I find it useful to think of the spatial arrangements and instruments as "hosting structures." Perhaps these hosting structures point to the overflow, or maybe also underflow of an expectation as caricatured above. At stake in these hosting structures is the idea of a reserve of a doing, a reserve of encounters. I think this resonates with the words of philosopher Jean-Paul Martinon in London, who writes that, "The encounter

involves asymmetrical movements of generosity that could not take place if there were no symmetrical movements of egoity," and that "the encounter involves a 'doing' that has no objective and yet could not take place without the setting up of objectives."¹

Also the words of Isaïe Nzeyimana come to mind, a philosopher working in Rwanda. I visited Nzeyimana last year, and we talked about the meaning of rest and its role in the shaping of our subjects. In our conversation, Nzeyimana mentioned the notion of *umwaku*. Nzeyimana calls this a malevolent wish. Suppose, Nzeyimana says, early in the morning you are up for some task, and you meet someone who makes a stirring comment to you. In Nzeyimana's words, this may be very banal. The person may tell you that your shirt is dirty, or the person may find that you are not looking good in this or that way. As the day advances, this comment grows on you to become agitating, and your disturbed mind prevents you from working restfully. For Nzeyimana this is *umwaku*: a piece of information, some news, or a comment, actual or false, that is troubling to the mind. The notion of *umwaku* is of an animistic origin.² What makes such comment stirring is not so much its unsolicited delivery, but its pre-emptive, anticipatory resonance to a possibly feared, relatively undesired image of the oneself.

The hosting structures are in tension with the institution of *umwaku*. For want of a better word, the idea of "letting" comes to mind: the hosting structures make it possible to remain, to let go, to make available, to slacken, to leave, to depart from, to leave undone, to allow, to bequeath. I think that the hosting structures perform the contradiction of such "letting." The tension and contradiction remain, because of the image of letting go, for example, through weariness or through neglect. Letting can also indicate to allow a perceived, alleged, or convicted offender to go unpunished, but also to divulge. These meanings open up to letting as ceasing, to stopping, to letting alone, to not mentioning, also as a way of sheltering. With this reflection, I am imagining an encounter whereby a speech leaves the guest and host alone; or whereby a conversation



Christian Nyampeta, *How To Live Together*, 2015, The 11th Gwangju Biennale: *The 8th Climate (What does art do?)*. Curated by Maria Lind, Gwangju, South Korea

leaves the other at rest, but without abandoning the other...

JHE: When you say that the indistinct hosting structures are in tension with the institution of *umwaku*, it makes me think of Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica and what today seems to be a rather utopian idea of a kind of lazy creative leisure, which he calls *creleisure*. Ceasing, stopping, letting alone, not mentioning, and letting objects become sensing organs—I believe you might be addressing a certain trope of activity, a stubborn idea that Art should be understood as a mode of action, as a *doing*, or even as a particular kind of activity. Perhaps your work can resonate with someone like Oiticica in a way that is helpful in trying to review the validity of that notion. For instance, these ideas of rest, laziness, or, to put it philosophically—active passivity—connect Art to a different notion of subjectivity through a body that isn't busy *doing stuff*, but that simply exists.

What if we re-orient your ideas of “how to live together” into “how to rest together”? Could we speak of this “letting” as a form of *Interpassivity*? A space, or the promise of a space designed in order to do nothing in particular?

CN: *Creleisure* sounds fascinating. I will consult that reference to refresh my memory. At present, I would outline the “rest” that I am evoking not as passivity-as-usual. Do we understand passivity as inaction? As laziness? In contrast, if we understand passivity as the passing of one subject into another, including our previous and future selves, then passivity is at stake in the hosting structures. This is because I consider rest not as leisure, or laziness, or inaction, but as an action of being sensitive to what is to come. In this way, I evoke rest as a shared resource in and out of our command. As such, rest involves the giving of rest rather than only taking rest. This contradiction makes it difficult for me to define rest conclusively. This way, rest falls outside of conceptualization, it is the rest of the concept. In some ways, this is helpful. This difficulty sketches out rest as that which is left or stays proper to its own being. It takes so much material and so many indescribable efforts to take rest, let alone to give rest. Maybe then rest connects our being to the world to come, as a reserve of a future event or encounter...

JHE: What I am trying to get at is how the notion of passivity changes the dialogue between the thing and the wearer/user, or a specific environment and what takes place within it. Apropos of



Christian Nyampeta, *Affiliations*, 518 Archives, alongside Cooperativa Cráter Invertido curated by Binna Choi, The 11th Gwangju Biennale, 2016

countering *umwaku* or avoiding pre-defined activity, Oiticica also had a notion of quasi-cinema. Today, we would simply call it a multi-channel installation, but in the 1970s it was a kind of revision of the cinematic order, where he attempted to expand the notion of film by producing spaces where an audience could watch without having to discern a particular position, without aligning their gaze according to a predefined order or with others. Instead, one could lie or stand while experiencing projections of multiple images on diverse surfaces. With his Quasi-Cinema installations, Oiticica said that he wanted to create “architectures of the libido” that “appeal to the complexity of perception through multiple senses and the integration of the arts.” Quasi is perhaps a good word. It contains this notion of passivity, and I really prefer it to the more dialectically negating terms that have been in circulation like “immaterial” or “dematerialized,” as it makes me think of notions like the placebo, the quasi-object, something that exists and does not exist, yet holds some power over how reality is perceived.

CN: Yes, this passivity, again if it is an activity of a passage, of a passing over. However, if passivity is inaction *tout court*, then it remains predictably incomplete. Nzeyimana finds that, day-to-day, a rest defined as inaction cannot exist in physical, biological, and psychological terms. Otherwise, Nzeyimana says, we are speaking of the end of a life, of existence. The planet, time, the organs, the mind, all of these are engaged in alternating but constantly active functions. Rather, Nzeyimana finds tranquility in this changing of activities. Tired of working at the office, we may find it restful to work in the garden. Another way Nzeyimana finds rest is through speaking to a stranger. Here, the contradiction returns: on the one hand, Nzeyimana



Christian Nyampeta, *How To Live Together, Prototypes*, The Showroom, London, 2014

highlights the importance of keeping ourselves away from the kind of speech and encounters that solicit or transmit *umwaku*. And yet, on the other hand, Nzeyimana finds it restful to talk to a stranger, whereby both speakers expose themselves to the unknown. The distinction, and not entirely the resolution of this contradiction, is the difference between meeting the unknown and falling into the unknown. In reference to the quasi, to the multiple immaterial you evoke in the reorientation of the cinematic sequence of that specific time of Oiticica, the idea of being a synonym of oneself comes to mind. This is how I propose to re-orient the idea of How To Live Together into How To Rest Together. I think laziness is too defined in this context. Rather, rest understood as a passivity, as a letting that is nevertheless a doing, understood as a way of changing the dialogue, as you say, this rest is a manner of finding synonyms of ourselves, of our structures, of our lives.

JHE: Can you develop what you mean by being a synonym of oneself, and how this relates to rest?

CN: I was noting my impulse to develop synonyms of my doing, my thinking, and my being. Of taking rest from “myself.” This can be a shared need, particularly as a way of intervening within a crisis or moment of exhaustion. I am attracted to the plurality, which is occasioned by the idea of synonyms, when I am facing such a “lack.” This ending, characterized by a tiredness of means or exhaustion of options, can be banal or extremely serious. For example, I speak languages that do not have the word art in their vocabulary. And yet symbolic creative work informs the everyday, as a specialism with specific sets of practices, and as a part of mundane encounters. Chatting with a child, flirting, describing the weather to a stranger, lengthy greetings and valedictory exaggerations, and so on.



Christian Nyampeta, *How To Live Together, Prototypes*, The Showroom, London, 2014

For instance, another friend philosopher, Obed Quinet Niyikiza, refers to an anecdote attributed to Luther.³ Allegedly Luther was asked what he would do if tomorrow were the end of the world. Luther responded that he would plant a tree. This assertion is a way of overcoming an ending, an exhaustion. This assertion is a performance, with or without a goal in mind. This performance instantiates a simulation, a synonym of the ordinary. The extraordinary becomes the ordinary by another name. Conversely, such performance of the ordinary can have a goal: it may carry a terrifying charge of interpellation, of keeping the other in check. But the synonyms which Niyikiza sketches are means of overcoming an ending, an ending of words, of ideas, of habits. These means may connect us to the rest, to a radical outside. The hosting structures, the instruments, are synonyms of chairs, of tables, of beds, of sandals, of monochords, and so on. Within these spatial arrangements, we can then ask questions that reach beyond the exhaustion of our speech: what is art in this or that language? These questions can of course be felt, asked, and dealt with away from these hosting structures. But I imagine that the material dimension of the same discursive question might further the inquiry.

JHE: In short, the things you make are synonyms of objects, or *quasi-objects*, that amplify certain questions. What then is the role of the exhibition? Let's say that the exhibition is a place to rest, for instance. It obviously won't solve the complications of fatigue, but I guess it might provide some calm to reflect within the structure of the institution where it takes place. Correct me if I'm wrong, but as far as I have understood you're not really into the passive/active dialectics, so you cannot simply be saying that if the art world is making us tired, we should try turning the tables and exhaust its spaces... So I would like to ask you if you also could talk about the relationship between the things that you make, the hosting structure, and the institution where they present themselves. Could you give an example of these connections?

CN: It is a beautiful question. In my experience, every exhibition is contextual. In some cases, an exhibition is the culmination of a sets of elaborate activities, in some other cases it is a setting for further research, in some others it is a setting for hosting workshops, and in some others it is a thesis, etc. All together, leading to the exhibition are interior activities, and the exhibition

is a space to meet the rest, to meet the outside: if we retain the notion of rest as a sensibility of attending to what is to come. Indeed, the distinction between action and passivity is not what is at stake in “my” exhibitions. I am now speaking from South Korea; I am here on the occasion of the Gwangju Biennale. The entry of my contribution in the exhibition catalogue speaks of these exhibition activities as *also* restful activities: watching movies, debating, reading, eating, drinking, workshopping, finding solutions, talking to strangers and friends, etc. All these activities can be ways of resting. Resting compels self-determination, it makes it possible to inhabit oneself with or without a goal in mind.

The hosting structures, the synonyms of objects, are often prototypes whose use is to develop affective and working relationships between artists, communities, and the surrounding resources through producing studies for new tools and settings. In the past, these structures have included community notice boards, public benches, toys, sandals, notebooks, musical instruments, aprons—things of all kinds that become relevant through sustained use and dialogues. The exhibition then oscillates between the roles of host and guest. Occasionally, the structures supporting, accompanying, or hosting these activities become useful for other artists or staff of the institution. This was the case at Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory in Utrecht, The Netherlands. I would also cite a work realized in collaboration with The Showroom at Church Street Library in London. Here, the actual structure is a permanent mural conceived in collaboration with groups and communities neighboring The Showroom, realized through The Showroom’s Communal Knowledge programme.

Today, my uses of such “communal knowledge” is the staging of extended discursive programmes about the uses of art outside the field of art, in collaboration with philosophers. By philosophy I mean the conception of ideas, and this needn’t be practiced only by those schooled in the traditions and disciplines of philosophy.

JHE: I like how you define philosophy as thinking rather than its expression through speech, and resting as inhabiting oneself with or without a goal in mind. It reminds me of a cheeky quote by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard where he says, “People demand freedom of speech as a compensation for the freedom of thought which they seldom use.”⁴ There is a moment of non-

doing, or openness, in thought, which is easily overridden by the institutions of contemporary art such as biennials. To be fair, under those conditions it is very difficult to work without a clear goal in mind, but it seems to me that one often tries to compensate a desire for intimacy with intensity. With some restraint (given our political contemporary), one might on the level of rhetoric draw a parallel to the trope of compulsive activation or judgment vis-à-vis the more contemplative “letting” you described earlier.

But what strikes me with your answer is how clearly you articulate that discourse and gaze inform our understanding of space. Yet to my mind the phenomenological subtlety of what you do often goes the other way. Somewhat clumsily put, your prototypes allow the space to betray how we speak and see. In a sense they become an artifact “in between” the time and space of an exhibition. Perhaps my last question should have been *when* rather than what is an exhibition?

To give a specific example, I was thinking about the sandals you made for Casco. Any environment is of course understood differently when you are busy trying to keep your balance, constantly aware of your feet, hips, gaze or when every step you make creates a sharp sound. Could you describe that specific work, and since we’re speaking about anticipation—what did you anticipate from it and what was the outcome?

CN: If rest is being, I imagine that thinking is the awareness of this being, of inhabiting oneself with or without a goal in mind. This thinking can be expressed in a speech, but thought is not speech itself. Thank you for the quote by Kierkegaard! In the logic you sketch, perhaps biennials are a form of language, of material appearances and arrangements that include and exclude the non-doing and openness of thought. Here, we then find that there is a goal to such exhibitions and activities. If all is well, the existence and the contours of the demands of this goal are known in advance, and the extent of these prospects can be navigated, and its terms can be negotiated. At least in theory. At the same time, my presence here in Gwangju is partially owed to the long reveries, meditations, and open conversations we held with curator Binna Choi over a few years on the subject of how to live, work, and rest together. This intimacy becomes an intensity at specific moments such as the installation weeks.



Christian Nyampeta, *New Habits*, Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht 2014

The intensity shifts into a distributed intimacy, as we encounter the works in various forms, as exhibitions, publications, events, and so on. The “letting” is also letting intensity and intimacy grow into something not yet known or no longer known. This, again, reminds me of a synonym.

“When is an exhibition” is a beautiful phrasing. Yes, the spaces of display, the exhibition spaces, and the activities in which we encounter each other and the work are co-determined by a temporal element. Prototypes are “examples,” models, simulations, synonyms of ways of inhabiting the world. The work you mention was realized in the context of *New Habits*, the research exhibition curated by Binna Choi at Casco in 2014. Elements of these prototypes were structured as a performance titled *Models, Manners, Prayers*. We performed together with fellow artist Aimé Zito Lema and other friends. The prototypes, these sandals, allow for the passage between “habits,” between ways of life, and between how these ways of life may translate in aesthetic and ethical forms. This was the question at stake in Casco’s *New Habits*. I study asceticism, and some of the ascetics value physical or symbolic pilgrimage. With the sandals, we were thinking of life as a set of

journeys, and how such journeys would be facilitated by furnishings that model themselves into new forms through use in time and space. The sandals at Casco offered structures for visiting the exhibition, which is perhaps also a journey of sorts. The sandals are a sensing organ between the body and the environment of the exhibition. We thought that wearing sandals induced a way of walking that is specific, responsive, and sensitive. There arises a certain receptivity when vision corresponds to balance and sound; in other words, when our otherwise separate senses are active associatively.

It is hard to measure the outcome, but the resulting gestures and movements placed the body in a heightened correspondence with the environment of the exhibition. The sandals provided an extension, a conjoiner, a passage between senses and the works, from one sensory space into the other, from one habit into another. If an exhibition can be a model of how to organize our world, then this correspondence, this conversation between works and senses can have resonance outside of the exhibition.



Christian Nyampeta, *New Habits*, Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory, Utrecht 2014

JHE: I wanted to end by asking you how the institution is affected, but I can't help noting that what you are describing also could be seen as analogous to the structure of a joke. Both artworks and jokes can reconfigure the structure of how we perceive the world by providing a thought that can at once point out structures to which society conforms and be a wink. Or by breaking with habitual thought or perception... Bringing us back to the question of anticipation, one could say that humor appears in the disjunction between the way we perceive things to be— and the way they appear in the joke—between what one might expect and what is developed within the logic of the joke. Examples can vary from speaking animals, to farting bishops, curators installing light bulbs, or straight linguistic inversions. Cicero once said that the most common joke is when we expect one thing and another is said—here, our disappointment makes us laugh. Kant says something similar. Basically the joke departs from a notion that we live in, or believe ourselves to live in, a rational and ordered world. In this environment we become

accustomed to certain reoccurring events, patterns, and routines: that things happen in a certain order and have certain reoccurring structures.⁵ When something happens that disrupts that order, that breaks our expectations or habits—we burst out in laughter. Or it can also be a question of unexpected similarities. For instance, Pascal writes that two identical faces, of which neither could produce laughter, can make us laugh due to their similarity⁶ (it can for example be funny if the guy in the café looks just like George Bush, not because the guy in the café is funny, and not because George Bush is particularly amusing—but simply because it's funny that the guy in the café looks just like George Bush). The comparison is, in other words, that impossible equation between our habitual concepts and the things that these concepts represent. More to the point: Immanuel Kant defines laughter as an affect that depends on an expectation transformed into nothing. Kant's definition seems sensible, and I would say that it has been widely used and accepted when talking about humor. But how apparent is it that a failed expectation could create an affect tied to joy? How can disappointment make us happy? Analogously to your description above, Kant shows how a storyteller gears our expectations in a certain direction toward an inevitable solution through narrative succession while the logical, habitual or obvious consequences of the story are exempt. One of his examples is a story about a rich person who wants to arrange a fancy funeral for a relative, but the more money he gives to the grievors so that they will appear sad—the happier they get! If this story had ended the way that Kant assumes that we are expecting—that is to say if the grievors had played sad, it wouldn't have been as funny. Being a 300-year old joke—it actually has a rather low “ha-ha-factor,” but the point is still clear: the story's climax is its anti-climax which in turn relies on an absurd logic, or even a non-rational non-logic that breaks with cultural habits or the cause-and-effect of the everyday. Perhaps, and I do realize that I am stretching it and that this might be an improper comparison, but perhaps this break with expectation, this questioning of habits, of “letting” is not about anticipation at all but the potential of a non-resolved promise?

CN: I think the category of a joke can be a useful analogy to chart the shifting of terms and registers of how we understand our relations to our environments,



Christian Nyampeta, *Life after Life*, 2016 at Jerusalem Show VIII

our practices, and ourselves. Your analysis of the jokes from these philosophers is helpful for thinking about the notion of anticipation, because some categories of jokes dissolve or displace anticipation. In addition to your analysis, we can sketch out a spectrum of jokes and its relation to my artistic wishes. On one end of the spectrum, we could find the jokes of a comedian. On the other end of this spectrum, we may find the jokes of, let's say, a dentist who is at work. The jokes of a comedian are warranted. When we don't find the comedian's jokes funny, the absence of our risibility is relative to many factors including our own ethics and tastes. However, the jokes of a dentist at work are not easily becoming. It could be that at the moment we hear the joke of a dentist at work, we find ourselves in a position of such discomfort that laughing will only make matters worse. Do you think that the jokes told by Cicero, Quintilian, and Kant can be located in the middle of this spectrum? The relation between the propositions of the ways being and doing at the heart of my work and a joke is the devaluation of an impasse, it is the dissolution of an exhaustion. This deflation is not necessarily a solution. Instead, it is an orientation towards another center, towards an exterior mode of thought. I will conclude by imparting to you my current whereabouts. I was in London when we started corresponding. By now I am writing from Jerusalem. If we speak of promises, Jerusalem is a place and maybe also a time, which is pregnant with a kind of anticipatory violence. I am here for the Qalandiya International, a biennial in Palestine now in its third edition. I am contributing to The Jerusalem Show VIII, on the invitation of Vivian Zihel who is curating this edition in collaboration with Al Ma'Mal Foundation for Contemporary Art. This edition is themed Before and After Origins. For my contribution, we are making a filmic work. I have titled the film *The Hereafter*. The film expands on *Guelwaar* (1992) by the late Senegalese novelist and filmmaker Ousmane Sembene. Guelwaar

is a Christian who fights against the imposition of international aid to his community by militating for women's rights. When Guelwaar passes away, his body is mistakenly buried in a Muslim grave. As a result, in our new film, Guelwaar arrives in the wrong heaven! No longer a man or woman in the Hereafter, Guelwaar meets the Inhabitants who advise on matters concerning how to live together in the Hereafter, how to behave in this new reality, how to feel at home in this wrong heaven, and how to find a way to the right heaven, if this exists at all. These Inhabitants of the Hereafter include a philosopher, a comedian, a healer, an archaeologist, and a child.

The Hereafter is set in the Shu'fat Refugee camp, which was established in 1967. The Camp is located in the municipality of Jerusalem, but the Camp is isolated by the Separation Wall. Shu'fat is outside of either Israeli or Palestinian authorities. The navigation through the Hereafter is facilitated by a "new" signage system carved in stone and developed in collaboration with Assyriologist Yasser Khanger and artist and stone mason Hasan Khater, as a system from before the emergence of heavens as we know them today. Indeed, it turns out that our heavens are the result of an erroneous partitioning of the Hereafter!

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Stockholm/Växjö/Zurich/Limassol/London/
Gwangju/Jerusalem, September 2016

Notes

- 1 Jean Paul Martinon, *After "Rwanda": In Search of a New Ethics* (New York: Rodopi Press, 2013).
- 2 Christian Nyampeta, *Comment vivre ensemble*, HD video, 30 min., color, sound, 2015. Conversations and commentaries on the role of rhythm in the shaping of our subjects, our communities and our localities. With theorist Olivier Nyirubugara, at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, philosopher Isaïe Nzeyimana at his home in Butare, Rwanda; philosopher Obed Quinet Niyikiza at his home in Butare, Rwanda and philosopher Fabien Hagenimana at INES-Ruhengeri in Rwanda. In conversation with artist Christian Nyampeta.
- 3 Op. cit. Christian Nyampeta, *Comment vivre ensemble*.
- 4 Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin Classics), 1992.
- 5 Immanuel Kant, *Die Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790, § 54.
- 6 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (1670), II, "La Vanité." "Two faces that are alike, although neither of them excites

laughter by itself, make us laugh when together, on account of their likeness.” (Translation by Jonatan Habib Engqvist.) It’s a remarkable quote as it used by both Freud and Bergson as a point of departure for speaking about humor.

Christian Nyampeta is a Rwandan-born, Dutch artist. In 2017, he had an exhibition at Camden Arts Centre, London, UK. This year, his work will be included in the Biennial of Contemporary African Art Dak’art, Senegal; and at Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden. Nyampeta convenes the Nyanza Working Group of Another Roadmap School Africa Cluster, runs *Radius*, an online and occasionally inhabitable radio station, and is a research student at the Visual Cultures Department at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Jonatan Habib Engqvist is a curator and theorist with a background in philosophy and aesthetic theory. Previously project manager for visual art at Iaspis (2009-2014), curator at Moderna Museet (2008-09) and The Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm (2005-07). He also manages Curatorial Residency In Stockholm and is editor in mischief of the online journal *tsnoK.se* and has curated a number of large international exhibitions, including *Survival Kit 9* in Riga, Latvia, *Sinopale 6*, Sinop, Turkey (2017), *Tunnel Vision*, the 8th Momentum Biennale in Moss, Norway 2015 and *(I)ndependent People*, the visual art focus of Reykjavik Arts Festival 2012. He is curator of *The Children of the Children of the Revolution* at Färgfabriken in Stockholm (April 2018) and *New Småland* on commission by four art museums and a university (2016-2019). Books include: *Big Dig – Om passivitet och samtidskonst*, CLP Works, 2018, *Studio Talks: Thinking Through Painting*, Arvinus+Orfeus Publishing, 2014, *In Dependence – Collaboration and Artists’ initiatives*, Torpedo Press, 2013, *Work, Work, Work – A Reader on Art and Labour*, Steinberg Press, 2012, *Dharavi: Documenting Informalities*, KKH, 2008, Academic Foundation, New Delhi 2009.

Working Care

Valentina Desideri and BAR Project

Initiated in 2013 by Andrea Rodríguez Novoa, Veronica Valentini, and Juan Canela, BAR project is a curator-run organization supporting local and international artists and curators and promoting transdisciplinary dialogue, hospitality, collaboration, and exchange. “Drinking while walking while hosting while thinking while making together” is the leitmotiv of BAR project, which takes its name from the popular and social gathering place in southern European culture in order to recontextualize it, and to be able to work and practice (reflection-in-action) in a flexible, informal, and critical way. This working condition and status goes beyond the bar extending curatorial practice into working in the public realm and takes the city of Barcelona as a public project space. Through a public program of international residencies, screening programs, pedagogical formats (BAR TOOL and BAR module), encounters, and collaborations related to a leading topic, BAR’s curatorial practice aims to highlight relevant subjects in the current political, social, and economic paradigm.

Last May 6 and 7, 2016, BAR project organized *The Right to Be Unhappy. On the Politics of Control of Human Behaviour and the Psychotropification of Society*, a two-day event of cinema, performance, and discussion among practitioners of care from art to psychiatry, at the Antoni Tàpies Foundation and French Institute, Barcelona. The two days of events were developed according to BAR project’s 2016 curatorial program exploring the politics of control of human behavior. In addition to guests like Montserrat Rodríguez, Virginia García del Pino, Bárbara Rodríguez Muñoz, Silvia Maglioni & Graeme Thomson, Dora García, Mathilde Villeneuve, Alexandra Baudelot, Josep Rafanell i Orra and Carles Guerra, the spring group of BAR project residents composed of curator Florencia Portacarrero and artists Warren Neidich and Valentina Desideri were also invited to work within this framework.

The following conversation among BAR project curators Veronica Valentini and Juan Canela and artist Valentina Desideri revolves around care, hospitality, independence, or institutionalization. The conversation was recorded at Bar La Farigola (Barcelona) in

July 2016 and was recently updated. We were drinking *cañás*, tomato juice, and water.

Valentina Desideri: What was your first interest in working with *The Right to Be Unhappy*?

Veronica Valentini: At the beginning of the project *The Right to Be Unhappy*, there was the invitation from Les Laboratoires d’Aubervilliers, Mathilde Villeneuve, Alexandra Baudelot, and Dora Garcia, to work together on an edition of Les Printemps des Laboratoires. Their research revolved around the concept of “psychotropification de la société,” about the general use and abuse of medicine by contemporary society, and we turned it toward the politics of control of human behaviour and extended it to our curatorial program, looking for a sort of common ground on which to discuss and share it with the artistic and curatorial practice of our residents. Having experienced your *Political Therapy* at the Kunstverein Amsterdam in 2013, I thought it would be the kind of practice essential for this project.

Juan Canela: Before that, we worked around the topic of how to live together, reflecting and focusing on alternative ways of living and working together. We invited artists like Alex Martinis Roe, Christian Nyampeta, and Maria Guggenbichler. So this subject around the politics of control of human behaviour in society relates in some way to the previous one, and this is the way we try to articulate our program, working with a new subject that relates with the previous and with the next. As a curated residency program, we curate more time than space, so we are very interested in this kind of “subject-relation timing.” So we decided to bring the “psychotropification de la société” into our field and work with it from different perspectives, expanding the topic to issues such as meditation, measures of control in society, and how we can also work these kinds of things in other way, and here is where the notion of care was important.

Reproductive Labor

VD: Care is one of the points of interest we shared with Florencia during the residency. She was reading about the affective turn in feminism, and I was reading *This Bridge Called My Back*, a collection of



The Right to Be Unhappy curated by BAR project at Tapies Foundation and Institut Français, Barcelona (2016). Photo by Eva Carasol.

writings by radical women of color, so we ended up talking a lot about the kinds of reproductive labour we are engaged in, that allow society, and capitalism, to continue.

Reproductive labor is the labor of care, of reproduction of other humans, of love and friendship that goes unpaid while producing surplus value for capital (by reproducing its workforce and their well-being). It sounds like a very crude description of love, but when you think about it in those terms, it really sucks!

Because not only was capitalism made possible by colonization and the brutal exploitation of colonized lands and bodies, it also continues to thrive on it. As Silvia Federici pointed out, this moment of colonization and exploitation that Marx called primitive accumulation is not just an originary moment that has now ended, it is on the contrary an ongoing process of exploitation that is necessary for the survival of the system.

Now, this reading is painful. It makes me, my love, my sense of care for my friends, an intimate accomplice of this ongoing violence, and yet this pain has

to be assumed and become the starting point for imagining another politics, which is for me simply the way we experience and experiment life together. It's from this point that we began with Florencia to think about care as a practice that could subvert those processes rather than reproduce them. Audre Lorde was of great help with her definition of the Erotic as power. She talks about the Erotic as the power that circulates through/amongst bodies, an infinite resource within each of us, that operates its own routes, often deviant from those indicated by the Law or the State or Capital. I have a feeling that care also could also travel through those Erotic routes and that we could think of practices of care, of a certain maintenance or collective rest that is generative of another politics. Practices that would not rest on or reproduce the same values.

So the question was how to invent ways of caring for and with each other that set up their own values, their own ways of valuing, that bet on their own ethics?

Or maybe just how do we displace existing forms of care?

And even before that, how do we begin to pay attention to the kind of affective and reproductive

labor we already perform and sense its underlying ethics?

Because really, it's quite hard to see! And it's quite hard to question it without sounding like a total bitch!

If I say to a lover or my parents or my children: "Look, when you're texting me again and again and expect me to answer so I can confirm to you that yes, I like you, you're asking me to perform affective labor that is perhaps not necessary right now," I sound like a horrible person! Because it's so embedded in common sense, as if it was something you should naturally feel, along the line of: "If you really loved me you would text me, etc." And that's not true. It's just a specific practice that we recognize and feel comfortable with because it had been practiced on us before that, and our good feelings were rehearsed in it. It is also difficult to question attending to the affective labor we do, because it can be straight-on painful. A lot of the ways in which we "care" for each other are ways of maintaining certain systemic privileges that can be totally obscured by our "innocence." And with this I don't mean that care is just something capitalism has imposed on us, we would care for each other anyway, but it has been put to work in specific ways that reproduce specific values. I don't know, but for example when I started to do the Political Therapy, it's not that I had a plan, or understood what I was producing or reproducing, I just bet that if we tried to talk about politics starting from physical sensations, we would be able to speak about it differently and undo some of the categories we usually employ when thinking about politics.

Reading is a Practice of Being Aware

VV: Could you tell us more about your ideas on how to be aware of the affective space and how to organize the space of care?

VD: Yes, the first question is how to become aware that I am even doing this affective labor, whom is this labor serving, and what is it producing. How do we concretely even begin to attend to it? I guess this is where reading helps me, so the reading practices I engage in: like reading tarots, astrology, bodies, palms, but also reading philosophy... they are practices that allow us to attend to a situation not in simplistic terms, but assuming its complexity and without trying to solve it. When one does a reading, one begins from a problem, a crisis, a question and from that one lays down

some kind of constellation that is a complex imagining of the situation, and from there one begins to read and describe the situation from different directions, thinking, feeling, allowing for contradictions, in conversation, without having to determine what it is and what to do about it. Or at least in the way I read...

JC: It is a set of different ways of understanding the world, not in the rational ways...

VD: Well, reading is rational in its procedure, although those tools have been deemed "irrational" as a way to disavow them...or perhaps in relation to a very narrow definition of rationality! When you read, you still make sense of things through some kind of system. When you look at an astrology chart, it is divided into 12 Houses that are different stages where different Planets perform and interact according to the characteristics of the different Signs they fall under. Or the different spreads one could make with the Tarot cards... when I do the spread of the Celtic Cross, I draw eleven cards to create an image of the situation, and the person who is being read is signified only by card six, which is a card that is there on the side, partaking in the situation but not at its center. That's very important. When I tell you about a problem I'm experiencing, just because of grammar I have to begin: *So I did this, and then this happened, and I feel...* it's a more or less linear sequence of subject+verb+object that tends to orient the description as if it was always departing from me, the subject. So it's good to have those tools displace the subject a little bit. Also those reading tools, those ways of imagining a situation, allowing for contradictions, diverging elements and



The Right to Be Unhappy curated by BAR project at Tapies Foundation and Institut Français, Barcelona (2016). Photo by Eva Carasol.

narratives that one weaves together (or apart!) through the reading.

VV: It's funny because yesterday morning I had my first family constellation and in the afternoon my session of (Lacanian) psychoanalysis. I got two different readings of the same situation. When I told both women (guidance counselor and psychotherapist) I was practicing their therapies simultaneously, they disagreed with the fact I was doing something considered at the opposite of their own practice. As for me, I enjoyed both a lot, and I have more interpretations.

VD: It's funny that the different practices would need to disavow each other...as if, of course, the value of your theory or practice comes from the disavowal of another one, or the value of your person come from the devaluing of other people, because you do something more unique or special or beautiful. I mean, this is the kind of scarcity that is constantly produced (and reproduced) by a certain idea of value. So something is more valuable when it's scarce, not available (be it truth or money), otherwise it's just air, nothing. It's sad that this is the attitude those practices have to keep towards each other in order to function in this economic system. That's why there is the saying that poor people go to Tarot readers and rich people to psychoanalysts! But really if we would use reading, what we would be looking at in your situation is the abundance it contains! Actually, reading is a way of attending to abundance. So yes, let's say you lost a lover or a job, and that makes you feel bad or changes your situation, the suffering is there, it's not disavowed. I wouldn't tell you to just chill and be happy! But readings could perhaps expose what else is also happening at the same time. Maybe there are other processes taking place that might be generative and that you might want to explore...

Bar Methodology

VD: I also have a question for you, more in relation to care and how you work together: how do you attend to the erotic levels of organization?

VV: BAR project was born out of rethinking the work situation in which we, the three founding members, found ourselves in 2012: freelance workers. The next step was to analyze the state of affairs. We performed a critical analysis from the personal to the extra-personal, the position/figure of the curator (ours), as well

as that of the artist (our colleagues). We carried out an analysis of the local context and what we detected was needed in the city, such as a greater critical dialogue and exchange with what is outside the city, and we valued artistic labor as a paid job, etc. The concept of mobility that was being experimented with and the willingness to invite people to come to the city led us to work with the notion of hospitality, and from there to the idea of making a curated program of residencies instead of a curated program of exhibitions. It was more than just putting works into a defined space, the intention was to move people, ideas, and discourse into a much wider space: from the world to the whole city of Barcelona and vice versa. We decided not to have our own exhibition space and that our (public) project space would be the city of Barcelona, because we wanted to invest the money in human infrastructure instead of architectural infrastructure: the artists and curators with whom we wanted to work, and who with us, obviously, would carry out the project. That led us to work in collaboration and to optimize what the city offered by seeing this act as complementary. This "rethinking," this entering into discussion, thinking, inventing, and re-formulating things that were already done or existed, pushed us to take a lot of care of the forms of working, and the truth is that today it continues to be the engine. BAR project is a curatorial organization made by people, therefore changing and moving by desire, whose way of working and practicing is what most distinguishes it. We are committed to sustainability, flexibility, informality, and collaboration. But also for the redistribution of knowledge and goods. In other words, we work around the access and the right to the city. Perhaps the most singular aspect of the project concerns its spatiality. We work in a mobile way, and the projects take place in most varied existing spaces to challenge them and create some sort of f(r)iction.

JC: When we started BAR project, we thought a lot about different structural and important things that will be guidelines for us. But at a certain point, we just start working and keep the project organically open to evolve along this guideline...I think the three of us have this will of doing things, this belief that we can do something if we want...We thought a lot about how we wanted to work with other people, among us, how we wanted this project to be. We know that we wanted a long-term project, a professional and flexible project where artists, curators, and also ourselves could work according to the terms and conditions we think are adequate to our time, our interests, and our ethics. It is

like creating a structure where we take care of the people we invite, in the sense of providing the proper resources to work in a professional but informal way, but also to provide a hospitality context for them in town that maybe we missed in other residency programs.

VD: In which ways did you want to take care of residents in a way that other residencies programs didn't?

JC: Like hosting them, working with hospitality as our main resource, going out with them, introducing them to other practitioners or friends in town, the basic things in life, that sometimes we forget about when we work. Showing them our favorite places in town, sharing our social life... These little things that are important also for us.

VD: Well, if you read this at the energetic level, you could also see how the project emerged from a common desire, and that desire was driving the action. So you could be quick, dedicated, etc., and that energy made the project work, but then as it works well and it gets recognized, you also get recognized and you get invited to curate more projects individually, and then that's great, but also you become busier and have less energy, and this is where perhaps the work together becomes harder, or more complex.

VV: When I proposed stating that "BAR project is initiated by," it was because I had in mind the idea to hand/pass the project to other people in the future. Maybe this is the space of anticipation that embodies possibilities. "Initiated" incorporates something else from the beginning, at least it's just ambition but it is there. If you "make space" for something else (the unknown) from the beginning, there will be always space for more. This also works for the economic aspect: if you consider it as constitutive of the project you will find ways to get it; the same goes for caring: if I can take care of myself, I can also take care of others.

VD: How could we imagine an institution as a collective practice of care? Imagining it not so much in terms of architecture or infrastructure or as a designed system, but rather as a set of specific practices between all the people involved? I mean practices as ways of doing things—it can be practices of economic exchange, of talking to each other, of making decisions, etc., just shifting the focus of where to begin organising from.

VV: BAR project is primarily a curatorial project, for which we do not select but rather proceed by invitation and offering proposals. The criteria—so to speak—are more practical and in line with our philosophy, in line with the research that guides the program and other sensitive factors such as the economics and overall coherence of the project. In addition to our human and curatorial accompaniment, logistical guide work is carried out, which is extremely useful when arriving in a foreign city. For example, we offer a place to live (BAR apartment), a space to work (studios in Fabra i Coats), round-trip travel, a monthly fee, and production for an end event that reveals the practice put in connection with the city. We help to connect with local agents and with "the local," and we organize *My Studio Visit. The City as Studio*, in which a local artist is commissioned to give a visit of a special location in Barcelona in order to speak about his/her practice through the city and out of the common studio space. We are especially committed to supporting intellectual production and development of a practice.

JC: One of our aims is to work in an informal way but with a professional attitude; sometimes it is difficult because when you are really open, and almost everything can happen, when you are doing different things, in different periods, in different spaces... sometimes it is difficult to communicate what you are, and it takes time until the context understands what you are doing. In fact, we work more with the temporal aspect of the residencies and the projects.

Working Practices of Care

VD: For example, if we think about the trajectory we described before; the project grows, you also grow artistically, the community also grows and is harder to organize, takes more energy, and you have less time, etc. If we keep the frame of looking at BAR as a collective practice of care, how to organize yourself next year? How to face growth? What practices are changing and how?

JC: Maybe the challenge is to be able to keep being present in a physical daily way; maybe us or someone else. It's just to keep doing what we are doing in a consistent way, and not lose the parameters of our identity in the process of growing.

VV: BAR project is celebrating its five-year existence. Apart from the residency program and the multiple activities associated with specific projects, we started BAR TOOL, a practice-based training program for five

participants that allows us to strengthen the exchange with our guests and to create a forum for discussion in the city at various levels, and generated by different voices. We were able to start this project because we got a grant that allows us to hire a person for a year. The idea has been to empower her, adapting ourselves to her, asking her to centralize all the information and data, in order to feel being part of the project and managing it.

JC: It's also nice to have this opportunity to have this person at the moment that we need more help; she will stay with us for one year thanks to the grant, but we want her stay longer with us, so we have to start looking starting now for the money to pay her when this grant is finished. And along this line, from the very beginning we had known that we wanted to take care (of our guests and of ourselves) on the affective and personal level, but also on an economic and professional level. For us, it is essential to be able to pay anyone working with us and ourselves, something that is not common in other independent (and some institutional) projects in town, and we think this is another level of taking care and avoid precariousness.

VD: Yes, and of course the needs change, and the capacities, too. To me, it is interesting how to have these conversation on needs and capacities and change...how to make decisions. Maybe that's where the erotic level comes in. Do you make readings? Do you have tools to sense your needs? Or to listen to each other or the city or the people around?

JC: We also learn during the project to talk among ourselves, and we have had different moments of discussion. One of the most interesting things about working in a collective is that this is your project, but at the same time it is not just your project...your authorship is there, but at the same time it's diluted among others, and this is beautiful, but at the same time you have to learn how to manage it.

VD: I'm just thinking how to somehow fictionalize those situations, or make them more (art)ificial, not just to be creative like in a Google office, but rather to open them up, to attend to them differently, or perhaps to care? It's easy to take for granted that the way we make decisions is that we sit and talk about the points on the agenda, or that we vote... but these are not a given, and we might choose to not reproduce them in that way.

For example, you are making possible the production of art—how does the content of the artists you work with feed back into the ways in which you work, live, and organize? Because I think this reciprocity is interesting—do you integrate a practice, or an image or a score that an artist has shared with you into your own process? That's also a way of undoing the alienation of work.

VV: The person we invite—artist or curator—is a sort of extension of ourselves. Each one can develop a project that we all desire to do. Inviting people is a gift for us and also generates something else for them and for the local community. It's a mutual "gift."

VD: The duration of three months for the residencies is very good, because it allows this reciprocity to happen in unorganized manner, more emerging from a shared sociality. Although I got so much into sociality that by the time I left, I felt I was just at the beginning of something!

Experimental Space of Anticipation

JC: We wanted a period of time that you are able to enter the city, meet people, develop some kind of project...and at the same time a period that people are able to move to another city. If you invite people for six months, your possibilities are reduced.

VD: Yes, here I managed to organize just two sessions of Studio Practice, one on anger and one on shame. It took time to gather people, either by just meeting them socially, or individually doing sessions of political therapy, just because I wanted to make sure that we would all be entering the sessions on even ground. It was clear to me that I did not want the sessions of Studio Practice to be like workshops or events/performances, where one could come and watch, or take part in something already organized for them. So it was two small events, but from doing them I learnt that the kind of engagement I am looking for might have to be constructed over a much longer period of time. Actually, it was very interesting to finish the residency at BAR and go straight into Elsewhere&Otherwise at PAF¹ where I felt that the Studio Practice was actually happening there and on its own! E&O is a meeting dedicated to practices and knowledge that falls outside of the academic grid, which means that as we (me and Daniela Bershan whom I organized it with) went around meeting people; I would tell those I thought were onto some similar



BAR TOOL, practice-based training program. Photo by Eva Carasol

interests to come there so we could all meet. And it happened! And at once there were all those incredible people, and the level of exchange was so high because they're each so committed to their own practice, and everyone is learning. And now I know that this is gonna happen for the next ten years (at least!), once a year we meet. So in a way Elsewhere&Otherwise has become what I always imagined the Studio Practice could be. So you see? I imagined this practice where people come and study together, but do it transversally (physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually) like in the dance studio; so I formulated it as an idea, I tried to do it, etc., but at some point I understood that this is only possible in another temporality, so I have to imagine totally other conditions of production for it or sense where else this is happening and perhaps displace it or learn from it or allow it to manifest in all its possible different forms.

VV: I always wanted to start a “school project” and have someone for a longer time and develop his or her project in order to work with another kind of temporality and intensity.

VD: Yes, also we need to give ourselves permission to work at another temporality. For example, I could think that ok, this idea of the Studio Practice does not work, or not immediately, not as I thought, so I should get rid of it, it's a bad project. But actually there are things that require another temporality, or things that are working but at a level that is not yet visible and if you somehow insist in being curious, in staying with the failure of the thing not working, then maybe something else can happen.

VV: When BAR project decided not have an exhibition space, it also decided to not make exhibitions, which is the typical thing you do when you start an independent curatorial project. So we decided to organize temporary events and use the city as a project space. Instead of inviting one artist per week to develop an exhibition for a month, we invite an artist for three months to develop a three-hour project. Our aim is to support (performative) intellectual production, more than (static) objectual production. I consider BAR project an anticipation space where you can “test” and experiment with things. Also, I like to define BAR project as a *curator-run organization*, which comes from *artist-run space*, and focus on the term of

organization instead of the institution. I look at the human scale and human vulnerability.

JC: It is like expanded institution-making. When you create your own independent structure or self-organized project, what you create is a place where you can do whatever you want—of course, with the resources and structure you have—but you are the one deciding how the “institution” works. When you develop a curatorial project in an institution, you always have to negotiate and adapt the project to the structure of the institution... Here, the structure is flexible, we try to adapt it to each project, and it is a place for thinking, testing, and researching in an organic way.

VV: Even if we weren't aware at the beginning, I think we have been able and clever to manage a budget, and in that time we have also developed tools and skills. In the art world and cultural sector in general, speaking about money is a taboo. I think it's an historical problem...but now we cannot afford this anymore. Without a budget, a modest infrastructure, in our case made by the combination of skills and desires of the three of us, you can't go so far if you really want to build something.

Institution-Building as a Generative Space

VD: It's interesting for me to imagine how those spaces/structures we build can be generative at all levels; that's why I would like to think of them as practices of care, of a maintenance of some kind of life.

I'm thinking about PAF—Performing Arts Forum in France. I think about it as a space that allows for the maintenance of something (a way of working/living) that is beyond whatever PAF wants itself to be. There is an excess we maintain there. It's perhaps the gap between planning (which sets what the space wants to be) and how people inhabit it, or what the space also allows that was not planned for, and instead of trying to close the gap and have a more efficient organization, how do we let this gap proliferate, and germinate within the planning, so that the plan may also change and follow a process. It's paradoxical... It means that on one side the planning has to be very ambitious, and on the other, not ambitious at all!

VV: In our case we want to keep the human scale. We are three and maybe we will be five, but no more. Otherwise, it will become something else.

VD: If we go back to the question of how to have those conversations (about changing needs, or about organization or making decisions), one interesting thing is that in the case of PAF, we always talk about it as a performance, not an institution or an art space, just because that enables another language and another way of thinking.

VV: We never define ourselves as an institution, and in fact recently we started to define ourselves as a *curator-run organization*.

VD: Do you think you have to maintain this scale in order to stay experimental?

VV: We want to. For example, for BAR TOOL we will have a maximum of five people, in order to be able to manage it at all kinds of levels.

JC: The scale is very important for us; we want this scale because it allows us to do things in the way we want. Then there arrives this moment when you have to try to keep the scale and be careful about how you grow, how we can grow maintaining the scale.

VD: Yes, I also feel like protecting a certain scale, in the sense that I want to protect the capacity for the space to stay open and not crystallize into just one function or one thing it may become more known for and then it should capitalize on. In this sense, yes, scale is not size, the size could change but the scale as a kind of horizon or dimension that can stay.

Notes

1 PAF (=PerformingArtsForum) is a place for professional and not-yet professional practitioners and activists in the field of performing arts, visual art, literature, music, new media and internet, theory and cultural production, and scientists who seek to research and determine their own conditions of work. PAF is a user-created, user-innovative informal institution. Neither a production house and venue, nor a research center, it is a platform for everyone who wants to expand possibilities and interests in his/her own working practice.

Juan Canela is an independent curator and writer. Co-founder of *BAR project*, he is member of the Programs Committee at HANGAR, Barcelona. He

has been curator of *Opening* section at ARCO Madrid (2016-17). He has curated projects such as *Cale, cale, cale! Caale!!!*, at Tabakalera San Sebastián (2017); *Irene Kopelman: On glaciers and avalanches*, at CRAC Alsace (2017); *I Speak, Knowing It's Not about Speaking*, a project with works by La Caixa and Macba collections and contemporary artists performances and interventions at Caixaforum, Barcelona (2015); *Lesson 0*, a long-term project curated by Azotea for Espai33 Fundació Miró, Barcelona (2013-2015); *Ignacio Uriarte: 1&0s* at Marco, Contemporary art museum Vigo (2014); *¿Estudias o trabajas?*, La Ene, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2013); He has attended *SYNAPSE Workshop 2015* at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlín (2015), and he was one of the speakers at *Surrounding Education* (2015), a two-day program focusing on education and pedagogy meeting artistic and curatorial fields at De Appel Art Center, Amsterdam. He has given lectures and workshops at *Curando Caribe* República Dominicana, Bisagra Lima, Instituto Di Tella Buenos Aires, and La Casa encendida, Madrid. He is now working on a solo show by Rometti Costales at CA2M Madrid (2018); He prepares the publication *Curadora/Comisaria* with Angel Calvo for Paper collection in Consonni Bilbao, and he usually writes for art magazines such as *A*Desk*, *Terremoto Magazine*, *Babelia El Pais*, *Mousse*, and *Art-Agenda*.

Valentina Desideri is an Amsterdam-based artist. She trained in contemporary dance at the Laban Centre in London (2003–2006) and later on did her MA in Fine Arts at the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam (2011–13). She does Fake Therapy and Political Therapy, she co-organizes the Performing Arts Forum in France, she engages in Poethical Readings with Prof. Denise Ferreira da Silva, she speculates with many, she reads and writes.

Veronica Valentini is a curator and researcher. She is founder and head of Emma, a curatorial organization that develops a roaming public program of artistic research, and mediator of Nouveaux commanditaires-Citizen Art Spain Program of the Carasso Foundation (Madrid). In Barcelona, she is co-running and curating BAR project's international residency program and the annual practice-based training program BAR TOOL. She on the artistic jury at Mecènes du Sud (Montpellier-Sète), member of C-E-A. Commissaires d'Exposition Associés, and curator of the Roaming Assembly #22, a public

symposium organized by the Dutch Art Institute (NL). In 2014, she was curator, together with Xiaoyu Weng and Kit Hammonds, of the 2nd CAFAM Biennale titled *Invisible Hand: Curating as Gesture* at CAFA Art Museum in Beijing, for which she curated *On Ambiguity and Other Forms to Play With* (Bik van Der Pol, Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz, Heman Chong, Claire Fontaine, Dora Garcia, Mark Dion, Pablo Helguera, Tobias Kaspar, Lili Reynaud-Dewar). From 2006 to 2009, she was editor at *Flash Art* magazine in Milan and New York. She has curated exhibitions and projects, given lectures and workshops in spaces such ARC Bucharest (Bucharest), Matadero (Madrid), SOMA (Mexico DF), Le Quartier Center for Contemporary Art, (Quimper), Art-o-Rama art fair (Marseille), Glassbox (Paris), BF15 (Lyon), 40m3 (Rennes), STROOM (The Hague), MACBA Study Centre (Barcelona), Villa Arson (Nice), Institut Français (Barcelona), Tàpies Foundation (Barcelona), Plataforma Revolver (Lisbon), Syntax (Lisbon), Careof (Milan), Fine Art school (Brest), Dutch Art Institute (Arnhem), Le MAGASIN-CNAC (Grenoble). www.veronicavalentini.org

BAR project is a *curator-run* organization that develops a public program in the city of Barcelona issued from different activities of a residency program (2013) for international artists and curators, and BAR TOOL (2016), a nine-month training program for practice-based visual arts and non-arts related practices open to five participants. BAR project is run by Andrea Rodríguez Novoa, Veronica Valentini, and Juan Canela. www.barproject.net

Conversation Piece

Céline Condorelli, artist / Manuel Segade, Director of Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (Móstoles, Spain)

Manuel Segade: I wonder about this picture you have in your Skype¹ profile.

Céline Condorelli: It's Kathrin Böhm (with whom I have been sharing a studio for many years) and I doing a female icon impersonation of two feminists from the suffragette movement, working together in the '20s. We decided to pose as Aletta Jacobs and Anna Howard Shaw, both acknowledging and embodying a reference from the past, as a way of carrying their project into the future. When I was working on friendship, I was looking at the suffragettes as an example of people who worked in friendship to change the world. They are known as a group, but very few as individuals: we don't remember most of their names. It's a sort of friendship in action, that is not faceless but is certainly not about individuals.

MS: I love this thing of having a reference and embodying it.

CC: I really enjoyed reading your text "A Deviant Script" [A text for a book on artist Jani Ruscica, by Circa Projects]². I knew in theory that we had many issues in common, but I didn't know how close your research has been to questions I have. It's really interesting to me



Céline (Condorelli) and Kathrin (Böhm), female icon impersonators, as Aletta (Jacobs) and Anna (Howard Shaw). (2008)

how interests converge. Everybody is working in their corner, and eventually the practices that run parallel to each other meet, and become close.

MS: Like an ongoing conversation.

CC: For instance, you mention the "conversation pieces"—I have some works titled like that. It's really interesting to me how you insist on the dialogue happening between inanimate objects, as a part of the making of an exhibition; it's always about the setting up of relationships between humans, things, issues, and ideas in space. Coming back from the Gwangju Biennale, one of the things I've been thinking about is that an exhibition is always a set of relationships, and responsibility must be taken also if some of these are broken, or dysfunctional. Curating is to care, and part of the curatorial responsibility is to take forward relationships even when they break down, even when they're not functional.

MS: I was thinking a lot about the performance of Fernando García-Dory and how a lot of this piece was produced by the misinterpretation or misreading in the translation process, while working with the Korean participants, and how those differences became the main part of the piece. Let's say: to build a community with others as a frame where these issues can be productive.

CC: Those frames need a lot of care and attention.

MS: Sure, but I was thinking about your pieces there, located in a different place from where they were supposed to be. This wrongness becomes finally an advantage for them.

CC: I agree with you. Change is productive and part of the process of working things through. Most often it is. And the reading that Fernando allowed us is of the evolutions of a set of relationships.

MS: The first time I approached your work was with the *Support Structures* book (Sternberg Press, 2009). As a curator I was trying to provide a theory about the kind of work we do all the time but that cannot be defined, all those parts of the curatorial work and of the relations we establish in order to contribute, produce, or provoke contemporary culture. Your work was really important for me at that moment because you were providing words for things I was looking for: how to express our main methodology, which deals with things we never think about, like intuition, emotions... things we take for granted but that are central to our field. From your book, until now I was more interested in display, that uncanny thing that is happening during the encounter between bodies and objects. Maybe there is a kind of an unthinkable or unknown position, a plus, an extra thing or an extravagancy that is the main contribution of art or of an exhibition to the world. Rereading your book these days, I realize how display was all around it.

CC: What you say makes total sense to me, and the vocabulary is what I was looking for, also in this attempt to recognize and acknowledge a largely invisible work that I saw happening all around me. My thinking has also shifted since then, and I have focused very much on display in the last couple of years as necessary work. In your text, you also refer to the relationship between humans and things. A cultural institution is responsible for articulating this relationship in a particular context. And humans also come with bodies, the triviality of a body in need that might be tired or cold... that is part of the responsibility when there are people walking around, not just intellects, nor just eyes. I don't know if I was thinking about this yet when I was writing *Support Structures*. The promise of that is there. It's interesting how both our thinking from the book grew in parallel directions.

MS: Lately I was writing this book on display, *Countless Species* [Prelude published by Kadist Foundation Paris in 2016]. I was trying to make a theory on display delivered as a curatorial discourse, delivered and constructed as I think curatorial issues should be defined as a praxis. Teaching, a public discussion of any kind... became a curatorial action: a body provoking material relationships. I decided that I needed to make performances associated with it, and I felt the need to introduce a biographical approach, one that includes queer issues, putting forth my own body as a genealogy.



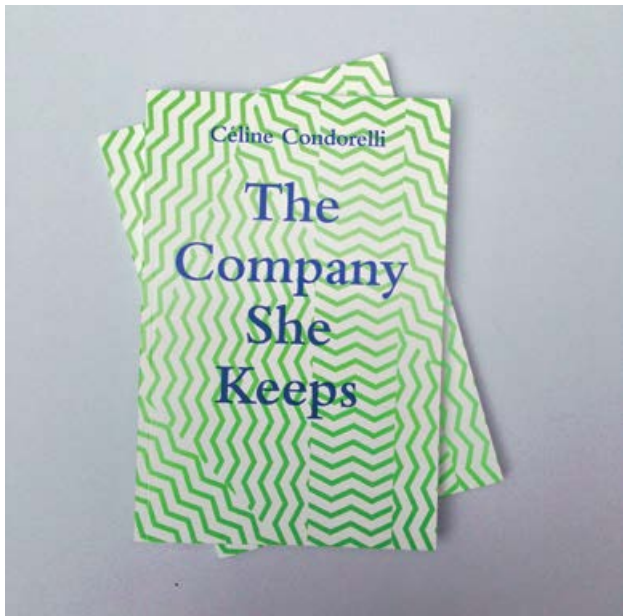
Conversation Piece. Materials: Wood, steel, epoxy paint, dimensions: 300 diameter x 60cm (2016)

Every time I quote Foucault or Barthes, and when I read a quotation from them, I exercise an embodiment, as in your picture in Skype.

CC: You also mention Barthes, who was so important to me when I was writing *Support Structures*. In *Fragments of a Lover's Discourse*, he structures how the point of view has to be inhabited, as he clearly cannot be analytical on a subject such as love, but has to talk from love. It was reading this that I realized I can only speak about support from a supporting point of view, which Barthes gave a voice. That is where the embodiment is, I think, positioning oneself from the place, or the site, you are trying to speak with. There is no way I can ever be (or want to be) an expert, and I can only offer support and speak from that position of total complicity. I'm enormously grateful to Barthes for this, for giving me the possibility of a voice within, the voice of becoming.

MS: In his diaries of that period, he was struggling with the condition of being an old gay man, with prostitution as the only way of interacting with the objects of his desire. He published cruel and sexually explicit fragments of those journals when he was still alive. He calls this block of texts *Incidents* [University of California Press, 1992], contingencies between his body writing at home and his sexual appetites.

CC: I remember reading the letter that he receives from a man he probably paid for sex, whom he considers a



The Company She Keeps, Céline Condorelli, Co-published by Book Works, Chisenhale Gallery, London and Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven Co-Series, No. 7 (2014)

brilliant model. The man is asking—not for money—but for help. It says something about friendship that is not pure, that is completely implicated in needs and desire. It clarifies a lot of things.

MS: How did you turn from support to think about it in a frame of friendship?

CC: I knew that friendship is a fundamental aspect of personal support, and quickly realized how friendships were fundamental to the production of culture, also in terms of cultural support—like the friends of the museums, for example. You can't do anything on your own; you always need alliances in order to propose any cultural project. I thought that friendship could become a chapter in the Support Structure project and then realized that it was too big a subject. Again, you can only speak on friendship as a friend, so it required a whole different set-up. Also, I didn't know how to deal with how friendship appears as a subject in philosophy—one of the only disciplines where friendship is an entry—defined as only a relationship between men, from a world in which only men were free and equal. I needed to work within friendships amongst the excluded, be they slaves, homosexuals, suffragettes... I put it on the side as a future project.

MS: I underlined from *The Company She Keeps* [Céline Condorelli. Book Works, Chisenhale Gallery, Van Abbemuseum, 2013] the part when you ask Avery F. Gordon about homosociality. In my art

history PhD, I focused on the end of the 19th century, in the crisis of modernity happening before modernity was named as such. This happened in a semantic system elaborated by an elite group of men moving through the main Western cities. What I realized then, is how even in the construction of the man-to-man society, the woman was always the determining point, the main point of significance who conditioned, even from the outside, all those framed positions. The absence of women was determining the symbolic capital exchanged between those men at that moment.

CC: I think there is a funny parallel between what you describe and the development of museums at the time. Somehow the museum stages relationships to and between objects as accepted at any given time, and mirrors forms of control, repression, conditions of appearance. Displays manifest relationships and exclusions, and in this way the museum says a lot more about the society that produces it than the culture it seeks to portray. From the end of the 19th century, the time that you describe, museums becomes increasingly more uncomfortable: they started at the late 18th century as a place of encounter. I want to read a quote of *Notes on the Museum Bench* by Diana Fuss: "So begins Henry James's 1877 novel *The American*, set largely in 1868 Paris, where our wealthy if unworldly hero has come to find a wife. And where better to scope out the options than from the great ottoman of the Louvre, where people come not just to see but to be seen, and where the art of seduction rivals any veiled eroticism of painting or sculpture, objects serving not merely to frame romantic trysts but to abet them."³ All signs of inhabitation, of comfort—such as sofas or plants—are gradually taken away from the museum, and with them the acknowledgement of anything other than a visual experience of culture. I read this in relationship to this gradual deletion of social life from the museum. You are describing a movement that goes from a cultural institution model of the museum as a place to go and, for instance, find a partner, to it being the site of audiences' gradual disembodiment as a requirement for a so-called appreciation of contemporary art.

MS: In your formal and aesthetic options this seems very important, too.

CC: I believe it is essentially misleading and a way of making the institution apolitical. I'm interested in the material aspect of any cultural production, in the

relationships on which we depend, and of actually making those the material of cultural work itself. We are dependent on specific relationships not just of people but also of things, of electricity, of water, of things we lean on... all the aspects of support, both physical and metaphysical, are essential material. That is why I make things such as museum benches. What happens if you acknowledge those liminal objects and make them part of the cultural experience?

MS: Avery F. Gordon told you: “Friendship as a condition for political life.”⁴ Not forced into a participation but prepared to host it. Not a place to build a community but a place where a community can be acknowledged as a set of gestures of responsibility. Your pieces in Gwangju were well received, and people were talking about them in an emotionally positive way: happy, easy, kind pieces.

CC: It means that what I am addressing is readable, which is great. One makes stuff in relation to commitments and promises—that’s how any art object is produced. I’d like to ask you how you construct sets for these relationships to take place on an institutional level. How do you expand this to the scale of the institution?

MS: In this sense of rethinking the new institutionalism, we are forced to think about the new ways of politics taking place in the South, through assemblies, new forms of participation... We are trying to invent a way in which an institution can be a place to speak from and make a program as a consequence of that dialogue. We are developing this informal school, called *Escuelita*, an organism inside the institution in which people can participate in a non-violent way, forming a community not formulated as such, consciously not having it as a productive situation. Its space is a domestic place for bodies to feel comfortable, which was made by Bik van der Pol: an exhibition that can stay or change through their long-term engagement with it, which is occupied by the uses of the *Escuelita*. I wish to imagine an institution where exhibitions become socio-historical crystallizations of the way the museum talks with society about itself and of the way audiences answer back.

CC: Do you start from the performative, or do you formalize it explicitly?

MS: I want this to be enigmatic for me. I’m trying to provide the frame for this to happen, but I don’t want to know the output. Otherwise this would be the same model of institution we already have. I want to imagine the material tradition of an institution as a context: the set of relationships that constructs a free, public, and open institution of contemporary art made visible through a programme, by constructing the programme itself. It’s like taking all this reflection from the *Support Structures* and to make those methodologies explicit as the program itself. The performative will always be the starting point, but for the peripheral condition of the museum itself, from this area south of Madrid, our audiences are starting the dialogue every time, interacting with our exhibitions, educational programs, and events. They were using our museum as a tool, without a tradition or frame. We now try to integrate the relational system the museum constructed, and make that the material of our program.

CC: Avoiding the separation between exhibition-making and education. I understand museums as collective building sites.

MS: In fact, your pieces in Gwangju are transitional pieces.

CC: ...which may not look like art.

MS: I will love to have this museum where this transition or boundary or libidinal actions could be its very center.

CC: Does it need to be explained?

MS: I don’t think so. It just needs to be experienced. It’s the experience, the change: other kinds of bodies as other kinds of relations. Already our audiences are not just the conventional audiences of a museum space.

CC: Which is a relief in your case.

MS: Exactly. What is and has been already happening is the way the museum should institutionalize or de-institutionalize itself.

CC: What is interesting is that in some ways it shifts the focus a little bit. Art happens anyway. There are different communities in what you are describing.



Punk. Sus rastros en el arte contemporáneo, exhibition. CA2M 2015.
Photo: María Eugenia Serrano



Verbenas. CA2M 2016. Photo: María Eugenia Serrano

Maybe the only thing they have in common is that they are not part of the structure of the museum. There is another community of people making and providing things—artists—whom your audience is encountering every day, maybe not in presence, but through their labor. This is also a form of encounter. Somewhere in that encounter, the museum is produced.

MS: You wrote: “Communities can be formed through exhibitions, just as much as they can be destroyed.”⁵ How can we maintain this unstable position, a continuous delivery position? I think that is the main problem we have now, as we are thinking about the future of an institution.

CC: All of the things that you describe can be understood as different meanings of exhibitions, different ways of making things public: exposing, informing, offering... We use exhibitions in a very conventional way, arranging a space as a place for the pleasure or consumption of the audience, but actually the public aspects of exhibition—which is literally just to unfold something in public—can be applied to many other things. A very traditional way of understanding what public is, which means anything presented can be copied or reused or taken elsewhere. I like the idea of people putting things out, and while a public normally designates the visitors to an exhibition, this public enters with a knowledge that is also embedded in what is presented. The people who are engaged in the process of making an exhibition can never be entirely separated from the public. They contribute and they constitute it. The institution you are describing is an institution of the future. The institution you are working towards is also a social context in which people exist and work, where potentially they form groups and relationships that are all essential to the production and interpretation of culture.

MS: I saw an exhibition that changed my life, a retrospective of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, in '97 in CGAC [Santiago de Compostela, Spain] that the audiences remembered, that was the measure of the exhibitions to come. It charged emotionally the program for years. Years later, I was chief curator in the center and I realized he died during the exhibition: it was his last show when he was alive.

CC: Like a haunting.

MS: All the time in museums, there is this rhythm of one exhibition after the other, but there is also a longing going on, a missed relationality that passes from one part of the program to the other. The institution is eating itself over and over again through the calendar. Can we find a way of putting the institution in this missing relationality to itself, in a situation unknown to itself, in a becoming or an anticipation system?

CC: One thing that disturbs me in Felix Gonzalez-Torres is the slight tint of sadness it comes with, which I consider to be very different from a starting position of desire: very proactive and looking towards the future, as something that is asking to be made and constructed.

MS: In my place, we have a special relationship with death: at Christmas dinner, a chair is left empty for a dead relative that died during the year. This isn't morbid, it's a thought about the future: that place can be occupied by a late arrival, a relative that might just come for coffee... It's not sadness but an overcoming of another thing that affects the past coming from the future.

CC: And also acknowledging the presence of that which is missing—not hiding it. That's interesting thinking about the notion of haunting, acknowledging the presence of that which has gone away or has been put away: an interesting way of thinking about integration.

MS: And a very political gesture.

CC: I think finding ways of sharing space, and I really mean it in the most genuine way, is becoming for me an absolute priority. That has partly to do with the fact that everything is pointing us in different directions, towards not sharing anything—but protecting, which is the opposite. I say this after the Brexit vote, from London... But these set-ups or stagings that allow sharing are actually incredibly political and important even on a really small scale.

Notes

1 Céline (Condorelli) and Kathrin (Böhm) female icon impersonators as Aletta (Jacobs) and Anna (Howard Shaw).

2 Jani Ruscica, *Appendix*, Circa Projects, 2016

3 Henry James, *The American (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1877)* CSS Bard, 2015. <http://joelsander-sarchitect.com/an-aesthetic-headache-notes-from-the-museum-bench-with-diana-fuss/>.

4 Céline Condorelli, *The Company She Keeps*, Book Works, Chisenhale Gallery, Van Abbemuseum, 2013, p. 88.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Céline Condorelli (CH, IT, UK) lives and works in London, Lisbon, and Milan; she is currently Professor at NABA (Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti) Milan,

and one of the founding directors of Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK; she is the author and editor of *Support Structures*, published by Sternberg Press (2009), and her first monograph, *bau bau* is published by Mousse (2017). Recent exhibitions include *Proposals for a Qualitative Society (Spinning)*, Stroom Den Haag, NL, *Corps á Corps*, IMA Brisbane, Australia (2017), *Gwangju Biennale*, *Liverpool Biennial*, *Sydney Biennial*, and *Concrete Distractions*, Kunsthalle Lissabon (2016), *bau bau*, HangarBicocca, Milan, IT (2015), *Céline Condorelli*, Chisenhale Gallery, UK, *Positions*, Van Abbemuseum, NL, including the publication *The Company She Keeps*, with Bookworks (2014). Previous exhibitions include *baubau*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Leipzig, curating *Puppet Show*, Eastside Projects, Gävle Konstcentrum, and Grundy Art Gallery (2014), *Additional*s, Project Art Centre, Dublin, Ireland, *Things That Go Without Saying*, Grazer Kunstverein, Austria, *The Parliament*, 'Archive of Disobedience', Castello di Rivoli, Italy (2013), *Surrounded by the Uninhabitable*, SALT Istanbul (2012).

Manuel Segade has a BI in History of Art from the University of Santiago de Compostela. His dissertation was a review on theatricality and allegorical linguistic structures in sculpture from the 1980s through the work of Juan Muñoz. Since 1998, he has worked in fragments of a cultural history of aesthetic practices of the end of the 19th century, around the production of a somatic and sexualized subjectivity, which was the subject of his published essay, "Narciso Fin de Siglo" (Melusina, 2008). In 2005 and 2006, he served as content coordinator for the Metrònom Fundació Rafael Tous d'Art Contemporani in Barcelona. From 2007 to 2009, he was a curator of the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea in Santiago de Compostela. In 2009, he resumed his freelance activity, producing and curating projects for La Casa Encendida, ARCO, MUSAC, Centre d'Art La Panera in Spain, Pavillon Vendôme in France, and TENT in the Netherlands. He has also been teaching curatorial practice in different postgraduate and MA programs, such as the Honours in Curatorship of Michaelis University of Cape Town and MACBA's Independent Studies Program in Barcelona, and is now the annual tutor professor of the École du Magasin in Grenoble. He is director of Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo in Móstoles (Madrid, Spain).

Making Room – Spaces of Anticipation

Emanuele Guidi and Lorenzo Sandoval

Research exhibition at ar/ge kunst
14.06. – 02.08.2014

With Brave New Alps & Paolo Plotegher, Janette Laverrière in collaboration with Nairy Baghramian, Alex Martinis Roe, Marinella Senatore in collaboration with Assemble, Mierle Laderman Ukeles.

Curated by Emanuele Guidi and Lorenzo Sandoval

Making Room was an exhibition exploring the idea of space in relation to the artistic, cultural, and curatorial practices that produce it. Accordingly, it brought together works and collaborations by artists, architects, and designers from different generations and geographies, each of them stressing the mutual correspondence and influence between social practices and the environments that play host to them.

In all the projects presented, the act of proposing spatial settings and configurations unfolded in line with the desire to establish a bond between past and ongoing experiences—through collaboration, storytelling or simply by posing questions. Hence a domestic environment, a salon, or a school, a display system, a cultural association, or an art institution can all still be considered as models for facilitating possible encounter and common usership. In a context as such, the notion of “care” is central to rethinking the way these “places” can be designed, experienced, and (collectively) maintained.

Making Room in this sense becomes a gesture that welcomes other practices and knowledge as generative forms of transformation—a way of “giving space” and “dedicating time” to both alliances and conflicts, be that with partners, fellow colleagues, or audience members.

In this context, the *Manifesto For Maintenance Art 1969! Proposal for an Exhibition ‘CARE’* by American artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles (born 1939, Denver, Colorado) stressed the importance of the unseen activities and periods of time necessary for the “maintenance” and support of a “place.” Written after the birth of Ukeles’ first child, the Manifesto reveals the complex set of relations that regulate the life of the artist (woman and mother), both in the private sphere (the house) and the public sphere (the exhibition space and the art institution). In the following years, her research continued with *The Maintenance Art Questionnaire* (1973–1976), a survey that asked the audience how much time they spend on such maintenance tasks. This Questionnaire has to be understood as an affirmative gesture, one that instigates a public sharing of these preoccupations, reflections, and responsibilities.

A similar notion of care also resonates in *A story from Circolo della Rosa* by Alex Martinis Roe (1982, Australia, lives and works in Berlin), part of the artist’s work on feminist genealogies. The film relates the encounter between two women—both active members of the Milan Women’s Bookstore Collective—and their work on feminist pedagogical experiments in the late 1980s. Narrated in the form of a fictional corre-



Making Room – Spaces of Anticipation, exhibition view at ar/ge kunst, photo anares, 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Private Performances of Personal Maintenance as Art*, 1970-1973, black and white photographs, (1) 8 x 10 inch photo (4) 10 x 8 inch photo. Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo anares, 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.

spondence between the artists themselves, the story describes the reciprocal nature of a relationship built on *affidamento* or “entrustment”: a social-symbolic practice exercised and theorized by the Milan Women’s Bookstore Collective.

The need to accommodate and follow up alternative histories was also central to the collaboration between the Swiss, naturalized French designer Janette Laverrière (1909–2011) and the artist Nairy Baghramian (1971, Iran, lives and works in Berlin), who met and began collaborating in 2008. Laverrière’s drawings, furniture, and objects are presented in a display system conceived by Baghramian. This included a vitrine system for sketches, and walls painted in a watery green that recalls Laverrière’s private living room. The care invested in this arrangement gave eloquent expression to the intergenerational friendship between the two women (Laverrière said they were “sisters in spirit”), but it also highlights the interweaving of Laverrière’s professional, private, and political life. Alongside her work as a designer, Laverrière was among the founders of the National Front for Decorators and the Decorators Trade Union (both in 1944), and in the latter part of her career she designed “useless” objects in which the need to tell a story prevails over function. A significant example of this is the mirror from her *Evocations series: La Commune, homage à Louise Michel* (2001), which evokes the French anarchist Louise Michel and her contribution to the foundation of the Paris Commune.

The School of Narrative Dance is a project that was initiated in 2013 by Marinella Senatore (1977, lives and works in Berlin and London): a model for a multidisciplinary, nomadic, free school, which, through verbal and non-verbal storytelling, centers the educational process on the emancipation, inclusion, and self-cultivation of the student. For *Making Room*, Senatore and the architectural practice Assemble (London) had proposed a display that assembles a number of related documents and preparatory drawings. These visual and conceptual references, presented on a sort of working table, underlined the process of translation that was involved in giving the school its first actual architectonic and spatial dimension on the occasion of the Premio MAXXI in Roma.

Working with and on behalf of ar/ge kunst, Brave New Alps & Paolo Plotegher started a research project that considers all these practices and explores the potential of models of art institutions such as the Kunstverein. Taking the story of the “The Troubadour of Knowledge” by Michel Serres as their starting point, they produced a visitors’ questionnaire in order to collect experiences that will then form the basis for a workshop.

Making Room was a research phase of the project *Spaces of Anticipation*.



Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art, Proposal for an Exhibition "CARE"*, 1969
Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo anares, 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Alex Martinis Roe, *A story from Circolo della rosa*, HD video, 2014.
Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo anares, 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Janette Laverrière in collaboration with Nairy Baghramian,
Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo by anares 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Janette Laverrière in collaboration with Nairy Baghramian, installation view, 2014.
Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo by anares 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Janette Laverrière, *La Commune, homage à Louise Michel*, 2001, from Evocation series. Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo by anares 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Janette Laverrière, *Bibliothèque verticale*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist and Silberkuppe Berlin. Books from Milan Women's Bookstore Collective Archive, 2014. Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo by anares 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Janette Laverrière, *Chapeau chinois*, 2011. Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo by anares 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Marinella Senatore in collaboration with Assemble, *The School of Narrative Dance*. Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo by anares 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Brave New Alps & Paolo Plotegher, *What It Means to Win*, 2014. Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo by anares 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo by anares 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.



Lorenzo Sandoval with S.T.I.F.F., *Mutant Matters*, 2013-ongoing. Installation view at ar/ge kunst, photo by anares 2014, copyright ar/ge kunst.

Could Curating Be in Time? An Afterthought on the Relation Between Curating, Time, and the Commons, through *We Are the Time Machines: Time and Tools for Commoning* Binna Choi

Speaking of time, we have to speak of space, and vice versa. Noteworthy is a resonance between the exhibition *Making Room*, which forms part of the *Space of Anticipation* project, and the project exhibition¹ *We Are the Time Machines: Time and Tools for Commoning* (WTM) that concludes the program as inquiry at Casco, called “Composing the Commons.” In mutual reverberation, there’s a common desire that drove the two exhibitions: an exhibition as an active space for social composition and collective transformation, rather than a display / container for contemplative spectatorship. It stipulated both exhibitions to perform the transversal spatial articulation beyond the distinction between art, architecture, and program, with interwoven programmatic elements that happened during and beyond the exhibition period.

Some might problematize the binary distinction of those two modalities of exhibition space and could easily say that spectatorship as we know might well bring forth a social alchemy. With/against it, however, we are still ridden with a short, still evolving history of institutional critique, especially in terms of what a seemingly neutral white cube serves and how the viewership in such a space is limited from a “labor point of view.” We also have been witnessing how a space of contemporary art has been changing from merely being a space of display to a complex of multiple kinds of activities.² The underlying motivation for this phenomenon calls for our attention—the rise of the service industry and accelerating neo-liberalization that also brought forth the privatization of the art space and the diminishment of the art center as community center.³ Against this backdrop, we look closely at this common desire to articulate a space of assemblage within the parameters of the exhibition, as distinct from the capitalist-driven. My hypothesis is that the distinction has to be made in the aspect of temporality, although it’s exactly there wherein the problem lies. What do I mean?

The following passage in the exhibition outline of *Making Room* should be relevant in this light:

‘Making room’ in this sense becomes a gesture that welcomes other practices and knowledge as generative forms of transformation – a way of ‘giving space’ and ‘dedicating time’ to both alliances and conflicts, be that with partners, fellow colleagues, audience members.

This passage of curatorial intention triggers several questions, in particular, the phrase “dedicating time.” How is it so that an exhibition becomes a way of dedicating time? Isn’t it typical of an exhibition to at best freeze time or frame time for those who come to see the exhibition, while taking away time from those who make it along with all the



WTM room 2, *Office for Unlearning (Un)usual Business/Business*, with a view of Annette Krauss, Casco team, and Rosie Eveleigh's *Exercise Pad for Site for Unlearning (Art Organization)*, installation with pad and stool, 2015/2016, photo: Niels Moolenaar

frenzies in organizing and materializing the concept? Then who dedicates time? Is it about the viewership? Whose time is it talking about?

As the title may well echo, one of the central concerns of the *WTM* exhibition was the matter of time. Adding the issue of temporality to the idea of an instrumentalization of artworks and other things as tools was a modest yet crucial distinction we wanted to make to the buzzing discourse around “useful art”—especially its assumed transcendental objectivity and the narrow definition of practicality—while having wanted to harvest and share what we have been (un)learning from the investigation into the commons and the practicing of it. The exhibition was meant to be made—and continues to be made—from what we call “tooling” in the context of commoning practice: an active form of composing tools for, about, and of the commons by reworking, recreating, and reenacting artworks alongside research projects and other encounters. And we elaborated this process of tooling in the following way, involving the time element:

This experimentation includes making time—especially “reproductive” time for things like study and conversation—which we consider a fundamental condition for commoning. As such, the exhibition runs for an extended period of five months and includes rooms that accommodate open processes of such time-making hinging on the embrace of different life rhythms in common.

Reproduction as discussed in (Marxist) feminist discourse encompasses cleaning, cooking, eating, pro-creating, taking care, and all the maintenance work that supports the production process without (equivalent) remuneration and recognition while indispensable to the patriarchal capitalist accumulation process. Through the course of *Site for Unlearning (Art Organization)*, a long-term collective project for unlearning art institutional habits by our entire team at Casco and artist Annette Krauss since spring 2014, we have expanded on the concept of reproduction. Through the process of



WTM room 3, *Commons Study Library*, with a view of Adelita Husni-Bey's *White Paper: The Law*, poster (one of a set of five), 2015 and paintings by EZLN, 2011, photo: Niels Moolenaar

from the works and practices we have developed or encountered in recent years and amplified by the spatial design by the Berlin-based *Kooperative für Darstellungspolitik* (Jesko Fezer and Andreas Müller with Peter Behrbohm). While the curatorial decision for selection was based on the intensity of relations, it's interesting to note that the architects also chose a relation as a method: to be in dialogue with graphic designer David Bennewith and Bram van den Berg who developed with us the project identity and all the visual communication rooms.⁵ The shape of the spatial articulation of each room (with the furniture) also corresponded with the visual identity.

Adding to this set-up is a “conversation card” in place of an exhibition guide with captions and work descriptions. If tools for commoning are not pre-existing, they have to be made through collective situations and effort. When those situations are not always able to be face-to-face, or by physical contacts, they could be mediated through spurring experiential stories and subjective writings⁶ generated personally and/or collectively, a sort of literature. That was the idea. While some basic literature was then written by us the team at Casco as our own exercises of study, deep understanding, and tooling, we also wanted to provide the possibilities for anyone who visited also to join this tooling process. In every room, there was a stack of empty cards and literary tools such as nails and a hammer to install the cards anywhere one wanted.

The third element—in no order of importance at all—is an extensive study “program,” whose program is, however, not meant to be so programmatic. It is woven by three strands. One is a relatively traditional approach, a series of four forums, zooming into four major-minor sites for commoning—economy, governance, art organization, and aesthetics—organized by the team. The second is the formation of a study group that self-organizes their own questions into the commons and for their own tooling for the commons, by taking the exhibition as a primary case. The final element is that of community-driven events and reading groups. Through this, we wanted to assemble all those self-organized groups and communities around into one space/time to relate to each other. It also implicates ourselves, too.



*WTM staircase, with a view of diagrammatic representation of the Casco 2013-2015 program, *Composing the Commons*, by Binna Choi, Staci Bu Shea, Sanne Oorthuizen, Ika Putranto, 2015, photo: Niels Moolenaar*

These three aspects together made the exhibition into something “special”. It was special in the sense that the exhibition as a space for social composition always remained temporary. When the rooms were not inhabited, it was close to emptiness, if not a semi-ruin. When inhabited, especially by more than two groups, the heightened spirit from collective studies ran through room to room, while it might have been rather alienating for those who came with an idea of an exhibition that is seeing artworks in the space. By co-habitation, the space was also ever non-static, evolving with more and more traces by the “Conversation Cards” left by the inhabitants, although their literature was often closer to a comment if not a haiku. The Study Group themselves found a methodology of their study around the commons and the institution in walking through and inhabiting one room after another.

Yet this temporariness of the space, in contrast to a sense of permanence or infinitude postured by a white-cube exhibition, as we know, is also where it falls short, especially when we are still “busy.” The busy-ness, despite the extended period of the exhibition and a form of exhibition made for reproductive time, prevailed. Changes in the team, one member on maternity leave, the treacherous time to get to know a new temporary colleague for maternity cover, an illness of team member, external commissions and projects to come, all contributed to maintaining our ongoing “business” as usual. For example, our team itself had no more time for conversation cards, though conversations took place occasionally: so we did not succeed in multiplying tools after the opening of the exhibition. Some of the visitors might have turned their back on the exhibition out of avoidable alienation since our hosting capacity—the time to dedicate to it—had been diminishing because we had to attend to other matters. The hosting was essential for this exhibition in order to gain a first understanding of the intention of this exhibition.

How about the compositional possibility? On the last day of the exhibition, a festivity for all those who were involved in the *WTM* commoning process fulfilled a projective image we had in terms of gathering all those groups and other related individuals together to see a possibility of commoning (in whatever way possible), but they did not leave a concrete legacy, in terms of an action to take. Simply being together, could we call this the commons? If not, did the exhibition “fail”?

Rightfully so, the city council of Utrecht through the voice of their appointed expert committee members made a critical remark in their evaluation of Casco for the upcoming policy term (2017-2020): Casco is confused between being a presentation institution (a general term for contemporary art institution in the Netherlands) and being a platform for world-changing enthusiasts (meant to be pejorative by referring to having no actual power to change things but only to dream). And the quality of its exhibition fluctuates. What is meant to be a criticism by those who must have seen the *WTM* as a failure is, however, a compliment for us, which is not without saying that there’s nothing that could have been done better or differently.

A compliment in that it is the enthusiasts—and those becoming enthusiasts—who count for us. They count for us for the “prophetic” quality of their passion and the quality of their temporariness—however precarious or vulnerable it is. Almost



WTM room 2, *Office for Unlearning (Un)usual Business/Business*, a workshop session as part of *WTM* Forum II, *Commoning Art Organization*, 30 January 2016, photo: the Casco team



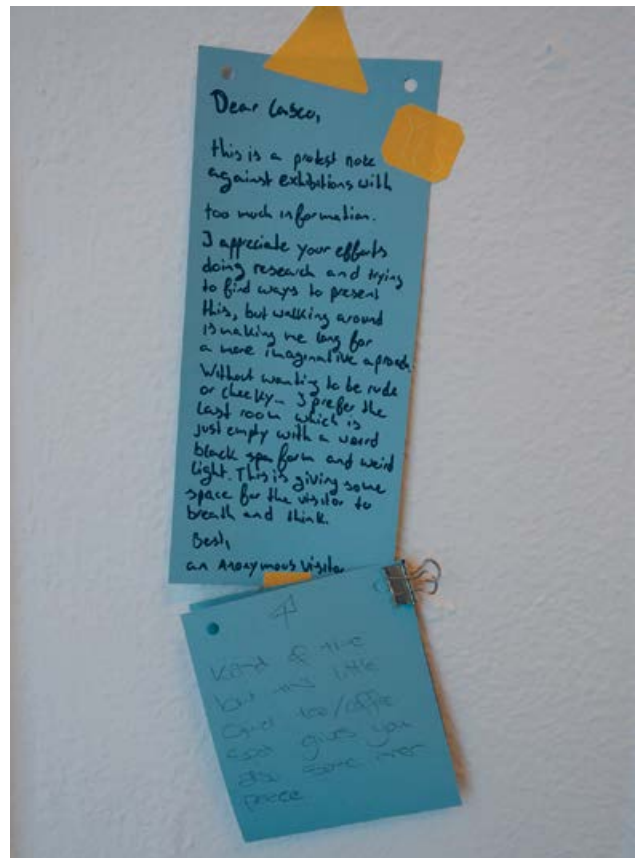
WTM room 1, *Room for Collective Imaginaries*, with Jazael Olguín Zapata (Cooperativa Cráter Invertido) and students from HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, 21 December 2015, photo: the Casco team



WTM room 2, *Office for Unlearning (Un)usual Business/Business*, a zine making workshop by Gerrit Rietveld Academie students (a group led by Paul Gangloff), 9 March 2016, photo: the Casco team



WTM Study Group at Casco office, 11 April 2016, photo: the Casco team



Conversation Cards in the *WTM* exhibition, photos: Carlijn Bakker

purposefully concealing a collectivity under (the radar of) an institution, even not commoning to avoid the managerialism of the commons (narrowly defined as co-management) but being together in struggle, what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten call the “undercommons,” and the undercommons is a prophetic organization. This is the power for change. When the prophecy also moves the institution from which it originated, its truth also gets proven. Casco is now being transformed, and we are in the self-challenging process of “re-organization” to accommodate the idea that grew further from the *WTM*. This would purposely conceal what we are undercommoning, but we could speak about the commons. More paradox might be needed in order to protect the undercommons: institutionalize ourselves further. In the same vein, the re-organization will also reflect what could have been better in the *WTM* exhibition: for example, we could have allocated more rooms for artworks of experiential intensity,

that is, with no code to interpret and no text to read. This in turn could have given more room for poetry, as the language of prophecy. After all, the exhibition was announced as such to make a prophecy, as in the exhibition guide:

We Are the Time Machines: Time and Tools for Commoning also implies the actual transformation of how Casco as an organization works. Inspired by *Site of Unlearning (Art Organization)* Casco's ongoing engagement with Annette Krauss, the exhibition intends to shift the notion and function of the office, along with rethinking the exhibition space. Production and management tend to make up the brunt of any office's activity, including Casco's. Through the exhibition, Casco works toward the abolition of this type of office. Instead, we create a space that cuts across both office and exhibition where the activity of collective study, reproductive labor, and co-management are encouraged. While it addresses the public, audiences, and visitors, just as any exhibition or art institutional program does, the focus here is on the possibilities of these plural publics becoming "we."

With a detour, this growing, evolving "we" would find a home, the structure in which temporariness is encouraged in many ways. In this, temporariness diverges away from the antagonistic positions within the realm of leftist social change these days, *to accelerate or to slow down*. The antithesis to busyness is not slowing down, nor immersing oneself in acceleration. Rather, it is to allow time, if possible all different times and rhythms sensed, to create an almost mythical, prophetic sense of polyphony. It's a resonance of anticipation.

"Dedicating time," I am curious how curators or all others involved in the show *Spaces of Anticipation* did so. For sure, there is no socio-spatial production without arrangement of time, in particular active engagement in non-permanence, anticipatory re-invention, and above all heartbeats.

Notes

- 1 I use this term inspired by Marion von Osten's use of the term and her practice, an exhibition of trans-disciplinary assembly and a proposition of the counter-public.
- 2 Nikolaus Hirsch, "Plans are Nothing—Planning is Everything: Productive Misunderstandings of Time," in *Cultures of the Curatorial—Timing: On the Temporal Dimension of Exhibiting*, eds. Beatrice von Bismarck, Rike Frank, Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer, Jörn Schafaff, Thomas Weski (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 69.
- 3 Read Andrea Phillips' essay "Remaking the Arts Centre," in *Cluster Dialectionary*, eds. Binna Choi, Maria Lind, Emily Pethick and Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014).
- 4 This is even the case when a quasi- or pre-relational medium like social media capitalize on it.
- 5 The first room, *Room for Collective Imaginary*, was created with Mexico-based artists collective Cooperativa Cráter Invertido whom we befriended through the Arts Collaboratory network and Mattin whose improvisational practice set the very tone of the program in its beginning. A big round table for a group meeting that served equally as a drawing table for building affective imaginaries together, as inspired by Cráter Invertido's drawing practice, was a means to deal with their collective work-life process and to call for radical imagination. The second one named *Office for Unlearning Business / Busyness* is structured by two ongoing projects at Casco, the abovementioned.

tioned *Site for Unlearning: Art Organization*, and another *(Un)usual Business*, a research collective into local community economies which we initiated together with the student activist group Kritische Studenten Utrecht. Resembling an office, made up of an excessively long table, a bench, flipchart, an A3 color printer, etc., the space also hosted tools by each project/group that in turn invite an ongoing tooling process. The following room was perhaps the most didactic room, which offered possibilities of mapping out some key definitions of the commons, key concerns, and commoning works across geographies with a selection of some art and film works and books and articles. Called quite literally the *Commons Study Library*, it was introduced by the following: “The basic definition and reality of the commons is what constitutes the land, mountains, rivers, water in general—what makes up our environment. Much of this has been privatized, territorialized, and exploited over the last centuries, with significant impact especially over the last sixty years. In this room, you can delve into the crisis of the commons and broaden your understanding. This understanding includes delving into our knowledge, language, relations, bodies, etc., as the commons, and how to fight to reclaim them from privatization and state appropriation!” with works of or contributions by Sari Denisse, Adelita Husni-Bey, Fernando Garcia-Dory, Adrian Jimenez, Tadasu Takamine, Bregtje van der Haak, Aimée Zito Lema with LeRyan, members of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation via Rigo 23. Then before passing to the final room, there was a small kitchen for use, and the installation work by Ruth Buchanan, our long-term collaborating artist, where in a compulsive mode the word body is repeatedly typed intercepted with different number of quantities. *Plane for “UIQ” aka Dark Room* was the final room, the whole of which was dedicated to *UIQ (the unmaking-of)*, a sound work by Graeme Thomson and Silvia Maglioni, whereby various voices gathered by several workshops share their imagination of how a film could be unfolded based on Félix Guattari’s unmade science-fiction screenplay, *A Love of UIQ* (1980–1987).

6 An example of this kind of writing is what Seoul-based philosopher and art critic Hyosil Yang calls **feminist writing**, “The writing that is written about which one cannot live without is greater than that written about what one thinks is right. There tends to be power/violence performed in the writing that is written *for all*, written for a big cause, for objective truth, for urgency. The result is contrary as confessional writing can fall into the trap of narcissism. However, the writing that weaves the confessional narrative into an ideological and a structural context enables us to become historical subjects beyond self-pity. The writing that is abstract or written for all is a form of narcissistic writing that kills others. The writing that is fragile at the very beginning, which I call feminist writing, calls for us to imagine the commons by making contact with collective and social problems. Confession is a strategy using words to reflect how we can live with those I don’t know, who hurt me, who I would like to kill...” Excerpt from an interview with Hyosil Yang, “예술은 언제나 약자의 편에서 강렬하게 긴급한 것들을 말해왔다” [Art Always and Eagerly Spoke of the Urgency from the Margin], published in *Article* in August 2013, translation by Binna Choi.

Binna Choi, director of Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons (formerly Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory). **Casco** is a public contemporary art institution in Utrecht, the Netherlands, dedicated to artistic research and experiments, practicing toward the commons. The artistic practices we focus on are cross-disciplinary, open to collaboration and process-driven. Our work traverses design, theory, and the wider social sphere. Since May 2017, Casco has been transitioning to study and practice the commons on the back side of the organization as well as in its public programs, as marked by its new in-the-making *Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons*.

An Exercise in the Practice of *Affidamento* Alex Martinis Roe

Over the past few years, I have been searching for collective feminist practices within the history of some interconnected groups and networks with the aim of learning from them and using them as tools with which to develop new ones. One of the groups with which I have spent time, researching their practices, is the Milan Women's Bookstore co-operative, whose collective research has been widely influential, not only in Italy, but also in a number of European countries.

Perhaps the most beautiful, difficult, and important of the Milan Women's Bookstore co-operative's practices is their practice of *affidamento*. The Bookstore, which was founded in 1975 and which is still in operation today, is the public project of a women's group, which developed this common project as a way to create a bridge between the separatist women's group and the public realm. Similarly, *affidamento* is a practice that facilitates the extension of the radical politics of difference within the group into its way of working together on the bookstore project, but also further afield into existing institutions and power structures.

Affidamento is a term that describes a relationship between two women, where each entrusts herself to the other, so that each can use her talents, competences, and desires to open new political spaces for the other. It is not that the Milan Women's Bookstore co-operative invented this kind of relationship, but rather they put a name to it. They named a kind of relationship, which now and historically has been indispensable for women to achieve political aims. Indeed in naming it, and practicing it intentionally, they created a radical ethics of difference, where this entrustment to the other is actually an entrustment to her difference—in other words, a radical openness and commitment to another's irreducible difference, her uniqueness. This relationship is not one of identification—it is not that these two women see themselves in one another—on the contrary, it is through their differences that they desire to not only work together, but also to re-form the self as a uniqueness that comes about through its recognition by another and the affirmation of that uniqueness as sexuate.

Affidamento is a practice of commitment-through-difference in relationships among women. Knowing through doing is particularly important with regard to *affidamento*, because it is a practice that begins from and takes the shape of those who do it. The importance of empirical and personal knowledge in Italian feminist political practice is present in this structure, using one of its key founding principles as its basis: *partire da sé* or "starting from oneself." Thus, in order to understand this theory, one must undertake the practice and invent it for oneself-in-relation. Although *affidamento* is usually something that takes its own time, often long-term, it is possible to attempt it and to experiment with it, in the time of one meeting. This exercise is a framework that is intended to provide such an opening, and it uses storytelling to do so.

The importance of narrative storytelling in the practices of the Milan Women's Bookstore co-operative is felt in the story told in their book about two women, Amalia and Emilia.¹ Amalia is sick of her friend always repeating stories about her life, and so

she writes Emilia's life story for her on a few sheets of paper, which Emilia then carries around in her purse afterward and reads incessantly and with great emotion. As Adriana Cavarero writes about this story, "Emilia has lived a life in which her uniqueness has remained partially unexposed due to the lack of a shared scene of co-appearance, the lack of a true political space."² Many of the "socio-symbolic" political practices developed by The Milan Women's Bookstore co-operative utilize different modes of storytelling. These speech practices are not always the defining feature of these practices, but nevertheless play an important practical role. The story of Amalia and Emilia is a story of *affidamento*, in which Amalia's greater competence as a writer gives Emilia access to a sense of self.

I developed the following exercise as an attempt to find a way to both introduce the practice to a group and to foster its growth among members of the group. I devised it for a group that has not yet formed in mind, such as a workshop with participants from different contexts, but a group that has already been established could also do it. It takes about an hour; each part requiring around twenty minutes:

Part One

Meet in a circle. The facilitator begins from her left and gives everyone in the circle a consecutive number, stopping when she is halfway around the circle. Then she begins counting from one again, so that everyone can find the person who has been given the same number. That way, pairs are formed, and the pairing is more likely to join people in the group who are not (yet) closely connected.

These pairs then find a space in the room where they can listen to each other, uninterrupted for ten minutes in the psychoanalytic arrangement, i.e. one lying down, the other sitting next to her head so that they don't look at each other, and listening to each other with a special kind of attention: keeping an open mind and not categorizing what the other person is saying. Other physical arrangements are fine, as long as there is a disparity in orientation between the positions, and there is no eye contact. Each tells a story about a relationship she has had with a woman (and if you are not a woman, a story of a relationship between two women you know of) which could possibly be a story of *affidamento*. It is important that the one listening does not interrupt the one speaking, although she may take notes.

When the first block of ten minutes is up, the facilitator tells those speaking to stop and change positions with their partners. After the next ten-minute block, the facilitator explains the next stage of the exercise.

Part Two

In twenty minutes, write the other person's story. The facilitator poses some challenges and questions to the group: Think about the way you tell the story—its form and the kind of language you use. From what perspective, in which voice do you write, and why? Do you need to ask your partner questions as you write? Try to think of this story as a gift to the other: what can you write that will help her and the others understand the relationship in a particular way?

Part Three

Gather again as a group in a circle to read a few of these stories. Those in the circle who would like to share the story they have written read them aloud. The facilitator asks for a few minutes of silence, so that everyone in the circle can consider the following: This reading should be done in such a way as to be a kind of gift to your partner (or the women in the story in the case that your partner is not a woman), giving her a coherent sense of her uniqueness-in-relation, and giving her the authority



Alex Martinis Roe, *A story from Circolo della rosa*, high definition video still of a photograph by P.H. Vanda-Vergna courtesy of the Milan Women's Bookstore co-operative archive, 2014.



Alex Martinis Roe, *A story from Circolo della rosa*, film still of a photograph courtesy of the Milan Women's Bookstore co-operative archive, 2014.



Alex Martinis Roe, *For the joy of being together, they didn't have to agree*, film still of a photograph courtesy of Ca La Dona archive Barcelona, 2015-2016.



Alex Martinis Roe, *It was an unusual way of doing politics, there were friendships, loves, gossip, tears, flowers...*, super 8 still transferred to digital, 2014.

to speak about the relation for herself. In this task, we entrusted one another with intimate stories of relations between women that work through and on disparity rather than sameness. We worked on the important task of storytelling as a way of creating affirmative relations over time and giving others a political space of co-appearance as an act of co-becoming. How can we perform this in the act of reading?

Postscript

Having undertaken this exercise with four groups now, it has confirmed to me that engaging in this kind of political practice with strangers is extraordinarily effective. It is astonishing, that ten minutes of open and attentive listening is enough for these stories to be meaningful, not only to the pair who shared the experience, but to everyone. What another, who has opened herself to it, can observe may enter the story as an important insight, as it did many times in my experience, but then much more simply, as a witness, the listener and her written story affirm the importance of that relationship, creating a political space of appearance for it. And although sometimes the stories themselves can be a bit boring, the act of giving this kind of gift is what is important. The stories are gifts of recognition of relationships among women that are not framed by the existing institutions of family, work, and friendship, but rather are accepted on their own terms including modes of relation that exceed these structures and flow between them.

It is also important to dispel the rosy picture that may have arisen as you read the above. This practice is not always easy. Sometimes the greatest gift is a line in the story that goes against our habits of thought, our way of understanding ourselves and our relationships. Listening is an act of kindness, but refusing to repeat or affirm the habits of patriarchy and other oppressive structures in us is an act of love—one that can be difficult to accept.

Although ten minutes is already enough for the practice to begin, our experiences have made it clear that more time is precious—in fact incredible in its effects. A gift of acknowledgement that takes time and takes time into account is the most effective of the relational practices I have witnessed and taken part in. That said, it is so important to keep beginning, now, and in as many possible places at once, and with more and more people.

Notes

1 Amalia and Emilia attended adult education classes together—a program called *La Scuola delle 150 ore* (The 150-Hour School) that was set up by the Italian left in the '70s, which enabled domestic and other workers to attend adult education classes. The Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, *Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice*, trans. Patricia Cicogna and Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987) 102-107.

2 Adriana Cavarero, "On the Outskirts of Milan," *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, Warwick Studies in European Philosophy (New York: Routledge, 2000), 57.

Alex Martinis Roe is an artist and researcher. She is a former fellow of the Graduate School at the University of the Arts Berlin, and holds a PhD from Monash University, Australia. She is currently completing her project *To Become Two*: a series of films, workshops, public events and a book, as a social history of the feminist practices that invented the concept of "sexual difference," and collective experiments with this research through the sub-project *Our Future Network*. This project was co-commissioned as a series of solo exhibitions by *If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution* (Amsterdam), *Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory* (Utrecht), *The Showroom* (London) and *ar/ge kunst* (Bolzano), and has also been exhibited at *Badischer Kunstverein* (Karlsruhe). Parts of the project have been exhibited at, among others, *Art Gallery of New South Wales* (Sydney), *Australian Centre for Contemporary Art* (Melbourne), *SlyZmud Gallery* (Buenos Aires), *Dienstgebäude* (Zürich), *Yvonne Lambert* (Berlin), and *Hessel Museum of Art* (Annandale on Hudson, NY). She is Head of Sculpture at the Australian National University and co-leads the transversal working group *FORMATIONS* in Berlin with philosopher Melanie Sehgal.

Undoing the Present: On Labor Conditions, Economic Survival, and Other Questionable Practices of the Art World

Antonia Alampi in conversation
with Alec Steadman



The Imaginary School Program (Public Program), workshop with Ashok Sukumaran, Fall 2013, photo by Antonia Alampi

*The conversation took place in September 2016; for this reason, important notes with updates have been added to the original text.

Alec Steadman: So we are here to talk about two sister projects you have developed, one delivered in the recent past, one to be realized in the near future. Both in different ways deal with issues of infrastructure, in very pragmatic terms, and not only in reference to the art world. Should we start by establishing the basic parameters of the first? *The Imaginary School Program*¹ (ISP) was a form of para-pedagogical model you developed whilst working as Curator at *Beirut*, in Cairo. The most succinct description of the ISP that I could find was “an eight-month cross-disciplinary practice-based theory program designed for twelve participants,” the focus of which was “institutions and forms of organizing,” working backwards from the existing institutional landscape the city had to offer. What made you feel the development of such

a program was urgent in Cairo at the time, and what were the biggest challenges you faced in the process of developing and delivering the ISP in such a fluid and contested political context?

Antonia Alampi: *The Imaginary School Program* was probably an organic conclusion of *Beirut*'s existence, an institution developed as a temporary experiment with an expiry date, and its ongoing efforts in thinking about institutional structures. It's hard for me to exactly trace the genealogy of the ISP and when or how its urgency was felt, as our work was constantly bound to the fluidity of the political context and the financial precariousness of a small-scale organization in Egypt. But the following is a possible lineage. In the autumn of 2014, *Beirut* organized a season (our program was articulated in seasons of three months comprising exhibitions, public programs, etc.) focusing on questions around art and pedagogy, as well as higher educational structures in Egypt. Within that framework, we curated an exhibition titled *Writing with the other hand is imagining*, featuring works by artists involved in education, both as a practice and as a mode of thinking, such as Luis Camnitzer, Mladen Stlinovi, Adelita Husni-Bey and Redmond Entwistle, among others. During the exhibition, we organized a discursive program titled “The Imaginary School Program,” trying to expand on some of the aspects that the exhibition raised by organizing conversations with local teachers, pedagogical activists, and artists to look more closely at various issues that would directly or laterally speak to the educational system in Egypt. We aimed to also look at the ecology of independent educational experiments that had happened in the past (as discussed in a conversation with education activist Motaz Attalla), or in correlation with anarchic-collectivist examples (as addressed in a lecture performance by Adelita Husni-Bey). What emerged out of

this program, conceived as a research process, was an urgency in organizing an educational project that would engage students on a programmatic level addressing the questions we were raising and problems we were facing since the very beginning of *Beirut's* founding by Jens Maier-Rothe and Sarah Rifky.

The intention of the program was to scrutinize, in order to better understand, the various aspects and dilemmas that characterize the independent scene in Cairo, from an infrastructural perspective, including economic trajectories, issues of legality, modes of governance, and the ideological and cultural frames that existed within them. In a way, we almost anticipated the disastrous scenario that would manifest during the school, and the following programmatic state attempt to dismantle the entire independent scene. Here is a concrete example of the situation at the time, to give substance to what I am talking about. Legally registering your not-for-profit institution in Egypt de facto allows the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the government's agency in charge of civil society organizations, to interfere with institutions' structural and temporary decisions, from the election of boards, to staff management and programming. Needless to say, it is employed to enact severe censorship and control over their work. Furthermore, registered NGOs need the government's authorization to accept funding from abroad. Its approval is likely to come very late or not at all, and the whole procedure might even include interviews with security services. Vagueness and ambiguity permeate this policy, as the law does not even specify whether a non-response to a funding request, after a prolonged period, indicates tacit approval. The logic is clear, to weaken institutions, striking their economic sustainability is a very effective tool.

Thus, try to imagine with me what kind of decisions need to be made when instituting, already from the very first act of your registration. Here comes a highly performative element of independent institutions in Egypt, as under the Mubarak era most of the ones engaged in work ranging from human rights to culture would register as Limited Liability Companies or law firms to avoid being confined and censored by the NGO law. What happened right at the very beginning of the ISP was that the new (non-democratic) government of General Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi set a deadline, summoning institutions vaguely defined as performing "civil society activities" to register under the premises of the highly restrictive Mubarak-era law I just described. Soliciting to register was performed in the



Alexandra Pirici, *Parthenon Marbles*, 2017, commissioned by State of Concept and Kadist in the context of Future Climates, photos by Alexandra Masmanidi

form of intimidating ultimatums accompanied by threats of violence and prosecution, announcing the possible closure of hundreds of institutions, and the life-imprisonment of their staff. As you can imagine, all people we were working with or aimed to collaborate with, and of course ourselves, were potentially under threat, and thus reasonably shied away from sharing too much information with our students. This, of course, had a heavy impact on how we had conceived the program and where we wanted it to go, while also giving us a sense of even more urgency in discussing precisely those aspects and speculating on new forms of legal existence. That also meant, however, that the focus of the program had to slightly shift as a sensitive and respectful act towards this dangerous situation. In this sense, we faced immense challenges, trying to activate open discourse while being careful not to put anyone into more danger. And, of course, creating an independent educational program in Cairo from scratch demanded experience that we didn't fully have, so we were learning by doing, every



by Dan Perjovschi

day. For instance, we faced a number of issues when dealing with the students themselves. With an alternative program that has no tangible outcome, such as an academic degree, no history, and is not designed around acquiring the skills of a specific profession, we found it hard to count on students' attendance, as they tended to prioritize other engagements (mostly university degrees or jobs). We also found that the variety and diversity of the program's activities at times led to confusion amongst the students, rather than complexity.

AS: Jumping into the present, we find *Future Climates*, a platform you have been developing since 2016 with iLiana Fokianaki, founding director of State of Concept in Athens. *Future Climates*, and its broader thematic framework and context, stems from the daily realities and operational experiences of running and institution within a context such as Cairo, and in particular the difficulties of such a critically inquisitive program as the ISP. Could you say something about the experiences that led you to want to foreground institutional precariousness in terms of the content of *Future Climates*?

AA: iLiana Fokianaki invited me in late 2015 to curate a project at State of Concept in Athens (the space she founded and directs, and in which she invites a guest curator per year), predominantly because being interested in the Imaginary School Program she had followed it remotely. *Future Climates* is the outcome of our encounter, of long conversations and heated debates on precarity, on exploitation, on infrastructures, and on unproductive economic and legal frameworks, particularly as cultural workers mostly engaged with small not-for-profit initiatives.

It stems from a consideration of how art and cultural institutions around the world today, and to various degrees, wrestle with economic and more recently ecological sustainability, long-term structural support, low compensation of artistic and intellectual work, precarious labor conditions, complicated or problematic legal, political, and bureaucratic frameworks. Building and running small-scale not for profit initiatives in geographic locations marked by a lack of public infrastructure and support usually goes hand in hand with precarious labor conditions. Workers are either underpaid or not paid at all, which in many cases leads to the life-span of institutions being short, whilst they rely on DIY technicalities and the limited resources of collective sharing, friendship, and generosity. While small not-for-profit initiatives are increasingly invited to take part in art fairs, biennials, and the programming of large museums—thus marking a general recognition of their cultural capital and relevance—cultural policies are increasingly gathered towards mainstream or large-scale events and institutions, putting their life and longevity even more under threat. For these reasons, it is urgent to imagine and implement new ways of existing and operating, clear and ethical parameters that define and regulate acceptable working conditions, in order to emancipate ourselves from old, unsustainable models. The surge of new art and socially engaged, small-scale, and citizen-led initiatives of different kinds that continue to emerge in Athens against the backdrop of the peak of the economic, political, and migrant crisis and the arrival of a huge institution such as *documenta 14*, make of this city and its agents a paradigmatic context in which to start.

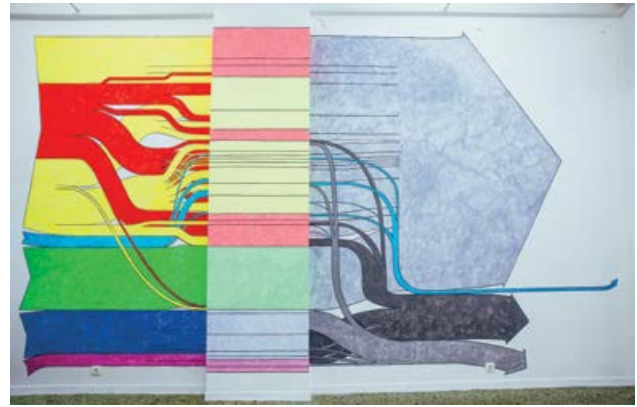
AS: The ambitions for *Future Climates* are huge (which I love!), described (in brief) as “a platform that aims to propose viable futures for independent cultural practice.” This search for viable futures is something, as you say, pretty much any arts and cultural institution in the world is busy with on a daily basis. Particularly as we witness the dwindling of the post-war model of the welfare state in the European context, the struggle becomes not only one of finding practical solutions and funding for our work, but a new and sustainable ideological framework for artistic/cultural/institutional practice. How will you begin to tackle such big issues? And do you genuinely think it's possible to find new viable models with such a project, or is that meant more as marking the conceptual territory for your investigations?

AA: In Italian we say “la speranza è l’ultima a morire” (hope is the last to die)! Our objective is to put together a cohesive group of participants coming from a broad range of relevant disciplines.² We will then ask the group to apply their diverse bodies of knowledge to explore fields such as law, economy, policy-making, and, of course, culture. This process will begin by asking them to research, contextualize, and ruminate, but moving forward we want them to really imagine new forms of sustainability. The group will take as a starting point the very concrete context of Athens, in particular the realm of small-scale cultural organizations, looking back to 2008, a paramount date in relation to the Greek financial crisis.³

So, the first manifestation of *Future Climates* will really try to be defined, with clearly marked frames and focuses, concentrating particularly on economics and structural funding, with all that implies and involves. Not reaching a solid conclusion⁴ might be a risk, but for us this is the beginning of a larger project, and even just getting to collective and open discussions substantiated by research, facts, and figures could be a good place to start. Methodologically speaking, investigations will involve field research, the opening of archives and particularly budget sheets, interviews with key actors of the scene; from funders, via politicians, to directors and curators.⁵ We also will work with artists such as Alexandra Pirici, Navine G. Khan-Dossos, and Alexandros Tzannis, among others.⁶

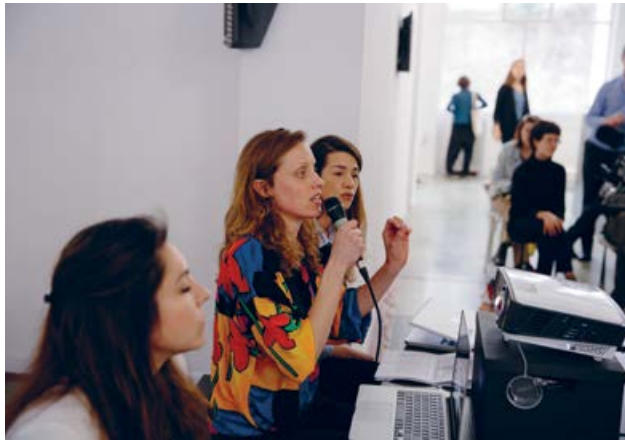
AS: How do you work towards imagining and developing viable alternative independent futures, when you are stuck fire-fighting every day. Just trying to keep an institution alive and to get paid to keep yourself alive, housed, clothed. Especially when so many “opportunities” in the system come with an expectation that you give your time, your ideas, your labor for free (such as this interview we are doing now). With *Future Climates*, a project trying to find these sustainable institutional models as its focus/content, you yourselves are just as (if not more so) precarious than the institutional examples you will look at/work with. What are your strategies for creating the breathing room (practically and financially) for yourselves to carry out this investigation?

AA: I believe so much in the need to change this system that I am donating my own time to it, but for my own cause. What I mean here is that this project is technically responding to my own experience and



Navine G. Khan-Dossos, *Navigating the Numbers*, 6 x 3m, 2017. Site specific wall painting in gouache commissioned by State of Concept in the context of *Future Climates*, photos by Alexandra Masmanidi

situation of precariousness, while knowing of course how this difficult position is shared by many, many more. It’s so difficult to economically survive in the art world that is not market-oriented and not private that it is becoming, or maybe simply it is still, an extremely elitist context in which you basically have to be able to afford to work, and for which you have to accept impossible working conditions (I am consciously generalizing). You juggle a million other jobs simultaneously, which might include bartending, translating, film production, baby-sitting etc... In short, jobs that pay you better by the hour. There was recently an interesting and sarcastic article on *Hyperallergic* by Benjamin Sutton⁷ mentioning how an assistant curator at Tate would survive better by being “team leader” at Tesco. The piece in essence was highlighting the difference between the enormous amount the museum had recently spent on enlarging its premises (£260 million) and that are put into marketing or salaries of high-profile figures (the salary of its director Nicholas Serota reaches £165,000 and £170,000 per annum, which is anyway super low compared to museums in, say, the USA), versus the younger or even simply lower level workers of the “content-producing” departments who earn (much) less than the bar or restaurant workers of the museum (an entry salary for an assistant curator is £13 per hour before taxes and life in London is ridiculously expensive). And this is the context of a big museum. I am sure you know others in the city operating in a similar way. Exploitation of intellectual or artistic work is an old debate of course, but it’s still totally unresolved... The absurd circle here being that not having enough time (and personal or institutional resources) to research, travel, do studio visits, etc. will undermine your professional practice as well, which obviously means that your possibilities to find a better job in the field will shrink. I guess I want to fight for



Antonia Alampi, Iliana Fokianaki and Evita Tsokanta during the opening conference of *The School of Redistribution*, the first chapter of *Future Climates*, Athens, commissioned by State of Concept in the context of *Future Climates*, photos by Alexandra Masmanidi

more equality, coherency, ethics, and solidarity. It is as simple as that in a field that has very high societal and political claims but often ends up reproducing exactly those neoliberal exploitative models it theoretically fights against. It's too easy this way. Talking only about a distant example and not really intervening in our own, small, mundane, and banal surrounding is hypocritical. To be clear I am not talking about the "evil" art market here, but about the "good" politically engaged not-for-profit sector. It goes without saying that I am hyper-critical of big spectacular events that drain all funding for only temporary projects. Lastly, with regard to my personal situation, to diversify my income I opened up a restaurant with a few friends, with a little bit of starting money and a bank loan. It is a ramen restaurant in Florence (Koto Ramen).⁸

AS: Somehow the ISP seems like it was more hopeful in its tone (textually at least). It was about institution-building as a radical political act. Looking both theoretically, and very practically in terms of legal registration etc.... Attempting to understand what materially constitutes an institutional form as a legal and political body, in order to subvert those processes for radical effect. My understanding of *Future Climates* on the other hand is that it is more about trying to find ways out of a bad institutional situation, out of precarity, finding models and strategies for existing institutions to build viable sustainable futures. Its still incredibly utopic in a way, but seems to come from an understanding that building radical institutions alone isn't enough when faced with harsh financial and political realities. Would you see it that way?

AA: Indeed. More than a temporary school, *Future Climates* is a research project structured like a school, and it is in a way more realistic than the ISP in its ambitions, by trying to focus on more determined aspects.⁹

AS: In relation to the broader thematic framework of this issue (*Spaces of Anticipation*), which explores "the role and potential of artistic and cultural institutional models," *Future Climates* offers an interesting and critical position. Namely that for art, curatorial and cultural institutional practice to have any agency effecting the social and political conditions of its constituencies, it is crucial that it simultaneously addresses (and actively works to change) its own internal conditions of exclusion and exploitation. You seem to imply (or maybe I'm reading into this?) that too often institutions that are engaging with social and political issues as part of the content of their program can be really bad offenders in terms of the daily realities of their teams. Is this contradiction between content ambition and internal reality of art institutions what led you to want to convene a group that includes people with non-art backgrounds for the *Future Climates* core group? And was that where the ambition for it to directly engage with fields "outside" of art, such as law, the economy, and policy-making, stems from?

AA: I don't think that labor exploitation or neoliberal working models, etc., pertain only to socially engaged institutions, of course, but when this contradiction exists in this type of institution (and it does very often) it's much more disappointing and hypocritical. To quote Mia Jankowicz in an article on Mada Masr, "The question that remains—as ever for the art world at large—is whether the ends justify the means."¹⁰ And truly, in many cases, I really don't think they do. Working with people and professionals outside of the art world is a decision based on the fact that we need a certain type of competence that is outside of our context. We need people who are proficient in the legal system of Greece and its cultural politics, who have a knowledge of economics, who have financial literacy, who can bring in a variety of models, drawing both from the not-for-profit but also from the for-profit sector.¹¹

AS: For me, there is a necessity for an active process of un-doing for any attempt to envision or construct more equitable futures. I'm thinking here of Walter Dignolo's propositions of de-coloniality,

de-Westernization, and de-linking that make clear the need to actively undo modernity in order to overcome its inbuilt oppressions, exclusions, and divisions. In essence, our current system is inextricable from oppressions of gender, race, class etc.... As such we can't just "anticipate" the future, but have to work hard to actively undo the present. It seems like this is where you are trying to get to, by addressing a specific element of a much larger set of questionable relations, and one that you are directly engaged with, so you actually have potential agency. Perhaps that's a good place to finish?

AA: x



The Imaginary School Program, participants' round table discussion, winter 2014. Photo by Lotta Schäfer

Notes

1 *The Imaginary School Program* existed between October 2014 and May 2015, in Cairo as part of *Beirut's* program. It was directed by Antonia Alampi with the assistance of Lotta Schäfer. Core contributors included Amr Abdelrahman, Jasmina Metwaly, Jens Maier-Rothe, and Sarah Rifky. See <http://beirutbeirut.org/Beirut/projects/535d217255627576a7180000>.

2 Participants were Denise Araouzou, Jane Fawcett, Ioli Kavakou, Laura Lovatel, Federica Menin, Giulia Palomba, Sol Prado, Rosana Sánchez Rufete and Aris Spentsas, Sara Santana, and Dora Vasilakou. However, quite a few, like Laura Lovatel and Federica Menin, participated only minimally.

3 The whole group was guided by Evita Tsokanta, who was head of research of the program, with the assistance of Maria Konomi.

4 Actually a few concrete proposals came out of this project, in particular tapping into collectivizing finan-

cial tools and using these as methods for sustaining grass-roots initiatives. We will publish most of our findings in an upcoming publication that will be licensed under creative commons and free to download online, so please bear with me for more information. But also, on November 24, 2017 at Kadist Art Foundation, we engaged with some particularly interesting cases of experimental practices in this regard, with people we have either already been engaged with or will be working with in the future.

5 We encountered or had workshops with an incredible wealth of contributors, people, institutions, and collectives such as: Victoria Ivanova, Maria Lind, Temporary Academy of Arts Athens (Glykeria Stathopoulou, Elpida Karampa, Despoina Zefkili), Nikos Arvanitis and Anja Kirschner (Circuits and Currents), Emily Pethick, Julieta Aranda and Anton Vidokle (e-flux), Nato Thompson, Tania Bruguera, Bik Van der Pol, Nora Sternfeld, Nicoline van Harskamp, Olav Velthuis, 3 137 (Kosmas Nikolaou, Paky Vlasopoulou, Chrysanthi Koumianaki), Enterprise Projects (Vassilis Papageorgiou, Danai Giannoglou), SNEHTA Residency (Augustus Veinoglou), Radio Athenes (Helena Papadopoulou), Fokidos (Sofia Stevi), EHESS, Paris in conversation with the Open School of Immigrants, Peiraious, Katerina Nikou, Polyna Kosmadaki, Kostis Stafylakis, Jens Maier-Rothe, Jonas Staal, Angela Dimitrakakis, Theo Prodromidis, Sophie Goltz, James Bridle, Mohammed Salemy, Libia Castro and Olafur Olafsson, Stella Barakianou and DIY Performance Biennial Athens (Vasilis Noulas, Gigi Argyropoulou, Kostas Tzimoulis), PAAC (Assembly Platform of Catalan Artists), Enric Duran plus the artists (Studio Markus Miessen, Martha Rosler, Navine Khan Dossos, Alexandros Tzannis, Alexandra Pirici).

6 Now that everything has happened: due to the fact that we managed to raise much less money than we hoped for (less than 18,000 euros, with State of Concept Athens having to support the project financially and provide its local resources for free. The artists commission program became more modest (in the number of artists, not in their quality). We commissioned a new fantastic piece from Alexandra Pirici inspired by the controversial story of the Parthenon Marbles. Navine G. Khan-Dossos realized a mural inspired by the orientation of our research, and Markus Miessen designed a discursive space for the program. We also had two films by Martha Rosler, and contributions by many many artists, in public programs, talks, and conversations...

7 Benjamin Sutton, "Wanna Be a Tate Curator? Don't Quit Your Day Job!" *Hyperallergic*, August 24, 2016, <http://hyperallergic.com/318850/wanna-be-a-tate-curator-dont-quit-your-day-job/>.

8 And just to confirm this side-note I—and iLiana, too—ended up working completely for free for this project, while deciding to pay everyone else involved in it.

9 The second chapter of *Future Climates* that recently took place as part of the exhibition *State (in) Concepts* that iLiana curated at the KADIST Foundation Paris, looked into the first part of the research and the failures in relation to pinpointing a particular root of the problem for Athens as a case study, and tried to offer possible scenarios of how to monetize precarity in order to survive, with excellent contributions from WAGE, Victoria Ivanova, and Vermeir & Heiremans, together with many not-for-profit small institutions in Paris that we learned face similar conditions.

10 Mia Jankowicz, “The knife-sharpener’s wheel: A review of Ayman Ramadan’s Mere Real Things at Townhouse West,” Mada Masr, October 22, 2015, <http://www.madamasr.com/sections/culture/knife-sharpener%E2%80%99s-wheel-review-ayman-ramadan%E2%80%99s-mere-real-things-townhouse-west>.

11 Disappointingly, we only managed to involve a handful of people outside of the art world, the reasons for which we will address in the upcoming publication.

Antonia Alampi is a curator, researcher and writer born in southern Italy and currently based in Berlin, where she is Artistic Co-Director of SAVVY Contemporary, a space wherein epistemological disobedience and delinking (Walter Dignolo) are practiced, and a space for decolonial practices and aesthetics. In 2016, she initiated with iLiana Fokianaki the research project *Future Climates*, which first manifested in Athens in March 2017, by focusing on how economic fluxes shape and determine the work of small-scale initiatives in contexts with weak public infrastructures for arts and culture. Since 2017, she has also been curator of Extra City in Antwerp, with a three-year program focused on the manufacturing of the notion of European Citizenship. From 2012 to 2015, she was curator of *Beirut*, an art initiative that existed in Cairo in that time-frame, reflecting on the paramount moment of transition the country was experiencing at the time. There, she conceived and directed the educational project *The Imaginary School Program* (2014/2015) looking into forms of organizing and institution-building in the city. Between 2009 and 2011, she was the co-founding director of the art initiative *Opera Rebis* and prior to this she worked for the Studio Stefania Miscetti

(Rome), Manifesta7 (South Tyrol), and the Galleria Civica di Arte Contemporanea of Trento.

Alec Steadman is a curator and researcher living between Yogyakarta, Indonesia and London, Europe. He is currently Co-Chief Curator at Gemeti - Institute for Art and Society, Yogyakarta, collectively exploring the possibilities for a gallery to act as a site for civic action. Previous roles have included Curator, Arts Catalyst, London (2015/16); Artistic Director, Contemporary Image Collective (CIC), Cairo (2013/14); and Head of Exhibitions, Zoo Art Enterprises, London (2005-2010). In 2015, he was Exhibition Studies Research Fellow at Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong, and Curator in Residence, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, in 2013. He participated in the De Appel Curatorial Programme, Amsterdam (2011/12), and completed an MRes Art: Exhibition Studies at Central Saint Martins, UAL (2015/16). His writing has been/will be featured in publications such as *Metropolis M*, *Arte-Util.org*, *OnCurating*, and *Shadow Files*.

A Model of Possible Action

An Unfinished Protocol

Krüger & Pardeller

2011

Following the change of director at the MAK (Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art), Vienna, we are invited to develop a display for an exhibition on the future of the institution. Our attempt to include the participants in effective institutional decision-making processes by means of artistic procedures is successful on one hand, but also demonstrates the limits of artistic influence. It also shows us the limits of our professional expertise; after all, the supervision of organizational transformation processes also requires other skills from outside the art world.

We observe that large art institutions, parallel to their programmatic critique of neoliberal practices, themselves engage professional coaching firms in order to implement internal organizational development processes.

Institutional critique has become an adept chess move made by decision makers to prove their criticality to the art scene—just as the processes of organizational development now function as a tactical justification of the institution to policy makers. The reverse is also true: policy demands these processes in order to be able to justify itself. A mutual safeguard of this kind does not lead to assumption of responsibility, but rather to its being passed along to workshops that promise efficiency.

We wish to set an artistic format against the increasing use of these practices in arts and cultural institutions. We want to learn more about coaching strategies, and investigate the overlap between methods of institutional critique and the techniques of organizational development.

Early 2012

The Austrian Frederick Kiesler Foundation is on its last legs. Policies offer no assurance of funding the institution in the future. The director, Monika Pessler, adds a course on organizational development to her existing duties in order to strengthen her negotiating ability. As artists we feel obliged to speak up for the maintenance of the institution: what can our contribution be?

We arrive at the idea of submitting an artistic research project together with the Kiesler Foundation, which would partially co-finance the foundation. *A Model of Possible Action. An Experiment to Develop a New Methodology of Institutional Cooperation* is to consist of the following team: a coach for organizational development, the artists (our-

selves—Krüger & Pardeller), and the director of the Kiesler Foundation. The initiative to set this up is ours.

At first the ambivalent social utopias of Frederick Kiesler serve as a theoretical foil, but soon it becomes clear that we wish not only to work out this model theoretically, but also to find an opportunity for putting it into practice. Monika Pessler, however, is reluctant to turn the Kiesler Foundation into a case study or a place of experimentation.

Spring 2012

We actively seek an institution that is undergoing a process of transformation and is interested in doing so within an artistic framework, and with the involvement of a professional organizational developer.

The experiences of cooperation are to culminate in an exhibition. The modular setting used in the coaching workshops—which, tellingly, is reminiscent of institution-critical exhibition design—is to be repurposed as a display. Finally, a symposium and a publication shall support public discussion about *A Model of Possible Action*.

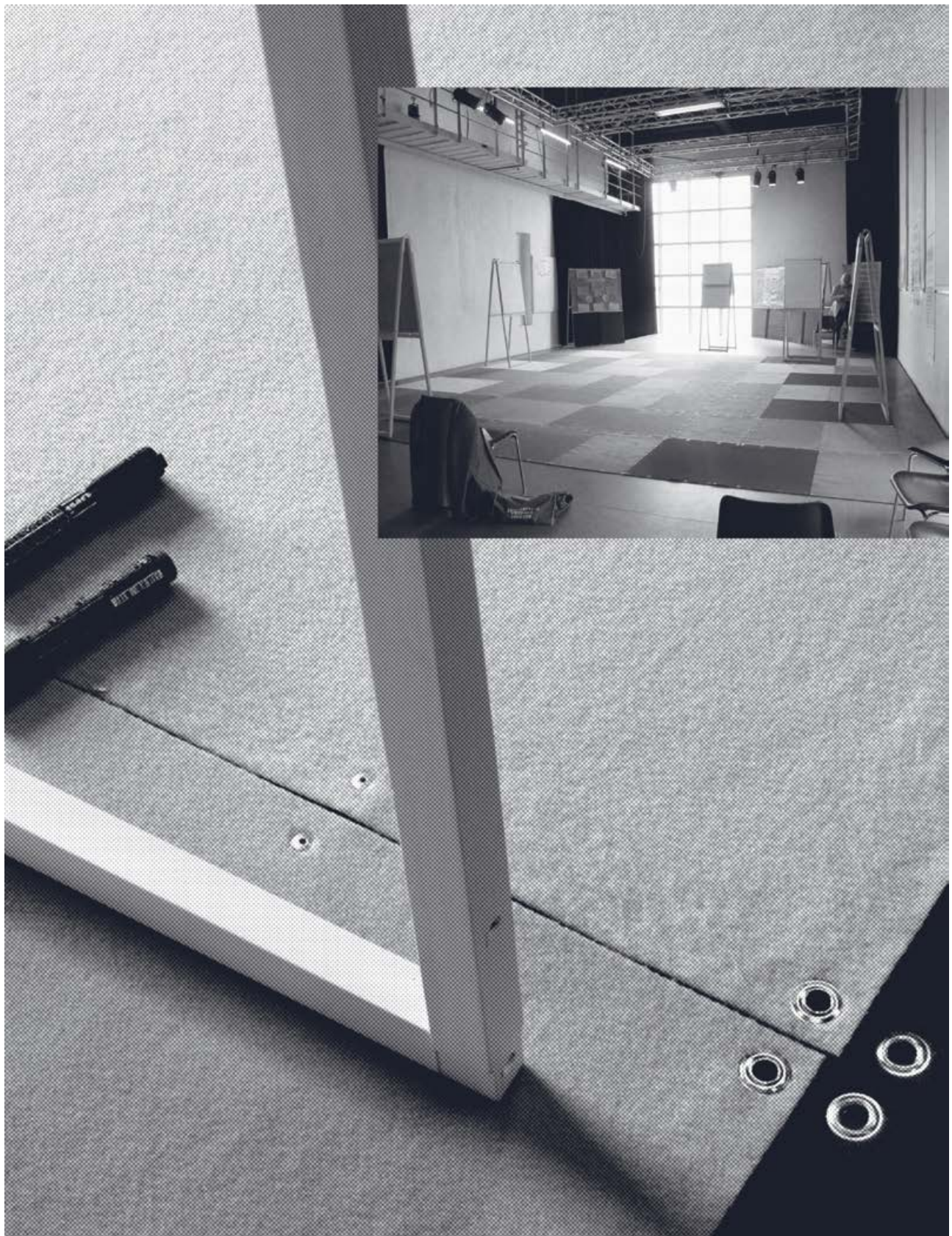
Independently of this, the institution is to benefit from the results of the coaching workshops. This particularly applies to smaller institutions, which cannot afford a transformation process with this kind of input under their current conditions.

August 2012

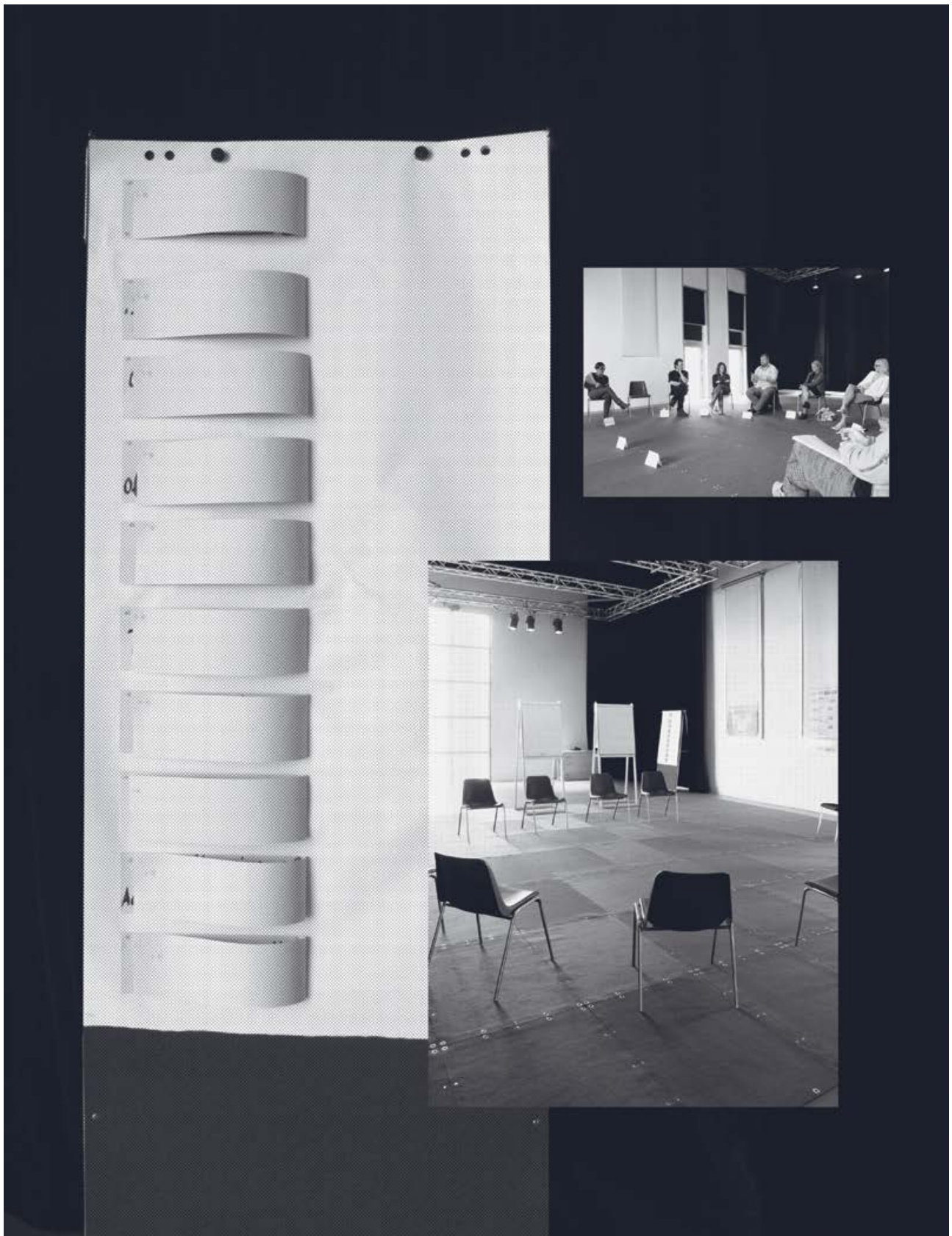
We get to know the Norwegian curator Geir Haraldseth, who was to become director of the Rogaland Kunstsenter (RKS) the following year. He is interested in our approach. Later in 2012 he invites us to begin the project shortly after taking up the position of director in Stavanger.

Geir Haraldseth describes the situation at the beginning of the project as follows: the Kunstsenter is an association formed by regional artists and designers who administer it themselves. Together with the board, he is responsible for the program. Problems can arise from the interaction of the two professional groups, as well as from the geographical location in the South of Norway. The town of Stavanger was limited to very few cultural institutions until the discovery of oil in the 1960s near the Norwegian coast substantially improved the region's economic situation. Currently, Stavanger is an important town for petrochemicals, but there is still little cultural engagement; a newly constructed opera house mainly serves passengers from the cruise ships that dock there.

The director wishes to transform the Kunstsenter into an internationally well-connected institution. He is interested in a theoretical, discursive program, but he lacks



Krüger & Pardeller, *A Model of Possible Action: An Experiment to Develop a New Methodology of Institutional Cooperation / Constellation Work*, 2013/2016. 8 Duplex-Prints. Image courtesy the artists.



Krüger & Pardeller, *A Model of Possible Action: An Experiment to Develop a New Methodology of Institutional Cooperation / Constellation Work*, 2013/2016. 8 Duplex-Prints. Image courtesy the artists.

the money and the support of municipal and regional political bodies or economic leaders. He wishes to spend the first phase of his new position sounding out the needs of local artists and designers in order to engage in conversations with representatives of the town, the region, and the economy about the future of the institution.

Working with a professional organizational developer enables the director to address local policy makers and administrators, and invite them to joint meetings that take place within a format (coaching workshops) that seems familiar and trustworthy to them.

Krüger & Pardeller's artistic framing embeds the whole process in a self-reflective critical discourse. This fulfills the director's requirement for criticality and aesthetic transformation. He can only gain the participation of local artists and other art institutions on the basis of the artistic format.

December 2012

We meet Karl Prammer, a coach for organizational development and transformation processes. He teaches the educating/curating/managing course at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and brings a solid foundation of theoretical knowledge about organizational development to the table.

With him an experiment seems to be possible that plays out on two levels: one being the level of the concrete situation of the RKS, the other being the meta level, an alternative model for development in which the paradigmatic "opponents" join to make common cause.

The critical question being asked by all: who is working for whom?

January 2013

Together with the coach, we develop a model of cooperation and division of work. The first step is to learn the methodology of each discipline.

We organize an introductory talk on institutional critique in the studio. We wish to make our critical attitude clear to the coach from the very beginning.

For his part, he invites us to his company and gives us a presentation with hand-prepared flip charts showing the structural procedure of an organizational development process.

A development and transformation coach is primarily interested in the systemic structure of organizations. Whether he works for a concern, an NGO, or an art institution is not at first relevant for his work; neither is the nature of the products or contents produced there. The structural complexity to be integrated or represented can vary. Accordingly, different formats and grammars are available.

First an inquiry is made into “core targets” of the client, and the content carriers are determined.

A list of the relevant participants is drawn up, in combination with their hierarchical position. Decision-makers should be identified and grouped within the “decision-making body.” They should be integrated into the development process from the beginning as their power ensures a future realization.

The first task of the “decision-making body” is to determine the “cases for action” and to decide which other institutions should be involved in order to guarantee a successful transformation process.

This determines which people will be invited to the “project team.” The “project team” consists of representatives of all relevant groups, and works through the details of how the “core targets” are to be implemented. It identifies “hot potatoes” and “taboos” at an early stage that could hinder future realization.

A “project coordinator” is appointed who coordinates all activities, provides the necessary infrastructure, and keeps information flowing among all participants.

In the course of the first workshops two other “bodies” are formed: an “internal sounding board” and an “external sounding board.”

The “internal sounding board” consists of additional people from the institutions already cooperating on the project. Their job is to point out new approaches and other social aspects that the “project team” has overlooked, and to contribute by anchoring the process on a broader basis.

The “external sounding board” represents the idea and the involvement of the public: representatives of relevant public bodies are invited to a collective event so that their feedback can be obtained, or their cooperation gained.

This general design calls for five workshops over the course of a year. Each of these workshop modules has its own specific structure, which is dealt with in prepared “scenes.”

While the contents and results of the process are fully open-ended at first, the structure is, in contrast, concisely planned and determined in order to guarantee a successful transformation process for the client.

February 2013

We wish to learn more about the scenic organization and choreography of the individual workshop modules. It begins with a greeting to the seated participants, and continues in a closed circle of chairs. Subsequently, flip charts are set up and some initial keywords and formulaic sentences are written down.

The entire structural side of the organizational development process is laid out, anticipating at the same time the dynamic of the group process itself: the “phases of transition” from the “old reality” into the “new reality” have to be run through step-by-step: “denial,” “anger,” and “fear” are transformed through the process of “mourning” into positive feelings such as “curiosity” and finally “happiness.”

A systemic structural setup follows. In a “constellation work,” the participants are asked to position themselves in a coordinate system marked on the floor in accordance with the questions being asked. Emotional and content levels are combined with each other. Linguistic metaphors are employed. “The one” and “the other” are translated into spatial zones within the context of sociometric exercises. There is talk of “the sinking ship” and “the safe harbour.”

Using the coach’s descriptions, we develop a modular setting that enables real spatial settlements alongside the linguistic spatial metaphors. It involves a system of frameworks from which flipcharts, bulletin boards, “corner- and milestones” can be generated as well as “walls of separation,” “open gates,” or a “totem of taboos.” Modular fields on the floor made of two-sided carpet squares create a way to mark out emotional zones within the coordinate grid. On the flip chart paper, group memberships shaded with different colors are transferred directly into the space. Hanging walls create discrete spaces; symbolic arrangements are translated into tangible forms.

March 2013

We project the planned workshops in a space normally used for theatre and performance art. Here the coaching modules’ scenic choreography itself is to appear staged. Black curtains, theatre lighting, and a balcony that enables observation from above are meant to underline the relationship between organizational development and the practices of psychodrama.

May 2013

The existing team is joined by Elisabeth Fritz, a sociologist and art historian who is to alternate as supervisor with Monika Pessler.

June 2013 As “project coordinator,” the director of the RKS informs us of the following participants in the “decision-making body”:

- an artist from the RKS Art Association
- a designer from the RKS Art Association
- a representative of the state government, culture department
- a representative of the municipal government, culture department
- a local representative of the Chamber of Commerce

July 2013 Krüger & Pardeller produce the setting: 40 lacquered frame elements, 98 double-sided carpet elements with grommets, aluminum bars, hanging rails, MDF slabs, rope hoists, silkscreen posters, etc. We drill over 1000 holes and send seven transport crates to Norway.

September 2013 The pre-kickoff workshop takes place. The team, consisting of Krüger & Pardeller, Karl Prammer, and Monika Pessler, travels to Stavanger.

As an artist duo, we are on one hand participants in the workshop and so bring our viewpoint into the process. During interim phases we leave the stage and this role behind in order to document the proceedings, create new spatial settings, or carry on individual conversations with the participants. In doing so, we are careful to consider the group dynamics initiated by the coach.

The coach’s technical competence in organizational development is complemented and expanded by a corresponding artistic competence. This relates to the level of artistic objects in their aesthetic as well as their functional quality in the same way as the involvement and critical distance of the artist duo.

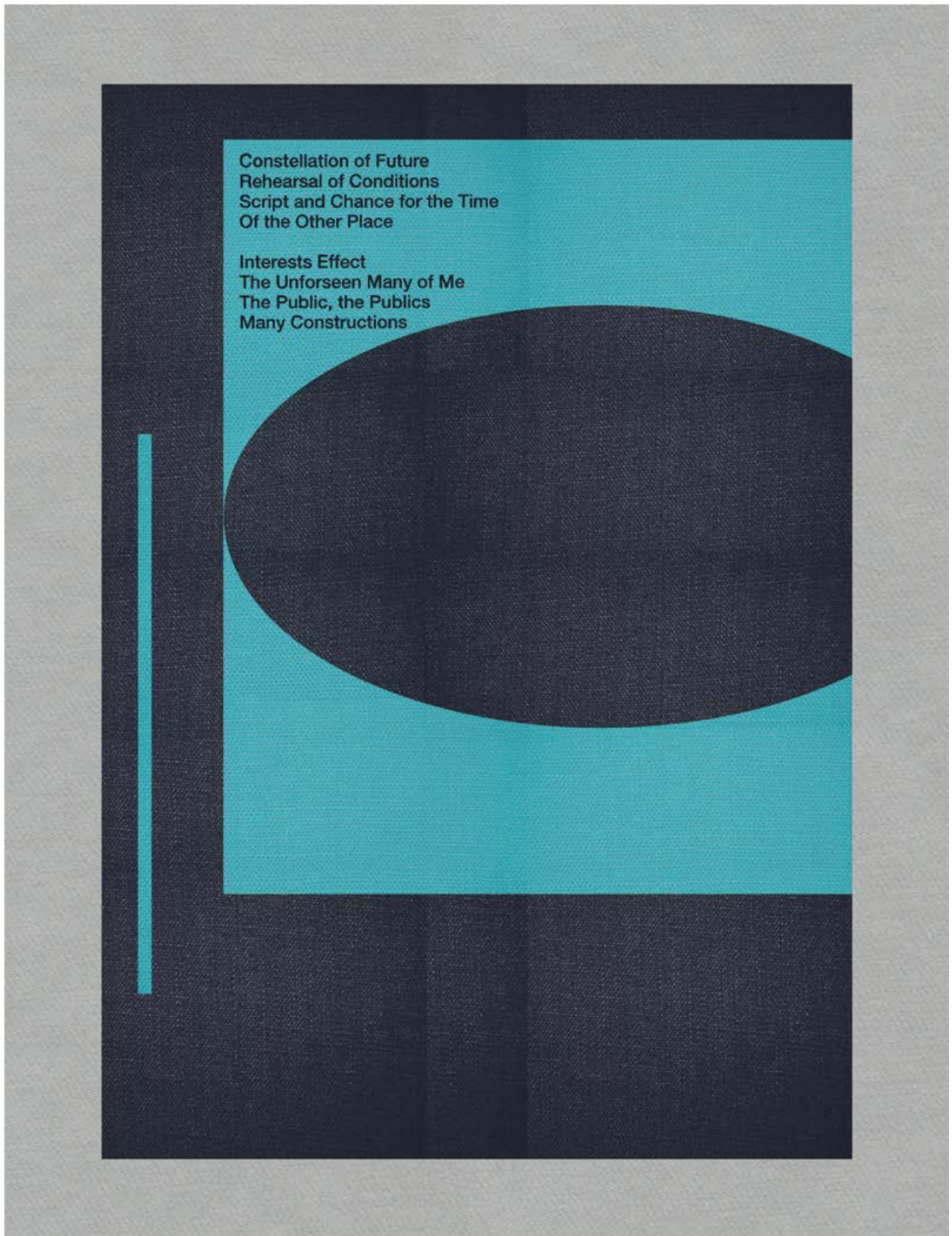
After the workshop, a collective feedback round takes place for the team. The observations and suggestions are meant to flow into the coming workshop module, especially in light of the fact that the city official has cancelled at the last minute.

We get the news that the municipal government employee now has other priorities due to a right-wing conservative alliance’s victory in the parliamentary elections held shortly before our workshop. Subsequently, the state government employee also gets an order to withdraw from the project.

We return to Vienna. The director of the Kunstsenter tries to restore contact with the local cultural policymakers. He does not succeed. He had not thought it necessary to get contractual agreement for their participation.



Krüger & Pardeller, *A Model of Possible Action: An Experiment to Develop a New Methodology of Institutional Cooperation / Rehearsal of Conditions*, 2013/2016. 8 Duplex-Prints. Image courtesy the artists.



Krüger & Pardeller, *A Model of Possible Action: An Experiment to Develop a New Methodology of Institutional Cooperation / Rehearsal of Conditions*, 2013/2016. 8 Duplex-Prints. Image courtesy the artists.

The foundation of our artistic project on organizational development, which had been seen by both the policymakers and the institution as an adequate means for guaranteeing regional cultural development from an economic, structural, and content standpoint, is shown to be too fragile. Under the changing political conditions, it is precisely the security and sustainability itself that no longer seem desirable.

October 2013 We discontinue the project.

December 2013 We receive compensation that covers the production costs.

2014 The art historian Sabeth Buchmann takes up the project and describes it in her text “Rehearsing the Rules,” in *Krüger & Pardeller, Aesthetic Basic Chronicle, Vol.1* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014).

“If rehearsal formats are understood, not least of all, as an expression of a willingness to fail as well, then *A Model of Possible Action* is also undoubtedly productive, because as an experimental arrangement it is conscious of its own (self-) entanglement. This ultimately shows that process and product are no longer opposites in light of modular methods and rules, but rather two mutually conditional sides of the same coin. Whether these kinds of further developments of institutional critique consequently hold an analytical and resistive potential in the sense of a practice that is not subsumed in contemporary logics of exploitation or does not act as a seamless supplier to entrepreneurial interests, can only be—as Krüger & Pardeller’s project shows—‘situation-specifically’ tested and decided.”

2015 Sabeth Buchmann, curator Ilse Lafer, and artist Constanze Ruhm invite us to transform the project for an exhibition around the theme of “rehearsal.”

August 2016 *Putting Rehearsals to the Test*, an exhibition with three chapters at three locations—Leonard & Bina Ellen Gallery, VOX, Centre de l’image contemporaine, and the SBC Gallery of Contemporary Art—opens in Montréal.

Our work fluctuates between a documentary approach and the formal translation of our workshop experiences.

Eight double-sided posters show a continuous text, based on the language of organizational development used by the coach. It is underlaid with abstract symbols and colors that come from the coaching process. They denote role disposi-

tives and group memberships. On the other side the “scenes” of the workshop are documented. The “take away” posters end up lying on a pedestal, embedded between Harun Farocki’s film *Die Schulung/ The Training* (1987) and Rashid Masharawi’s *Waiting* (2002) in the SBC Gallery of Contemporary Art.

At the initiative of Ilse Lafer, a scenario from the workshop is integrated into the exhibition room of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Gallery as a large-format wall piece and placed in relationship to a workshop situation conceived by Achim Lengerer for the exhibition.

Between the two locations our project can be seen as an unfinished “*Model for Possible Action*.”

- September 2016 The continuation of our project as “*Unfinished Protocol*” is based on discussions with Ilse Lafer.
- March 2017 The poster series “*Constellation Work*” and “*Rehearsal of Conditions*” travel from Montreal to Stavanger to return to RKS. They are shown in the exhibition *Collective Good/Collaborative Effort*.
- December 2017 RKS - Rogaland Kunstsenter publishes the book *Collective Good/Collaborative Effort*, with texts by Geir Haraldseth, Michael Birchall, Marc James Léger, Charlotte Bik Bandlien, Gregory Sholette, and Harry Weeks, featuring exhibitions like *HAIK* (designkollektive HAIK), *It Could Go Either Way* (Mariam Ghani/Erin Ellen Kelly), *Model of Possible Action* (Krüger & Pardeller), or *Jenny Say Qua* (Anna-Sophie Berger, Halvor Rønning, Martyn Reynolds, Christophe Hamaide, and Philip Kleinmichel).

KRÜGER & PARDELLER (AT/IT)

The Austrian/Italian artist-duo aligns itself with a socially activated, political understanding of aesthetics. Working predominantly with sculpture and installation, a concept of production emerges—in the words of Krüger & Pardeller, “concrete openness.” Crucially, this openness does not only stand for a transgression of the traditional concept of work, but also brings the concrete rules and conditions of a participative practice into play, a work form invested with continuation and completion. Krüger & Pardeller recently published *AESTHETIC BASIC CHRONICLE, VOL. 1* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014).

Welcome!

A Conversation with Sol Calero about Tropical Hospitality, Latin American Legacy, and the Potential of the Exotic

A Conversation between Sol Calero, Emanuele Guidi, and Lorenzo Sandoval

Emanuele Guidi: As you know, we wanted to meet you because of our ongoing research dubbed Spaces of Anticipation, which investigates artistic, curatorial, and institutional practices that operate at the intersection between production/arrangement of space and production/circulation of knowledge, a relationship that implies the forever-challenging notions of “participation” and “public.” In these terms, your practice is very relevant for the way you question the “function” of certain institutions/art-spaces you have been working with, very often starting from a very spatial and aesthetic perspective to design situations that facilitate encounters between “agents” of different kinds. This approach of drafting conditions for a co-habitation represents one of the central aspects in the way we understand “anticipation”; a gesture of care, taken ahead of time, with all the risks it can imply.

Lorenzo Sandoval: In that sense, we wanted to talk with you about a main question in your work related with our research on anticipation: the way you work architectonically providing welcoming spaces through generous strategies. You combine the artist approach on the one hand, with the practice of curating, and an active intervention on architecture on the other, as one can see in many of your projects and in the project space you run together with Christopher Kline, Kinderhook & Caracas. Also, this space is placed in your own home: the domestic space as a model for institutional practice emerges from there, creating a subtle line with the practice of welcoming, that is transversal in most of your projects.

Sol Calero: Terms like “public” and “domestic,” “welcoming” and “inclusivity” are central ideas both in my practice and in our project space. In general, it has

always been very important for me to work in a collective way. When it comes to the domestic and welcoming aspects of my work, it’s a very simple gesture: hospitality is an essential part of the culture I come from, and I create welcoming spaces that involve social interaction and exchange. I’ve been very inspired by the tradition of Latin American artists from the ‘60s and ‘70s, who worked with politicized ideas, and activism together with art. And also with what are the limits between low and high art, between design and craftwork, as well what is considered to be art and what is not.

LS: At some point you were even doing wearable pieces.

SC: Yes, it’s true. And as you can see, I still keep my interest in design, furniture, and crafts as essential elements of my projects and installations because of their domestic and functional aspects. Design is part of our daily life, we are surrounded by objects, they are both vehicles of tradition and defining of the way we live. This also became part of the conceptual structure in my work alongside the interest in engaging with people.

LS: This question of the engagement functions clearly as curatorship in your case. When you have been curating inside of your installations, many times you included artists from Venezuela and Latin America, and also close friends.

SC: The curatorial aspect has a lot to do with the layered nature of my work. On one level, the aesthetic exploration talks about a Western perspective on Latin American cultures: I started working with a bright, colorful palette, and referencing a tradition that hasn’t been submitted to the discourse of Art History. Below,



Sol Calero, *Casa de Cambio*, 2016. Art Basel Statements, Basel. Installation view.
 Courtesy of the artist and Laura Bartlett Gallery, London.
 Photo by Andrea Rossetti.

there are many deeper levels that address the political implications of that. This is reinforced by the access to other voices, other artists' works dealing with issues of identity, racism, or the consequences of colonialism in today's globalized world, which are also part of my work because I have experienced them in the past, as a citizen and as a member of the contemporary art world.

Now that I have a platform of visibility, after playing within the rules and conventions that the art world imposes, including other artists' voices is a way for me to make artwork more inclusive and complex, instead of perpetuating a system that I have experienced as classist and exclusive.

LS: Your projects are extremely visual. At the same time you challenge the hegemony of sight by incorporating all the other senses, like for instance with the inclusion of plants and fruits, which underlines the aspects of your installations that deal with the exotic. Indeed, the beginnings of cultural collections in Europe in the modern period started

with practices of extraction from Latin America and Africa, following the same general logic that characterized colonialism. These early collections built the idea of the exotic itself. This extraction activity happened as well in many avant-garde movements. The challenge of the construction of the exotic is a central subject in your practice. You are approaching this idea generating a critical discussion on where it comes from. What place does that tradition have in the background of your practice?

SC: The way I started working with the idea of the "exotic" came from the vision of the "other" towards what is Latin American art. Because one still has the idea of Latin America like this pool where everything is the same, when every culture and country is actually very different. We have the same perception of Africa, for example, and we often still encounter ideas like "the new African art," the new "Latin American art." But the big question for me was: "What is Latin American art?," because after living and studying in Europe for a long time, I became worried about having the same perception about Latin America. This is why I



Sol Calero, *Bienvenidos a Nuevo Estilo*, 2014. Installation view, Laura Bartlett Gallery. Courtesy of the artist and Laura Bartlett Gallery, London. Photo by Andy Keate.

started from zero, and I decided to educate myself about this subject and about my own identity. I started learning about Latin American art and I found many interesting threads that guided me towards the projects I've been doing. And in relation to what you mentioned about the cultural collections from Europe, I found very interesting how there was this dynamic during Modernism where artists from Latin America and Europe were constantly exchanging cultural ideas, which became the references to their work. For example, the references to pre-Columbian art from European artists, like the Albers did. One will encounter Anni Albers' work when studying the Bauhaus school. But it was later when I started my research on Latin American art that I found out that Anni and her husband Josef Albers had an extensive collection of pre-Columbian objects that helped them explore the relationships between cultures and that became very important for the development of their work. When Anni published her book *On Weaving*¹ in 1965, she dedicated it and paid tribute to "my great teachers, the weavers of ancient Peru."

EG: I'd like to talk to the spaces you create, from the point of view of architecture. Coming from painting, textiles, and objects, you decided to act clearly at the level of architecture and even at the level of the institution-making, founding a space such as Kinderhook and Caracas, as we already mentioned. It is a change of scale, and it expresses a clear intention of becoming more inclusive to design a larger "picture" and to make it accessible...can you speak about this relationship between architecture and exhibition-making?

SC: Yes, this relation gradually grew on me from running a project space, where we had to think of ways of displaying things, ideas, or structures. Since our space is so small, we started pushing the artists to work on their concepts and translating them to the whole space with immersive installations. Showing small objects didn't make much sense. So we were producing architecture for showcasing an idea. Architecture became a conceptual aspect of the work. When I start my projects, I often do this exercise and think about what could be a social space that I can recreate in the exhibition in order for something to happen, and that's when you see the hair salon (*Bienvenidos a Nuevo Estilo*, Laura Bartlett Gallery, London, 2014), *The Internet Café* (Frieze Art Fair, 2014), the school (*La Escuela del Sur*, Studio Voltaire, London, 2015), the currency exchange bureau (*Casa de Cambio*, Art Basel, 2016), the sauna (*La Sauna Caliente*, Kunsthau Bregenz, 2016), etc. I started referencing social places, and I worked from this pre-existing form to develop the show.

I also became more and more interested in Caribbean architecture, because in that kind of construction one sees a very beautiful overlap of cultures—the colonial and Spanish architecture mixed with the colors of the Caribbean.

LS: For instance, we could think of the project *Inside The Archive of Oswaldo Lares: Music Across Venezuela, 1969-1989*, a collaboration between Guillermo Lares and Laura Jordan with Kinderhook & Caracas, for which you built a piece of architecture to host their father's collection of music and sound recordings he had made across Venezuela. It connects very well with *Salsa* or *La Escuela Del Sur*.

EG: All your projects articulate in different ways your interest in the ideas of the exotic and hospi-

tality. And here, your approach to architecture clearly emerges: they take place in three completely different kinds of spaces (your own project room, a contemporary art institution, and a dance school), and your intervention is always meant to transform the atmosphere by acting on the design or even by searching for diverse audiences.

SC: The archive is one of my favorite projects. It was very collaborative in many ways, and this is a good example of how we combined our way of working with Kinderhook & Caracas with the visual identity of my work. We needed to find the best way to present an archive that was easy to access for the public and that could visually represent the identity of the archive itself. This is why we selected my aesthetics mixed with Guillermo's and Laura's ideas. Creating a tropical patio would immediately transport you to the archive.

Oswaldo is a Venezuelan architect who dedicated his life to trying to collect the musical identity of Venezuela. He spent decades documenting different forms of musical expression across the country, creating one of the most complete music and folk archives of Venezuela. He is one of the only people in Venezuela who did this kind of research, which is really amazing because he was thinking of the importance for the future generations to know how the country used to be. Actually, some of these traditions or instruments, for example, don't exist anymore, which is very sad. In 1974, he founded a group called *Convencuella* to spread the music and traditional and popular dances of the country. Among other offerings, his most important is perhaps the donation of all the original audio recordings done between 1969 and 1977, including all of his radio programs, to The National Library in Caracas. In 2002, he started a foundation called *Fundalares* to begin the activity of digitizing this material. In the show we had a few tablets where you could listen to the music and sound archive by periods, and we displayed a wallpaper designed and printed with all the covers of each record, together with photos and images from the archive collection.

LS: This is very interesting if one is thinking in terms of politics of the archive and policies of archival heritage: who has access to heritage, what is a public good, and who produces the narrative of the archive through the different techniques of presentation.

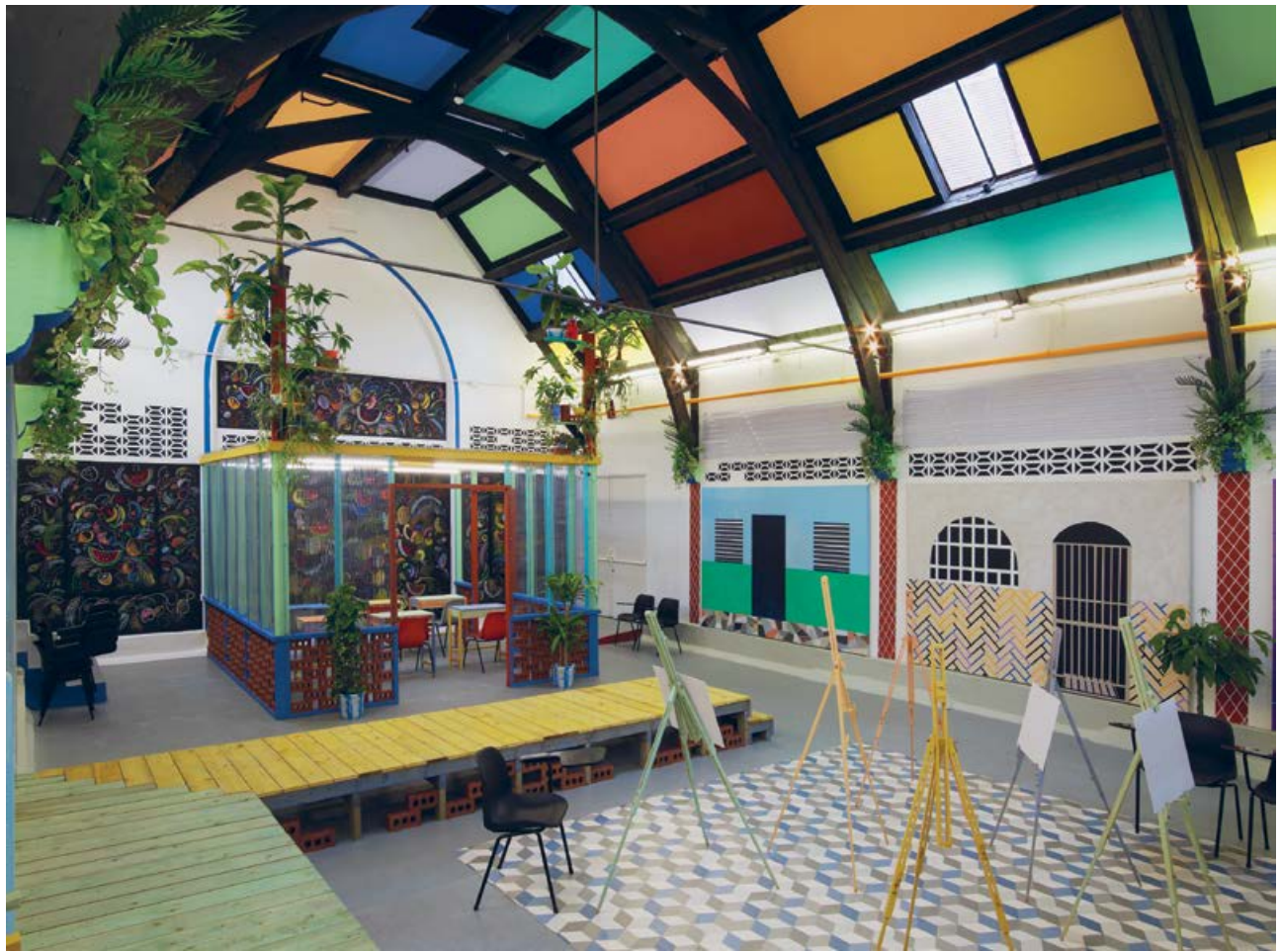


Sol Calero, *Salsa*, 2014. Installation view, Gillmeier Rech, Berlin. Courtesy of the artist and Laura Bartlett Gallery, London. Photo by Hans-Georg Gaul



Sol Calero, *Salsa*, 2014. Installation view, Gillmeier Rech, Berlin. Courtesy of the artist and Laura Bartlett Gallery, London. Photo by Hans-Georg Gaul

SC: Yes, you are right. It's very interesting and a very difficult job. But one thing that I would like to add is that even though it was a lot of work, the archive project opened a new vision for our space. We had that exhibition running for three months and had a great response from the public. We thought we really wanted



Sol Calero, *La escuela del Sur*, 2015. Installation view, Studio Voltaire, London. Courtesy of the artist and Laura Bartlett Gallery, London. Photo by Andy Keate.

to start working more in this way and to build projects not necessarily related to contemporary art. It achieved another type of audience; every week there were people coming, sitting down, and listening to the archive for hours while Guillermo and Laura watched the space. So, after this exhibition we wanted to start working with long-term ideas, and this how *Conglomerate* was born.

EG: And in the design of the exhibition, or through the program, did you use any form to activate, facilitate or “translate” the archive? One can say that at some point architecture is not enough anymore, and one needs to bring something else.

SC: We had a program, and we organized some parallel events and talks: a night with Venezuelan musicians, a listening session, a panel discussion, and a visit to the exhibition with Oswaldo and other guests. Another example of this, in my personal projects, is *La Escuela del Sur*, which I did at Studio Voltaire in Lon-

don. With this project, we had a program for the duration of the show. We organized a series of lectures with artists and curators on issues surrounding the cultural appropriation of Latin American art and its reception in Europe. We also had kids from the neighborhood coming two times per week after school to have painting lessons. It was really great to see the space activated during the whole duration of the show.

EG: How did you conceive the space?

SC: I went to Los Roques, a Caribbean archipelago in Venezuela, where I saw this architecture, which actually is the reference that I was using in other projects. I was in the “cathedral of Caribbean architecture,” so I decided to create a space that makes you feel immediately that you are suddenly in the middle of a different place that is not London. That’s also an important thing: the spatial translation. The space can take you to another part of the world—or at least the feeling of it—and create a Caribbean environment in order to



Sol Calero, *La escuela del Sur*, 2015. Installation view, Studio Voltaire, London. Courtesy of the artist and Laura Bartlett Gallery, London. Photo by Andy Keate.

learn about Latin America. That was in a sense a very simple idea, and by learning in a school, I created this program that you could learn from the perspective of a Latin American artist and British curators. So that's why I decided not only to activate it, but also to create this tool with this idea: it's just time to sit down and learn about these things.

EG: I find interesting the different ways in which your idea of painting as a “tool” is articulated. Can you speak more about that?

SC: Yes, together with the classes that the kids after school were going to learn how to paint. They were painting all the references that I had provided in the show. The paintings that they were doing were actually Caribbean beaches. In the way I work, paintings in my shows become decorative elements of the space. The idea—like in *Salsa* and in most of the shows I do—is that you don't know if the painting should work as a painting or if it's just decoration. In *Salsa*, it was even more exag-

gerated because the paintings were really over the top, and I think that people who came to the school didn't even notice that there were artworks in the space.

Formally speaking, the figurative aspect of the painting is there because I create these iconic elements to support an idea that I want to project, in a bi-dimensional way. I come from abstract painting, and after all, when you are in the creative process, everything is so abstract that wherever the concept of the painting comes from doesn't matter. In that point is when you are completely free, because it is about color and shape... Painting is the most amazing thing and the most difficult, too. And I feel it doesn't matter how much I develop the way I think—the way I approach art—painting is going to be getting hopefully better.

LS: One of the aspects we are addressing in *Spaces of Anticipation* deals with how to challenge history writing. In your case, one of the ways you have worked with it is through oral histories on one hand, but also music, like in the case of *Salsa*,



Sol Calero, *La escuela del Sur*, 2015. Installation view, Studio Voltaire, London. Courtesy of the artist and Laura Bartlett Gallery, London. Photo by Andy Keate.

which works as a historical device within the core of your research. Rewriting history not with the text itself, but with the movements of the body and the strata of the music. In your project *Salsa*, as well as in the archive we have already spoken about, music plays a key role.

SC: With this project, the idea was to start a project aside of the exhibition space. I was in my studio listening to a song of Rubén Blades—who I’ve danced and listened to since I was a kid—and I realized that the lyrics are very sad, talking about the situation of the Latin immigrants in New York. Rubén Blades invented the term in New York City, together with Fania All Stars. They were mixing mixed mambo, cha-cha-chá, and different rhythms from Latin American immigrants who had moved to the USA to have a better life. Music was so important for the identity of the whole Latin community abroad, in the sense of how one creates something that is done outside of the place of origin. Before Rubén Blades joined Fania, his songs were about folklore. Later, he started addressing social issues in his lyrics, which was very important because then one could reach people. That’s the clue for my work: through a welcoming party sound, one can tell people about very serious things. That’s what I want to do when I work in this way.

There is so little that has been written from the perspective of the artist in Latin America. When information is limited, you have to look towards other points of reference, like music, which is a very accessible subject in culture in general.

EG: Music encapsulates the coming together of high and low culture. Coming back to *Salsa*, the main space where it was taking place was...

SC: A Salsa school run by German instructors. In that sense, the project was also reflecting on how Latino culture is approached from the eye of a German person—or just another culture. And not necessarily from a negative position: people who are fascinated by the other culture and start acting alike, translating elements from it: the clichés of one culture, absorbed by another culture, interiorized and re-enacted. That’s quite something.

LS: Performing the Latin, so to say. For instance, looking at the tension between avant-garde and popular culture. Thinking of some of your sources, it made me think of process of “autoconstrucción” in different parts of Latin America, which is present in your installations as well.

SC: That’s very interesting, because it’s very problematic. When you are working with identities, there are all these aspects that fall onto a darker side. I’m always trying not to get there. For me, the idea of working together still remains the most effective. If I’m going to work with a Salsa school in Germany and be critical about it, I have to work side by side with them in all honesty. In fact, there was a Salsa class on the opening night, and I was very surprised at how all these people from the art scene who attended couldn’t make it through the entry—they were completely afraid of the whole theme.

This goes to show that the very idea of inclusivity and the elements that I use and explore in my work are actually uncomfortable for people to be confronted with, in the conventions of the contemporary art world. The welcoming, festive appearance of my work is both a bridge for access, and a trigger for these kinds of reactions and relationships to take place. The point is precisely how that unveils constructions of class, identity, and culture.

Berlin, July 2016 – September 2017.

Notes

1 Anni Albers, *On Weaving* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Sol Calero was born in Caracas, Venezuela in 1982. She lives and works in Berlin, where she runs a project space alongside Christopher Kline, entitled Kinderhook & Caracas after their respective hometowns, and she is a member of the ongoing collaborative project Conglomerate TV. Calero studied at Universidad Complutense de Madrid and Universidad de La Laguna, Tenerife. She has been nominated for the Preis der Nationalgalerie in association with Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, and shortlisted for the Future Generation Art Prize. Her recent work has been included in the Folkestone Triennial, UK, and shown in solo exhibitions at Kunsthhaus Bregenz, Austria; Kunstpalais Erlangen, Erlangen; Dortmunder Kunstverein, Dortmund; Studio Voltaire, London; David Dale Gallery, Glasgow; SALTS, Basel; Frieze London; Laura Bartlett Gallery, London; Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf; Gillmeier Rech, Berlin; and The Taut And Tame at Luttenmeijer, Berlin. Sol Calero's work draws on the complex political and social histories behind the construction of Latin identity. The ambivalence that allows her work to approach highly problematic issues with a semblance of frivolity is exemplary of the way Calero works through, rather than against, the coded cultural vocabulary of the cliché.

Emanuele Guidi is a writer, curator and, since 2013, artistic director of ar/ge kunst, Kunstverein of Bolzano, where he carries on a program of productions exploring the reciprocal relationship between society and the expanded field of visual arts. His practice unfolds around exhibition-making and its slippages into other forms and formats of knowledge production and circulation (for more information: www.argekunst.it). Further recent exhibitions include *The Variational Status – Riccardo Giacconi* (FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, 2017); *Freizeyt, Ingrid Hora* (DAZ, Deutsches Architektur Zentrum, Berlin 2015-16). Edited publications include: *The Variational Status*, with R. Giacconi (Milan: Humboldt Books, 2017); *Negus*, with Invernemuto (Milan: Humboldt Books, 2014); *Rehearsing Collectivity – Choreography Beyond Dance* (Berlin: Argobooks, 2012) (with E. Basteri, E. Ricci); *Between Form and Movements* (Bologna: Galleria E. Astuni, 2012); *Urban Makers, Parallel Narratives of Grassroots Practices and Tensions*, (Berlin: bbooks, 2008). His texts and interviews have been published in various magazines and artists' publications.

Lorenzo Sandoval works at the intersection of artistic practice, curatorial processes, and spatial design. He holds a B.F.A and has a Masters in Photography, Art and Technology from the UPV (Valencia, Spain). He has exhibited in many venues internationally as well as attending international residencies in Denmark, Spain, Germany, Portugal, and Kenya. He received curatorial prizes such as Inéditos 2011, the Can Felipa Curatorial Prize, and the Noguera Blanchard Curatorial Challenge 2012. *Deep Surface* at L'Atelier-ksr and *Your Skin Is a Frozen Wave* at BDP Bür were his most recent solo shows in Berlin in 2016. He recently won the art prize "Generación 2017" presented in La Casa Encendida (Madrid) in 2017 and the production residency grant "V Beca DKV- Álvarez Margaride," which made possible his last solo show "Shadow Writing (Algorithm /Quipu)." He works on a regular basis with Savvy Contemporary, District Berlin, and Archive Kabinett as a spatial designer. Since 2015, he has been running the fictional institution "The Institute for Endotic Research" dealing with topics regarding reproductive labor. His recent research deals with computation and domesticity. He is preparing a project for Nottingham Contemporary related to the history of lace production, and a collaboration with Bisagra in Lima, Perú about Andean textiles and the technology of the Quipu-www.lorenzosandoval.net

A Former Jail, A Diagram, A Space for Openness: What Is to Be Done?

Interview with Justo Pastor Mellado, Chilean Curator and Critic Teobaldo Lagos Preller

When Justo Pastor Mellado assumed the position as the director of *Parque Cultural de Valparaíso*—a cultural center located in the building of a former jail—he thought about the transformation of what he calls the *diagram of a work of art* into specific practices for the interaction of the center with communities living beyond the limits of the territory.

The *Parque* was founded 2011 in the building of one of the former jails of Valparaíso, the most important Chilean port. By the beginning of the 20th century, it served as a place for the reclusion of anarchists. During Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, this building worked as a normal jail and operated as a center for the detention and torture of political prisoners. By the end of the 1990s, already nine years after the return of democracy, the jail was emptied by the authorities. The *normal* prisoners were transferred to other prisons, and then it was occupied by artists, self-organized cultural collectives, and relatives of the political prisoners, who turned the space into an autonomous venue for reflection about the immediate past and cultural activities.

The people in charge of the occupied cultural center sometimes had a conflictive but rather productive relationship with the municipality. After some time of activity, the local government approved the allocation of resources for going on with the project. A commission was formed by members of the local government and the occupiers.

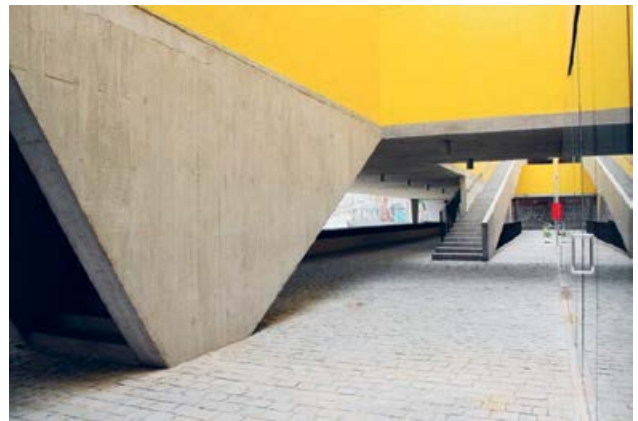
Santiago, 2010: the first right-wing government led by Sebastián Piñera since 1990 assumes power, integrating several actors from different political sectors into the field of culture. The new governmental cultural project sought social cohesion through some recovery of *republican* and national values. Luciano Cruz-Coke—an actor working in theatre and television—is called to be Minister of Culture, and he designates Justo Pastor

Mellado to be the director of the *Parque*. Pastor Mellado had the goal of re-negotiating the meanings of the space and reformulating the relationship with a broader community than the one already existing; individuals or groups living around the several hills, self-organized or not; active and passive members of the constellation running the Park. The transversal goal of this new integration dispositive would be an axis for consolidating Valparaíso as one of the most important cultural capitals of the South American country.

The Diagram: Levels of Interaction

The communities outside the boundaries seem then to emerge from a space of silence and evidence: their daily cultural practices, such as popular gastronomy, dances, and forms of interaction like community gardening, are sought and articulated as levels for interaction. Mellado understands these as organic elements of “an editorial procedure”: “Its duty? To put to work a diagram of work, which would be like an archaic drawing of a narrative energy inside of which furrow, in a certain moment, an irrevocable density fixes the character of a block of discursive events.”

The notion of the diagram, alluding to Foucault's *dispositif*², has a permanent presence in Mellado's work. Basically, this is understood by him as the way by which a schematic model of reality is presented through the work in an exhibition space and through a set of practices being involved. The complex displays new possibilities for filiation of works with other works as well as with social, cultural, and economic constellations forming possible levels of reading. The exhibition itself is consequently a position in another wider diagram, in which relationships with the outer world are woven and codified. A diagram is a model constellation by which the research-based curatorial practice focuses on fractures, junctions, and new filiations that challenge traditional historiography.



Parque Cultural de Valparaíso, HLPS Arquitectos, 2011

The resulting and unexpected narrative path is a ravine, a fissure in which new knowledges may become able to emerge. This is applied by Mellado according to the landscape and topography of Valparaíso. One example: *La Quebrada* (which in Chilean Spanish means *ravine*) is a metaphor used by the Chilean curator describing activities beyond the boundaries of the building, beyond the physical space where the institution is placed.

Chile is a country strongly related to agriculture, for which production even until the second half of 20th century was structured according to the logics of feudal capitalism: great landowner families occupied and exploited most of the land, forcing the poor to cultivate and take care of cattle in difficult terrains. The gardening practices developed by the community at the former jail—according to Mellado—functioned as a performative realization and reproduction of the practices coming from the margins. Thus, *La Quebrada* is represented by him as an imaginary crack in the soil where validating their right to own and manage the territory of their collective practice necessarily involved the recreation of an attempt to survive under the most difficult conditions of (self-)marginalization.

The Chilean curator calls this mode or attitude against and in the world a “Culture of the Ravine”:

“The inner space of the house is a place in which things will happen, things we don’t know yet but which we can foresee. What happens inside of the greenhouse is an alteration of the interior temperature. I would like the greenhouse to change the cultural temperature of the city. Then, the greenhouse turns into an emblem and a model for enunciation,”³ writes Mellado in the foundational essay of the Parque, *Escritura Funcionaria* (*Functionary Writing*).

Valparaíso, 2013: The former occupiers, supported by the local government, make a call to elect a new director. Mellado, paradoxically, has to participate and defend his position as director, reiterating his application through a letter of intent, in which he defends the idea that the park had the goal of “accelerating the formal imaginaries of the port (of Valparaíso)”: “One cultural center is a *dispositif* for the acceleration of the local imaginary. One *dispositif* is a compound of proceedings aimed to field research, a reading of the context, the design of answers, the setup of initiatives for participation.”⁴

The architectural gesture of appropriation, deconstruction, and reordering of the building according to a new relationship with the community was in dialogue with Mellado's approach to generating new spaces for the public sphere in interaction with a center devoted to professional arts in a place for community representation and reflection. The new architectural project by Jonathan Holmes, Martin Labbé, Carolina Portuguese, and Osvaldo Spichiger dropped walls down, opened corridors, and most importantly of all, maintained most corridors and walls that recall the original appearance of the austere, modest, and hermetic appearance of the building, literally opening it to the transit of people and producing an impression of a site of memory and an open, functional monument at the same time. The entrances, passages, walls, and empty spaces of the structure prove that in a former space for repression and occupation, some other levels of reading and interaction are possible.

Some artistic patterns of the collectivization of knowledge and practices became central to Mellado's project to develop new forms of interacting with the community: artistic residencies and *clinics*.⁵ In this sense, the *Parque* had two exhibition spaces showing works by international and national contemporary artists reflecting and creating in relationship to the historical density of the space and daily life in Valparaíso. These have continued to work as such beyond his period as a director.

A Letter of Defense

The diagram as conceived by Mellado was a conceptual framework based on the idea of "a theory of three functions," as he says in his letter of defense and intent presented to the *Oficina Comunitaria Funcional* (Functional Community Office), a board composed by the former occupiers in charge of validating or voting against his decisions as a director. The letter is in a way paradoxical: the director of a museum is obliged to participate in a contest after his vertical designation, and he has to defend himself against the accusations of elitism:

"I apply hereby for the position as a director of the *Parque Cultural de Valparaíso* because I have to complete the framing project for its opening. I have first had to formulate this framing, being sanctioned by the board of the OCF during 2011. Secondly, I have had to set a *dispositif* in order to transform into programs of action the hypothesis I have formulated during the elaboration of this framing. I have to insist that this is a

dispositif for the formal acceleration of the local imaginary that is formulated based on the realization of its three functions: the one of a cultural center, the function of an arts center and the function of a community center."⁶⁷

"This is not a center for proximity but a center for centralized expansion," he argues, "Its aim is to articulate actions for the strengthening of local practices so that they can be inscribed in an international context. There is no internal policy but an exterior fiction. The park is in Valparaíso but its projection is on the level of the neighborhood, the commune, the region, it's a center to be projected nationally and internationally. The collaborative role that the *Parque* is able to have has not been sufficiently considered, nor have the possibilities of interaction with other municipal cultural centers in the region."⁸

Spaces of Anticipation

Teobaldo Lagos Preller: We speak about spaces of anticipation when we find practices that, in a certain way, do not call for a classic notion of the public sphere (the space for discussion about current realities between the State and its citizens), but a dimension of expectation in public space: objects, subjects, and structures in which they work as such are parts of scenarios in which we recreate the present, maybe in order to imagine a new future. This is the way you did it at the *Parque*: the public sphere is one beyond the words, actions, and gestures and beyond a specific place, they are transcendent regarding the site and project themselves into an idea for future public cultural, arts and community centers. This constant drifting between past, present, and future is a sort of liquid essence of the contemporary, with whose surface we can play. Where and towards what do we anticipate?

Justo Pastor Mellado: The notion of anticipation is considered an affirmative approach, as a responsibility of "looking forward" and from there on to feel and serve as a vehicle for the desires of our neighbors. This is one form of anticipation that is open in its intentions and that opposes the anticipation that is an algorithm for control through which late capitalism may be able to operate and turn audiences and participation into commodities.

TLP: This confirms in some sort of way your interest for connecting the community that was for-

merly located around the prison and that is now a community and cultural center. This new connection with citizenship and the public sphere goes beyond any border and tries to develop a new future for daily life in the city. How does anticipation work in such an environment? Is it a form of expansion as we already know it, in the sense of generating dialectic dynamics?

JPM: All I produced as a proposal regarding my connection to the Parque Cultural de Valparaíso is referred to in the book *Escritura funcionaria (Functionary Writing)*, which I published 2013. I synthesized in this book everything I had to write in order to “justify” my policies regarding the opponents of the project, who saw how their margins, their limits for extortion were diminished, like in relationship to a kind of cultural authority who didn’t understand that it was about opening a center in which three partial functions collided: a center for the arts, a civic center and a cultural center. I have recently composed a project to be presented to the jury of the *Bienal Sur (Biennale for Contemporary Art from South America)*, because I think it’s an opportunity to show the validity of a *work diagram*. The title of the project is “¿Qué hacer?” (“What is to be done?”), and I can synthesize it in the following words: there are aesthetic effects of social and ritual practices that can be more consistent than much of the production of contemporary art. The title refers to Lenin’s work entitled *Chto delat (What Is To Be Done: Burning Questions of Our Movement)* published in 1902. This decision can be explained because of an existing need to fix a relationship of forced dependence between one text and one (our) way of proceeding. There is in this case a displacement of the medium, because the text itself is being replaced by a protocol for action. This protocol is translated into social and ritual procedures, which will be set in relationships by the considered *works*. These are not classical works. They have to be understood as the expansion of a diagram of forces that brings into movement an interpretation about the consolidation of a settlement, presenting in its beginnings a level of instability and de-sovereignization, which will be paid off via autonomous social practices. These practices would be mostly executed beyond the reach of action of the public powers. They mostly realize their basic urbanization works very late, under the pressure of an existing reality they cannot omit.

TLP: What kind of role does the Parque as an exhibition space play as a contact zone? What is the program, the path to be followed in order to

search for this integration between community and institution? I ask this because practices like agriculture, local dances, gastronomy, etc. have a certain immateriality that makes them not so easy to be apprehended and organized in a space for contemporary art and culture. What are the levels on which these practices can be organized?

JPM: First of all, the project didn’t contemplate any exhibitions as such. The designated practices produce gestural groups, sound recordings, and objectual displays emphasizing the visibility of their procedures. This project is very similar to what we have mounted at Parque Cultural de Valparaíso. Nevertheless, there are no exhibitions this time, but we instead make some procedures visible whose shaping introduces a space for determining aesthetic effects. The project thus conceives of realizing experiences of community kitchens around the fabricating and consuming of three key elements of the Valparaíso, *porteña diet of the poor*⁹, which means: pork sausage-making, preparing seaweed like the *cochayuyo*¹⁰, cooked, smoked crab (a sort of sea bacon), and the production of local spirits (through the maceration of different herbs). And secondly: the project also consists of the realization of encounters aimed to produce situations of live performances: *cueca porteña*¹¹ as a socially complex choreography, being displayed on a model of the *Décima Espinela* (a 10-line-stanza), and the connections to some local practices of contemporary dance. Third: the project contemplates the *mise-en-scène* of a sequence of little field research initiatives aimed at collecting the effects that are bonding practices of association as those mentioned above.

TLP: *Hospitality* is the notion recovered from Parmenides by Derrida in the decade of the 1980s in order to create a form for speaking about the recognition of the other as a *xenos*: the one coming from abroad, from the outside, speaking another *langue*. During his or her visit, the foreigner learns the language, s/he teaches and discusses the reality in which s/he’s been invited to live. He or she thus enriches the *agora* or the public sphere. We are experiencing a turn in Europe nowadays, in the sense that there is a transformation, a crisis of the borders as they had been defined up to now. I’m talking about the refugee crisis. The problem of borders is being reformulated in this sense. It creates an unexpected present time, and it has the effect of making evident the need for designing new programs of actions.

JPM: Oh, no... I would say that in Chile we are experiencing a crisis of hospitality. Everything began because of a crisis of political representation, for which the aftermath was an institutional crisis, which at the same time anticipated the legitimacy of the system installed during the post-dictatorship. But the whole thing began with a sort of agreement to which several actors and parties came and which made possible the (never-ending) transition to democracy. The problem of borders has been reformulated inside of the *inside* of the nation-state in a panicked, lethal way, freezing the discourse on possibility of recognizing multicultural rights that are at the same time related to some forms of territorial self-determination. Knowing full well that the state criminalizes the *Mapuche's*¹² demands, it's not possible to think about hospitality as such. One of the things that have surprised me the most about this whole situation is the burning of churches and chapels by a radicalized group. But, why radicalized? They simply *enact a symptom* of the spiritual genocide realized by the churches as an ideological and religious vehicle for exclusion. So, today, they burn chapels. There have been more than one hundred burned down during the past year. This is indicative of the rancor, which is far from being absorbed by any kind of hospitality. But these are not all borders. Strong forms of discrimination take place within the cities, among some cities and others, among regions; the unconscious of rurality is always present as a form of symbolic infrastructure of the forms for the production of subjectivity.

Challenges and Projections

TLP: In this sense: what challenges do you think those working within the cultural apparatus are facing in Chile?

JPM: A year ago, I published a text in an online Catalan magazine that I had written about two years ago and that had the title "Los ricos no necesitan Ministerio de Cultura" (The Rich Don't Need a Ministry of Culture Because They Can Transform their Private Tastes Directly into Public Policy).¹³ The problem of public policies is formulated to satisfy some constructed deficient elements according to a justification of the structure. Nowadays, the debate in Chile is centered in the formation of a "New Ministry" of Cultures, Arts, and Heritage. The resulting model is being discussed in the Parliament as a discursive corpus whose aim is to expose the prejudices of a political group that has brought it into being. This political group assumes cultural practice, on the one hand, as a new kind of agit-prop, offering a very varied menu of

compensation services, as happened with the former squatters of the center. From my point of view, this is not the kind of debate to hold, because it means to remain under the empire of desire of the bureaucrats. Because, on the other hand, an enormous amount of violence is exerted over the traditional institutions or entities that have historically sustained the material, visual, and *scriptural* narratives of our country.

TLP: What are the borders in such an environment, and what are the possibilities for translation and negotiation inside of them?

JPM: Just consider that I don't need to refer to Europe when we talk about xenophobia. It's just a matter of recovering habitual practices of the communities and non-guaranteed groups. There is a district close to Santiago in which the neighbors of an already installed settlement reject the arrival of new inhabitants because they will pollute what they have. Those coming are people of a "bad life" who are coming to disturb the life already recognized by traditional inhabitants who are, by the way, supported by the mayor. When I directed the *Parque*, the representatives of non-guaranteed groups on the board of the institution questioned my relevance because I was coming from the "outside" and hadn't "lived" through the phase of "occupation" of the area where the unaffected jail was placed. This fundamentalist vitalism is very common among the associates who live from state funding via very precarious forms of extortion. Finally, the squatters ended negotiations to get out of the former prison building in order to allow the renovation. But the district administration had to pay for their relocation and to assure the installation of the most radical group in another place. This is how the extortive business of subsidized radicalism works. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of a port such as Valparaiso claimed an original property that, in the end, promotes the exploitation of its own symbolic resources by their local agents.

TLP: Is there in any sense an expansion of the zone of autonomy of the cultural field towards spaces of the public?

JPM: My answer should be optimistic. It can't be. When I state *the rich do not need a ministry of culture*, I mean that structures of this kind are only being thought for the management of vulnerable settlements, so that I have suggested that the National Council for Culture should be an office depending on the Ministry of Interior. It's an insignificant joke. In Chile nowadays, the

cultural sector is an economic sector depending on the entertainment industry. But these economies do not respond to industrial criteria. Many of them do not go beyond an existence as handicraft in which subjective, completely pre-capitalist relationships suggest that there is a desire to be managed by a sort of providential state. This means that this state awaits resources that pay off the lack of ubiquity of artistic production and sustains artists via subsidies “democratically” shared. Nevertheless, the structure is not capable of distributing such resources and keeping artists in a position of autonomy. By the way, why are you asking me this question on the autonomy of the cultural field? There is no such autonomy. There are autonomous practices with a middle life expectancy within a cultural field tolerating them as part of its fiction of inclusivity.¹⁴

TLP: How can we talk about a new form of “we” in a context like contemporary Chile? It would be interesting to appeal in this sense to the unitarian and illustrated background of the shaping of a mononational state such as the Chile, which doesn’t conceive of any multicultural condition at all – neither within, as in the case of the relationship between the Chilean state and the Mapuche Nation; nor towards the outside (in terms of a deficient policy of reception for immigrants). You were talking with me the last time on Skype about the last theme, a “humanization of misery.”

JPM: Nevertheless, I would separate the problems you’re proposing. There is no *we*. I mean, there is no dependence on this *we* regarding the National State, which has been deprived of responsibilities by the political society during the first half of the 20th century. The *we* of the Chilean post-dictatorship has lost legitimacy. One American economist has said in an interview that Chile doesn’t take off because there are too many Chileans inside of the country.¹⁵ Just imagine what this comment produced. The guy explained it even better: Chile is an endogamic country that is not going to develop if it doesn’t tolerate the foreigner. The geographically isolated country has always experienced internal migrations: peasants without work and displaced people traveled to the *Norte Grande* to work in mining and saltpeter by the end of the 19th century. Miners and men from the countryside went down to the south when the great crisis of the ‘30s came. Then, in the central valley, the State assembled itself towards within, against the mobility of laborers. The international immigration of a cheap labor force is something relatively new and is not sufficiently considered in any policy at all.

TLP: Is there a transformation of the canons of legitimization of spaces like collecting, research on the arts, museum management, and heritage in Chile?

JPM: This is very incipient. Not because of the failure of the local system, but because of a decision not to have it. This is what happens with collections of classical Chilean painting, which only have a cultural value for the oligarchies. Nowadays, there are contemporary collectors, but they’re few. Knowing this, the need for a sort of private collecting with a “public function” is incomprehensible for many people. On the other hand, there is no consistent public collecting because of carelessness, which is coherent with the dominating concept of institutional management. Research is insufficient because the conditions for its reproduction inside of the universities is insufficient as well. It’s unbelievable. You just need to read the reviews of studies done during the past ten years. You can find many surprises. There is basically no historiographical work as such about Chilean art. What we can find there is taken on by very few universities, and the yearly production of individual units of historiographical work is not significant. We could say that some monographs and short-term studies are being done with the help of some funds for which you can apply (*laughing ironically*).

Notes

1 J.P. Mellado, “Propuesta para la dirección del Parque Cultural de Valparaíso,” July 15, 2015, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://justopastorvalparaiso.blogspot.de/2015/07/propuesta-de-justo-pastor-mellado-para.html>.

2 The notion of the *dispositif*, or *apparatus*, is a constant aspect of Michel Foucault’s work, and it’s related to the analysis of an apparatus, which focuses on how social and technological histories are connected to each other and determine the way we relate to each other as well. An interesting review of the genealogy of the concept has been done by Sverre Raffnsøe, Marius Gudmand-Høyer, Morten S. Thaning in “What is a dispositive?,” December 19, 2014, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://raffnsøe.com/?p=1226>.

3 J.P. Mellado, *Escritura Funcionaria* (Buenos Aires: Curatoría Forense, 2013), 45.

4 *Ibid.*, 54.

5 A *clinic* is an instance of interaction between artists in order to learn and improve a certain practice or personal artistic project through dynamics of exchange and collective learning.

6 Mellado, “Propuesta para la dirección del Parque Cultural de Valparaíso.”

7 The three functions mentioned by Mellado in the apologist document are, as he argues, based on the general cultural policies installed by the national government: “These are described in the chapter for culture in the Regional Strategy of Development 2020, in which it is said that Valparaíso has a regional identity based on its cultural, social and territorial diversity that projects the city onto the national and international scenario. [...] It is therefore a region with a natural, cultural and historical heritage congregating and satisfying the demands for habitability and life quality of its inhabitants and visitors, with a growing attractive touristic potential in terms of coasts, valleys and mountains, whose wealth is situated in the local diversity. Every province, commune and locality inside of the region has its own traditions, festivities, customs and modes of life that have to be protected, valued and potentiated as an attraction in terms of heritage and tourism. In this sense, it has to be highlighted that the region is the main area for tourism for national as well as foreign visitors [...] Another quality in terms of its identity are its religious festivities, an expression of living syncretism resulting from the installation of religious orders and the most popular ritual customs. They all constitute manifestations of meaningful contributions of the region, and they testify to the component of popular religiosity that characterizes the cultural identity of its inhabitants.”

Mellado takes as examples the arts centers “Centre d’art contemporain” in Grenoble and the “Centre d’art contemporain Le Creux de L’enfer” in Thiers. A cultural center is for him Matadero in Madrid. And a community center that is highlighted in his writings is “Centro Cultural Barrio Moravia” in Medellín, Colombia, a city that has become an example for implementing cultural policies for community life and urban development: “There experiences lead me to formulate plans for mediation and communication. I say this because some members of the board have asked themselves where did I take this proposal from and how far it can be understood as a certain kind of social innovation” (Ibid.)

8 Ibid.

9 The *porteña diet of the poor* is a metaphor conceived by Mellado in order to understand local gastronomy as one determined by economic, social, and cultural conditions. *Porteño* is the noun describing people from Valparaíso, the port.

10 *Cochayuyo*, or “bull kelp,” is the name of *Durvillaea antarctica*, a sort of seaweed located in the coasts of Chile and Peru, for which the date of its first consump-

tion is estimated to be about 14,000 years ago in the south of the country. The *cochayuyo* or *kollof* (as it’s named in the indigenous Mapuche language *Mapudungun*) is very commonly used in the Chilean kitchen, eaten fried or boiled.

11 The *cueca porteña* is one of the variations Chilean national dance *cueca*, which consists of a re-creation of the courting between cock and hen. The instruments involved are guitar, tambourine, and accordion. Very similar to flamenco in the use of the guitar, it comes from the *zamacueca*, a colonial dance from Peru influenced by Andean, Spanish, and African cultures.

12 The most important Indigenous First Nation, whose territory is composed of lands in Chile and Argentina. The Mapuche maintain a fight for resistance against the Chilean state, demanding ownership of ancestral lands that have been in many cases transferred and sold illegally to families and companies since the founding of this state since the beginning of the 19th century, contradicting in many cases even agreements existing in the time of the Spanish colonization. The Mapuche Land has been progressively reduced since Chilean independence, though an important section of the actual Chilean territory officially belonged to them. This reduction has transformed the indigenous people into poor farmers, and there is no recognition by the Chilean Constitution of their autonomy as a nation within the territory, as Chile is legally understood as only one nation-state, avoiding a discussion on cultural diversity according to international and contemporary standards, as has been done in countries like Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, or even Paraguay, for example, where one indigenous language, the *Guarani*, is as official as Spanish. Nowadays, there is an armed conflict of low intensity between the Chilean government and the Mapuche, with minimal perspectives for resolution.

13 J.P. Mellado, “Los ricos no necesitan Ministerio de Cultura,” *The Economy Journal*, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://www.theeconomyjournal.com/es/notices/2014/02/los-ricos-no-necesitan-ministerio-de-cultura-67058.php>.

14 Here, Mellado is talking about the Chilean Funds for Art and Culture, which is a system of application for funding created during the 1990s in order to democratize the production of culture in the country, allowing all possible actors to participate in it. The system is frequently criticized within the arts field because of its narrow criteria, which are mostly based on variables such as foreseeable impact (quantity of visitors/audience), projection of the image of the country nationally and abroad, and paternalism, preventing

creators from developing innovative and non-predictable strategies, fundamental for the dimension of experience and the support of creativity. There is also an implicit critique in Mellado's work of the character of these funds as *welfare assistance*, in the sense that they displace cultural functions traditionally related to the state and transfer them to vulnerable and precarious agents with low possibilities of representation.

15 The comment is related to a Venezuelan economist working at Harvard, Ricardo Hausmann. The quote "Why does Chile not grow? Because it's full of Chileans" was tweeted by Hausmann in order to promote the idea of a migratory and diverse society as a key to economic growth. Cf. "Economista de Harvard desata Polémica: '¿Por qué Chile no crece? Porque está lleno de chilenos,'" in *Russia Today*, Aug. 26, 2016, accessed November 4, 2016, <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/217151-economista-chile-polemica>

Justo Pastor Mellado (b. 1949) is an independent art critic and curator. After studying political philosophy, his work has focused on addressing relations of transference and filiation in contemporary art from Chile and Latin America. He directed the School of Art of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and the School of Visual Arts and Photography at the UNIACC University in Santiago, Chile. He has written several monographs on Chilean artists, including José Balmes, Gracia Barrios, Carlos Leppe, Patricia Israel, Eugenio Téllez, Arturo Duclós, Ingrid Wildi, Camilo Yáñez, Gonzalo Mezza, Mario Navarro, Eugenio Dittborn, and Gonzalo Díaz, among others.

He has published *La Novela Chilena del Grabado* (1998); *Textos estratégicos* (2001); *Textos de Batalla* (2009); *Escritura Funcionaria* (2013); *Escenas locales* (2015); and *Escritos de Sastre*. He has curated several exhibitions for the São Paulo, MERCOSUR (Porto Alegre), Venice and Lima Biennials. He was the conceptualizer and general editor of the First Chile Triennial 2008 – 2009. Between 2010 and 2014, he directed the Parque Cultural de Valparaíso. Currently, he is Director of the Centro de Estudios de Arte (CEdA) in Santiago, Chile.

Teobaldo Lagos Preller (1978) is based in Berlin as a writer and a Ph.D. Associate Researcher at the Research Group "Art, Globalization, Interculturality" at the Universitat de Barcelona, after finishing the M.A. in Interdisciplinary Latin American Studies

at the Freie Universität Berlin and the B.A. in Communication Sciences at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. His doctoral thesis is about the relationship about art and public sphere in Berlin after the fall of the Berlin Wall, focusing on the production of contact zones through art and exhibition practices. He's collaborated with the Freie Universität Berlin, the German Federal Foreign Office and the Jumex Foundation/Collection, as well as in art and theoretical projects as a curator and writer in Europe and Latin America.

Spaces of Anticipation (Symposium at EACC in May, 2014) curated by Lorenzo Sandoval

“This future does not have yet a name, but we are standing on its brink. If the last forty years have been marked by ‘posts’ (post-war, post-colonialism, postmodernism, post-communism), then today, at least, we seem to be in a period of anticipation—an era that museums of contemporary art can help us collectively to sense and understand.”
Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology*¹

“Ultimately, the idea of community leads to philosophies and ideologies marked by fear and impotence: the community as a disappointing experience and commitment to it as a failed requirement (something that is lacking). How does one move on from there?”
Marina Garcés, *Commitment*²

When the novel developed in modernity as a frequent format for narration, it imposed a distance between the storyteller and the audience. It was a spatial distance, but also a temporal one. In conjunction with its capacity to distribute stories, it also produced a separation between the individuals through the object book. It worked as an isolation device. Telling a story was no longer shared time, partly because it was not a shared space, where people came together joining their experiences gained by travelling or listening to others. The consequences of this very well-known proposition³ of Walter Benjamin could be easily translated from the book device to exhibition-making, as they were parallel in time in their emergence. The stories were detached from their usual ecosystems in social spaces as the artworks were taken out of their context to conform the modern experience of the exhibition and the visit to it: isolated individuals looking at artworks, navigating around supposedly in silence.⁴ With the rise of capitalism, orality suffered a loss of value with the radical separation of object and subject, as well as between subjects.

Certainly, there is an actual lack of public spaces (one would say common instead of public). Nowadays, there is an urgency for agoras, spaces of encounter, and critical discussion, beyond the participation models we have witnessed in (art) institutions. If in the last twenty years we have been witnessing a huge number of projects that promote participatory processes with no critical insight, it is only in the last decade that agents have appeared who are looking at the phenomena with an analytical gaze. As Markus Miessen pointed out in his by now long-time classic *The Nightmare of Participation*, participation has been used more as a promotional tool rather than as a critical process on its own.⁵ When we look at all the social movements that were popping up in different geographies around the world, we should be aware of how those groups arrange their actions, because that has a correlation to art institutions: it has an impact on how spaces are designed and the experience is reorganized. The question that emerges from there is how to rethink institutions in terms of cultures of assembly, to use Miessen’s expression, and the problematic that is by default inserted on the construction of any idea of the “we.” This lack of a politic arena seems to claim to reassemble the spaces of experience that Benjamin claimed had vanished, while adapting them to the current conditions. It brings forth the problem of how to restore the relations between subject and object and how to generate the experience of a common space.

It seems that we cannot elude the commitment towards building up the experience of the “we” though. A crucial question, a fundamental question is opening up: what is it that commits us to others and to what extent?⁶ If we think about how different agents are organized in the space, the terms are not only architectural but also choreographic. When one dives into the etymology of the word choreography, one can find that it is the writing of a chorus, of a plurality of voices, or tonalities or languages.⁷ The ongoing accelerated socioeconomic changes are reshaping the relations between individuals, and between them and objects. This rearrangement of relations has a reflection on how space is formulated and how bodies come together in art institutions. It is possible to trace how there is an embodiment of criticality, how the question about *performativity* and *context* appear again and again. This draws attention to the different positions of these situated agents, resulting in a cross-disciplinary praxis where the different roles permute. The focus is extensively expanded from the single artwork to the entirety of the elements that shape an exhibition,⁸ producing a deep reflection of how those elements operate and how they blur into each other: from the curators to the visitors and the critics, the architects and, obviously, the artists—just to mention a few—including the artworks and the literature, are all involved in the production of the space and its storytelling, which shapes the exhibition.

In recent years, some agents have been reflecting upon all these processes. In terms of storytelling and organizing, it is pertinent to mention the analysis made by Claire Bishop: “A more radical model of the museum is taking shape: more experimental, less architecturally determined, and offering a more politicized engagement with our historical moment. [...] They do not speak in the name of the one percent, but attempt to represent the interests and histories of those constituencies that are (or have been) marginalized, sidelined and oppressed. This doesn’t mean that they subordinate art to history in general, but that they mobilize the world of visual production to inspire the necessity of standing on the right side of history.”⁹ Though she writes about museums with collections, she presents a certain attitude that is traceable in other kinds of art institutions, too.

What is addressed in this project is the practice of some art institutions that reshape the experience of visiting an exhibition as a collective situation, where the orality is re-emerging as a critical tool. This moment of construction of the “we” offers a moment of anticipation, proposing another way to think and design the space, one with conditions that enable the exercise of a political imagination.

Lorenzo Sandoval, Berlin, March 2014.

Notes

1 Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology, or, What’s ‘Contemporary’ in Museums of Contemporary art?* (London: Koenig Books, 2013), 62.

2 Marina Garcés, *Commitment* (Barcelona: CCCB Breus, 2013).

3 Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller* (1936); *El narrador*, trans. Roberto Blatt (Madrid: Editorial Taurus, 1991).

4 As clearly described by Dorothea von Hantelmann: “Time is a vital factor here. Classical works of visual art tend to compress time in the object rather than manifesting it. But how can time be decompressed again in the exhibition? In late Renaissance and Baroque curiosity cabinets, it was often the prince himself who presented the objects to visitors. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century painting galleries were social conversation spaces. [...] The perception of art required the spoken word in order to become a social event. Such

conversation enriched the works not only with language but also with time. They linked the isolated work with temporal duration, repeated perception, and thought.” Dorothea von Hantelmann, “Notes on the Exhibition,” in *dOCUMENTA (13) The Book of Books* (Ostfildern: Hantje Cantz, 2012).

5 “Participation has become a radical chic, one that is en vogue with politicians who want to make sure that, rather than producing critical content, the tool itself becomes what is supposed to be read as criticality.” Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation: Cross-bench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality* (Berlin: Stenberg Press, 2010).

6 Marina Garcés, *Commitment*.

7 “Interview || Paz Rojo,” *escenas discursivas*, accessed February 15, 2018, <http://escenas-discursivas.tkh-generator.net/2011/04/interview-paz-rojo/#more-45>.

8 A very relevant example is the critic series initiated by Afterall Books on the subject called Exhibition Histories, where in each book they realize an extensive analysis of the exhibitions they include. See <http://www.afterall.org/books/exhibition.histories>.

9 Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology*, 6.

Spaces of Anticipation was organized in EACC, Castellón in 2014.

The contributors were: Markus Miessen, Federica Buetti, Santiago Cirugeda, DPR Barcelona, Mijo Miquel, and José Luis Pérez Pont.

The symposium was a first step for an exhibition curated with Emanuele Guidi, which never happened at the end because of the cuts of structural funding in the context of the Comunidad de Valencia. This unrealized exhibition was one of the multiple beginnings of this publication.

Earthscore Specularium

Luis Berríos-Negrón

19.Oct.2016, Copenhagen

Lorenzo Sandoval & Emanuele Guidi
Spaces of Anticipation

Dear Lorenzo and Emanuele,

Please find here a series of correspondences and images regarding Earthscore Specularium for your publication. Please see "addendum four" here included for more details about the installation.

So, as proposed...

...the core artwork of Earthscore Specularium was a shared accumulation of letters and scarfs, as an epistolary account, that served as notation and hypomnemata about the three months living inside the installation at the exhibition space.

We made these for, and with, the institution, curators, collaborators, public visitors, but more importantly, with our guests that stayed one or two nights with us at the installation at Färgfabriken. This method led us to accumulate some sixty letters/correspondences along with over thirty ink-drawn scarfs. The written letters are the evidence of our communication, back and forth. The scarfs were evidence of our other shared communication, as another more entangled form of notation done by practicing Threeing - a practice invented by Paul Ryan, who also invented its related notation Earthscore, both which we worked with for, and during [REDACTED].

The accumulation and externalisation of these memories (that's what we mean by multidimensional notation) depends less on the visual or the digital, and more on other sensations that deliver a shared collective experience about what accelerated climate change may be. This type of memory is, in no uncertain terms, the colonial matter itself that is embedded within the envelop of the term "greenhouse".

This term is currently the primary vehicle of exploration for works like the Specularium, as well as several others, most recently Collapsed Greenhouse at Undisciplinary Learning in District Berlin. They operate as preparations produced for conditioning unforeseen forms of knowledge and environment. These also occur as other variations, as Turtles, Flying Carpets, and Y-Tables, all as a body of work, dedicated to nurturing the instantiation of "social pedestals".

Sooo... then, please find here included the letters from the Specularium to curator Eva Wilson, to biologist and director of Bio Sciences at Jülich Forschungszentrum Ulrich Schurr, and to urban ecologist and Paul Ryan's life-long partner Jean Gardner. You will not only find fotos of one of their corresponding scarves, but also a contact sheet of a selection of the scarves made by other guests, a foto of the Earthscore Specularium by David Fischer, the original letter prospectus sent to Färgfabriken (addendum four), and a poster I made as general image of the Specularium.

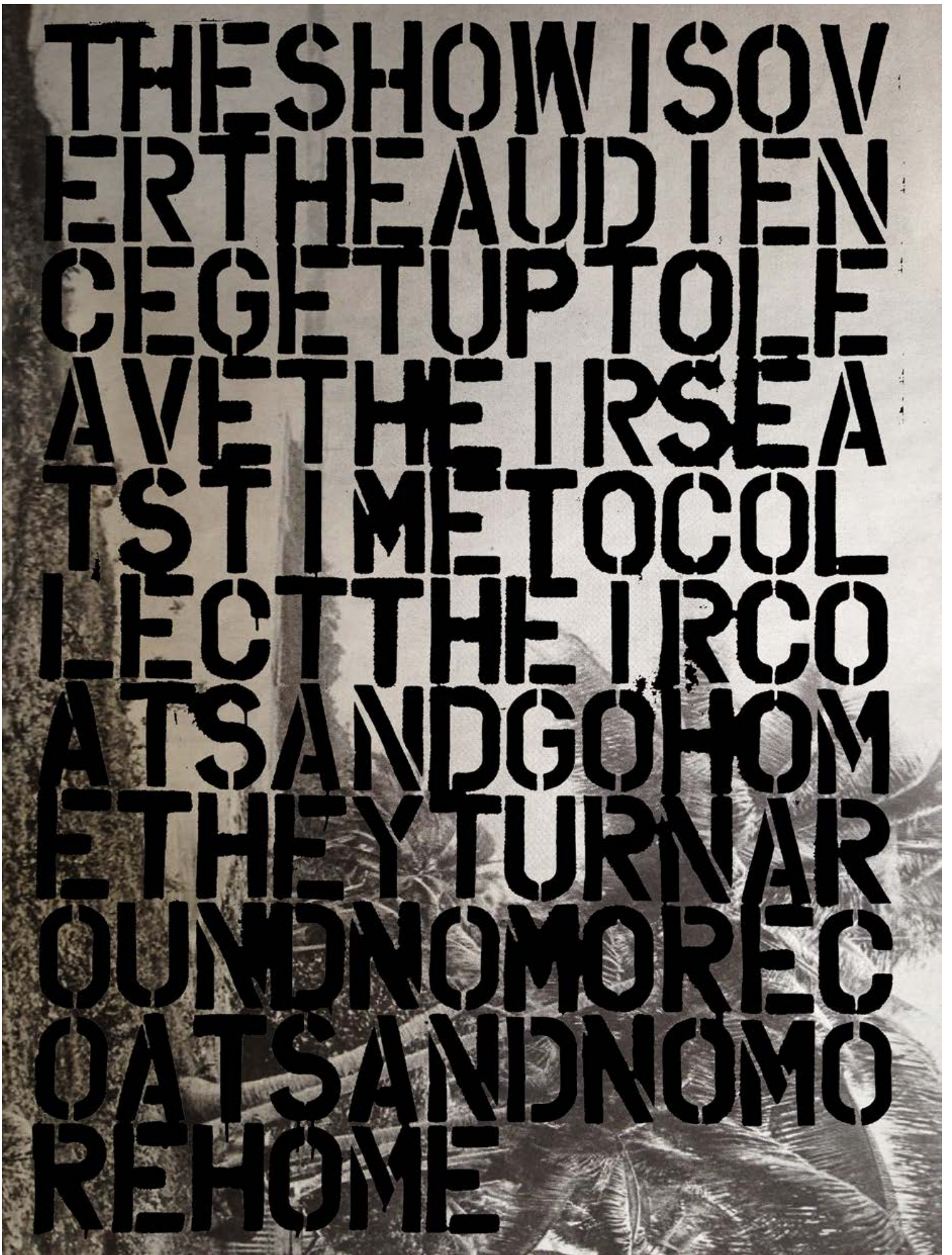
The poster took the form of a all-weather polyethylene poster and was exhibited as a component of the installation. Set over an old picture of my long-gone tropical home of Puerto Rico, it is derived from Christopher Wool's Untitled of 1991, later adapted by Félix González-Torres (as a collaboration with Wool created for Printed Matter at Dia Foundation in New York in 1993). The painting and poster are derived from a 1918 essay titled The Apocalypse of Our Time by the philosopher Vasily Rozanov that allegorised the upheaval of the Russian Revolution. The Situationist writer Raoul Vaneigem later adopted the passage, and now serves as a somewhat precise description of our period of neocolonial advance - of accelerated climate change and forced migration. "The show is over. The audience get up to leave their seats. Time to collect their coats and go home. They turn around. No more coats and no more home."

Ok, that's quite a bit, lets talk about it so to make the final layout together.

In touch.
Yours Sincerely,

Freia, María, Luis
(aka. Negrón-Berger Family)

Freia · María · Luis



THE SHOW IS OV
ERTHE AUDIEN
CEGET UP TOLE
AVE THEIRSEA
TSTIME TOCOL
LECTTHEIRCO
ATSANDGOHOM
ETHEYTURNAR
OUNDNOMOREC
OATSANDNOMO
REHOME



IMG_8201-Maja-2.jpg



IMG_8203-Maja-1.jpg



IMG_8204-Hakan-1.jpg



IMG_8205-Hakan-2.jpg



IMG_8206-Obert-1.jpg



IMG_8207-Obert-2.jpg



IMG_8209-Dombois-1.jpg



IMG_8210-Dombois-2.jpg



IMG_8212-Husberg-1.jpg



IMG_8213-Husberg-2.jpg



IMG_8214-Noshe-1.jpg



IMG_8215-Noshe-2.jpg



IMG_8216-Frichot-1.jpg



IMG_8217-Frichot-2.jpg



IMG_8218-Wilson-1.jpg



IMG_8219-Wilson-2.jpg



IMG_8221-Gardner-1.jpg



IMG_8222-Gardner-2.jpg



IMG_8224-Fischer-1.jpg



IMG_8225-Fischer-2.jpg



IMG_8226-Schurr-1.jpg



IMG_8228-Schurr-2.jpg



IMG_8229-Behzad-1.jpg



IMG_8230-Behzad-2.jpg



IMG_8231-Bonnevier-2.jpg



IMG_8232-Bonnevier-1.jpg



IMG_8234-Buckley-1.jpg



IMG_8235-Buckley-2.jpg



IMG_8237-Lantz-1.jpg



IMG_8238-Lantz-2.jpg

(This is addendum four, for public use, subject to change)

10.juni.2015, Berlin

Dear FÄRGFABRIKEN,

Yesterday's meeting with our collaborators has clarified most of the physical dimensions and general components.

Particularly, the discussions have strengthened the thought of what it ought to signify and display as our social pedestal, to think Paul's Earthscore. This means that:

Physically, it will be a loose 1:3 scale model of the volume of the Färgfabriken building as a miniature replica of an industrial greenhouse superstructure.

Figuratively, it will be a ~~figure~~ spectre. It will be an industrial ~~figure~~ of its ~~figure~~ self coming back to talk to us in present ~~figure~~

Formally, it embodies a reorientation towards solar and environmental coordinates. These are non-local and site-specific, not in perspective nor in regards to its projection, but a representation of our modern, retinal dysfunctions.

The way it gets to occur is by now concentrating on its technical materiality, structural layout, and ~~figure~~ life. These are needs for the opening of the exhibition for these are the aspects that will provide its temporal resolution, and start the core interrogatives we aim to provoke.

The rest - the mint, the parsley, the rosemary, the cilantro, guayabas, the parchas, the papayas, the plátanos, the hens, the dragons, the cocks, the tilapias, and tucunares, the plantwalls, the stream, the mess, the beds, the loving details - will come soon and during installation.

~~figure~~ we want to release any more information ~~figure~~

Earthscore Specularium is happening.

Thank you.

Freia, Maria, Luis
(aka, ~~figure~~)

(This is addendum fortyeight of Earthscore Specularium, for public use, subject to change)

8.Nov.2015, Stockholm

Eva Wilson
Curator
c/o Adam Gibbons
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] London-UK

Dear Eva,

We are very much looking fwd to seeing you and Adam.

As far as speaking dates... if you are flying out on Sunday evening, I suggest we have you speak then on Sunday 14:00 instead. We have been doing a kind of indoor picnic/tea (Swedes call "fika") that have been quite lovely. The turn out varies quite dramatically, between 8 and 50 people. But it is very nice regardless as it turns into quite a comfortable thing, like to day's with Hélène Frichot and Jonathan Metzger which was a super nice discussion with guests such as Elof Hellström from Cyklopen and Peter Lang from Mejan. The fika with queer scientist and architect Katarina Bonnier and family of five a couple weeks ago was particularly wonderful.

As far as the Specularium, we have pretty much everything you need, including towels. The one item that we ask to bring are house-shoes.

Sleeping arrangement is that you and Adam will have your own sleeping module, which is quite small but intimate, like a monastic cell.

As far as daily routines... we do not open the doors to the public unless we are comfortable doing so. The matter of being on display, particularly as a social pedestal, only takes place when activated by us, not by the institution, meaning that we do not operate on the opening hours... that said, we do often open usually after 12:00noon when we usually feel good and ready and Freia is up from her first nap. And, we do so because there are always a few people who are eager to come in, and we try not to be too despondent.

So, you can totally think through the momentary, domestic situation and perhaps give that an alternative dimension. Again, we are in a virtual machine that we think you of all people will appreciate, and we do not hinder any actions from our guests as long as they are not traumatic to us, Freia, nor to any of our non-human companions.

As far as all the equipment you mention for your performance HyperHyperHyper, all is available here, without exception, so just give Carla a heads-up on what you think you will be needing to prepare.

Ok.

With Loving Regards, Yours.

Freia, Maria, Luis
(aka. Negroni Family)

Freia · Maria · Luis





(This is addendum fourteen of Earthscore Specularium, for public use, subject to change)

9.october.2015, Stockholm

Prof. Jean Gardner
Urban Ecologist
[REDACTED]
New York, NY [REDACTED]

Dear Jean,

It has been almost a week since you left to return to New York... but your spirit is still here very present, along with Paul's, of course.

Just such a pleasure to have you stayed with us. As expected, we have had so many transformative conversations...

The first that comes to mind is the clarification about the photo of Paul in the boat (which we are embarrassed to see that in the feuilleton of the *ES* there are a couple of mistakes, about the time and location of Paul's passing, which we will correct in the next edition) about to sail with his crew to drop and lay the "pearl necklace" across the bottom of the Atlantic, from South Carolina to the Gibraltar. Somehow your description hit so hard that we felt as if we were on the boat too, dropping stones off board, eating dinners with fine china, upon the hard swaying of the seas, a chandelier swaying back and forth, battling the nausea of seasickness with the delight of a fine chablis.

Another is how much Paul's Earthscore has been part of your our processes and how his, and you own scholarship of Charles Peirce has also manifested independently in your processes, in *Cinematics* and more so importantly in studying *Geometries of Life*. These approaches seem to vastly expand Paul's intent on the intersections between the autographic and the allographic (between self-referential and collectively reproduced work), intersections that so deeply resonate with all that we have been learning from you both - perhaps the deepest value operating here at the Specularium.

Lastly but not least, of course, is how you brought in and clarified the importance of a fourth figure in the precesses of Threeing, which was an obscure aspect to us, now opening brand new points of entry into the Relational Circuit.

And, so, as we continue to take Paul's chreod, of treating our work as if life depended on it, we send our deepest Love and Gratitude for your unending source of Energy, which we constantly turn to, no matter where you are.

Your scarf will be accompanied with a hard-copy of this letter, so Please let us know how it feels to see it again.

In touch, narrowcasting from the Earthscore Specularium,

Yours,

Freia, Maria, Luis
(aka. Negrón-Tansler Family)

Freia · Maria · Luis

(This is addendum thirtyone of Earthscore Specularium, for public use, subject to change)

19.Oct.2015, Stockholm

Dr.Prof. Ulrich Schurr
Biologist
Director of Institute for Bio & Geo-Sciences
Forschungszentrum Jülich
[REDACTED] Jülich DE

Dear Uli,

It was just such a precious time to have you and Petra visit with us at the Specularium.

Your warmth and care for us and Freia was so deeply appreciated, not to mention all the excellent conversations we had, with all the new references and ideas you offered.

It was particularly interesting to hear, from the bizarre case of Fordlandia in Brasil, to Bill Bryson's "history of home" which gives such a potent account of Crystal Palace which is of such relevance to the research through E.S.. But, more so prescient were our discussions about colonial transplantation and breeding, explaining to us the critical differences between phenotype and genotype, particularly in regards to what the former provides as material to go beyond "the toolbox" of genetic data. And, most importantly, the way you describe that the contemporary processes of classification and modelling are not quite providing the much needed languages and interconnections between broader networks of data, emerging practices, and people.

As we discussed, languages and interconnections, are critical to what we hope the Specularium to reflect. We hope that by looking at what Paul Ryan was attempting with Earthscore we can not only encourage alternative forms of notation that do not rely on visual privilege or geographical flattening for the understanding of the complexities of climate change, notation itself, as Paul's water ripple videos to present topological forms, as formats of unexplored environmental forms.

Of course, the languages of environmental form are of key consequence, as we cannot see climate change, but we can also speak, after your visit, that instead of a superstructure, that E.S. is more of a Site-Specific Greenhouse Parastructure as a building that is part of that contingent discourse, for challenging the status quo on the agricultural technology that is to become the overwhelming aspect of our landscapes and atmospheres. We must address it all to provide our most comprehensive approach to a future survival that hinges on industrial greenhouses.

We so hope that we can continue our conversation for years to come, and again, we are so beyond happy that you and Petra took time off your very very busy schedule to be here and inform the Specularium.

Most Sincerely,

Freia, Maria, Luis
(aka. Negrón-Larrea Family)

Freia · Maria · Luis





Luis Berríos-Negrón (Puerto Rico, 1971) is an artist exploring the environmental forms of sculptural and spatial display shaped by the unforeseen social forces of global warming. His most recent exhibitions and installations were 'Impasse Finesse Neverness' (Museum of Ethnography and Archeology of Bahia, 2017), 'Collapsed Greenhouse' at Undisciplinary Learning (District, Berlin, 2016), and 'Earthscore Specularium' (Färgfabriken Konsthall, Stockholm, 2015). Recent commissions include the 3rd Biennial of Art of Bahia (2014), co-representing Germany in the São Paulo International Biennial for Architecture (2013), "Future Archive" (Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, 2012), and as core-collaborator to Paul Ryan's "Threeing" project at Documenta13. Berríos-Negrón lives and works between Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Berlin.

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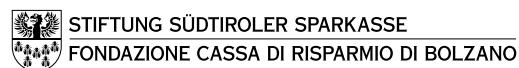
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