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PERFORMING THE EXHIBITION



Katja Schenker, *moll*, 2011, Kunstverein Konstanz. Photograph by Stefan Rohner. Courtesy of the artist.

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PERFORMING THE EXHIBITION: ON EXHIBITION PRACTICES BETWEEN PERFORMANCE AND INSTALLATION.

Intro

This issue of the journal brings together contributions from an international group of art practitioners, curators and theorists exploring the relationship between performance and installation in the context of the contemporary art exhibition. Key amongst the concerns of the journal is the possibility for rethinking the static model of exhibition and exploring the way in which 'performative' approaches, adopted by artists and curators alike, can reframe the exhibition as an environment undergoing formal or relational transformation.

With reference to history, theory and examples of contemporary projects, these texts reflect upon the way that diverse artistic and curatorial practices can be seen addressing several linked questions: If allowed to transform and evolve its surroundings, how might performance re-program the exhibition format? To what extent do experiments between performance and installation describe a new role for exhibition publics? With a renewed focus on the participatory and process-based possibilities of the exhibition, to what extent has curating itself become a performative activity?

PERFORM THE SPACE: PERFORMANCE ART (RE) CONQUERS THE EXHIBITION SPACE.

Sibylle Omlin



Katja Schenker, *moll*, 2011, Kunstverein Konstanz. Photograph by Stefan Rohner. Courtesy of the artist.

The practice of the installation in performance art has become increasingly interesting for contemporary art over the past two decades, especially the dovetailing of performance and installation. Diverse curatorial formats have been explored in this context in art spaces, festivals, museums and public spaces. With museums such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York,¹ MOCA in Los Angeles² and the Migros Museum in Zurich³ addressing performance art, the recording of the performance as space and object, apart from the moment of the live event, has become a specific theme.

As a form of activity and physical action, performance art is not only closely connected to the pictorial invention of visual art and theatrical performance but also to music, dance, spoken word and process-oriented art.⁴ New performance-specific forms such as interactions in public space, performative installations in alternative spaces and long-duration performances increasingly demand new formats in the exhibition world.

Theoretical reflection on the transformation of performance into spatial installation and vice versa is, however, still available only in its incipient stages. That is why this essay focuses on research into this

¹ Marina Abramovic, *The Artist Is Present*, Museum of Modern Art, 14 March–31 May 2010. In this context the artist showed her longest duration performance conceived for a museum context.

² See Paul Schimmel's exhibitions since 1998, such as *Out of Actions: Between Performance and Object, 1949–1979*, conceived and curated by Paul Schimmel for MOCA Los Angeles in 1998.

³ *While Bodies Get Mirrored: An Exhibition about Movement, Formalism and Space*, 6 March 2010–30 May 2010; Christoph Schlingensief: *Querverstümmelung*, 3 November 2007–3 February 2008, among others.

⁴ See Sibylle Omlin ed., *Performativ! Performance-Künste in der Schweiz; ein Reader* Pro Helvetia, Zurich, 2004.

transformation, in theory and in artistic practice. I take performance as the point of departure for an exhibition apparatus that oscillates between event/performance and installation in the exhibition context and contains temporal and spatial aspects. Thus it revolves less around the symbiosis of action, event and installation in the exhibition space than around the question of transformation and temporal duration of exhibition formats and the artistic works involved.

How can something emerge from the performance, from the event or the action, from the material, that is more enduring than a photograph of a performance? How is a performance transformed into an installation and how can it leave behind spatial relationships?

I will start from the following theses/observations:

The integration of objects or materials into a performance is already structured in a way that the object can lead its own life even apart from the performance.

1. The installation as a form of thematic or political event tied to space lends itself to the spatial expansion of performance. The transformation or metamorphose of the performance plays an especially crucial role here.

2. The extent of the performativity of an installation in relation to its appearance and intensity cannot be completely predictable and controllable (cf. especially the concepts of installation of Thomas Hirschhorn (b. 1957) and Christoph Schlingensiefel (1960-2010)). This turns the installation into an appropriate artistic medium for transforming the performance into spatial presence and duration.

3. The concept of *installaction*, coined by the Swiss performers Valerian Maly (b. 1959) and Klara Schilliger (b. 1953), is also interesting in this context. The Maly/Schilliger duo locates its work above all in the space between performance and installation, since their performances and installations are often, but not always, site-specific interventions, which are preceded by research related to the project. Also still powerful are the concepts of "living sculpture" (used by the British artists Gilbert & George) and of "performative sculpture", used by Victorine Müller (b. 1961), which also applies to exhibitions of relicts and performance materials in the context of space.

Speech Act

The central theory concealed behind the performance action is speech act theory, which attributes to every element of the performance in its execution the performative character that is in fact the essence of an authentic execution of performance.⁵ In her interpretation of this theory, Judith Butler⁶ later emphasised that the performative character of a linguistic action, or any action, can only be determined from the constantly renewed execution of that action. Some people today, such as Philip Auslander, are considering whether it might not be the case that performance is always already structured towards deferred action – that is, planned and executed for a document or fixing visual medium.⁷ The narration of the event, the discourse about it, also represents an essential component of the artistic performance. Over the past ten years in the history of contemporary performance art, there has thus been a shift in interest away from the body of the performer to the relational space and context of the performance. This concern with the space intended for the performance – stage, public space, exhibition format – calls for new forms in the evolution of performance, for example, the environment or the action, politically committed projects, or art actions in social space.

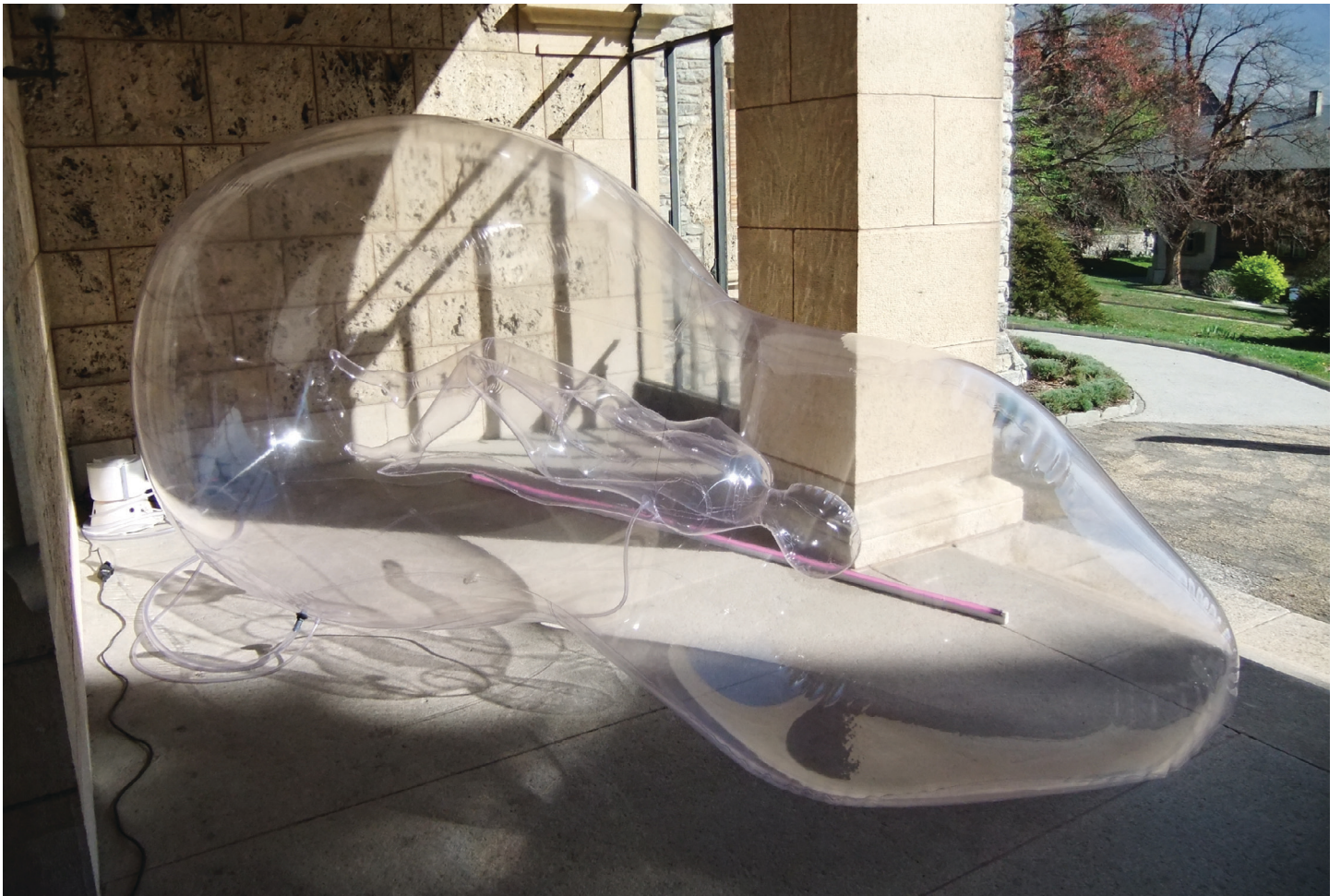
The concepts of the event and the installation have become central to the development of contemporary performance art. Let us look somewhat more intently at the second term: the installation.

The installation stands for a construction of a space within the space of art that is defined by the artist. The performance stands for the enlivening, inhabiting and occupation of this space by the artist's body. Both forms of art began during the period of political upheaval

5
J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1962.

6
Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, Routledge, London-New York, 1997.

7
Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Routledge, London-New York, 1999, esp. 'Against Ontology', pp. 38-45.



Victorine Müller, *Erdling*, 2011, Château Mercier, Sierre. Courtesy of the artist.

around 1968, when conventions and institutions that had previously been considered valid were called into question.

Both the installation and the performance are no longer satisfied with the accustomed space for art – the museum or exhibition space. Both forms of art tend to expand into public space, to inhabit a space of social intervention. Both performance and installation have thus extended and scrutinised the context of art. The position of the beholder/viewer has also been affected. The beholder in the museum, walking along the walls and looking at paintings or photographs, becomes a *flâneur* moving freely within the space of the installation or performance, seeking her or his own perspective and standpoint. The relationship between the work and the viewer in art forms based on the installation and performance is conceived as part of space in the life-world.

The Transformation of the Installation

The term *installation* – first used by Dan Flavin in 1967 for a work with fluorescent lights – already referred at that time to this space of the lifeworld that became relevant for artistic questions. Dan Flavin integrated everyday fluorescent lights, electrical lighting, electrical wiring and installation elements from building technology into his artistic works. The context of the lifeworld and everyday life lend a corresponding significance to the term *installation*. Flavin used the term because *environment* sounded too sociological to him.⁸ Using everyday elements such as electrical lighting for simple perceptions of space was, in his eyes, a radically simple artistic activity. This simplicity and radicalness subsequently became significant both for installation and performance art. The dramatic quality associated with such aesthetic questions is also central to both media. The term *installation* was also submitted to a form of deconstruction in the works of Gordon Matta-Clark – his *anarchitectures* were direct interventions in abandoned buildings and industrial sites – although the deconstructing gesture left something transformed behind. Transformation is thus inherent in both contexts – performance and installation.

"What is created under the term *installation* are not so much works as models of their possibilities." With this observation, Juliane Rebentisch legitimises, in her *Ästhetik der Installation*, an indeterminacy factor that is fundamental to installation art; the continual transgression of genre boundaries and definitions can be seen as the main characteristic of this artistic phenomena. According to Rebentisch, the installation fundamentally calls into question the given context of aesthetic expectations.⁹

The nature of the concretisation at work in the case of an installation is characterised by the process-based character of reception and its uniqueness in relation to the body of the active observer. That means a primary subjectivisation of aesthetic reflection. In that context, installation art certainly has similarities to other time-related and performative art forms, which can be included under the keywords action, happening, performance and body art. As Paul Schimmel demonstrated in his influential 1998 study, these art forms imply a changed understanding of the perceiving audience.¹⁰ The viewer is no longer the passive recipient of content represented by artistic media.¹¹ On the contrary, the reactions of the viewer are an integral component of performative forms of art, just like the actions of the artist-protagonist and the props used.

These reactions are activities related to the presence of the body, and they drive the event and thus create discursive situations that can be experienced in time and as real. Such works of art do not lay claim to the audience's contemplative reflection and perception but rather involve "the whole physical polysensuality and the viewer's active relationships that are constitutive of the work."¹²

If we compare the viewer's involvement in time-related, performative art forms with the relation of the observer within installation art, it becomes clear that the physicality of the viewer is also involved as an

8
Johannes Stahl, "Installation", in Hubertus Butin ed., *DuMonts Begriffsllexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst*, DuMont, Cologne, 2002, pp. 122–126, esp. p. 124.

9
Juliane Rebentisch, *Ästhetik der Installation*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2003, p. 103.

10
Paul Schimmel ed., *Out of Actions: Aktionismus, Body Art und Performance, 1949–1979*, Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern-Ruit, 1998.

11
Lea Vergine, *Body, Art and Performance: The Body as Language*, Skira, Milan, 2000; orig. pub. 1974.

12
Gerhard Graulich, *Die leibliche Selbsterfahrung des Rezipienten: Ein Thema transmodernen Kunstwollens*, Verlag die Blaue Eule, Essen, 1989, p. 17.

active constituent of the work in spatial installation art and provides the foundation for shaping his or her experience when perceiving an installation. But because the specific technique for provoking an experience does not go back to the action of the artist/performer (performance) or to his or her instructions (happening) but rather to the spatial arrangement itself, it is referred to as "situative".

Studies of situation- and site-specificity in art in turn do not take the spatial localising of the installation as their point of reference, but rather its performative potential.¹³ If we consider the process of perception that takes place when aesthetically opening up an installation, it becomes clear that installations are time-dependent art forms.¹⁴ In an installation, a very precise function is assigned to time in the dependence on perception that is generally necessary for aesthetic experience. It is the time a viewer needs to walk through the installation. This simple fact also determines the make-up and installation organisation of the given exhibition space, which is also a space of perception.

The design of an installation space is dictated by the idea of prescribing as far as possible the viewer's movement and visual perspectives. But this is precisely what makes it possible to describe this movement as narrative or even cinematic in nature. The opening up of the installation space is determined by a space-time, before-and-after perspective that dictates the observer's movement and their supposedly free wandering through space. If we consider, under these premises, the way an installation space is perceived, we can speak of the establishment of a rhythm of the excerpts of reality, perceived as a succession of impressions.

One important example in the area of installation, one that above all integrates performative and narrative elements into the space of the installation, is the work of Thomas Hirschhorn (b. 1957 in Bern, Switzerland; lives in Paris).

The Swiss artist defamiliarises forms of presentation in the area of the installation. Using wood, Plexiglas, cling wrap, aluminium foil, wrapping paper and tape, he builds chaotic-seeming, inscrutable structures. They are connected with research on a specific kind of historical event or philosophical thought, which finds expression in a performative interaction with the audience.

Not content with the imposed definitions and limitations of a capitalist, multinational rhetoric of globalisation, Thomas Hirschhorn makes use of the communicative potential of thinking. His work, which ignores material value, comprises various models of the installation, primarily composed of the cheap product packaging materials of the consumer industry – aluminium foil, plastic, cardboard and plywood – and thus converts the desires of capitalism into a state of enduring creative anarchy. Hirschhorn's temporary monuments for Benedict de Spinoza (1999 and 2009, Amsterdam), Gilles Deleuze (2000, Avignon) and Georges Bataille (2002, documenta 11, Kassel), which address community commitment and the 'quality of inner beauty' (Hirschhorn), follow a logic of ephemerality, accretion and potential openness.

For his *Bataille Monument* Hirschhorn mapped the city for more than a year, from personal and social perspectives, eventually integrating the work into the life of a marginalised community in the Friedrich Wöhler-Siedlung for the duration of documenta 11.¹⁵ Dispensing with the traditional categories of knowledge production, the work takes the collecting and exhibiting functions of the museum, which have become formalised into a ritual, and brings them back into public space. The philosophical recourse to Georges Bataille is deliberate. Thomas Hirschhorn writes: "I am a fan of Georges Bataille; he is at once a role model and pretext. Bataille explored and developed the principles of loss, of overexertion, of the gift, and of excess. I admire him for his book *La part maudite* and his text 'La notion de dépense.' Choosing Bataille means opening up a broad and complex force field between economy, politics, literature, art, erotica, and archaeology. There is a great deal of explosive pictorial and textual material."¹⁶

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For a critical discussion of the state of research in English on this subject, see Peter Osborne, "Review on Recent Literature on Installation", in Caroline Arscott ed., "On Installation", special issue of *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2002, pp. 145–154.

14
See Rebetisch, cit.

15
The artist worked with young people from the Philippenhof boxing camp to construct the monument; they were paid for the work they did.

16
See www.bataillemonument.de. Accessed 20.06.2011.

The *Bataille Monument* consisted of eight related elements:

- A sculpture of wood, cardboard, tape, and plastic.
- A Georges Bataille Library, with books that refer to Bataille's oeuvre, arranged according to categories of word, image, art, sports, and sex – a collaboration with Uwe Fleckner.
- A Bataille exhibition with a topography of his oeuvre, a map, and books on and by Georges Bataille – a collaboration with Christophe Fiat.
- Various workshops through the duration of the exhibition (8 June to 15 September 2002) – a collaboration with Manuel Joseph, Jean-Charles Massera, Marcus Steinweg, et al.
- A stand with food and drinks.
- A television studio that broadcasts daily a brief show from the *Bataille Monument* on the public-access channel Offener Kanal Kassel.
- A shuttle service with buses and drivers to bring the visitors from documenta 11 to the *Bataille Monument* (and back) and residents of the neighbourhood to documenta 11.
- A website with webcams from the *Bataille Monument* (24 hours, 7 days).¹⁷

The monument was intended not only to call the concept of the monument into question, through its location, its materials and the duration of its exhibition, but also to provide a special place and time for discussion and ideas. Hirschhorn's monuments emphasise the view from below, the view of the mobile, social and non-representative. The *Bataille Monument* was thus also a social project, which permitted connections to a non-exclusive audience and created relationships that would not have been possible otherwise in this neighbourhood. The installation was also the pretext or occasion in this project to go through performative actions with a group of visitors, to transform events medially and to convey content.

Performance as Visual Event and Presentation

In parallel with the development of the exhibition apparatus, forming the performance as an image, its repeatability as visual activity and the exhibiting of relicts of the performance have opened up the path to the museum, to the classical exhibition situation, for this medium.¹⁸ Exhibitions on performance art with installations, dance performances in the white cube and monographic exhibitions on individual performance artists reveal a transformation in this art form. The audience continues to be direct observers of and accomplices in a live action, but increasingly the performers chose spatial displays to anchor their action specifically in the exhibition space.

In the late 1990s, cultural theorists re-launched the discussion of the terms *presentation*, *performance*, and *performativity* in the arts, beginning in Germany with the theatre studies scholars Erika Fischer-Lichte and Hans-Thies Lehmann.¹⁹ Starting with reflections on the 'linguistic turn' in the 1950s in the United States and the United Kingdom (J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*), in view of the 'iconic turn' in the 1990s the discussion was expanded to "how to do things with images/art". The use of images and visual activities seemed attractive for theatre and dance performances; socially active art's grab of public space and the space of classical cultural institutions was on the programme. The notion of performance in the visual arts as conspiratorial and taking place in the seclusion of insider festivals, where it was seen only by the initiated, was over. Today, performance is presented in large-scale dramatisation on institutional stages. With his *Church of Fear*, Christoph Schlingensiefel (1960–2010), who was then still known primarily as a man of the theatre, swept through the Giardini at the Biennale di Venezia in 2003. Conversely, the artist Jonathan Meese (b. 1970) staged large-scale performances such as *Jonathan Meese ist Mutter Parzival* at the Staatsoper in Berlin.

The performative turn even began to influence the view of science in cultural studies. The view of knowledge as drama – that is, the change from a model of knowledge to one of presentation in its (self-)description – became a paradigmatic role model for the interpretation of performance in theatre and art studies at the end of the twentieth century.²⁰ Analogously to the theoretical discussions of space in the

- 17
- Benjamin Buchloh,
Alison M Gingeras,
Carlos Basualdo,
Thomas Hirschhorn,
Phaidon, London–New
York, 2004.
- 18
- The performer Boris
Nieslony is of the
view that performance
art in the 1970s was
actually produced in
the gallery space, and
hence always worked
with the spatial appa-
ratus. The development
of the performance
with the culture of
festivals is primarily
a Francophone and
European phenomenon.
Discussion with the
artist, 8 April 2011.
- 19
- Erika Fischer-Lichte,
Clemens Risi, Jens
Roselt eds., "Kunst
der Aufführung,
Aufführung der Kunst",
Recherchen, Vol. 18,
Theater der Zeit,
Berlin, 2004; Erika
Fischer-Lichte and
Christoph Wulf eds.,
"Theorien des Per-
formativen", special
issue of *Paragrana*,
Vol. 10, No. 1,
Akademie-Verlag,
Berlin, 2001; Erika
Fischer-Lichte,
*Ästhetik des Perfor-
mativen*, Suhrkamp,
Frankfurt am Main,
2004; Erika Fischer-
Lichte and Christoph
Wulf eds., "Praktiken
des Performativen",
special issue of *Para-
grana*, Vol. 13, No. 1
Akademie-Verlag, Ber-
lin, 2004; Uwe Wirth,
*Performanz: Zwischen
Sprachphilosophie und
Kulturwissenschaften*,
Suhrkamp, Frankfurt
am Main, 2002; Hans-
Thies Lehmann, *Post-
dramatisches Theater*,
Verlag der Autoren,
Frankfurt am Main,
2005; Erika Fischer-
Lichte and Doris
Kolesch, eds., "Kul-
turen des Performati-
ven", special issue
of *Paragrana*, Vol. 7,
No. 1, Akademie-
Verlag, Berlin, 1998.

20

See Christoph Wulf
and Jörg Zirfas eds.,
*Die Kultur des Rit-
uals: Inszenierungen,
Praktiken, Symbole*
Wilhelm Fink Verlag,
Paderborn, 2004; Doris
Bachmann-Medick, "Per-
formative Turn", in
Doris Bachmann-Medick,
*Cultural Turns: Neu-
orientierungen in den
Kulturwissenschaften*,
Rowohlt, Reinbek,
2009, pp. 104–143;
Jacques Derrida, "Sig-
nature Event Context",
in Jacques Derrida,
Limited Inc. North-
Western University
Press, Evanston-IL,
1988, pp. 1–23.

1970s by Henri Lefebvre (*La production de l'espace*) and Michel de Certeau (*L'invention du quotidien – Arts de faire*), performance underwent a transformation into space, which included the space of society as well.²¹

The Combination of Performance and Installation

One important exhibition for this discussion was *Mise en Scène: Theater und Kunst* at the Grazer Kunstverein in 1998, which was dedicated to the combination of presentation and stage elements. The theme was taken up by Andreas Baur and Stephan Berg in 2002, organising the exhibition *On Stage* at their institutions in Esslingen and Hanover (Kunstverein Hannover), respectively, in 2002–2003. Udo Kittelmann was likewise concerned with issues of the life world and of performance in the museum context, as demonstrated by the exhibition *Das Lebendige Museum* at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Frankfurt in 2003 (no catalogue), where he was head curator at the time.

Also in 2003, a team of curators led by Angelika Nollert (now head of the Neues Museum für Kunst und Design in Nuremberg) organised an exhibition on *performative installation*, conceived for various art spaces in Germany and Austria.²² The five-part exhibition series *Performative Installation* at the Galerie im Taxispalais in Innsbruck (2003), the Ludwig Museum in Cologne (2003–2004), the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen (2003–2004), the Secession in Vienna (2004), and the Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig (2004) took place at the initiative of and in cooperation with the Siemens Arts Program. Each exhibition was autonomous and took up one possible aspect of the theme. The concept of "performative installation" was coined for this series of exhibitions and understood to mean a concrete artistic work with the character of an event.²³

The exhibition series *Performative Installation* explored very distinct concepts of performative installation. Ranging from constructed situations of reality in the exhibition space to media installations in which the audience was invited to participate, and *Body Display*, which thematised the exhibition space of the Vienna Secession as a stage and showed bodies acting on it in its quality as a projection screen for public identities. The works thus demonstrated performative, installational, referential and communicative processes. The exhibition as 'display' standing for a spatial form of presentation that attempted to integrate the audience directly and actively into the events.

The subject matter of performativity as an aspect of action and of the character of an event in relationship to the present was achieved through the concept of the installation and the end product of the installation's qualities, characterised with the adjective *performative*. That also meant that performance as the singular execution of an action in Judith Butler's and Peggy Phelan's sense was not the focus of the exhibition's investigations. "The performative installation is not about breaking down the work in the event, but rather about the event as constitutive power of the installation, about the symbiosis of event and work."²⁴

This exhibition project was thus about launching a concept, while defining it only tentatively. The focus of interest was on the concept of performative installation, which has to organise the theatrical quality of the presentation in a different way than common to a stage space, where the temporal formats of the audience's presence are predefined. The concept of the installation has become a universal concept. It subsumes many forms of artistic expression that escape more precise definition. Based on its etymology, the word means first and foremost the submitting and inserting of objects as process and result. Installation introduces one thing to another and seeks to take the viewer into this space of relationships. It can incorporate and fit together everything. Above all, installation is also an evaluative concept that, in addition to its quality of space and experience, possesses the ability to create an original, singular, and individual context similar to that of performance. The concept of the installation would thus appear to be in a position to create a unique context for art that is able to address in a special way the intrinsic context of the system of art.

21
Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974), Basil Blackwell, London, 1991; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984.

22
Angelika Nollert ed., *Performative Installation*, Snoeck, Cologne, 2003. Exhibition catalogue.

23
This series of exhibitions was also a central point of departure for my reflections and curatorial experiences in the project *Im Bauch des Wals/In the Belly of the Whale*. See www.installation.com. Accessed 13.05.2012.

24
Catalogue in preparation.



Dorothea Rust, *Newton's Äpfel*, 2010, K3 Project Space, Zurich.
Photograph by Christian Glaus, Courtesy of the artist.

The Concatenation of Events: The Performative Relay

This intrinsic context was specified in the project *Im Bauch des Wals* (*In the Belly of the Whale*; 2010-2011), which was developed in a Swiss context.²⁵ We thought up a special event format specifically for this project: the relay. The term, which derives from the Olympic running event with four one-hundred-metre legs, alludes to the idea of handing over an element to the next participant. In this project, the term *relay* is brought to bear both as an element of transformation and as a passing on.

Thirteen artists participated in five exhibition sites, with its own specific circumstances: a white cube, an alternative space, an experimental exhibition space in the nature of a display window, a park and the public space.

Because performance now as ever depends on an ephemeral, albeit repeatable action, it needs new forms of extension in the narrative cultural space. One possibility would be this concatenation of exhibitions, when seen in the context of research on performative practice and performative installations. The transformation from one to the other, from performance to installation, from one spatial apparatus to another, is the heart of the research in this project.

The chain of exhibitions within the relay not only changed places but also changed subject matter, formats and artists, who used their own means and media to examine the performance. Each of the artists invited to participate in the relay had two appearances or performances in the project.

For example, the artist Katja Schenker – whose performances cleverly combined physical strength, material and physical forces in a live situation at the Kunstverein Konstanz involving a paper landscape that filled the room, expanded out from a compressed paper cube – made furrows and folds in the paper during a one-hour action, which was then shown in the exhibition space for a month under the title *moll* (minor).²⁶

The performance artist Dorothea Rust, in turn, was on the road with a store of material. She installed this material – which included shoes, bags, climbing ropes, carpets, hooks, apples and pages of paper – in dance performances at the K3 project space in Zurich and in a transformation of the same materials in the park of Château Mercier in Sierre, Switzerland.

Summary

Performance art thus remains a field for situational and site-specific activities, one that can figure into all the areas and contexts of life. One of the great challenges for this medium is that context – that is, the venue, the space and the audience – directly influence the performance. By *directly* I mean more quickly, more reactively more relentlessly than in other forms of art such as painting, composed music or theatre. This demonstrates that the broad field of performance makes it necessary to differentiate. Historical, media and contextual relationships are becoming increasingly important when positioning oneself clearly within the mass of offerings and interpretations. "Whether it is a spontaneous initiative of artists in temporary spaces or a performance from established institutions such as theatres or theatre festivals influences how they are perceived and in turn reflects back on the works"²⁷, emphasises the performance artist Dorothea Rust, who is also active as an organiser of performances.

Performance art continues to be an artistic strategy with which performers trigger surprises, densely packed moments, astonishment and confusion, even to the point of a lack of understanding. That also affects not least the aesthetic of the performative installation.

25
Nollert, cit., p. 14.

26
Katja Schenker:
Arbeiten an der Erdoberfläche, Verlag für
Moderne Kunst, Nurem-
berg, 2011. Exhibition
catalogue.

27
Dorothea Rust,
e-mail to the author,
8 July 2011.



Katja Schenker, *moll*, 2011, Chateau Mercier.
Photograph by Sibylle Omlin.

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VOICES IN THE EXHIBITION.

Barnaby Drabble

1.

In a scene from the film *Play It Again Sam*¹, the main character Allan, played by Woody Allen, visits an art gallery in a desperate attempt to pick up girls. He pauses in front of a painting by Jackson Pollock and nervously makes conversation with the young woman standing in front of it.

Allan: That's quite a lovely Jackson Pollock, isn't it?

Young woman: Yes it is.

Allan: What does it say to you?

Young woman: It restates the negativeness of the universe, the hideous, lonely emptiness of existence. Nothingness. The predicament of man forced to live in a barren, godless eternity like a tiny flame flickering in an immense void with nothing but waste, horror and degradation forming a useless, bleak straitjacket in a black, absurd cosmos.

Allan: What are you doing Saturday night?

Young woman: Committing suicide.

Allan: What about Friday night?

It is a quintessential Woody Allen gag. In his darkly comic style, he pokes fun at the bourgeois values associated with visiting art galleries while caricaturing the neurotic dislocation modern life inflicts on the individual. The ironic reversal here is that in his willingness to make compromises in return for human contact of any kind, Allan is more desperate than his suicidal companion. The joke is made more complex by the background to all this – In *Play it Again Sam* the art exhibition is portrayed as a site of cultural introspection, the enormous doom-laden canvas by Jackson Pollock acting as a kind of Rorschach blot test to the depressed young woman, whose response is triggered by Allan's pseudo-psychoanalytical question.

In some ways the question "What does it say to you?" can be seen as a central motif in over 200 years of thought about the relationship between art and its viewers, and the supposed grounds for visiting exhibitions remains bound to this central premise that artworks speak to us. The history of art variously documents how art experiences have, in various ways, been defined as different from other parts of our every-day lives. Yet, although this man-made differentiation lies at the heart of our exchanges with art, and points towards a specific function of the exhibition, the highly subjective nature of the sphere it produces is often wilfully overlooked. The wish, for the majority of the time, to put to one side the fact that the 'specialness' of art is attributed rather than inherent, may well lie in the fact that the question 'but, is it art?' is exceptionally tiresome. However if we want to analyse the idea of the speaking object, we need to take a few steps back from analysing art as art and note the importance of this designation in and of itself. In other contexts we can look at objects and accept them as mute. Functional or natural objects for example are exempt from semantic expectation – we would not look at a milk carton and say 'I don't understand it', or a tree and ask 'but what does it mean?' Art objects and experiences, on the other hand, are inseparably bonded to the expectation of meaning and understanding, and for much of the last two centuries these characteristics have been understood as inherent, insofar as particular formal, referential, pictorial or narrative qualities in the work can suggest ways in which it might be 'correctly' understood, or what it ultimately might mean.

Although the above understanding of the work as the site of some kind of inherent meaning can broadly be described as tied to the development of European modernism in the arts, pragmatically speaking it would be wrong to see the intervention of postmodern thought as anything more than a caesura in the still popular idea that the work itself 'holds the keys' to its own meaning, or that good work 'speaks for itself'. However, this idea is necessarily challenged by common sense; because, taken

1
Herbert Ross,
Play It Again Sam,
Paramount Pictures,
1972.

literally, objects cannot speak. So, we can ascertain that the context for observing and experiencing artworks has a great influence on any speculation on their content. The art exhibition has a transformative character, although it cannot actively make mute objects speak, by presenting them 'as art' it creates a space of expectation. In short, the exhibition is a site where we, as visitors, are encouraged to enter into a mental game – one in which we *imagine* that objects speak to us. To complicate this we can observe that the dominant art-historical view of the art experience favours content over context and upholds the myth that the works are the primary source of meaning. But, if we look more closely we realise that the aspect of conjecture involved in listening to imaginary voices, is essentially far more speculative in nature than art history would have us believe. When we visit an exhibition and listen carefully to what the works have to say, we are essentially improvising around a few set parameters in the exhibition space. What we choose to hear there is as likely to be influenced by our concerns about where we parked the car as it is by our concerns about formal or structural elements in the work. Add to this the fact that our behaviour in the exhibition is often in response to others who we find ourselves sharing the space with and we realise that meaning is not latent, but emergent, understanding is effectively performed by the visitors, together. If we can say that a voice emerges, it does so at a tangent to the works, rather than from within them.

It is easy to see why dominant opinion continues to uphold the historical idea that artworks are the primary source of meaning in a professionalised art world context where the terms of power, economy and knowledge have been built around that very assumption. Whether talking to an artist, art-historian, gallerist, museum curator, collector, critic or art student the centrality of 'the work' in what they do is unavoidable; works are, after all, the things stacking up in the studio, the things bought and sold, the things selected, transported, hung, written about and collected. These activities describe, and prescribe, an attitude that takes us back to the earlier points about differentiation and expectation. With all this activity going on around them, these objects *become* special, and with this status comes a responsibility to mean something. Nowhere are works more exposed to this responsibility than in the exhibition and over the last half-century in particular, the physical attributes of the exhibition space have been designed to support the idea that the works are fiercely, predominantly meaningful. The ritualised characteristics of the exhibition (a bright, quiet, white space with things separated out from one another on the walls and floor) set the stage for a silent transfer. This is what Brian O'Doherty observed in the forms adopted by commercial galleries in the early 1970's². The 'white cube', he argues, is designed primarily to stress the individual value of discrete auratic objects. Its interior-architectural characteristics also block out temporal and contextual factors that might confuse a reading of the work that, it is understood, should mean something in and of itself. The featureless walls and plinths privilege the formal and the objective, and once the public is familiar with what is signalled by such rituals the entire environment raises by implication all its contents to the status of art, even as O'Doherty wryly observes the fire-hose in the museum.

2.

It is revealing that a painting by Jackson Pollock forms the central prop for the art gallery scene in *Play It Again Sam*. At the time of the film's release, some sixteen years after his death, canvasses by Pollock were changing hands for over a million dollars each and the sales were predictably accompanied by a great deal of discussion in the specialist and mainstream press about the life and work of 'Jack the Dripper',³ and more broadly about the arrival of abstract expressionism at the top of the market ladder and Museum shopping list. In fact, perhaps more than any other 20th Century artist⁴, the painter's biography and appearance seems inseparable from his work. The paintings for which he became so famous are eternally joined to the image of the man himself – cigarette hanging from his mouth, or feverishly splashing paint on a huge canvas, engaged in an act of what appears to be unfettered expression. To a great extent we have the photographer Hans Namuth to thank for these images, as both his series of iconic photographs of Pollock

2
Brian O'Doherty,
*Inside the White Cube:
the Ideology of the
Gallery Space*, Lapis
Press, Santa Monica,
1976.

3
This nickname
was first applied in
the *Time Magazine*
article "Art: The
Wild Ones", February
1956.

4
It is debatable to
what extent Andy
Warhol might also earn
this reputation.

at work in his studio in 1950, and the film he made with Paul Falkenberg later that year, specifically focus on Pollock's physical state when making his work. While making the film Namuth famously suggested that the artist work in his familiar style, but on a sheet of glass so that he could film from beneath: "I wanted to show the artist at work with his face in full view, becoming part of the canvas, so to speak – coming at the viewer – through the painting itself"⁵. This was not the last time that the artist was to be literally framed by his work. As a result of this by the early 1970s Pollock had become a legendary figure, the telling and retelling of his life (and death) story, reducing him to a form of stereotype, a blueprint of the wild artist genius.

Though the film has come to be almost definitive of Woody Allen's early work for cinema, *Play it Again Sam* was originally written as a play and met with success on Broadway before being adapted for the big screen. We can imagine how, in the gallery scene from the play, the actors gaze at the 'lovely Jackson Pollock' standing on the front of the stage, the work they comment upon hanging invisibly between them and the audience. This simple device would ensure that the woman's comments are thereby directed through the transparent canvas, towards the seated onlookers. It also adds to the monologue's darkly comic effect – for it may be in them that she sees 'the hideous, lonely emptiness of existence' and of course 'nothingness'. Thinking of the choice of Pollock and the question of transparency, we can note the echoes of Namuth's film in which the canvas becomes a glass sheet through which we observe the artist at work. More relevant is the fact that both Namuth and Allen's approach to the works of Jackson Pollock bear witness to the development of a predominant wish to see an artist's work as a vehicle for their personality. The 'Jackson Pollock' in Allen's gallery scene, awkwardly referred to as 'lovely' by his main character, evokes the doomed caricature of Pollock himself, here channelled by the depressed young woman. Namuth decided in both his photographs and film to focus on Pollock's physicality, at times spritely and at others almost menacing, as he leans over the lens. In both cases Pollock (the artist) and a Pollock (the work) conflate and in the process we witness a moment at which the latter is essentially erased to make way for an image of the former.

In the debate about who speaks in the exhibition, the phenomenon of abstract expressionism proves interesting, as the critics of this painterly development in what is now regarded as late modernism became increasingly divided on the grounds for defence of these works. It was famously Clement Greenberg who promoted Pollock as the most important artist of his generation, supporting his claim with a strictly formal rationale in relation to the composition of his paintings⁶ and linking him to a longer tradition of painters engaged with abstraction. For him, Pollock's physical approach to producing his work, dripping paint onto the prone canvasses and actively stepping on and into the image, was interesting, but not valid in any assessment of the work as work. His nemesis at the time, Harold Rosenberg was convinced that the gestural approach to painting was a break with tradition, and represented an attempt to recuperate more expressive elements of the activity of painting from overly theoretical or academic impulses. He termed the approach that interested him 'action painting' and stressed the fact that the canvasses could no longer be judged in terms of their surface or formal qualities, instead they had to be understood as 'an arena in which to act'⁷ a site where an event had taken place⁸. This moment in criticism reflects a widening of the parameters by which work could be assessed, from the position that the value of work was purely intrinsic to one where its relation with its maker could contribute to its meaning and understanding. Despite the fact that these two positions, as held by Greenberg and Rosenberg were acrimoniously opposite, the emerging field of popular culture was to find fewer problems with this shift. The attributes of the work and its creator were simply merged, the maker becoming as much object as subject, and the voices in the exhibition understood as *per se* those of the artists, speaking through their works.

5
Hans Namuth, "Photographing Pollock" in Barbara Rose (ed.), *Pollock: Painting, Agrinde Publications Ltd., New York, 1980.*

6
Clement Greenberg, "American-type Painting." *Partisan Review*, No. 22, Spring, 1955.

7
Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters", *Art News*, No. 6, 1952.

8
Rosenberg's ideas in "The American Action Painters" later influenced Allan Kaprow to write about Jackson Pollock as an inspiration for the new genre of performative art emerging in the late 1950s in the form of happenings and environments. Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock." *Art News*, No. 6, 1958.

3.

In 1996 Bruce Ferguson published the essay "Exhibition Rhetorics"⁹, in which he put forward the idea that exhibitions can be understood as the speech act of an institution. Introducing a linguistic model for analyzing exhibitions, he suggested that first and foremost the voices we hear in the exhibition are neither those of the artworks, nor those of the artists, but those of the institution. The exhibition, he argues, is full of voices, but these are synthesised into a predominant institutional voice, which in turn speaks through them. The 'rhetorics' of the essay's title relate to his belief that this voice is continually communicating an identity, telling and retelling an institutionalised story. For the critical audience member, listening becomes important here, because recognising the 'institutional voice' radically reframes the question 'What does it say to you?' The 'it' becomes tied up in the question of institutional power, and the possibility is raised that, as visitors, we are willingly signing up to our own normalisation or indoctrination. Ferguson's linguistic analogy, appears as a precursor to a new kind of listening in the exhibition; a tool for affording distance, from which we can see who is speaking, who is being spoken too and on what terms the conversation is taking place. Rather depressingly he concludes that when listened to in these terms too many institutional exhibitions sound like 'a loud monologue followed by a long silence.'¹⁰ In place of this Ferguson imagines what a more conversational institutional voice might sound like, arguing that such a conversation could only take place when the pedagogue's booming tones are replaced by a more hesitant, uncertain and questioning voice. The resultant engagement with what he terms an institution's 'slips of tongue and anxious 'parapraxes''¹¹ might allow visitors to get a word in edge-ways, to intervene in the affirmative institutional narrative with less dominant narratives of their own.

This lack of variety in exhibition speech, and the institutions propensity for specific approaches to pedagogy, is also the focus of Oliver Marchart in his more recent essay "The Institution Speaks, Art Education as a strategy of Domination or Emancipation."¹² Like Ferguson before him, Marchart examines the ways in which institutions voice themselves, noting that the growth in interpretation, outreach and gallery education departments effectively distracts attention away from the fact that the public art institution itself is a giant interpretative machine; its abiding logic is one of informing and educating 'through' art and not solely 'about' it. A decade after Ferguson, he notes that the monologue remains the predominant form of institutional expression, and discusses a similar necessity for break or rupture. Helpfully he calls on an example to illustrate this concept, and describes his own role in the education project of the documenta 11 and the conscious wish of the team, headed by Okwui Enwezor, to design a structure for extending the project in an educational direction, without recourse to dominant methods of pedagogy. Convinced that this direction had to be initiated and developed by the learners themselves, Marchart describes how the team set about marking a series of 'slots', or empty spaces for activity of this kind. Marchart discusses how the quality of experience suggested in this 'education project' differed from that more familiar idea of an education programme. The project logic is one of initiation without expectation of specific goal oriented learning, where as the program already suggests more structure, for if it wishes to function it cannot avoid being programmatic. These ideas and observations suggest how we might see all exhibitions as potential non-programmatic knowledge experiences, were it not for their enduring wish to be perceived as complete, discrete and authoritative. Just as reflections on the work of Jackson Pollock describe the impossibility of isolating the voice of the work from that of the artist, the ideas of Ferguson and Marchart recognise that those of the work, the exhibition and the institution are similarly inseparable.

4.

With all the above in mind, the question of whose voice we hear when we see the exhibition is hard to answer. Exhibitions, it becomes clear, are polyphonous constructions. Here, not only the objects but also their surroundings speak, and artists' voices are joined by those of the curators and the institutions they work within. As such, exhibitions can be harmonious or discordant in tone and judging their merits entails

9

Bruce Ferguson,
"Exhibition Rhetorics:
Material Speech and
Utter Sense" in Reesa
Greenberg, Bruce
Ferguson, Sandy Nairne
eds., *Thinking about
Exhibitions*, Rout-
ledge, London, 1996,
pp. 175-191.

10

ibid. p. 188.

11

ibid. p. 187.

12

Olivier Marchart, "Die
Institution spricht"
in Beatrice Jaschke,
Charlotte Martinez-
Turek, Nora Sternfeld,
eds., *Wer Spricht,
Autorität und Autor-
schaft in Ausstel-
lungen*, Verlag Turia +
Kant, Vienna, 2005,
pp. 34-58

careful listening – an ear for how the various voices sound together and how they supplement, extend or oppose one another. If we listen carefully enough we start to perceive an ongoing series of overlapping debates. An artist's sensitivity to the voice of the institution may result in a critical contradiction, or a playful echo. Curatorial decisions can bring artistic positions into dialogue with one another, or reveal the process behind the objects by way of a parallel commentary. Yet, there is a very real danger here that in analysing what we hear, we allow ourselves to imagine too great a critical distance from the voices in the exhibition. After all, the question 'What does it say to you?' reminds us that we too are present as speaking subjects. If we choose to answer the question, even quietly in our own minds, one of the voices in the exhibition is our own. Whether visiting exhibitions alone or in company, the conversations that accompany or follow these have a specific quality, as we attempt to unlock, what leads us to our conclusions about what we have seen. When arguing our point of view about art, even to ourselves, we find ourselves addressing a far greater topic through the vehicle of our aesthetic taste. We start to rehearse our subjectivity – constructing and defending a personal and particular role for ourselves in relation to what we have witnessed in the gallery¹³.

The voice of the audience is currently the least discussed of the many in the exhibition. Yet, if the last decade appears to be the golden age of the curator, the next may well belong to the visitor. This prediction might appear to be a further step away from recognition of the artist's key role in exhibitions, or be mistaken for a call for populism. These risks are very present but do not exclude the fact that a genuine recognition of the audience's ability to speak, and not just to listen, is more radical than it might appear. Far from detracting from the importance of artists it actually strengthens the argument for the importance of their work. The artwork remains central to the quality of both the exhibition and the conversation it provokes, precisely because the best work, though professing to say something and introducing new languages in which to say it, deliberately refuses to entirely reveal itself and make its meaning transparent. It is this very fact that so frequently raises questions of elitism and obscurity in relation to contemporary art, but it is one built on a fundamental misunderstanding. Because, although it is understandable that people like to have things explained to them and that art can sometimes provoke the frustration of not knowing what something is supposed to mean. This should only be seen as a critique of an exhibition if a programmatic acquisition of knowledge or expertise is the kind of understanding they are trying to promote. This observation might serve to point back to the primacy of the game we agree to play in the museum or gallery environment – we *imagine* that objects speak to us. To play this game well it is primarily investment in feeling, idea association and a willingness to speculate on meaning that prove useful and ultimately instructive.

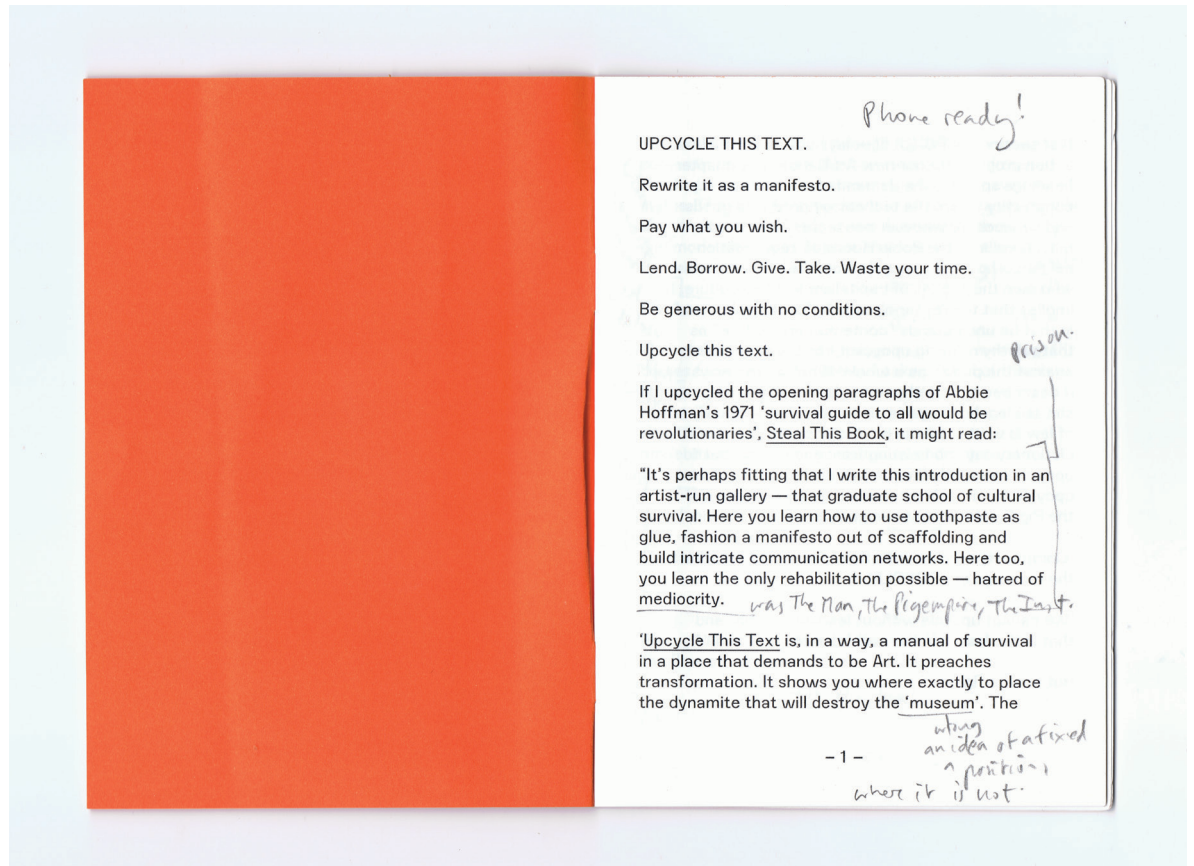
It is interesting to end with a consideration of the curatorial in the light of these gathered thoughts and references. On the one hand, the exhibition functions inevitably as a meta-artwork. As such, it presents a whole range of interesting parameters within which the game of speaking objects can be developed and experimented with. That said, on the other, there is an implicit danger in the curator as author construct that this implies – because the idea that the curatorial concept is a tool for understanding the exhibition is as questionable as the premise that the artist's intention explains the work. There are all voices in the exhibition, but the full breadth of meaning is restricted when one claims to be more authoritative than the others. So, recognising the audience's voice as well has the potential to be quite the opposite of dumbing-down the art experience – It *per se* demands recognition of the complexity of the art experience and the need to avoid pre-empting meaning. As such, in relation to exhibitions, interpretation¹⁴ might be best understood as the job of validating the audience's voice. For those who make exhibitions and run institutions the challenge is to construct experiences that actively promote the activities of speculation, improvisation and the performing of non-programmatic knowledge while avoiding the temptation to monologue on the meaning of art.

13
The idea of exhibitions as spaces where audiences can performatively 'shift themselves from being viewers to being participants' is introduced in Irit Rogoff's seminal article "How to Dress for an Exhibition". Mika Hannula, ed., *Stopping the Process?*, NIFCA, Helsinki, 1998, pp. 130-151.

14
Here again the term interpretation should be understood to encompass, not only the activities of the education department, but the whole of the institutions activities in relation to its publics.

EASTSIDE PROJECTS.

Gavin Wade



Scans of selected pages of the publication 'UPCYCLE THIS TEXT', with Gavin Wade's pencil hand-notes.

"In order to accumulate experience and put the building through a learning process, some traces should remain from what has happened previously. The gallery is a collection. The gallery is an artwork."

Gavin Wade is director, and part of the founding collective, of the artist-run space Eastside Projects in Birmingham, England. For this journal issue, on the invitation of the editors, he agreed to the re-publication* of the following:

- Extracts from the space's continually updated User Manual (drafts #2, #4 and #5) edited and designed by James Langdon.
- Photographic documentation of the space's evolution since its first exhibition, *This is the Gallery and the Gallery is Many Things*, in 2008.
- Scans of selected pages of the publication *Upcycle this Text*, with Wade's pencil hand-notes. The text formed a loose script for his performative lecture at the symposium upon which this journal issue is based.

Extract 1: Introduction to Eastside Projects Manual Draft #4
Organisations do not often provide user's manuals.

Extract 2: Eastside Projects Manual Draft #2 (edited version)
This is a manual for Eastside Projects, it explains what the space is made of, how it was set up, who it is for, how it can be used and what it can offer. Eastside Projects was designed from experience and speculation on future publics, inhabitants and workers of the space, to expose its specific context and encourage its use. As would be necessary for operating a machine or learning a subject a manual may be necessary for the full use of Eastside Projects. In this way we seek to open Eastside Projects to new forms of engagement.

Situation

Eastside Projects is an artist-run space, a public gallery for the city of Birmingham and the world. It is organised by a founding collective comprising Simon and Tom Bloor, Céline Condorelli, Ruth Claxton, James Langdon and Gavin Wade, who first conceived and now runs the space.

Eastside Projects seeks to question the role and function of art within the urban environment by inviting and presenting experimental contemporary art practices, and fully participating in and supporting the cultural activity of the city both inside and out. Eastside Projects is free and open to the public, as well as to multiple forms of involvement from artists and other practitioners.

Eastside Projects is to be considered intrinsic to the structure of the city and part of the sphere of public support through government subsidy. This is correct and proper as part of the fight to keep at bay the monopoly of cultural homogeneity. It works to establish the artist-run space as a public good.

Eastside Projects is a not-for-profit organisation, and works in partnership with Birmingham City University; it is revenue funded by Arts Council England West Midlands.

Eastside Projects is set within an industrial building, originally a cabinet makers, in the centre of Eastside, Birmingham, and in close proximity to other art production and exhibition spaces Ikon Eastside, the Custard Factory and Vivid. The building was renovated using Arts Council England West Midlands funds and includes a large main gallery space, 225m²; a second smaller gallery, 70m², (equipped for video projection); and an artists' residency studio. Birmingham City University's Visualisation Research Unit (VRU) offices and studios for image and sound editing are also onsite. Building renovations and development of the exhibition space were led by Support Structure: Céline Condorelli and Gavin Wade.

Purpose

If previous gallery structures tend to lull you into passivity then Eastside Projects demands, through its design, that you are active. This activity is a prompt for further work beyond the public space of the gallery into and onto the public sphere. This should be the purpose of the gallery.

Display Device

The exhibition space was developed from the following questions: How do architecture and design support exhibition-making alongside the curation process? Can architecture and design be used as a form of curation as part of a gallery programme? Can we imagine a context that actively and explicitly produces exhibitions and exhibition-making, rather than embody or represent them? Can exhibitions also display means, relationships, and underlying ideologies in the representation of space?

The gallery becomes a project-making machine, the artist-run space a space of production: of sensibility, of exhibitions, and of a specific understanding of objects, context and experience. In this way the exhibition space enters a discourse of performativity, with a constructed context that engages in its subject rather than merely offering it for consumption. Eastside Projects is a display device designed specifically with and in support of a programme, in order to work alongside it as a form of curating, with the design and building language supporting its process.

Such an art space is being imagined in order to produce critical questions on the production of art, its perception, consumption, and possible engagements through the filtered display of the art space.

Artworks as Existing Conditions

Eastside Projects considers design, organisational structures and architecture to be an integral part of its programme; each aspect of the gallery is in process and constant evolution. Existing conditions are constructed through and with the exhibition programme. Artists are invited to set the existing conditions for the gallery. Work may remain. Work may be responded to.

Occupying the existing building with a very thin and fragile layer, a lining with a temporary, ad-hoc aesthetic the first exhibition *This is the Gallery and the Gallery is Many Things* forms the first response to the site, and sets the initial alteration to existing conditions. This is clearly added on to the building, like a scaffolding, and as such allows further possibilities for change. In order to accumulate experience and put the building through a learning process, some traces should remain from what has happened previously. The gallery is a collection. The gallery is an artwork.

first section — UPCYCLE! — lays out a potential action program for our new Art Nation. The chapter headings spell out the demands for a free society. A community where the technology produces goods and services for whoever needs them, come who may. It calls on the Robin Hoods of 'regeneration neighbourhoods' to upcycle from the robber barons who own the castles of capitalism and low culture. It implies that the reader already is "ideologically set," in that he understands "contemporary culture" as that worthy of being upcycled, for it is committed against the people as a whole! Whether the ways it describes to reap the rewards of transforming shit are legal or illegal is irrelevant. The dictionary of law is written by the bosses of order. Our moral dictionary says no heisting from each other, but to upcycle from a brother or sister is honorable. To not upcycle from the institutions that are the pillars of the Pig Empire is contra-equally immoral.

low useful
to manipulate
high
useful?
- Add value -
found
to be
upcycled

'Community within our Nation, chaos in theirs; that is the message of UPCYCLE!

'We cannot upcycle without learning to fight and that is the lesson in the second section. FIGHT!'

But how to fight?

[and who against?]

The world is understood through myths. All meaning comes to us as stories. We can take control of these stories to create our own meaning and form new myths. The midden is the detritus of society and we sit upon it, pick things from it, re-mould them and model them into objects that can act out new histories and possible futures.¹

-> pile,
leftovers,
waster
gallery,
remains,
Art!

- image-poppo.
- Jennifer
column.

This could also be stated as:

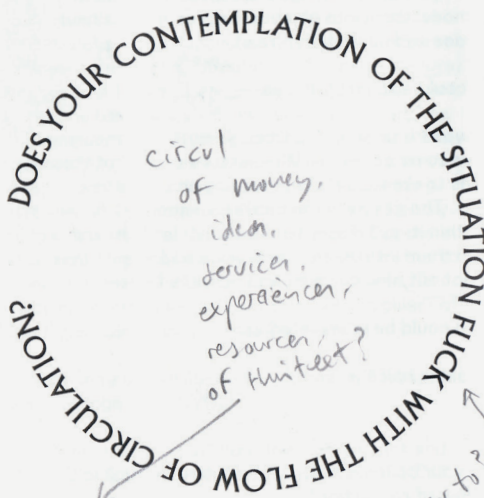
The world is understood through myths. All meaning comes to us as stories. We can take control of these stories to create our own meaning and form new myths. The gallery is the detritus of society and we sit within it, pull things into it, re-mould them and model them into objects, scenarios and events that can act out new histories and possible futures.

Which could be interpreted as:

Context is half the work.²

Or

Does your contemplation of the situation fuck with the flow of circulation?



An unnumbered to the texts,
make links, re-write one story,
one Book (all the copies).
Only through law?

The gallery as an artwork.

In 2009 I invited the Glasgow based artists Joanne Tatham & Tom O'Sullivan to produce a new work for a solo show at Eastside Projects in Birmingham — the space that I run. The collaborative duo made a new work entitled Does your contemplation of the situation fuck with the flow of circulation. The artists consider Eastside Projects a 'non-standard gallery' and treated it as a found site, working "on top of" the venue with components that form the exhibition, the artwork, as a series of objects (or constructed artefacts) designed to challenge the function and status of the venue and its contents.

images.

The objects consisted of a new architectural construction, a large patterned Z-shaped tunnel which could be entered and passed through, positioned centrally amongst elements that adapted and reclaimed the artists' existing tropes. Since 1995 Tatham & O'Sullivan have created work concerned with the mythic potential of art, and how art can exist as an event in a particular space and time. Situated between, and utilising, sculpture, painting, architecture, photography, performance, literature, institutional critique and curation, the artists' works use carefully crafted paths, displacements and diversions as strategies for synthesising the concept of 'culture as a localised system of meanings' and 'the world of art' — seen as a community sharing a collective mysticism of forms, objects and histories.

A key methodology of Tatham & O'Sullivan's practice is the re-using of existing tropes developed in earlier works. This re-using, recycling and recontextualising includes self reflexive phrases such as 'is this what brings things into focus?'

They are interested in structures or objects that represent a certain kind of creative endeavor, and have written or adapted theatrical plays or pantomimes into their work:

TOM O'SULLIVAN: Traditions such as pantomime are really quite sophisticated forms. They bring together different themes, ideas, and historical moments and create something that engages in a very direct way with an audience. I think there's a way of using objects in a theatrical mode that creates a space, which because it's staged actually allows things to function with some extra sort of clarity ...

JOANNE TATHAM: Is this what brings things into focus? [Joanne pushes back her chair, stands up and walks over to the window.]

TOM: It seems to be a good phrase for directly putting a viewer on the spot. It's a useful phrase and we decided to re-use it: to keep repeating the question. We previously used it as an exhibition

- 6 -

title, but in the projection element of Does your contemplation ..., the question is upcycled within the actual work.

GAVIN WADE: Is it your intention to make the relationship between the viewer and the object, or the viewer and the situation visible, more tangible? The text seems to be prompting you, telling you to consider the space you are in.

TOM: I think our work has always been about that, about the experience of the viewer. Some of the phrases we use have become useful as ways of representing or articulating that.

JOANNE: Does your contemplation of the situation fuck with the flow of circulation.

GAVIN: The work actually takes something that's invisible — an experience or a reaction and makes you aware of it as something actually present.

TOM: This is what happens when you walk through the tunnel, you become a viewer of your experience. You are aware of your participation as a physical occurrence.

- 7 -

Long Term Works

The Eastside Projects office is the artwork *Pleasure Island* by Heather and Ivan Morison. The structure is built from harvested red wood trees from a wood in Wales belonging to the artists. Originally commissioned for the Wales Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007, the building has been adapted for Eastside Projects as a long term commitment to exploring the nature of artworks within the space. New features within the structure include a kitchen, desks, shelving and a larger entrance. The artists will present a series of puppet shows within *Pleasure Island* as part of the gallery programme. The first show at the launch of Eastside Projects on 26 September 2008 was titled *I Love You Pleasure Island* and performed by Owen Davies and Suzy Kemp.

Other long-term works have been installed by artists Matthew Harrison, Peter Fend, ISAN, Mark Titchner, Lawrence Weiner, Barbara Holub, Scott Myles and Susan Collins.

References as existing conditions

At least three exhibition precedents have provided references and an underlying ethos for the first exhibition and continuing evolution of the gallery as an ongoing artwork.

1. El Lissitzky's *Abstract Cabinet* (1926/1930), at the International Kunstausstellung Dresden and Hannover Museum represents a clear and radical emergence of the artist-curator generating a constructed environment for artworks by Piet Mondrian, Naum Gabo and Lissitzky himself. It functioned as an artwork in itself, intertwined with the selection and integration of other artists' works. The *Abstract Cabinet* can be used as a model for an art space, a display device designed specifically to support different directions in a programme. We might think not of El Lissitzky's aesthetics but of his approach to spatial design as a form of curating, the building and graphics supporting and producing the curation process.

2. Peter Nadin Gallery (1978-1979), New York, by Peter Nadin, Christopher d'Arcangelo and Nick Lawson, which had a continuous exhibition titled *The work shown in this space is a response to the existing conditions and/or work previously shown within the space*. Artists included Daniel Buren, Peter Fend, Dan Graham, Louise Lawler, Sean Scully and Lawrence Weiner. The artists directly responded to each others' work, developing a cumulative environment. Two of the artists (Fend and Weiner) contributed semi-permanent works to the first exhibition at Eastside Projects. Nadin et al's 1978 project began with the text "We have joined together to execute functional constructions and to alter or refurbish existing structures as a means of surviving in a capitalist economy." The text forms the starting point for Eastside Projects' gallery policy and strategy. Just as Nadin et al's exhibition started with the 'empty' gallery space, *This is the Gallery and the Gallery is Many Things* followed suit in an unravelling of function, design and execution by the practitioners forming the gallery and the artists.

3. *This is the Show and the Show is Many Things*, 1994, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent, curated by Bart de Baere. The exhibition included Honore d'O, Fabrice Hybert, Louise Borgeois, Suchan Kinoshita, Jason Rhoades and Luc Tuymans, who collectively planned the exhibition as a joint enterprise, defining relationships between each other and redefining functions of the museum space. The title of the first Eastside Projects show, *This is the Gallery and the Gallery is Many Things*, is adapted from this exhibition and also functions as a policy and slogan.

Extract 3: Alphabetically ordered list of verbs used as the organising principal for Manual drafts #4 and #5.

"Each of these interconnected entries describes an activity engaged in by Eastside Projects as an organisation or a process occurring in the Eastside Projects building"

ACCUMULATING ADAPTING ADDING ADVERTISING ANSWERING ARTIST-CURATING BELONGING BORROWING
 BUDGETING CIRCULATING COLLABORATING COLLECTING COMMISSIONING COMMUNICATING COMPLICATING
 CONFOUNDING CONTINUING CONTRIBUTING COOPERATING CRITICISING CURATING DECODING DEMANDING
 DESCRIBING DESIGNING DISPLAYING DOCUMENTING ENGAGING ESCAPING EXHIBITING FACILITATING
 FOUNDING FUNDING HAIRDRESSING ILLUMINATING INSPIRING INTEGRATING INTERPRETING INTRO-
 DUCING LAYERING LINING LOCALISING MODIFYING NARRATING NEIGHBOURING NOT-FOR-PROFITEERING
 OCCUPYING OPENING ORGANISING OVERPRINTING PARTNERING PLACEMAKING PLANTING PRINTING
 PROGRAMMING PROVOKING PUBLICISING PUBLISHING QUESTIONING REFERRING REFLECTING RESPONDING
 RETAINING SEEKING SELLING SEQUENCING SLOGANEERING SPECIFYING STAFFING SUPPORTING TIMING
 TITLING TRANSFORMING TWEETING TYPE-DESIGNING UPCYCLING VISITING WELCOMING WHISTLE-
 BLOWING

*There is a question about the validity of this material when separated from James Langdon's design. The User Manuals are symptomatic of the approach of Eastside Projects, in the way they consciously problematise any perceived division between form, content (and the performing of these). Full versions of the various drafts of the manual, can be downloaded (pdf version) or ordered (paper version) from the Eastside Projects website. <http://eastsideprojects.org>.



Photographic documentation of the space's evolution since it's first exhibition. Clockwise from top left:
 1–3 *This is the Gallery and the Gallery is Many Things* 2008. 4 *Simon & Tom Bloor: As long as it lasts* 2009.
 5 *Curtain Show* 2010. 6 *Book Show* 2010. 7 *Carey Young: Memento Park* 2011. 8 *Dan Graham: Models and Videos* 2011.
 Photography by Stuart Whipps. Courtesy Eastside Projects.

SLAVES TO THE RHYTHM. PERFORMING SOCIABILITY IN THE EXHIBITIONARY COMPLEX.

1
This refers to the poster "Just what is it that makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing" designed by Richard Hamilton for the exhibition *This is Tomorrow* at the Whitechapel Gallery, London 1956. The work was destined to become emblematic of 1950s American consumer society.

Katya Garcia-Anton

Just what is it that has made performativity in the exhibitory complex of the last fifteen years, so appealing, so attractive?¹ Has the unpredictable, and fruitful, dynamic of performativity been condensed into aesthetic forms of ambiguous sociability and superfluous experience? How did the 1960s and 1970s' conceptual drive to extend aesthetic process over time and location, from the studio to the gallery space and beyond, result in the congealment of process and its commodification into a performative event? These questions and more are at the core of an intense internal debate taking place amongst curators regarding the limits of performativity in today's exhibition making.

The spell of performativity that has infiltrated the tissue of the exhibitory complex has transformed the relation between artist, curator and audience. This trend goes beyond exhibitions featuring performances or performative installations to span curatorial and artistic projects defined by multiple orchestrations of conferences, dialogues, interviews, debates, conversations, performed-publications, as well as educational projects and learning events. It seems that performativity has become an art of encounter, privileging a space for sociability amongst audiences (including art professionals, funders and collectors) Indeed there is much common ground between the performative and what has become known in recent years as the discursive and the educational turn in curatorial practice. Within which context are these developments operating? Undoubtedly the correlation between the notion of the society of the spectacle and the emergence of 'the experiential' drives the wave of performativity in the arts today. Moreover, one cannot ignore the impact on creative practice of a society led by the dynamics of consumption, where art works suffer from the pressure to be suitably easy to consume and ready to entertain. Furthermore, curators exposed to the increasing demands of the capitalization of knowledge find themselves having to perform as discursive brokers of their reputation, in order to territorialize their intellectual capital and compete in an experiential terrain.

In a society where the state is gradually withdrawing from its cultural and social responsibilities, and in a period of radicalization between the 'haves and have-nots', how have the original dynamics of performativity been transformed? Is this related to an art world where creative value is increasingly defined by market players; an art world politically manoeuvred by government's populist and democratic agenda, and socially hijacked by the wealthy to serve as their private playground? Has performativity ceased, to a large extent, to operate as a radical agent: producer of aesthetic knowledge and a transgressor of aesthetic boundaries? Has it been infiltrated by the dynamics of consensus making and camouflaged by the false promise of a democratic art? This text will highlight how shifts in the triangulation 'curator, artist and audience' in recent performative exhibition making has rendered the practice problematic; and point to a number of ways to explore spaces of resistance to this impasse.

Three Models for an Art of Encounter

One of the most commonly observed hallmarks of a performative art project today is the notion of 'participation'. Nowhere has this been more prevalent in recent times than in Nicolas Bourriaud's 1998 theorization of a group of artists whose work came to be known under the aegis of 'relational aesthetics'.² Posited as an art form of social exchange Bourriaud also considered that relational aesthetics offered a way to overcome "the utopianism of the historical avant-garde, not by simply abandoning it, but by realizing it, through the localized and momentary formation of alternative ways of living"³. The French critic's thoughts have often been referred to as a theory of art for the 1990s; and they certainly became a mantra for many an exhibition in the following decade. According to Bourriaud, relational artworks were being produced by a panoply of artists, amongst them Rikrit Tiravanija, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, and Carsten Holler, with the aim of enacting deep social transformation of the conditions and conception of art. Bourriaud's introduction to his text on the subject reads as follows: "Rikrit Tiravanija organizes a dinner in a collector's home, and leaves him all the ingredients required to make a Thai soup. Philippe Parreno invites a few people to pursue their favourite hobbies on May Day on a factory assembly line... Christine Hill works as a checkout assistant in a supermarket and organizes a weekly gym workshop in a gallery". However, as we shall see, this focus on the theatricalisation of experience has turned out to be one of the weaknesses in Bourriaud's argument.

There is a sense in Bourriaud's ideas whereby relational artworks are conceived as autonomous communes, even if they are actualized only for a moment. For example, Rikrit Tiravanija's project *The Land*, which he co-founded in 1998 in rice fields outside of Chiang Mai in Thailand, was described by the artist as a lab for sustainable environment and artistic projects, a sort of eco-aesthetic community. The realized utopianism of such a relational project made it resonate with the formation of various anti-capitalist movements since the 1990s. Indeed the series of articles brought together in Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics* could be read as a manifesto, in his own words "for a new political art, a micro-political disengagement from the capitalist exchange, creating a trading community that eludes the capitalist economic context".⁴ Such a declaration resonated reassuringly with much of the activist background behind performance in the 1960s and 1970s, giving it gravitas and pedigree.

However in the last six years, various critics have explored, on the one side, the darker side of the relational coin; and on the other, the wider socio-economic factors that have contextualised its seamless ubiquity in curatorial practice. Stewart Martin and Claire Bishop sought in two different articles "Critique of Relational Aesthetics" and "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" respectively, to draw attention to the profound limits in Bourriaud's problematic proposal.⁵ They discuss the need to reclaim history and reconstruct the idea of relational aesthetics as a 'critical' art of social exchange. Stewart observes that the anaesthetisation of novel forms of capitalist exploitation, in the works mentioned by Bourriaud, become "helplessly reversed into an aestheticisation of capitalist exchange".⁶ Both authors point to the exclusion of relational artists whose work challenges Bourriaud's model, and hence highlight the need to reassess this history. In particular Bishop proposes the notion of 'antagonism', as a form of relational resistance, whereby relational art functions as an immanent critique of the commodity of form. A prime example for both critics is the work of Santiago Sierra who, along with other artists engaged in arguably relational work, is not discussed in *Relational Aesthetics*. Sierra sets up simple situations in which on the one hand, people are employed (with contractual remuneration) to operate the art work in a manner that highlights their commodification and instrumentalisation whilst simultaneously embroiling the gallery visitor within the very ethics of such processes. Such was the case of *3 people paid to lay still inside three boxes during a party* staged during the Havana Biennial in 2000. Three young women were hired and paid 30 dollars each to remain inside a wooden box during a biennial art party. Invited guests were not informed about the content of the boxes they were using as seats. Sierra literally bought the time of those young women; and the guest was caught in the artist's web, their presence being the motivation for the piece to be created in the first place. This type of work is an anomaly for Bourriaud's theory; a relatio-

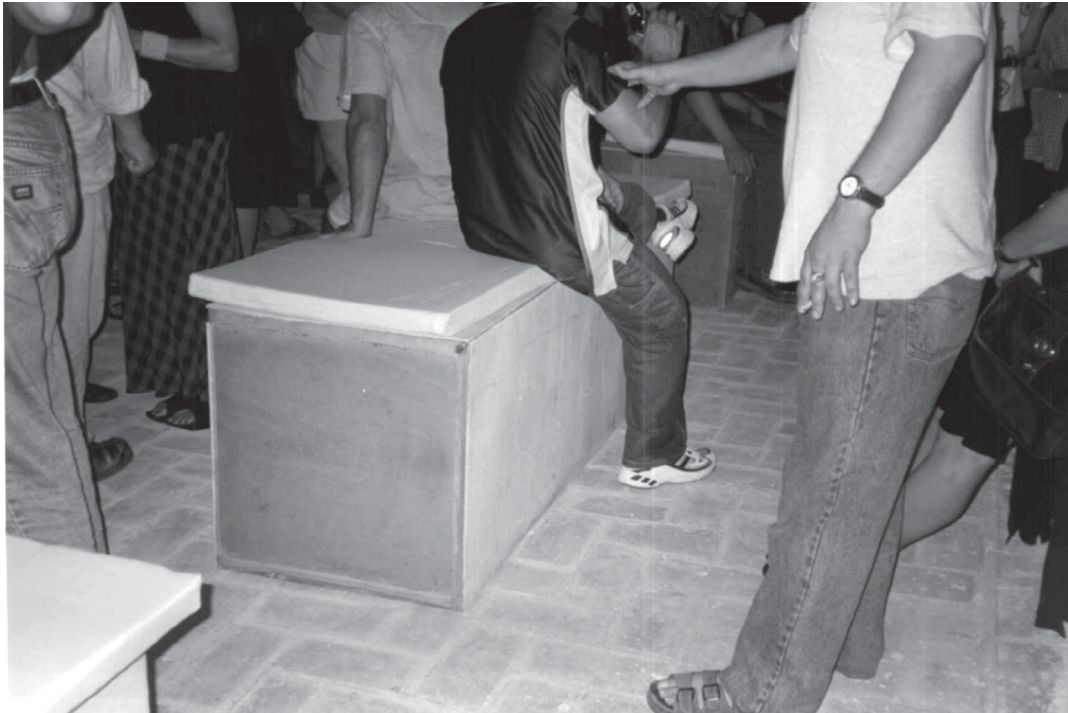
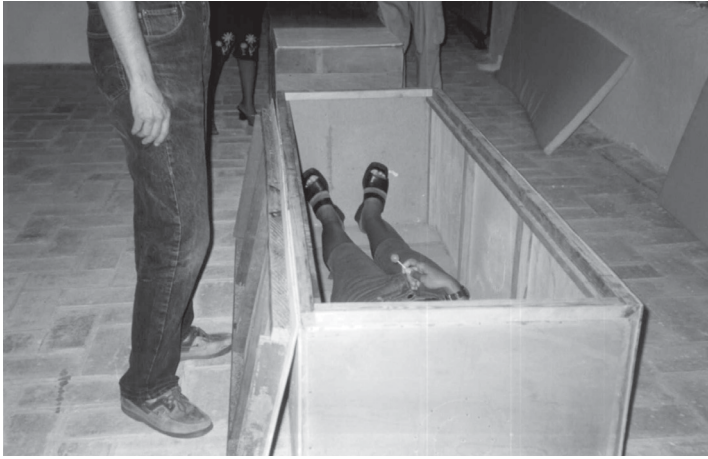
2
Nicolas Bourriaud,
Relational Aesthetics
(1998), Les Presses
du Réel, Dijon, 2002.

3
Stewart Martin,
"Critique of Relational
Aesthetics",
Third Text, Vol. 21,
No. 4, July 2007,
pp. 371.

4
Bourriaud, cit.,
p. 42.

5
Martin, cit.; Claire
Bishop, "Antagonism
and Relational Aes-
thetics", *October*,
No. 110, Fall 2004,
pp. 51-79.

6
Martin, cit., p. 371.



Santiago Sierra, *3 People Paid to lay still inside 3 boxes during a party, Vedado, Havana, Cuba.* November 2000. Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery.

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nal art which doesn't posit a social space apart from commo-dification, but rather highlights the social exchange as being mediated by money, building on the traditions of institutional critique of the 1970s.

Bishop and Stewart's central arguments are similar, both maintaining that Bourriaud's convivial encounters are not adequately antagonistic to count as democratic, and in doing so they push for a corrective to Bourriaud's ethics of inter-subjectivity. This opens up questions regarding the political substance of relational art by asking for an antagonistic (political) rather than convivial (ethical) account of art's social relations. But it is also true also that within this alternative theory of the relational, the presumption is that the politics of encounter have to be resolved within the work. The problem is that in establishing this as the main parameter of the work, one neglects other options, in which hegemony could also be challenged.

In relation to Bourriaud's conviviality and the more conflictual relations favoured by Bishop and Stewart, Grant Kester offers a third model to this debate, one which neither limits social encounters to convivial ones nor restricts its political antagonisms to the ones overtly present in the work. In his book *Conversation Pieces, Community and Communication in Modern Art*, Kester provides a robust account of the relationship between participatory cultural processes and the turn to discursive practices. He tracks a reflection that operates, in his own words, "between art and the broader social and political world".⁷ This model is politically spiced up: a "new genre public art", which develops an ethics for artists out of the contrast between a "patronizing form of tourism", and "a more reciprocal process of dialogue and mutual education".⁸ As an introduction to his ideas, Kester proposes that the traditional aesthetic strategies and categories of both modernism and postmodernism converged on "a general consensus that the work of art must question and undermine shared discursive conventions".⁹ He lists the common features of these avant-garde frameworks, as follows: on the one hand, that they favoured a reductive model of discursive interaction based on the traditional opposition between somatic and cognitive experience; on the other hand, they tended to restrict the definition of aesthetic experience to moments of immediate visceral insight; and finally, they were based on an essential solitary interaction between a viewer and a physical object, which disallows a comprehension of collective processes in the moments of production and reception within the creative practices.¹⁰

In opposition to this, Kester looks towards a different view of the artist, one interested in an emancipatory model of "dialogical interaction". Indeed we could consider that by extension his thoughts inevitably could also form our understanding of a performative curatorial practice. The directive proposed is one for an open, listening and vulnerable artist, in relation to the viewer or collaborator. The social models and techniques that Kester's dialogical artists use tend to be derived from political contexts. Kester traces his argument within existing practices including the work of Stephen Willats whose practice is conducted as an open work, based on agreement. Willats' work encompasses the polemics and issues of our contemporary culture and society as a means of consciously examining the function and meaning of art in society. This necessarily takes it beyond the norms and conventions of an object-based art world, rather seeing it as a function of his work to transform peoples' perceptions of a deterministic culture of objects and monuments, into the possibilities inherent in the community between people, the richness of its complexity and self-organisation; the artwork having a dynamic, interactive social function. For Willats these concepts have remained a constant, as he wrote in the 1960s:

"A work of art can itself constitute a societal state, a model of human relationships.

7
Grant Kester,
*Conversation Pieces:
Community and Com-
munication in Modern
Art*, University of
California Press,
Berkeley-Los Angeles-
London, 2004.

8
ibid., p. 151.

9
ibid., p. 88.

10
ibid., pp. 88-89.

A work of art can consist of a process in time, a learning system through which the concepts of the social view forwarded in the work are accessed and internalised

A work of art must acknowledge the relativism inherent in perception and the transience of experience, there being no right or wrong, it taking the form of an open-ended process

A work of art can engage anyone meaningfully, being available to whoever wishes to enter its domain, only through embodying in its presentation the means by which people are able to acquire the necessary language and procedures to receive and internalise its meaning

My work engages the audience in a new way of encountering art in society. I am not talking about a compliance, but something more active, a mutual understanding, an interaction between people – similar to the dynamic image of the homeostat where all the parts of the network are equal and equally linked."¹¹

More recently the German group Wochenklausur have developed projects that intervene directly in the social fabric providing medium term infra-structural, institutional, strategic solutions to perennial social problems like prostitution, elderly care, medical provision for homeless, classroom design, voting systems, immigration, and social barriers, amongst others. In their own words, "on invitation from different art institutions, the artist group WochenKlausur develops concrete proposals aimed at small, but nevertheless effective improvements to socio-political deficiencies. Proceeding even further and invariably translating these proposals into action, artistic creativity is no longer seen as a formal act but as an intervention into society."¹²

The problem is that Kester's argument, and the examples of artistic practice cited (consider the use of the term 'socio-political deficiencies' in the web-site introduction by Wochenklausur), can default into being a moralizing one, due to its focus on the conduct of the artist in relation to a given community. This raises the question of whether such thinking limits the art of the encounter (the social in art) to the political field, and this problematic aspect is left unresolved by Kester.

Having now looked at three models of sociability within the art of encounter, let us consider the wider conditions under which they operate. It is a context, let us not forget, in which curators are increasingly under pressure to literally perform spaces of communality in their projects; a context to which audiences (or, more influentially, funders both private and public?) appear increasingly addicted.

A Contextual Critique of Sociability in Art

Jan Verwoert's text "Exhaustion and Exuberance. Ways to Defy the Pressure to Perform", looks at the sinister turn that faces the labours of contemporary art workers, in particular the pressures to 'excessively' perform. The text was written by Verwoert, during a performative printing project initiated by Dexter Sinister in 2007, at the Centre d'Art Contemporain Geneva, where they compiled and printed issue 15 of the publication *Dot Dot Dot*¹³. The issue investigated the nature of contemporary production, overproduction and exhaustion. Dexter Sinister forced Verwoert to work within the conditions he had called into question in an earlier text that year entitled "Use Me Up".¹⁴ As Dexter Sinister observe in their introduction: "Quite literally to force the producer to produce in the immediate space of his imminent deadline, symbolized by the brooding presence of a waiting printing press. Over a compressed fortnight the rest of the issue then emerges in real time around this premise".¹⁵

As Verwoert explains in his performative text *Exhaustion and Exuberance*: "After the disappearance of manual labour from the lives of most people we have entered into a culture where we no longer just work, we perform. Being an ever expanding group of creative types, who invent jobs for ourselves, by exploring and exploiting our talents to perform small artistic and intellectual miracles on a daily basis. It is we, the socially engaged – who create communal spaces for others and ourselves

11
Steven Willats.
Accessed 7.05.2012.
<http://stephenwillats.com/context>

12
Wochenklausur.
Accessed 7.05.2012.
http://www.wochenklausur.at/projekte/menu_en.htm

13
Jan Verwoert,
"Exhaustion and Exuberance, Ways to Defy the Pressure to Perform", *Dot Dot Dot* 15, 15 December 2007, produced at the Centre d'Art Contemporain Geneva, Switzerland, for *Dot Dot Dot* magazine, New York, 2007. *Dot Dot Dot Issue 15*, was produced on location at the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Switzerland, between 24 October and 7 November 2007 by Mai Abu ElDahab, Stuart Bailey, Walead Beshty, Sarah Crowner, Joyce Guley, Will Holder, Anthony Huberman, Polona Kuzman, David Reinfurt, Joke Robaard, Jan Verwoert and Jan Dirk de Wilde, printed on Ricoh TC2, Ricoh JP 8500, and Riso V8000 stencil printing machines in an edition of 3000. This project was part of the exhibition "Wouldn't it be Nice... Wishful Thinking in Art and Design", Centre d'art Contemporain, Genève, Switzerland, 2007 (curated by Emily King and Katya Garcia-Anton).

14
Jan Verwoert, "Use Me Up" in *METROPOLIS M*, No.1, February 2007.

15
Dexter Sinister
Accessed 7.05.2012.
<http://www.dexter sinister.org/index.html?id=123>



Dexter Sinister, *Dot Dot Dot Issue 15*, view of the exhibition *Wouldn't It Be Nice...*, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, 2007. Photograph by Francis Ware. Courtesy of the Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva.

16

Jan Verwoert,
"Exhaustion and Ex-
uberance...", cit.,
p. 90.

17

James H. Gilmore and
B. Joseph Pine II, *The
Experience Economy:
Work is Theatre and
Every Business a Stage*,
Harvard Business
School, Cambridge –
Ma., 1999.

18

Lars Bang Larssen,
"Zombies of Immaterial
Labor: The Modern
Monster and the Death
of Death", in *e-flux
journal* "Are You Work-
ing too Much? Post-
Fordisms, Precarity,
and the Labor of Art",
Sternberg Press,
London, 2001, p. 86.

by performing as instigators of social exchange. When we perform we generate communication and thereby build forms of communality. When we perform we develop ideas and thereby provide the content for an economy based on the circulation of a different currency: information."¹⁶

Verwoert concludes that in a high performance culture, "we" are the avant-garde but "we" are also the job-slaves. Being part of that "we", one cannot help sympathizing at this stage with Verwoert's further description of the similarities of the world of art workers and that of sex workers. "We" are always ready to perform, any time, any place in the world, thinking new and creative ways to augment the satisfaction of the experience for our clients, and hopefully achieve a new commission.

Indeed 'experience' does seem to be the leitmotif of our times. Lars Bang Larssen has made this patently clear in a recent text entitled *Zombies of Immaterial Labor: The Modern Monster and the Death of Death* regarding the pressure that the capitalization of creativity has exerted on artistic practice and thinking in the last decade; pushing it towards a terrain of the experiential and consensual. For Bang Larssen art has become a norm, and within the current "experience economy" arts normative power consists in commodifying a conventional idea or art's mythical otherness with a view to the reproduction of subjectivity and economy. Bang Larssen goes on to present the thinking of James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II who ten years ago launched the concept of the experience economy with their book *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage*.¹⁷ This proposal describes an economy where experience is a new source of profit to be obtained through staging the memorable.

"What is being produced is the experience of the audience, and experience is generated by "authenticity effects". In the experience economy it is often art, and its markers of authenticity – creativity, innovation, provocation that ensure economic status to experience... The psychological premise of being able to alter the consumers' sense of reality is central. Gilmore and Pine highlight the profitability of simulated situations... It is clear how the consequences of the experience economy can have an effect on dismantling of artistic and institutional signification as well as social connections."¹⁸



Dora Garcia, *L'Inadecuado, Lo Inadecuado, The Inadequate*, presented in the Spanish Pavilion, curated by Katya García-Antón, in the 54th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, 2011. Photograph by Roman Mensig. Courtesy of the artist.

19
Diedrich Diederichsen,
*Eigenblutdoping: Selbst-
verwertung, Künstler-
romantik, Partizipation*,
Kiepenheuer & Witsch,
Cologne, 2008.

20
Markus Miessen,
*The Nightmare of Partici-
pation (Crossbench Praxis
as a Mode of Criti-
cality)*, Sternberg Press,
London, 2010.

In the same article Bang Larssen points to the evocative notion of self-doping imagined by fellow critic Diedrich Diederichsen, in his book *Eigenblutdoping: Selbstverwertung; Künstlerromantik Partizipation*, in 2008.¹⁹ In this Diederichsen goes one step further than Bang Larssen by looking at the addiction in audiences drawn to projects whose experiential promise is one in which there is actually nothing new to inscribe, no unique identity to contribute or craft towards construction of something new, but rather the space of inscription is one of predictability, consensuality. Diederichsen posits the traditional power of the cultural institution is displaced when audiences are invited to play and participate, in an ostensible democratization of art. Within this false premise audiences lose the possibility of inscribing their subjectivities on anything besides themselves, and are robbed of an important opportunity to respond to the institution and the exhibitionary complex where art is presented.

The thinking of Bourriaud, Bishop, Stewart, Verwoert, Bang Larssen and Diederichsen, amongst others, constitutes a revealing discussion regarding the factors that create and problematise the notion of performativity today. It is vital however not to limit the debate to critique; let us also attempt to imagine a space for a practice of resistance for art workers within the performative scenario. What indeed might be these other ways to perform? Could we imagine an aesthetic experience that operates within a field of collective agency, where workable forms of resistance can be devised?

Mining the Social through Conflict, Laxity and Crime

One way to enter this discussion is by imagining how to challenge the role of the audience within a performative field. Indeed if so far we heard calls to reconstitute the history of artistic practice, or a repossession of the energy expenditure within the furnaces of the art world, it is also essential to consider the operative space of the audience within this debate. In the final series of the trilogy *The Nightmare of Participation*, Markus Miessen imagines a new type of participant, one not subservient to predefined codes of practice and production, but an uncontrollable irritant.²⁰ The idea leads Miessen to go as far as advocating the possibility of a "conflictual participant". He argues that over the last decade, the term "participation" has become increasingly overused. When everyone has been turned into a participant, the often

uncritical, innocent and romantic use of the term becomes frighteningly vacuous. Supported by a repeatedly nostalgic veneer of worthiness, phony solidarity and political correctness, participation has become the default of politicians withdrawing from social and cultural responsibility. Similar to the notion of an independent politician dissociated from a specific party, this third part of Miessen's "Participation" trilogy encourages the role of what he calls the "crossbench practitioner," an "uninterested outsider" and "uncalled participator" who is not limited by existing protocols, and who enters the arena with nothing but creative intellect and the will to generate change.

It is perhaps the kind of participant that Charles Filch seeks. Filch, 'the beggar', is the secondary and marginal character that artist Dora Garcia asks to sporadically 'escape' (re-cast by professional actors) from Bertolt Brecht's *Three Penny Opera*. Filch's first invitation by the artist was to spend the summer in the Munster Sculpture Project (2007) and keep a diary of his encounters with the locals and the international art scene there (www.beggarsopera.org). His latest escapade was to the Spanish Pavilion in the Venice Biennale 2011, appearing on stage in the project *L'Inadeguato, Lo Inadecuado, The Inadequate*. The project gives us a reason to discuss on the one hand, the different kind of space for the audience, an aspect sympathetic to Miessens' conflictual participant, and on the other, a model for a processual type of performativity which avoids the congealment of the event.²¹

In a discursive, extended performance broaching the notions of deviation, radicality, the outsider, exclusion, censorship and marginality, actors Samir Kandil and Peter Aers, who developed the role, were given few directives by Garcia. Whilst in Venice they inevitably fed from their experiences in Munster, they also called on the internal logic of their own work. The performance fed too from the lax, occasional member of the audience who made the decision to engage or whom they attempted to engage with, or disengage from or ignore. For this space of dis/engagement there was no predetermined protocol, no task to complete and no groups of participants, previously sought out by a mediator, to make the work possible. Indeed Filch doesn't exist for the public specifically, his presence and actions take place whether or not an audience is present. Indeed none of the usual 'facilities' were offered to the audience to participate within the project, it was an inadequate forum ambiguous towards participation as such. The spectator was not conceived of as an essential part of the work, but as a casual passer-by. And yet the engagement with different moments of Filch's process, or indeed of *The Inadequate's* dynamics, could take forward the internal structure of the work, furthering in an immaterial manner its creative density.

And yet whilst the parameters of *The Inadequate* were rigorously elaborated, an openness of form remained in each of its moments. In the case of Filch this freedom provoked us into unearthing and questioning the dichotomies that Garcia inserted into a situation, and that characterizes so much of her practice. With Filch, the artist sidesteps the concept of participation as understood in *Relational Aesthetics*. She operates beyond modes of consensus, and opens up a space for Miessen's notion of conflictual participation, no longer a process by which others are invited in, but a means of acting without mandate, as an uninvited irritant: a forced entry into fields of knowledge that arguably benefit from exterior thinking. If participatory art has been fetishised as the conduit of a democratic art, then sometimes, democracy has to be avoided at all costs. Indeed the promise of participation today in performative exhibitions can also be experienced as a default space from which politicians can withdraw responsibility. The democratization of art may indeed bear the pungent whiff of its privatization. Rather than breeding the next generation of consensual facilitators and mediators, one could argue for irritation as a creative force. If, in *The Inadequate*, processual discursivity liberated the audience from the confinement of participation, the project *A Crime against Art* scripted the audience into the performance, thereafter giving them freedom of action. A hybrid project, somewhere between a conference, collective workshop and performance, it fundamentally employed discursivity as a means to explore the triangulation between performativity-spectacle-participation.

21
The expanded performance *L'Inadeguato, The Inadequate, Lo Inadecuado* occupied the Spanish Pavilion in the 54th edition of the Venice Biennial. I was the curator of the Pavilion. The project can be viewed in detail on www.theinadequate.net. Versions of the publication in Spanish, English and Italian are available for download at this site.

A Crime against Art explored the inherent contradictions and complexities, within the figure of the curator, the artist, the critic and the spectator within such a performative set up.

Conceived as a staged conceptual trial within the environment of the ARCO art fair, Madrid, in 2007, *A Crime against Art*, was inspired by the mock trials organized by avant-garde movements (André Breton) in the 1920s and 1930s, that theatrically raised a number of polemical issues in the world of contemporary art.²² The project, set as a television courtroom drama and filmed by four camera crews, began with the assumption that a crime had been committed. The process took place in real time and was not scripted, this openness being a key factor to the performative discussion held. The potential perpetrators of the crime, the defendants, had handed themselves in, yet the nature and evidence around the crime were allusive and no victims had come forward. Within this open-ended theatrical discussion the testimonies and cross-examinations became an attempt to unravel the nature of the puzzling "crime against art".

The accusations summarized the problematics of performance that concern this essay, that is the dichotomy between the creation of a space for agency, set off against the collusion with the gargantuan machine of spectacle and consumption that typify an art fair (or biennial, amongst other platforms) as places in which to produce performative art. In other words it asked the question of how to accept the invitation to create a performative project within a space such as an art fair, and still maintain a space of independence that questioned the morals of participation within the system. *A Crime against Art* incorporated a questioning discourse into its remit in an attempt to avoid becoming a wasted possibility of critical artistic agency; another moment of entertainment contributing to the further reduction of the little space left for contemporary art as a vector of enquiry. Such an impasse was eloquently targeted by Expert Witness and curator Maria Lind who presented excerpts from an art report regarding the art world of the future which foresaw that "In 2015, artists" ... (we could say here that this applies to all art workers)... "who refuse to take part in the entertainment industry will inevitably live under deteriorating conditions".²³

The result of the trial in *A Crime against Art* – the issue of whether the defendants were ruled innocent or guilty – was not really the point. The purpose rather was a discussion and enactment of the use and abuse of performative structures, within the eroticized and spectacularized space of an art fair. *A Crime against Art* attempted to reconfigure performance as a potential value for change, and so unveil several points of controversy in the contemporary art scene. Furthermore, the project questioned the notion of responsibility within an artwork, especially where performance and participation are concerned, and experimented with ways of negotiating the performative creation of art discourse.

Conclusion. A rhythmic NO

What the performances of Charles Filch and *A Crime against Art* point to is the importance of discursivity on various fronts. On the one hand, in problematising performance's natural good fit with public entertainment in today's consumer based society, and on the other, in creating a different dynamic for the public's engagement with, and construction of, the work of art. Finally these works also highlight the value of discursivity as an internal mode of critique for art workers and thinkers.

Perhaps out of this heterogeneous genealogy of objectives we might understand the strange complementarity and synchronicity between the ascendancy of the curatorial gesture (evermore creator of discourse) and the advocacy of language exchange as a paradigm of practice. Added to which is the ubiquitous appeal of the term 'discourse' as a word to conjure and perform power. In short the discursive turn that predominates the art world (curators and artists)... and therefore the quandary of performativity today.

There is nothing novel in this discursive turn however, at least in the case of artistic discursivity. Let us think back to Conceptualism's reception of J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, first published in 1962.²⁴ Austin's notions coupled with the failure of criticism at the

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Based on "The Trial" organised in Madrid in February 2007 by Anton Vidokle and Tirdad Zolghdar, *A Crime against Art* was edited into a video by Eric Menard and Hila Peleg, and produced by Bureau des vidéos, Paris in 2007.

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Maria Lind. 2005. "European Cultural Policies 2015. A Report with Scenarios on the Future of Public Funding for Contemporary Art in Europe". *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies*, <http://eipcp.net/policies/2015lind/en>. Accessed 13.5.2012.

time, prompted artists to fill the discursive gap between self-representation in interviews and other formats. Carl Andre, Donald Judd and Robert Morris, for example, took the explanation of the work into their own hands and employed published conversation as a genre to achieve this. These artists and others coupled the productive powers of language within the stock-assumptions of their experimental art practices and attendant commentary.

More recently, the literalised realizations of conversation have exceeded their precedents in anglophone conceptualism of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed during these decades, the turn to language in Conceptual Art was not straightforwardly an injection of language into art, but a militant assertion of art's implication in its own distributive and promotional structures, and of its adjacency to and involvement in text. Thus the turn to the discursive is presented as a reflexive attending to the conditions of possibility reproduced, in and as the art system. In the late 1980s and 1990s one observes a subsequent correlation between the turn to the discursive and the explicit thematisation of the infrastructural processes and roles of the art world. This is evidenced in a very diverse range of practices from Hans Haacke's social surveys to, more recently, Tino Sehgal's theatrical gamesmanship with art market processes and Dora Garcia's problematization of the role of institution and spectator in the artwork.

What is more novel however is the ever-growing discursive role of the curator, as in artistic projects such as in *A Crime against Art*. A shift due in part to similar circumstances as those recounted above – that is the failure of the critic in providing a sufficiently strong discourse. But, the shift is also related to the new dynamics of territorialisation and knowledge trading current in our times, and the pitfalls lying within the commodification of process and knowledge have been recently underlined by Carolyn Christov-Barkagiev. In her booklet for documenta 13 she comments that in the "obsolete twentieth century object, the exhibition, a form of mannerism of the exhibition has evolved," so that at times, specific contents have become disembodied, and specific artworks have become almost translucent in their lack of transcendence.²⁵ Christov-Barkagiev goes on to affirm that "procedural questions are as meaningful as, if not more than, the so-called thematic content or subject matter of an art project – how one exercises agency and relates to others, how one proceeds as an artist, or how one acts as a member of the audience for example." In particular she goes on to highlight the dangers of attempting to package the process of artistic creativity. "Although the process through which one reaches a result might be "creative" it is important to not turn that process itself into a new kind of product and as a consequence I am not fully in favor of the emerging, uncritical, dominant ideology of creativity... The problem we both need to consider is how to proceed as artists, makers of culture, and intellectuals in the emerging economy and hegemony based on the exchange of knowledge products."²⁶

Whatever one may make of this reading of cross-relations, it is clear that the discursive in the performative artwork or curatorial endeavour has entailed, as one of its many moments, a move to reformulate the various relationships of practitioners, audiences and institutional processes. Projects such as Dora Garcia's Charles Filch and *A Crime against Art* remind us of this militancy, pointing to and problematizing the potential of falling into a form of gestural, crystallized performativity rather than processual, mercurial performativity.

While the creative processes of performance and performativity have become singularly congealed into packages of entertainment and audiences herded into pre-established formats of vacuous participation, the question today is how to alleviate the practice and its audiences from these burdening imperatives. Over a century ago, Robert Walser chose to become a "walking zero", in order to escape similar pressures in his literary career as those we have been describing. Having been a successful writer in Berlin, Walser returned to his native Switzerland to duck beneath the 'accepted' level of language of the time. His 'ducking' involved occupying his pen through a series of microscripts, unintelligible to the normal eye and seemingly the fruit of non-sensical behaviour. Walser's NO, was viewed by society as a form of marginalization, antithetically heroic in

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J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1962.

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Carolyn Christov-Barkagiev, "Letter to a Friend", in *100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*, No. 003, Hatje Cantz, 2011.

26

ibid., p. 4.

its slightness. Today, even such small-but-big gestures would be absorbed by markets and discourse.

Since we are in the subject of words, it is perhaps fitting to consider another literary figure, and master of the NO, as an open window to our impasse, and temporary ending to this discussion. I had in mind the many apparitions of Bartleby recounted by Enrique Vila-Matas in his masterful novel *Bartleby & Co.*²⁷ This compilation of footnotes, eschewing the traditional narrative structure and progression, takes up Herman Melville's original Bartleby who leads the epitomy of a negated existence, and whose standard reply to any request was "I would prefer not to". Vila-Matas goes on to recount the many incarnations of Bartleby in modern culture, in particular literature. As the writer tells us, "Only from the negative impulse, from the labyrinth of the No, can the writing of the future appear."²⁸ With this spirit in mind, escaping the enslaving rhythm of our performative times involves a consideration of practice (artistic or curatorial) as a way of preferring not to, a sort of practitioners side-step, which doesn't attempt to take on the system head on, but creates a space alongside it; a form of open-ended indeterminateness sufficiently distant from an absorbable reality. Whether this position is then developed through the many channels of lateral action available to us, such as insidious charlatanry, trickstery deception, or smokey poker-ship, in order not to disclose the creative process, is up to our collective imaginarium to conceive. Indeed, what is being called for here, is what has been described (in a different context; a recent philosophical text by Chus Martinez, which I nevertheless find particularly relevant to the field of performativity) as the... the possibility of creating different kinds of thinking; logics capable of merging us with the substance of art, instead of placing us at a critical (I would add consumable) distance."²⁹

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Enrique Vila-Matas,
Bartleby & Co (2000),
Vintage, London, 2005.

28
ibid., p.2.

29
Chus Martinez,
"As little time on the
ground as possible.
First attempt on the
possibility of
artistic significance
beyond philosophy of
history", *Mousse*
magazine, No. 30, Milan
October-November
2011, p. 102.

HOW TO PERFORM THE CITY? A PERSONAL MANUAL IN 10 STEPS ON HOW TO ORGANISE AN ARTS FESTIVAL.

Sally De Kunst

The Belluard Bollwerk International is a small big arts festival that takes place every year at the beginning of the summer in Fribourg, Switzerland. It has a history of having its own vision on current artistic trends and showing the work of local and international emerging artists in a convivial context. It is hard to pin down the disciplines we are producing or presenting. Word says we are 'in between', which is at the same time complex, challenging and exciting. Our biggest quest is to find a good balance between artistic autonomy on the one hand and the link between the artist and the world that surrounds them on the other; between art and society; between an arts festival and its social function in a city. This however does not mean that we do socio-cultural work, rather the festival investigates *performativity* in different ways, presenting actions or utterances that through their performance change the situation or the power relations within the given encounter or context.

What follows is my personal manual in 10 steps on how to organize the Belluard Festival, distilled from four years of experience in Fribourg.

1. Get to know your context

Fribourg is a small town in the confederated Switzerland: a de-centralized country with 4 official languages, 26 states and as many different mentalities and cultures. Although it is geographically in the centre of Europe, Switzerland seems to have (in the performing arts at least) a big focus on local production, and this often due to cultural politics and funding bodies. 'Internationalism' in the Swiss German part means mostly an exchange with Germany and Austria. In the French speaking Romandie there's a strong link with France. Fribourg is a small catholic town (34.000 inhabitants, of which 1/3 are foreigners) with a renowned university (10.000 students) and is situated on the language and cultural border of these two regions. It's a city where superstitious practices are numerous, where the surface of shopping centres per inhabitant is the highest in Europe, and where you find seven tattoo shops for 34.000 residents. This complex combination gives it a sort of 'cosmopolitanism': an openness and curiosity. We seem to be situated in a quite remarkable place that turns out to be the perfect



Thomas Bratzke, *Building Therapy*, 2010. Photograph by Nicolas Brodard. Courtesy of The Belluard Bollwerk International Festival.

context, as to run a festival like the Belluard Bollwerk International implies to never stand still, to advance constantly, to feel the pulse of time.

One often gets under the surface of a local context by means of artistic projects. In 2010 the German artist Thomas Bratzke treated a building with acupuncture. The performance-installation Building Therapy revealed in its research that Fribourg is a Mekka of alternative therapy and superstition, including the practice of the 'fiseurs de secrets': people who have a gift to heal others through the telephone.

2. Think global, act local

There is a risk involved in what we do at the Belluard Festival, in producing and presenting atypical projects, either in their form, or their content. Within the given cultural political situation – that is as mentioned predominantly focused on the local – every year it remains a challenge to organise an atypical international festival. However this does not mean that I am pleading for a return to the local. The result of globalisation is that the romantic idea of cultural origins or local roots has more or less lost every meaning. Authenticity doesn't refer to provenance any more, but rather to a successful arrival of a cultural practice in a new surrounding, ideally with its own, obstinate touch. It is in that sense that locality becomes interesting to the festival: to produce international artistic work that creates an interactive relationship with and questions the local context. To stimulate local artists to overcome the 'little box' thinking by trying out new formats. To organise a contest with a leitmotiv, that challenges artists and practitioners from other fields, and that offers residencies and mentoring to get to know the city and local society. To involve the local spectators in an active way, by inviting them to be performers or participants in an artistic project. To use other locations in the city and reach an audience of passers-by. To be actively involved in both local and wider-ranging artistic activities.



Sylviane Tille, *The Great Public Sale of Brilliant but Unrealized Ideas*®, 2011. Photograph by Nicolas Brodard. Courtesy of The Belluard Bollwerk International Festival.

We often realize projects that employ licences or creative commons, like the Complaints Choir (2008) or the Human Library (2010). In 2011, the Fribourg theatre director Sylviane Tille staged *The Great Public Sale of Brilliant but Unrealized Ideas*®, an auction of artist ideas instead of oeuvres. Seventeen ideas by international and local artists, including Santiago Sierra, Miranda July, San Keller and Jean-Damien Fleury were estimated by experts, and sold by auctioneer Bernhard Piquet from *Maison des Ventes* in Geneva, for money or 'creative capital' (artistic ideas). The evening was brilliantly de-railed by anarchic and active participation of the Fribourg audience that demanded basic democracy.

3. Watch, listen and talk, talk, talk

The way choices are made to put the festival together every year is quite intuitive: I let myself be lead by what I see, hear and read, by the discussions I have with artists and by the questions, dealing with society, they are dealing with. A mutual interest is very important. Artists should also have a curiosity about our practice and reality. To put together the programme I am often in dialogue with a lot of different people: the artists, but also my team, the members of our association, politicians, foundations, sponsors, colleagues in the national and international art field, journalists, local authorities, experts in different fields, the owners of certain sites in Fribourg we want to use, and of course the audience. I consider my practice as a director of an arts festival as a constant dialogue with many people.



Sylviane Tille, *Human Library*, 2010. Photograph by Nicolas Brodard. Courtesy of The Belluard Bollwerk International Festival.

Through an informal discussion with librarian Madeleine Dietrich in Fribourg I found out about the creative commons Human Library. I invited Sylviane Tille to organize her version in 2010 in the State & University Library of Fribourg. The catalogue contained 60 human books – persons with a speciality or knowledge – and 15 dictionaries (simultaneous translators).

4. Work 'à la tête du client'

Although the festival ostentatiously spreads out in the city, we do have one main venue: the Belluard (or 'Bollwerk' in German), an old fortress built in the Middle Ages – reminiscent of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre – which is half open air, and has a theatre stage. The place was squatted in 1983 by the artists who founded the Belluard Bollwerk International, and since then, every year, it is the heart of the festival. It is a 'to gawk at', magnificent, but also very dominant building, which not every performance or art project can do justice. So this space guides decisions and, for the most part, the Belluard is used to present more 'conventional' projects, not in their ideas, but in their form, like concerts and performances. Sometimes artists use the space in a different way. In 2011, for example, the musicians/composers Antoine Chessex, Valerio Tricoli and Jérôme Noetinger used the architecture of the fortress to create the sound piece *Espèce d'Espèce* and the space has also hosted theatre pieces, like Forced Entertainment's creation *Tomorrow's Parties* or *External* by the young British company GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN (2011).

Another space we often use is the theatre Nouveau Monde at the Ancienne Gare. It is a classical small black box that allows us to present performances, lecture performances, films or other smaller stage projects, like *L'effet de Serge* by Philippe Quesne (2008). The space lends itself to other forms, for example the 'Oral cinema' piece [*wirvwar*] by Swiss artists Gilles Aubrey & Stéphane Montavon (2010), in which the audience were invited to lie down on pillows and close their eyes while listening to a soundscape based on field recordings from Fribourg and elsewhere.

Besides these more 'classical' stages, the Belluard Festival produces a lot of work in relation to the context of the city and its inhabitants. Many projects take place in the public space or in other spots or buildings in Fribourg. We've done projects in the university, shopping centres, library, old warehouses, a tribunal, in city gardens, streets, the open air swimming pool and behind the cathedral, to name a few. For this site-specific work and for the stage pieces, we operate *à la tête du client*: every artist proposes a concept or project to us, and together we look for the right setting for the project. It's never the other way round.



Sheila Ghelani, *Covet Me, Care For Me*, 2011.
Photograph by: Nicolas Brodard. Courtesy of The Belluard Bollwerk International Festival.

Taking time for a long walk through the city with an artist, and showing them several places and sites, turns out to be very constructive. Often a space inspires the initial proposal. The British artist Sheila Ghelani modified her performance installation *Covet Me, Care For Me*, in which the visitors can break a glass blown heart, after having decided to present the work at the *Werkhof*, a beautiful, rudimentarily renovated old boat warehouse.

5. Tickle artists with a Leitmotiv

In 2008, with the perspective of starting from artistic input, the festival's traditional call for proposals changed its rules. Every year we choose a leitmotiv, often in dialogue with other artistic practitioners: in 2008 we chose *Mis-Guided* in conversations with Wrights & Sites, a group of artists/researchers from the UK; in 2009, *KITCHEN* – re-inventing our festival centre – with Oliver Schmid, Patrick Aumann and Adrian Kramp, three architects from three different bureau's in Fribourg; in 2010, *Urban Myth* in collaboration with the Belluard office team; in 2011 *Hope*, with Belgian dramaturge Elke Van Campenhout. The collaborators were invited because they were working around a topic that was to us relevant at that moment. Either because it relates to the urban and social context (*Mis-guided*), because it concerns the festival as a community and meeting place (*Kitchen*), because it is a subject that is very present as much in Fribourg as globally (*Urban myth*) or because a lot of artists are dealing with it and it is a current political issue (*Hope*). These keywords are not themes, rather a pair of glasses to look through at what is happening actually in the field of art. Similarly, we are careful that the Leitmotiv does not dominate the whole communication of the festival.

As Fribourg is a city in constant mutation, in which urban transformations are as much criticized as acclaimed, the first call in 2008 took into consideration this everyday reality. Under the label *Mis-guided in Fribourg* and co-directed by the English collective Wrights & Sites, six interventions in the public space were realised for the festival. These projects didn't take the visitors to historical or picturesque parts of the city, but rather showed the 'verso' of the city: the commercial zones, the altering and expanding quarters. In a playful way the six projects questioned urban society, and this without the slightest hint of nostalgia, but from a subtle, critical point of view.



Alexander Hana, *Tschou Tschou*, 2008. Photograph by Alexander Hana. Courtesy of The Belluard Bollwerk International Festival.

The Mis-Guided projects in 2008 engaged not only festival visitors, but also drew the attention of passers-by and tourists. To our pleasant surprise two of the projects, *Tschou-Tschou* by Alexander Hana, an alternative tour with the Fribourg tourist train to the commercial outskirts of Fribourg, and *Hier, aujourd'hui, demain* by Robert Walker, a guided tour with 3D glasses through the constantly mutating quarter of Pérolles, were adopted by the Fribourg Tourism Office after the festival, to become a part of its summer programme in 2009.

6. Take risks

A jury of 8 people (half local, half international, consisting for example in 2011 of an architect, a graphic designer, a teacher/artist, an artist, a visual arts curator, a performing arts programmer, a dramaturge and me) selects between one and nine proposals – depending on the nature of the call and the projects – out of the average of 250 to 550 applications we receive every year. The final selection takes two days, and consists of long discussions, and a mapping of the chosen projects. This part of the festival practice is very important, as it puts my choices as a programmer at risk. First of all we receive lots of proposals from artists, or other practitioners, that I don't know, and would not come across in my usual networks – although I try to step outside of these. Secondly these artists often have a completely different take on the leitmotiv: it's like a stone that we throw in the water and that makes ripples in many directions. Thirdly the

eventual selection on the table is a result of a real tough debate. Some projects that end up in the programme, I would not have selected myself – individually. However through the group discussion, I find myself seeing certain things from a different angle and getting new perspectives on the festival, which is very refreshing.



Anonymous, *Anonymous*, 2010. Photograph by Nicolas Brodard. Courtesy of The Belluard Bollwerk International Festival.

In 2010 the jury decided to choose the project of Anonymous, an artist that wanted to keep his identity a secret; a scheme that put at stake the festival as an institution. We couldn't sign a contract with an anonymous artist, couldn't wire money to his account, or take out any insurance. During the festival Anonymous made different unannounced interventions, and the quest for his identity became a real treasure hunt in the city of Fribourg. On the philosophical level this project tackled different questions about authorship and art.

7. Stay up to date

Even though – after 28 years – we are institutionalised, we like to think that we are still a 'small big festival' that stays close to the latest developments, both at the level of society and the arts. Every year the festival's programme allows us to receive a new league of artists, and with them, new ideas. Where the 2008 festival focused on the urban situation more in general, the 2009 festival was influenced a lot by the economical crisis and the issues of the consumption of art. On October 5th 2008, the newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* reported that Switzerland had the biggest concentration of shopping malls per inhabitant in Europe. Yet with the arrival of the crisis, empty shop windows were spreading in Fribourg, according to *La Liberté* on April 28th 2009; a phenomenon also taking place in other towns. Within this context, the Belluard Festival 2009 invited three artists and two artist duos to open a shop in the city of Fribourg for a period of ten days. Their projects were a reflection about consumption, economic transaction and the position of artists in relation to this. 2010 was the year of 'urban myths', but also an edition where a lot of north-south questions trickled into the programme. When the Belluard Festival launched the call for proposals 2011 in May 2010 under the title *hope*, it seemed urgent to us to develop a con-

temporary understanding of the word. We considered that hope situates itself in the eternal now, as a subtle driving force in every situation, relation and ethical set-up we commit to, rather than dreaming of a revolution. Yet, a year later, in June 2011, as the festival was launched, events in the middle-east and north of Africa suggested a very different reading of the term. Of course, we believe that hope is just that: something that changes all the time, that is intangible and that implies actions, revolutions and movement. For us being hopeful does not involve simply accepting an activist position, but rather staying at the more indefinable level of unresolved poetics and questionings proposed to us by different artists from different backgrounds.



Nicholas Galeazzi & Joel Verwimp, *Coyotl: Imprimerie des mythes*, 2010. Photograph by: Charlotte Walker. Courtesy of The Belluard Bollwerk International Festival.

Real events quite often overtake art. When in 2010 artists Nicholas Galeazzi (CH) & Joel Verwimp (B) proposed to research the link between Colonel Ghaddafi & Damien Hirst in their performative copyshop *Coyotl: Imprimerie des mythes*, this was one of the 'myths' picked up by our graphic designer René Walker for his publicity campaign of anonymous posters. We couldn't foresee the huge media scandal this would cause around the time of our press conference. The copyright of one of the series of posters that said 'Ghadaffi invited to Fribourg', was tracked down by – of all possible Swiss media – the Tribune de Genève as belonging to the festival, and this exactly at the time that one of two Swiss hostages was about to be set free by the Libyan government. Some Swiss newspapers wrote that the Belluard Festival put the life of the hostage in danger, and a tough media and political debate about our campaign and festival arose, until the successful release of the hostage.

8. Create a buzz

The Festival has a history of producing and presenting art works that have in some cases caused scandals, but equally always created a buzz. Passed on by word of mouth, many projects over the past 28 years continue to lead a life of their own, often distorted, exaggerated or sensationalized. Mostly the rumours are spread unintentionally. However in 2010 the festival launched the call *urban myth* with the deliberate intention to cause a stir. In some of the realized projects the myth didn't come into existence through an action. Several projects were not announced before the festival, and their performativity existed rather in the word of mouth, the suggestion of what could still come, or the recounting of what had happened.



Christian Hasucha, *Die Insel*, 2008. Courtesy of The Belluard Bollwerk International Festival.

Although the festival has a playful, distinct communication, it's often the projects in the urban space that catch the attention of passers-by, and become an unconventional form of publicity. One of the most eye-catching examples was *Die Insel* (2008), by the German artist Christian Hasucha, an island covered with grass on scaffolding in front of the train station, on one of the busiest squares of Fribourg. It was for free to rent for time slots of three hours. The tenants were at the same time spectator and performer, on a platform that questioned territory in the urban space.

9. Work with a community of practice

The projects *Human Library* or *The Great Public Sale of Brilliant but Unrealized Ideas*® are examples of a *community of practice*, according to the cognitive anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger "a group of people that shares an interest, a practice and/or a profession". The group can develop itself by means of sharing and exchanging knowledge and experiences. The group can however also be formed with the goal to obtain knowledge about a certain field. For the festival we invite contemporary artists who call on the help of specialists to develop their work. This can be artistic support, but also and more often this is a knowledge exchange with specialists from other fields: an engineer, a scientist, an architect, a shaman, a cook, or a politician to list a few. The artists are invited for a group residency in Fribourg, a key-moment in the annual preparations for the festival. All these specialists or participants and their colleagues, friends and relatives are consequently part of the *community of artistic practice*. The exchange of knowledge that takes place during a festival (or its production phase) is more a form of sharing tacit knowledge; knowledge that is not so much tactile or explicit, but that can be transferred through artistic projects between different domains and people. All members of a community get a sort of stimulus from what they create: shared knowledge gives new perspectives, new forms, new art, for a changing society.



Kosi Hidama & Gosie Vervloessem, *The Digging Project*, 2011.
Courtesy of The Belluard Bollwerk International Festival.

Often the simplest concepts are the biggest challenge, and can consequently create the biggest community of participation. The *Digging Project* by the Brussels based artists Kosi Hidama & Gosie Vervloessem (2011) for example, was a poetic project – digging a hole for ten days in a public garden in the centre of Fribourg – that was however logistically very complicated to realize. The city architect, the city engineers, the Archaeology Service of the State of Fribourg, a geo-biologist, and a hypnotist were just a few of the experts that were consulted for the research and production.

10. Be a good host

An important aspect of the festival is hospitality. A cutting edge artistic programme can only brood in a convivial sphere, where a broad audience (or *community*) feels welcome. This hospitality can be interpreted very concretely: to create a time-space to host people to meet, eat, drink and discuss. In reference to the idea of the festival as a temporary community, as a place that, during two weeks, offers both a professional context for strong work of international artists and a convivial setting for exchange between artists, locals, visitors and professionals, the Belluard Festival launched a call for proposals for a kitchen for its edition 2009. For at the heart of every artistic process there is always a kitchen: a cooking place, an eating and meeting place – a place that nourishes creative discussions. And after all, one always has the most interesting encounters in the kitchen at parties. To amplify and encourage this idea of social gathering, Antonio Louro (P) & Benedetta Maxia (I) designed a modular table-based system – *KITCHAIN* – that invites people, through their actions, to turn the entire Arsenal (an old military warehouse next to the Belluard) into a huge kitchen. The audience can decide between an active or passive role: active because you can really prepare your own meal at one of the cooking corners; passive because you can observe our professional cooks Jean Piguet, Arnaud Nicod and Maïté Collin at work and taste their delicious meals. Besides that *KITCHAIN* hosts a bar, and is a space smaller projects and party's. Its flexibility allowed the festival to create different layouts and to renovate the kitchen space concept every year. *KITCHAIN* has turned out to be a huge success, hosting more audience every year since its introduction. (blog: www.kitchain.net)



Reggie Watts on stage at the Belluard Bollwerk International Festival 2010, Photograph by Charlotte Walker.
Courtesy of The Belluard Bollwerk International Festival.

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A festival is at its core a fest, so it should also be festive. It cannot lack parties. A musical highlight of 2010 was the hilarious, brilliant and unpredictable performance of the American musician-comedian-beatboxer Reggie Watts.

Footnote

This is a personal manual. There is no such thing as a single set of guidelines for an event as complex as the Belluard Bollwerk International. In the best case an arts festival in a small town in Switzerland does not have one profile, but many. It exists of a series of mini profiles, focusing on every project, every artist, and preserving their artistic autonomy, in relation to the given context. It's the art itself that defines the diversity of a festival and reveals the heterogeneous profile of its habitat. (www.belluard.ch)

DETECTION, LEFTOVERS, "DEAD THINGS" AND THE TIME IN-BETWEEN: NOTES ON EXHIBITING PERFORMANCE.

Federica Martini

"It is very curious but the detective story which is you might say the only really modern novel form that has come into existence gets rid of human nature by having the man dead to begin with the hero is dead to begin with and so you have so to speak got rid of the event before the book begins."¹ Gertrude Stein

Between 1970 and 1986, Joseph Beuys regularly visited the Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt to re-arrange and manipulate the seven-room installation of works, objects from his life and props from his performances known as the *Beuys-Block*. After his death, the installation has stayed unchanged in the museum galleries, as an aging trace of past actions. Frozen under the spell of museum conservation standards for more than twenty years, the *Beuys-Block* has been recently at the centre of a lively debate following the renovation plans of the Landesmuseum Darmstadt: will the *Beuys-Block* be the same once the floor and walls of this site-specific originally-performative but today static installation have changed? What was the artist's intention? Hasn't the artist's gesture turned into documentation or a significant collection, once the regular re-arrangement of the rooms performed by the artist is over?

Beuys' early experiment in translating performance props and ephemera into a museum space points out at one of the main issues in the exhibition of performance, that is the loss and inaccessibility of the live act. To this loss, the exhibition traditionally responds by presenting performance through its evidence and objects, such as photographs, videos, props, notes, sketches and oral interviews that try to reconstruct the artists' intention as well as historical and aesthetic contexts.² A mediated view of performance partially based on the assumption that in the live act, the audience has "direct, unmediated access" to information through the artist's presence.³

As Thomas MacEvelley highlights in a text on James Lee Byars, for many performance artists in the 1960s and 1970s, the direct, unmediated access to information in exhibitions about performances was guaranteed by self-exhibition.⁴ Invited to show in the Antwerp gallery Wide White Space in 1969, Byars "seated in a white suit, mask and hat in a chair-like arrangement which draped him in red velvet, in an otherwise empty white gallery", engaging conversations with visitors based on questions. Byars' presence and his work were supposed to be inseparable, as implied by a declaration he made in 1978: "Death cancels all my works, never show them again".

Still, today Byars' performances are shown through what remains of the historical acts, as it happened in the retrospective *I'm Full of Byars*, organised in 2009 in Detroit, Milton Keynes and Bern, where objects, texts and videos were put together to illustrate his work. While it is understandable from an art historical point of view to try and reconstruct the context and reception of past performances, the attempt to install the documents as a substitute for "the real work", the performance, is more questionable. In this latter perspective, performance acts the way a corpse does in detective stories, where the narrative begins after the crime has been committed. Still, between mourning and investigation, as Gertrude Stein wittily suggests, the death of the hero at the beginning of the story may be the most productive modern narrative source, if we consider leftovers of the crime – the act – not only as evidence of an unattainable past but as tools for performing the novel's present.⁵

1
Gertrude Stein, "What Are Masterpieces and Why Are There So Few of Them" (1940), in Lawrence S. Rainey, ed., *Modernism: An Anthology*, Blackwell Publishing, London, 2005, p. 413.

2
See Barbara Clausen, ed., *After the Act: The (Re)presentation of Performance Art*, MUMOK, Wien, 2005. Exhibition catalogue.

3
Amelia Jones, "Presence in Absentia": Experiencing Performance as Documentation", *Art Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 4, 1997, pp. 11-18.

4
Thomas MacEvelley, "James Lee Byars – A Study of Posterity", in Susanne Freidli, Matthias Fehner, eds., in *Im Full of Byars – A Homage*, Kerber Verlag, 2009, p. 105. Exhibition catalogue.

5
Stein, cit.

Translated into terms of exhibiting performance, this 'detective attitude' influences our way of considering the status of the performance document. As art historian Sophie Delpoux writes, the photograph of a performance is not necessarily only a document or "mise-en-image" of a gesture, but an autonomous image itself.⁶ Delpoux traces this position back to 1966, when Allan Kaprow's performance photographs were published not as "documents of events", but as tools for enhancing viewers' imagination.⁷

Furthermore, documentation of performance also implies staging, as film-maker Babette Mangolte observes regarding her collaboration with dancer Trisha Brown: "As a filmmaker I knew that dance doesn't work with cutting and that an unbroken camera movement was the way to film the four-minute solo. I had learned it by watching Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly's dance numbers. Somehow the film camera has to evoke the hypnotic look and total concentration of the mesmerized spectator and fragmenting the solo in small pieces taken from different camera positions would break the spectator's concentration and awe."⁸

Which implies that photographs of performances may be "produced as (or perhaps by) the performance (rather than of the performance)".⁹ This concern animated Vito Acconci's *Photo-Piece* (1969), consisting of a linear walk in the city, holding a camera and shooting an image every time his eyes blinked, thus producing images that are at the same time evidence of the act and the act itself.¹⁰

Both Mangolte's hypnotic camera movements and Acconci's shots as a response to his blinking gaze, go beyond the simple chronicle of a gesture, as the recording media and the positions they take towards the act provide a somehow unfaithful translation of it. They show almost the same thing, almost the same act, but in this fracture between the original gesture and its restitution through video and photography, they produce new, autonomous images.

In *Playing with Dead Things* (1993, Arnhem; re-staged in 2004, at Tate Modern, London) curated by artist Mike Kelley, this feeling of glimpsing recognition and ambiguous status was condensed in the idea of the uncanny, which implies past memories being triggered by a present encounter and the uncertainty about the object being animate or inanimate. A similar uncertainty, as that which arises from objects and images documenting performances, was tested in 2008 by the show *Not to Play With Dead Things* at Villa Arson, Nice. The exhibition challenged the dependence of props from performative acts by decontextualising them in the exhibition space.¹¹ The curatorial strategy focused on the rereading of John Bock's solo show at Frac Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (2005), where the staging and the content of the exhibition were determined by the leftovers of the performance held during the opening in the art centre. Based on the assumption that performance implies a certain degree of "updating, rewriting and re-staging",¹² *Not to play with dead things* aimed at discussing the aesthetic position of performance objects "after the act": "Are they meaningless ghosts?", asks co-curator Eric Mangion; are they bound to "restore the energy of the action that gave birth to them?"; do they contradict the immediacy of the performance?¹³

Along with the hypotheses of performance objects being autonomous or something in between performance and objects, *Not to play with dead things* also worked on "the misappropriation of performance historical documents as a creative process." As art historian Amelia Jones observes, performances are always also looked at "through the memory screen", the limited access to the live act implying two forms of knowledge, participation, for the witness, and eventually interpretation through documents and oral history, for the historian.¹⁴ The witness and the historian knowledge are, in Jones' view, equally legitimate also because of the way performance traces are preserved, that is, writes Jessica Santone, as "something that must be replayed, reread or reinterpreted in order to be experienced."¹⁵ In reading performance not only as a unique live act but as an event inviting for repetition and re-presentation, artists such as Tania Bruguera and Catherine Sullivan proposed works based on the displacement of historical documentation in different time- and site-specific situations.¹⁶

This position became a curatorial statement in *A Little Bit of History Repeated*, curated by Jens Hoffman at Kunst-Werke Berlin in 2001. The exhibition included performances from the 1960s and 1970s re-enacted as copies of historical presentations, re-interpreted by artists from younger generations or used as source of inspiration for new works.¹⁷ Concentrated over a few days, the project did not historicize the selected performances, but a way of performing the exhibition space such as the one experimented in the *Between* series at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf in 1969-1973.¹⁸ Conceived and directed by Karl Ruhrberg and Jürgen Harten, the Kunsthalle's project consisted of a series of invitations to artists such as Tony Morgan to occupy the exhibition space between the exhibitions officially included in the institution's program.

6
Sophie Delpoux,
Le corps-caméra.
Le performer et
son image, Editions
Textuel, Paris,
2010, p. 17.

7
ibid.; see also
Allan Kaprow,
Assemblages,
Environments and
Happenings,
Harry N. Abrams,
Inc., New York,
1966.

8
Babette Mangolte,
"On the Making of
Water Motor,
A Dance by Trisha
Brown filmed by
Babette Mangolte",
unpublished
paper, 2003.

9
Philip Auslander,
"The Performativity
of Performance
Documentation", *Per-*
formance Art
Journal, No. 84,
2006, pp. 1-10.

10
See also Delpoux, cit.

11
Eric Mangion, Marie
de Brugerolle,
eds., *Not to Play*
with Dead Things,
JRP Ringier, Zurich,
2009. Exhibition
catalogue.

12
Richard Martel,
"Performance", in
Docks/Actions,
Ajaccio, 2003, cit.
in Eric Mangion,
Marie de Brugerolle,
Not to play...
cit., p. 14.

13
ibid.

14
Jones, cit.

15
Jessica Santone,
"Marina Abramovic's
Seven Easy Pieces:
Critical Documenta-
tion Strategies for
Preserving Art History",
in *Leonardo*,
Vol. 41, No. 2,
2008, pp. 147-152.

16
See Tania Bruguera,
Tribute to Ana
Mendieta (1985-1996);
Catherine Sullivan,
'Tis a Pity She's a
Fluxus Whore (2003).

17
Jens Hoffman ed.,
A Little Bit of
History Repeated,
Editions Valerio,
Paris, 2001. Exhi-
bition catalogue.

18
Renate Buschmann
ed., *Chronik Einer*
Nicht-Ausstellung
Between 1969-73 in
der Kunsthalle
Düsseldorf, Dietrich
Reimer Verlag,
Berlin, 2007.

While Jens Hoffman's show was based on juxtaposing documents and their performative interpretations, the *Between* series was questioning the possibility to create a space for performance through disrupting the spatial institutional discourse and time frame. What happens with *Between* is that, when considered as a form of cultural production and inscribed in a curatorial perspective, performance brings up questions about the temporality of the exhibition, beyond the mere positioning of gestures, objects and images in a historical before and after the act, and beyond duration. The habit of showing performance retrospectively is here counteracted by the idea of constructing performance as actual presence in the exhibition space.

One response to this is the increasing dissemination of the festival format in exhibition spaces, in order to create a platform where the audience can participate to the live act and the performative gesture can be enacted or re-enacted in a site-specific situation. Nonetheless, this way the performance scene and the exhibition of documents, mainly stay separated. Two recent exhibition projects tried to go beyond this distinction, focusing on the connection between documenting and curatorial practice within the exhibition space.

In 2011, Mamco (Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Genève) presented *Hotel Sarkis*, a "paradoxical retrospective exhibition" showing a selection of Sarkis' works paying homage, evoking or openly drawing inspiration from writers, painters, musicians and other cultural figures from past.¹⁹ Most of them are posthumous interpretations, called upon by Sarkis' disappointment facing the exhibitions of artists such as Marcel Broodthaers and Joseph Beuys after their death. This inspired him to have curator and Mamco director Christian Bernard, practice the retrospective interpretation of his work in his absence, to discover his exhibition only the day before the opening.²⁰ Imagining his museum to be a hotel or shelter for works previously installed internationally in different exhibition contexts, Christian Bernard had the pieces emerge in the show in a similar fashion to Sarkis' process of "evoking, rewriting, updating and re-staging". Meant as a possible execution of Sarkis' original score, the exhibition redraws the museum walls with sudden bumps of colours sampled from paintings referenced in his works. A red thread traversed and organized the chromatic space of the exhibition, where the main curatorial strategy developed from a careful handling of back- and forward looks through the use of repetition and synchronicity, a choice that both actualized the memorial aspect of the works and summoned the works and their different temporalities through the exhibition lens. Instead of documenting loss, like many retrospectives do, *Hotel Sarkis* worked on the idea of memory being performative and ended up producing (curatorial) knowledge instead of commemorating the past.

Another way of doing this is to "connect archival research to practice", such as in *If I can't dance I don't want to be part of your revolution*, a platform founded in 2005 by curators Frederique Bergholtz, Annie Fletcher and Tanja Elstgeest to explore "the evolution and typology of performance and performativity in contemporary art".²¹ Taking on Hannah Darboven's definition of her work as "contemplation interrupted by action", *If I can't dance* is based on a combination of research and production of two-year programs presented in public situations, that develop "through their very enactment, at each event and at each location". All stages in the program, research, the act of setting the scene, the involvement of the audience and the production of knowledge are equally on the artists', researchers' and curators' agendas. Here the focus is no longer on the status of live acts, connected documents and objects, but on the circumstances that enable a curatorial project to become a platform for cultural production. The translation of visual poetry, an act negotiating the transposition of the text in terms of form and meaning, also demands this kind of positioning between respecting the visual format (how to translate) and selecting the meanings underlying both words and forms (what to translate) that inform the presentation of performance in an exhibition context. Both poetry translation and performance exhibitions deal with this idea of how much loss the original artistic or poetic gesture can take in order to bear witness to the past event.

The other option, as *If I can't dance* project proposes, is one of imagining the performance exhibition as a situation to participate in. In this respect, documentation becomes one of the elements in the exhibition/situation where knowledge is not merely represented but produced. This echoes, somehow, Marshal McLuhan's belief that recorded jazz is as stale as yesterday newspapers.²² The statement accounts for the difficult conciliation of retrospective and prospective gazes in a unique topicality. Still, yesterday newspapers produce, by definition, a time-specific knowledge that is supposed to last for the duration of one specific day. In this particular time frame, the main goal is not historicizing, but performing history in a limited present, within an ongoing, non-linear discourse that is bound to negotiate its format again, the day after.

19
See Christian Bernard, 2011. "Hôtel Sarkis". Accessed January 2012. <http://www.mamco.ch>

20
Samuel Schellenberg. 2011. "Sarkis. Chambre avec vue." *Le Courrier*. February 19. Accessed January 2012. www.lecourrier.ch

21
<http://www.ificantdance.org/>. Accessed January 2012

22
Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1964.

WHEN TRUTH DISCOURSE MEETS SPECTACLE.

Dorothee Richter



Renata Burckhard, *Inclusion/exclusion – actors in the art system*, 2010. Part of the exhibition project *Spill the Beans*, curated by Andrea Roca, Zoe Meyer and Renata Burckhardt, February 2010, Perla Moda, Zurich. Courtesy Renata Burckhardt.

This essay will review some historical perspectives, which influence contemporary cultural practices, posing the question: where does the clash between the visual arts and theatre come from and where is it going?

In recent times, we have experienced an increasing integration of theatre and exhibition practices in terms of display. Evidence of this may be found in the inclusion of scenography and theatrical scenery in exhibitions and installations and video projections in theatre productions, in both cases leading to general breakdown in what we might see as any strict narration. After some theoretical outlines I will discuss four examples as case studies, firstly the work of Fluxus artists, secondly of Christoph Schlingensiefel, thirdly of Spartacus Chetwynd and lastly a theatre scene by Renata Burkhardt integrated into the exhibition *Spill the beans*.

In order to outline some theoretical principles, I will refer to the distinctions Kant drew between different areas in the arts. He not only discussed the arts at length, but situated them in a new, very distinctive light. In Terry Eagleton's view, Kant's theory provided the upcoming bourgeoisie with an ideological background. Not only in his separation of the sensual from the rational, thus installing or giving a name to a friction which underlies modern subjectivity, but also in his definition of the subject in absolute contrast to the object, estranging the subject from its material existence. In this concept the subject is autonomous and it remains curiously alone; "The subject is not a phenomenon in the world but a transcendental viewpoint upon it"¹. As Terry Eagleton puts it: "If freedom is to flourish, if the subject is to extend in colonizing sway over things and stamp them with its indelible presence, then systematic knowledge of the world is essential, and this must include knowledge of other subjects."²

But this places the subject in a lonely position and interestingly enough it is the sphere of aesthetics that provides these estranged subjects with a form of community. To cite Eagleton again: "What brings us together as subjects is not knowledge but an ineffable reciprocity of feeling, and this is certainly one major reason why *the aesthetic* has figured so centrally in bourgeois thought. For the alarming truth is that in a social order marked by class division and market competition, it may finally be here, and only here, that human beings belong together in some intimate *Gemeinschaft*."³

Moreover, the artistic genius as a concept was bound to subjectivity in Kant's view as he derived the genius concept from the abilities of an eternal creator, but transferred it to represent a function of the artistic subject. This creativity may also be traced back to the requirements for an autonomous entrepreneurship. Kant saw the existence of one major break in subjectivity, the sensual (connected with the arts and the body) and the rational (connected with the rational and the mind.) A contradiction, which was later problematised by Adorno and Horkheimer, who pointed out that in this perspective the mind will always contradict and imprison bodily existence.⁴

This very brief theoretical excursion will function as a background showing us how and in which ways the visual arts and theatre, from the enlightenment onwards, are already positioned through their historical conception. Following Kant, both belong to the sensual, but it is obvious that the visual arts are positioned closer to the concept of a mimetic rational truth and theatre is closer to the sensual and the repressed pleasures of the body. To subdue the disturbing pleasures of the body, theatre plays had a strong pedagogical impact in bourgeois society, implying that you have to learn *morals* from theatre plays. In this perspective, two principles (those of the theatre and the visual arts) are at stake when we discuss the clash of theatre practices and visual arts from the 1960s onwards. To put it in even more exaggerated terms: what happens when spectacle meets the truth discourse? Even if today the manifestations of practices in theatre and in the visual arts seem to be almost the same, their context is different, which implies that more differences exist than appear at first sight.

1
Terry Eagleton,
*The Ideology of the
Aesthetics*, Black-
well, Oxford 1990,
p. 72

2
ibid., p. 73.

3
ibid., p. 75.

4
Theodor Adorno,
Max Horkheimer,
*Dialektik der Auf-
klärung, Philoso-
phische Fragmente*,
Querido, Amster-
dam, 1947.

The following simplified matrix outlines these differences approached from a historical enlightenment position like Kant's. I also take the liberty of transferring Peter Bürger's categories in his famous *Theory of the Avant-garde* (Reception, Production und Usage) to the field of the genres of theatre and the visual arts.⁵ The third category is changed by me, for this specific context, and tries to describe the mode of addressing the public; the underlying pedagogy.

	THEATRE	VISUAL ARTS
	Related to the sensual	Related to the rational
Public (Reception)	Group in a dark space	Individual in a overview situation, able to move around
Production	Hierarchical group	Individual genius
Underlying pedagogy	Morals about life, love and war	To behave, to install control inside the subject

5
See Peter Bürger, *Die Theorie der Avant-garde*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1974.

6
See Richard Sennett, *Verfall und Ende des öffentlichen Lebens. Die Tyrannei der Intimität*, Fischer, Frankfurt, 2004.

7
See Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum, History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge, London, 1995.

8
J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1962.

In Europe in the 1950s, after the catastrophes of the Second World War, theatre can be observed as a site where informative and timeless values were delivered to the upper and middle classes, or at least this was the current ideology of how a theatre play should be. In this period, as Richard Sennett has noted⁶, the public sat more or less immobilized in their chairs and viewed what was staged for them; a situation notably different to pre-French revolution Europe, when (rich) aristocrats freely moved around the theatre, chatting and commenting on the action on the stage. Also in the museums and galleries of post-war western cities people were encouraged to move around and view the exhibits silently and without indulging in any spontaneous, loud or expressive behaviour.⁷ In all cultural venues, the audience behaved in an extremely inhibited manner, for the instance of control was now installed inside the subject; it controlled itself in an environment of total overview and of total visibility (public). Theatre was supposed to be produced in a working process by a large hierarchical organized group, and of the visual arts as the product of the ingenious mind and skilful hands of a single individual (production), as sketched in the matrix above.

With the practices adopted during the 1960s the categories of theatre and visual arts collapsed, but remained defined or framed by the institutions, the museums and galleries for visual arts on the one hand and the theatres on the others.

The notion of performativity, which might be used in our context to discuss different image and theatre-based practices, can be traced back to a broad concept of the performative. In 2002, the team of the Munich Kunstverein described this in regards to their approach to curating:

"The concept of performance is derived from the philosophy of language of the 1950s which defined it as the conceptual antipode to competence. Performance here characterizes the concrete use of language and signifies the realization of expressions in a specific situation by an individual speaker – the applied and embodied language. Competence, on the other hand, is the ideal notion of a speaker who forms an unlimited number of expressions from a limited number of linguistic elements. This implicit meta-level of competence has been negated within the concept of performance by Noam Chomsky and J. L. Austin. Austin's speech act theory in *How to Do Things with Words* implies that language not only has a referential function but also a performative one.⁸ The performative, according to his definition, also realises what it characterises – a so-called speech act. What is meant here is the connection between action and language, such as the connection between the words "I congratulate you" with the action of shaking hands, or statements like "I swear", "I bet", in which the action as such is already implied. The relevant evaluative judgement of performative expressions is, accordingly, not their level of truth, but rather the relative success or failure of their intended meaning. 'Performative' is thus

understood as the constitution of a meaning through an act or a certain practice."⁹

The text provided by the team of Kunstverein Munich transfers speech act theory to the visual arts and specifically to curating, comparable to Dorothea von Hantelman's transfer of speech act theory to the arts in her publication: *How to do things with art*.¹⁰ Both approaches can be thought of as paraphrasing Judith Butler's notion of social practices which must be uttered/performed again and again to become effective. In this understanding 'the performative' of any utterance, whether artistic, curatorial or theatre based is related to its effects.

Fluxus

In the case of Fluxus the collapse of the genres of poetry, visual arts, theatre, was mediated through music, insofar as Fluxus events were notated as musical scores. Through this estrangement, everything could be written down in terms of notation and re-produced from this notation or score at every venue by everybody. A good example of the rejection of a pictorially oriented conception of art is La Monte Young's Fluxus event Composition 5 in which "The action is limited to allowing one or more butterflies to fly around in the performance room and to see to it that all the butterflies are able to escape."¹¹ Musical scores thus provided a meta-language that allowed a levelling of all possibilities of action with written and visual objects and subjects.

For George Maciunas ("chairman" of Fluxus) it was ultimately important to distinguish Fluxus from Happening. He traced Happening back to theatre and to the Baroque ballet at the court of Versailles, whereas Fluxus was positioned against elitist 'high art' and in favour of collective lifestyles; to be understood as a fluid transition between, or unification of, art and life. So Fluxus actions themselves refused artificiality or separation from everyday life. Even the objects that later on became known as Fluxus editions, began their lives as embodiments of action scores, ephemera which could be activated and performed anytime by anybody, the only restriction being to label them when publicly performed as Fluxus. The truth discourse of the visual arts is visible in the concept that Fluxus should avoid pretence and be neither dramatic nor skilful. In the words of Emmett Williams: "Fluxus art amusement [should] be simple, entertaining and unsophisticated, concern itself with banalities, require neither special skills nor numerous rehearsals, be neither tradable nor institutionalizable."¹²

Especially the last requirement turned out to be an impossible task, Fluxus became tradable and institutionalized at the cost of denying part of its goals and production-processes. For example, the multiple authorship in many Fluxus productions, particularly in the editions and films, is nowadays forgotten the reason being that Fluxus became again part of the visual arts field and became therefore again reduced to the attribution of very specific authorship. The following matrix summarises some main issues of the production and reception of traditional theatre in relation to the Neo-Avant-Garde Fluxus

9
Sören Grammel,
Maria Lind,
Katharina Schlieben,
2002. "Curating
Per-Form: Reflections
on The Concept of
the Performative",
<http://www.kunstverein-muenchen.de/>
Folder: ueber
legungen_considera-
tions/essays
Filename: en_per-
formative.pdf –
23.05.2002. Accessed
20. March 2011.

10
Dorothea von Hantel-
mann, *How to Do
Things With Art:
The Meaning of Art's
Performativity*,
JRP Ringier, Zurich-
Berlin, 2002.

11
Jürgen Schilling,
*Aktionskunst. Identität
von Kunst und
Leben? Eine Dokumenta-
tion*, C.J. Bucher
Verlag, Luzern-
Frankfurt am Main,
1978, p. 81.

12
Emmett Williams,
"St George und der
Fluxus-Drachen", in
Klaus Schrenk ed.,
*Aufbrüche, Manifeste,
Manifestationen.
Positionen in der bil-
denden Kunst zu
Beginn der 60er Jahre
in Berlin/Düsseldorf
und München*, DuMont,
Cologne, 1984, p. 33.

	THEATRE	VISUAL ARTS	FLUXUS
	Related to the sensual	Related to the rational	Related to chance operations
Public (Reception)	Group in a dark space	Individual in an overview situation	In a community – audience could be part of a score or could also engage in re-interpreting a score
Production	Hierarchical	Individual genius	In a group group authorship unclear – production is motivated through musical scores
Underlying pedagogy	Morals about life, love and war	To behave, to install the control inside the subject	re-evaluation of everyday life political awareness anti-bourgeois

13
Press Release
by Migros Museum
accompanying
the exhibition
by Christoph
Schlingensief.
2007–2008.

In our context it is important to state that the different productions and authorships were closely interlinked: the events were put on stage and sometimes the event score was written afterwards. The Event score consisted of very basic instructions that could be performed in many different ways. Many of the Fluxus editions comprehend conglomerations of these instructions or they proposed certain actions with their usage. So the object character that today marks presentations of Fluxus "works" is very questionable. For example when Nam June Paik performed an interpretation of La Monte Young's Fluxus event score *draw a straight line*, the remains of the performance were later treated by both art history and the art market as an autonomous art object.

Art/Life: Christoph Schlingensief

At the centre of the late Christoph Schlingensief's artistic practice were the processes of reshaping the conceptions of 'art' and 'life' and the question of how to represent the personal. He pulled on source material from his personal history and chaotic life events, devoting, with total dedication, his injured personality to his array of chosen media:

"The practice of Christoph Schlingensief (b. 1960, Oberhausen) represents a foray through diverse types of artistic engagement – from film-making to activism, from acting to directing, from painting to journalism. The multiplicity of materials that this implies has not only blurred the boundaries between traditional artistic categories but has also entailed a deconstruction and reconstruction of visual worlds; absorbing everything into itself, denying linearity and classical narration, the work makes excessive demands on the viewer's sensory abilities. In the effort to summarise Schlingensief's activities, one feels tempted to apply the term 'universal'.¹³

The above citation comes from the press release for Schlingensief's exhibition "Kaprow City", shown at the Migros Museum, Zürich between November 2007 and February 2008. The curator of the exhibition Raphael Gygas notes that the show, in its first appearance, was a walk-through stage set peopled by actors at the Volksbühne in Berlin (a theatre), later transformed into an installation for the Museum. In these images you can have a premonition of the round stage setting, which was static in the museum. The original moving stage was reversed into a film installation, the main film titled *Fremdverstümmelung* which was produced originally for the Opera FREAK (by Moritz Eggert). The installation at the Migros Museum also consisted of two films done by Schlingensief's father and a "waschvideo". In the first room different videos from surveillance cameras of the theatre version were also shown.



Christoph Schlingensief, *Kaprow City*, 2007/2008. Photograph by Stefan Altenburger.
Courtesy of Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich.

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With the transformation from theatre to the exhibition space the material changed from an atmospheric stage design (background) into a sculptural art object (foreground). While theatre is produced traditionally within a hierarchical group consisting of director, stage designer, actors, technicians, illuminators, special effect and sound technician, musicians, film-makers etc. in the context of the fine arts all this work is subsumed under the sole author name, in this case Schlingensief. Infected by the visual arts environment, the material gains automatic artwork values, losing the usable, tangible characteristics of stage design. The desire for bodily pleasure, which is more present in the context of theatre, is therefore hushed to allow for the more distanced sense of the visual. For the public the conditions of access have also changed, the material world could be entered in the theatre, but only partly so in the exhibition space. So the installation is influenced by the preconditions of the visual arts paradigms. The artist subject that is on display is positioned as being injured by his family history, which removes the encounter even further from any social or political conditions. The installation introduces the desire for a bodily transgression of the muted visitor subject, but it fails to allow this, blocking any theatrical access to the object. The media critique, which one could see in the blurred videos was hardly distinguishable from its affirmation. Even though the attempt at transformation was an interesting one, the resultant fixed attitude, was clearly due to the transfer from theatre context to exhibition space. This fixation was also reflected in the return of the (male) author subject as genius.

14
Raphael Gyga &
Heike Munder (eds.),
Spartacus Chetwynd,
JRP Ringier, Zürich-
Berlin, 2007. Exhi-
bition Catalogue.

15
Tom Morton, 2007.
"Spartacus Chetwynd",
Frieze, No. 107, May.
http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/spartacus_chetwynd/.
Accessed 13.05.2012.

	Schlingensief's work in the realm of THEATRE	Schlingensief's work in the realm of VISUAL ARTS
	Related to the sensual →	Related to the irrational
Public (Reception)	Group in a dark space →	Individual in a confusing situation, able to move around
Production	Hierarchical group →	Individual Genius, hurt by family history
Underlying pedagogy	Morals about life, love and war →	To behave, to install control and self discipline inside the subject

Spartacus Chetwynd

Schlingensief's installation was only one part of the Migros Museum's ongoing investigation of the overlapping of theatre and visual arts. A further exhibition at the museum focussed on the work of the British artist Spartacus Chetwynd¹⁴, whose performances employ an interesting approach to recycling material amidst scenery elements that fittingly look as if they have been made from rubbish. In an article for *Frieze* magazine, Tom Morton describes her work as follows:

"Over the past few years Chetwynd has, with the aid of a flexible troupe of some 20 friends and family members, staged a number of performances that draw on everything from Conan the Barbarian (1982) to The Incredible Hulk, from the performances of Yves Klein to Hokusai's erotic print... Although carefully produced, these spectacles seem always to teeter on the brink of joyful anarchy: the performers sip beer, extemporize lines and distractedly check their text messages, as though what's important here is not persuading the audience to suspend their disbelief but instead to introduce a measure of the carnivalesque into everyday life... I can't help but think her works are just as influenced by the let's-put-the-show-on-right-here-kids attitude found in the BBC children's television series *Why Don't You?* (1973-1995).¹⁵



Spartacus Chetwynd, *The Fall of Man – A Puppet Extravaganza*, 2006. Photograph by Stefan Altenburger.
Courtesy of Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich.

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Chetwynd's characters act as subjects who can make a claim on culture material and re-read it, according to their necessities, against the grain. For example, for her work "The Fall of Man" (2006) she presented aspects of the book of Genesis, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The German Ideology* as a puppet play. The marionettes, made out of potatoes, were animated on makeshift cardboard stages by her performers, dressed as clowns. In this absurd context the texts, normally laden with history and meaning, were handled with indifference, as if interchangeable with any, or all other texts. The inclusion of everyday behaviour from the actors, such as playing around with their mobile phones, creates a tension where the distinction between actors and audience is in danger of breaking down at any time. Yet on the other hand, their care-free attitude and lack of perceptible skill, appear to call out to the audience to become one of them, as if their weird sexual performances could be copied in a minute. In many of her performances, Chetwynd seats the audience at the same level as the actors with the division of audience and actors often set up purely through the presence of an installation element, a table for example.

	THEATRE	VISUAL ARTS	Chetwynd
	Related to the sensual	Related to the rational	Related to children's play and the absurd
Public (Reception)	Group in a dark space	Individual in a overview situation	In a community – audience is affected by the performance and in a way their presence is acknowledged
Production	Hierarchical group	Individual genius	In a group, authorship unclear but in the end subsumed under one artist's name. Production is motivated through do it yourself attitude, playfulness
Underlying pedagogic	Morals about life, love and war	To behave, to install the control inside the subject	re-evaluation of cultural history and media-access possible fun despite the absurdity of so-called reality

Calling on Dorothea von Hantelmann *How to Do Things With Art*¹⁶ we could argue that not only the spoken word (as Austin has developed at length) but also the play of signs in visual arts refer to actions and make things happen. The transfer of the stage set into the exhibition space brings with it the same problems, we have encountered with Fluxus and Schlingensief. The material is transformed from an equipment of an action into a fixed situation that becomes immediately an art object. Also the anarchic element of the life act is subdued through this transformation, the encounter of an event where possibilities can never be completely controlled, is lost.

Renata Burkhardt: a theatrical scene in an exhibition

The last example cited here is the scene with the title: "Inclusion/exclusion – acteurs in the art system". This took place in the exhibition project *Spill the Beans*, curated by Andrea Roca, Zoe Meyer and Renata Burckhardt in February 2010, at the alternative art space Perla Moda in Zurich. As the organisers explained in the press material, the exhibition "focussed on the existing structures, economies and politics of the contemporary art world, showing various works by artists who reflect on, emphasize and criticize these structures and mechanisms and subvert the control of recognition processes in the art world or offensively exploit them for their own purposes."¹⁷ Amidst more object based artworks, a setting in the exhibition space was designed by the scenographer Melanie Mock and featured a central, raised orange platform which resembled the kind of promotional display stages found at trade- and art-fairs. The curators used the platform to introduce a number of interventions exploring the dynamics of contemporary art business.

The writer Renata Burckhardt wrote a scene for the exhibition, in which actors portraying various art-world types made an appearance, playing out a dialogue amongst the audience in a situation which was not immediately recognizable as a staged scene. The two protagonists started with a typical situation in the art field, a relatively unknown artist (female and not young) shows work to a young hip male curator, who reacts patronizingly. Gradually the two locate themselves on the raised platform in the space, literally 'staging' the power relations they represent. During the ongoing scene, the female protagonist made it clear that her partner was a very influential gallerist and slowly took charge of the situation. This narration was interrupted by reflexions of the actual space (it is cold here), and the actual situation of the actors, partly delivered with megaphones. Even if the message was possibly rather a simple one, namely that money exerts a definite influence on art institutions and their exhibitions programme; the protagonists were expert in expressing their power relationship by subtle changes of attitudes and behaviour patterns. Precisely this inflection, was something everybody present in the room had encountered before. Also the references in the scene to the specific space where it happened (the door won't shut) further involved the audience in what was happening. The message of the theatrical intervention transmitted a sudden recognition of one's own position in the art world. The conditions of access became visible.

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Andrea Roca,
Zoe Meyer,
Renata Burckhardt,
Master Project for
the Postgraduate
Program in Curating,
Spill the Beans,
http://www.curating.org/index.php/master_projects/spill-the-beans.
Accessed 13.05.2012.

	THEATRE	VISUAL ARTS	Scene in an exhibition by Renata Burkhardt
	Related to the sensual	Related to the rational	Related to the sensual
Public (Reception)	Group in a dark space	Individual in an overview situation	In a community – audience is affected by the performance
Production	Hierarchical group	Individual genius	Hierarchical in a group but also based on a long term pre-production
Underlying pedagogic	Morals about life, love, war;	To behave, to install the control inside the subject	Self awareness

In this example the problem of the static art work is also recognizable, in our spectacular media world it would seem to be not enough to just view it. Yet, to put the audience in the situation of overwhelming emotions, as is often the case in mass media, is also not an option. To enlighten always means to make somebody aware of his or her position and to suggest a possible action, a move towards self-empowerment. All categories of reception, production and pedagogy/usage, that is of the underlying statements, could be resolved and aim at a message that goes beyond the given.

In conclusion it is possible to identify that we encounter nowadays a clash of theatre and visual arts, which melts down the categories in the Kantian sense. But this issue is not only driven by an ideological urge, it is also part of a certain helplessness of the position of so called "high art" which is nowadays encountering less support in society and from the political side. The aspect of an overall education is not of much interest for politicians, unless the masses are involved in the process (therefore the notion of art education is in this respect problematic). Meanwhile, in terms of ideological needs, protagonists of the visual arts field appear to be trying to change the exhibition format into something more spectacular. The movement from the Kantian fixed genres to this more recent overlap of cultural genres leads to a situation in which single authorship is more and more neglected in favour of a post-fordist notion of new free combinations of replaceable and interchangeable pieces. In such times, the question of how the visitor subjects are addressed is a difficult one, and the answer can vary enormously in seemingly similar projects. What remains clear is that aspect, what I have termed the 'underlying pedagogic' should never be taken for granted, but rather be carefully discussed in all cases.

BIOGRAPHIES

Katya Garcia-Anton is an independent curator based in Zurich. Her forthcoming project *Gestures in Time* (curated with Lara Khaldi) is the flagship exhibition of *Qalandia International* a new festival for international visual arts in Palestine, launching in November 2012. Katya Garcia-Anton's professional history encompasses the following institutions: The Courtauld Institute of Arts, London; BBC World Service, London; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; Institute of Contemporary Art, London; Museo d'Arte Moderno, Sao Paolo; IKON Birmingham, UK; and Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, which she directed between 2002 and 2011. She curated the Spanish Pavilions in the Venice Biennial 2011, and the Sao Paolo Biennial 2004; as well as co-curating *Days Like These*, the Prague Biennial in 2005. Between 2000 and 2002 she was on the editorial board of *Third Text*.

Federica Martini is an art historian and curator. After having studied American Literature and Contemporary Art at the University of Turin, in 2007 she completed a PhD focusing on the evolution of the biennial exhibition format. She was a member of the Curatorial Department of the Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art, Rivoli-Turin and of Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne. Since 2009 she works as a teacher and program coordinator for the Master MAPS - Arts in Public Spheres at ECAV, Ecole Cantonale d'Art du Valais, Sierre. Recent publications include *Just Another Exhibition: Stories and Politics of Biennials*, with Vittoria Martini, Postmedia Books, Milano, 2011.

Barnaby Drabble is a curator, writer, researcher & teacher. With a focus on contemporary art he has curated independent projects including exhibitions, screenings, discursive events and events in the public space. He initiated the research and archiving project *Curating Degree Zero* (1998 - present day) with Dorothee Richter and established Drabble+Sachs (2001-2006) with the artist Hinrich Sachs. He holds a doctor of philosophy (PhD) from Edinburgh College of Art (2010) awarded for his research into the public's role in contemporary art exhibitions. He co-founded the Postgraduate Programme in Curating at the ICS, ZHDK, Zurich (with Dorothee Richter) and since 2009 he is a faculty member of the Master MAPS - Arts in Public Spheres at ECAV, Ecole Cantonale d'Art du Valais, Sierre. He is managing editor of the *Journal for Artistic Research* (since 2010), edited the Swiss Arts Council's annual publication on exhibitions (2010 & 2011) and, as a writer, regularly contributes to art magazines, catalogues and publications.

Sally De Kunst is the director of the Belluard Bollwerk International, an arts festival in Fribourg, Switzerland. She currently also co-directs with Daniel Imboden the Watch & Talk residency programme at the Zürcher Theaterspektakel (CH). After her studies in Theatre at the University of Ghent (B), Sally De Kunst worked from 2000 til 2003 as a freelance dance, theatre and film critic for the newspaper De Morgen. From 2003 until 2006 she was the dance programmer of arts centre STUK and the international contemporary dance festival Klapstuk in Leuven (B). In 2006-2007 she worked as a co-organiser of two international exchange platforms: Monsoon, an Asian-European exchange, Seoul, 2006, and Expedition organised by Gasthuis (Amsterdam) in collaboration with Brut (Vienna) and Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers (Paris). She has also been working as an editor for *Etcetera*, a Belgian magazine on theatre, dance, performance.

Gavin Wade is Director of Eastside Projects, Birmingham, an artist-curator and publisher of Strategic Questions. In 2010 he received the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Breakthrough Fund Award for exceptional cultural entrepreneurs. Curated projects include: Yangjiang Group (2012), Painting Show (2011-12), Narrative Show (2011), Dan Graham: Models & Videos (2011), Book Show (2010), Joanne Tatham & Tom O'Sullivan: Does Your Contemplation of the Situation Fuck With the Flow of Circulation (2009) and This Is The Gallery And The Gallery Is Many Things, (2008), Eastside Projects; Strategic Questions Venice, 52nd Venice Biennale (2007); Public Structures, Guang Zhou Triennial, China (2005); ArtSheffield05: Spectator T (2005). His books include *UPCYCLE THIS TEXT?* Stroom (2011); *Has Man A Function In Universe?* Bookworks (2008); *The Interruptors: A Non-Simultaneous Novel*, Article Press (2005); *STRIKE* (adjusted by Liam Gillick), Alberta Press London (2002); and *Curating In The 21st Century*, The New Art Gallery Walsall (2000).

Sibylle Omlin is an art historian, curator and author. Since 2009, she has been director of the École Cantonale d'Art du Valais, Sierre, Switzerland. She studied German literature and art history at University of Zurich (MA degree). Between 1994 and 1998 she worked as a journalist on the staff of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* Zürich and in 1997 began lecturing at the University of Zurich (German literature) and University of Art and Design Zurich (art theory). Between 2001 and 2009 she worked as Professor and head of the art institute for art theory, cultural studies and contemporary art at the Academy of Art and Design in Basel. She regularly curates exhibitions including, most recently, *The Belly of Whale*, Vaduz, Bern, Konstanz, Zürich & Sierre (2010-2011), *À l'eau. Aquarell heute*, Centre Pasquart, Biel (2011) and *La forêt rouge*, Musée de Bagnes, Châble (2012). She is the author of numerous books, reviews, articles and catalogue texts on contemporary art. Her research has included a focus on public art, intermediality of text and photography, performance, new media and contemporary hybrid medial narrations.

Dorothee Richter is an art historian and curator; Director of Studies for the Postgraduate Programme in Curating, ICS, at the ZHDK Zurich and publisher of *On-Curating.org*. Prior to that she was Artistic Director of the Künstlerhaus Bremen. She has initiated symposia on questions of contemporary art with the following publications: *Curating Degree Zero* - an international symposium of curators (with Barnaby Drabble); *Dialoge und Debatten - on feminist positions in contemporary art*; *Im (Be_) Griff des Bildes* (with Katrin Heinz and Sigrid Adorf); *Die Visualität der Theorie vs. zur Theorie des Visuellen* (with Nina Möntmann); *Re-Visionen des Displays* (with Sigrid Schade and Jennifer Johns); *Institution as Medium. Curating as Institutional Critique?*, Kassel (with Rein Wolfs), teaching: University of Bremen; Ecole des Beaux Arts, Geneva; Merz-Akademie Stuttgart; University Lüneburg, Zurich University of Arts. She initiated (with Barnaby Drabble) the *Curating Degree Zero Archive*, an archive, travelling exhibition, and website on curatorial practice (www.curatingdegreezero.org). Other editions: *Curating Critique* (with Barnaby Drabble), editor of the web-journal *On-Curating.org*. She is curator of *New Social Sculptures* in cooperation with the Kunstmuseum Thun and students of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating.

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The background for the symposium was the touring exhibition project *In the Belly of the Whale*, curated by Sibylle Omlin. The symposium was interspersed with performative interventions from the artists of the exhibition.

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