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INSTITUTION AS MEDIUM. CURATING AS INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE? / PART 1



Christoph Büchel, *Deutsche Grammatik*, 2008. Installation view Kunsthalle Fridericianum (detail).

Courtesy: Galerie Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, London. Photo: Stefan Altenburger

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INSTITUTION AS MEDIUM. CURATING AS INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE?

Dorothee Richter and Rein Wolfs

The symposium *Institution as Medium. Curating as Institutional Critique?*, organised by the Kunsthalle Fridericianum and the Zurich Postgraduate Program in Curating (Institute for Cultural Studies, Department of Cultural Analysis, Zurich University of the Arts), attracted an international audience to Kassel on 26 and 27 March 2010. The two-day discussion was opened with the provocative question in how far it is possible to exercise institutional critique by curating exhibitions.

'Institutional critique' is a term designating artistic practices and positions such as those of Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, Andrea Fraser and Hans Haacke. The question is: how can a practice that intends to radically show the conditionality of art, its financial entanglements, and its function as a means of distinction be related to institutions and curators' activities therein? Is this not a contradiction in terms? The aim of the symposium was to explore these contradictions as well as the possibilities and limitations of critical curatorial practice.

Oliver Marchart's introductory keynote talk addressed the issue of the ideological engagement of exhibitions based on the example of theoretical positions of three documenta exhibitions. While documenta 10 transferred theoretical contributions in the *100 days 100 guests* format to the exhibition space, thus contributing towards a paradigm shift in the fine arts, and Documenta 11 extrapolated on and decentralised the theoretical part through the concept of international platforms and symposia, documenta 12 retracted some of these achievements. Hence hegemonic and counter-hegemonic tendencies are in constant conflict in exhibition making. Although institutional critique is articulated in the exhibition situation and as criticism of specific representation formats, it emphasises social conditions. For if exhibition visitors find themselves in a one-Euro shop after entering a museum, as was the case in Christoph Büchel's large solo exhibition *Deutsche Grammatik* mounted at the Fridericianum in 2008, the clear message is that capital is the absolute benchmark in our form of society. In spite of the seemingly spectacular incorporation of a discount supermarket in the exhibition concept, this message is not lost, for the visitor's unclear position is revealed. Visitors are addressed as consumers (which is what they actually are) at a place where they had hoped to find 'purer' pleasures. When visitors are thrust into an event in this way, the art institution becomes visible as a societal agent that produces exclusion as well as recognition. As places of representation, however, art institutions are also contested territory themselves. Who is allowed to convey what messages at art institutions?

Other symposium contributions dealt with the direct influence of politics on curatorial activities. Often

policymakers too quickly see institutions and curators as taking a critical stance and try to curb such activity. Exhibition institutions generally have to cope with insufficient financing and political demands to 'generate' high visitor numbers. In terms of education, this can reverse the aim of educating and emancipating visitors, conveying artistic and curatorial messages that conform to the masses.

Some of the postgraduate courses on curatorial practice and theory whose students took part in the symposium have integrated the idea of *educational turn* into their curating curricula. According to Nora Sternfeld, the so-called *educational turn in curating* marks an important shift in the understanding of both curatorial practices: "Curating is no longer understood as the mere mounting of exhibitions, education is no longer understood as the transmission of existing values and acquisitions."¹ As Dorothee Richter noted at another point, from the very outset curating is intertwined with pedagogy, whose effects (content) and influences (form) on subjects and group formation have to be discussed in each case. As a spatial practice, exhibition making arranges bodies in a space and as an event inscribes itself in bodies via behavioural patterns.² Curating programmes provide students with both a theoretical background and innovative practical approaches. The courses and thus the participants are at the interface of a contradictory mission. On the one hand, courses formalise and standardise curatorial methods. On the other, they strive to not only emancipate participants but also to make them players in the field of art who are capable of critical thought and action. Therefore it is no coincidence that the issues addressed at the symposium stemmed from an advanced art institution and a programme for postgraduate studies in curating.

1
Nora Sternfeld
(ed. Anton
Vidokle),
*Unglamorous Tasks:
What Can Education
Learn from Its
Political
Traditions?*, in
e-flux journal,
14 March 2010.

2
Dorothee Richter,
*Pedagogy of
Exhibition Making*,
in *Eigenheer*,
Drabble, Richter:
Curating Critique,
Frankfurt/Main,
2008.

'Critical' curating engages with very similar issues by striving to overcome ingrained structures and renew the institutions museum, gallery and art world. The aim is to develop socio-politically relevant exhibition formats, to question cultural-historical facts and myths, politicising the narration of the shown content concerning gender issues, migration, economy, urbanism and globalisation, to name but a few. This is connected with the desire to have 'radically democratic' (Mouffe / Laclau)³ and emancipatory effects, which can be created through a link to political-activist groups, through radical curatorial decisions, and through curatorial 'complicity' with subversive artistic practices.⁴

So if we view exhibitions and art projects as an institutional apparatus making it possible to convey certain meanings and new perspectives to a larger public sphere, then what is important is how new publics are addressed, how knowledge circulates, and which social spaces and therefore institutions can be created and addressed. Thus criticism may have only just begun through the medium of the institution art, which is why we have to take the issue of the messages of exhibitions seriously.

So what are the opportunities, possibilities, and impossibilities of critical curating? How and for whom are programmes designed? What kinds of deviations from formats change content?⁵

Dorothee Richter, the head of the Postgraduate Program in Curating in Zurich, described the course of study as a platform focusing on collaborative project work and new kinds of curatorial practice and art education, and the MAS Curating graduates Irene Grillo, Maren Brauner and Damian Jurt presented their institution-critical curatorial projects as an example. Rein Wolfs, the artistic director of the Kunsthalle Fridericianum, discussed Christoph Büchel's *Deutsche Grammatik* exhibition. Büchel integrated a one-Euro shop into the foyer of the Fridericianum and put a construction sign on the outside of the building announcing that the Fridericianum was being converted into a branch office of the German Federal Employment Agency.⁶ As mentioned, the keynote speaker Oliver Marchart (professor of sociology in Lucerne) formulated a radical criticism of the last three documenta exhibitions. Other speakers included Maria Lind (former director of the CCS Bard Graduate Program), San Keller (a Zurich-based artist), Carina Plath (curator for Painting and Sculpture, Sprengel Museum Hannover), Axel Wieder (artistic director of the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart), Stih & Schnock (Berlin-based artists), Giovanni Carmine (director of the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen), Hassan Khan (a Cairo-based artist), Stella Rollig (director of the Lentos Museum in Linz), Yael Eylat van Essen (director of the Curatorial Studies Program, Tel Aviv), Marysia Lewandowska (artist, London), Renée Padt (director of the CuratorLab, Konstfack, Stockholm), Søren Grammel (artistic director of the Grazer Kunstverein), Sissel Lillebostad (curator and coordinator of Curatorial Studies, Bergen), Beryl Graham (professor of New Media Art, Sunderland), Olga Fernández López (tutor of the Curating Contemporary Art course, Royal College of Art, London) and Lisa Le Feuvre (lecturer in Curatorial Studies, Goldsmiths University, London). In addition, a student in the Postgraduate Program in Curating, Isin Onol (Istanbul), together with the Serbian curator Maja Ciric organised a talk with students and graduates from Zurich, Amsterdam, London, Istanbul and Belgrade.

The discussion about the critical potential of curatorial practice was elaborated on and this debate given a platform again in the symposium *Institution as Medium. Curating as Institutional Critique?* A selection of the contributions will

be published in two issues. San Keller's intervention is a peculiarity in this web journal.

Keller documents his performative contribution for the symposium and puts it into the larger framework of his project for Kunsthalle Fridericianum: *Pre-, Pre-, Pre-, Pre-, Preview.*

3 The third aspect was a destroyed and plundered museum with a fully furnished caretaker's flat, whose rooms were divided into two parts by a grey 'inter-German' wall, as well as a break room for the caretaker and the technical staff, which symbolised the lost museum function. During the opening weekend, a real functioning trade fair for political parties in the Federal Republic of Germany called 'politica' including an event room and a café was held. It became a large-scale installation after the trade event and embodied the fourth aspect, a political one. The political aspect was also present outside the building, as Friedrichsplatz – formerly 'parade grounds' – was converted into ploughed farmland. On the field there was a silo, which covered the statue of Landgrave Frederick, as well as a dud sticking halfway out of the ground.

Cf. Mouffe, Chantal; Laclau, Ernesto: *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: towards a radical democratic politics*, London 1985.

4 Freely adapted from the concept of Irene Grillo, Jennifer Johns, Damian Jurt, Andrea Linnenkohl, Siri Peyer, Dorothee Richter, Rein Wolfs.

5 See above.

6 With his large-scale exhibition *Deutsche Grammatik* Christoph Büchel made use of all of the rooms of the Kunsthalle Fridericianum as well as a large part of Friedrichsplatz in front of the museum building. At the content level, Büchel investigated four aspects of German reality in grand style, under the fictional pre-requisite that the museum building was being used temporarily for other purposes during the exhibition (and afterwards). The Fridericianum was supposedly being converted into a branch of the Employment and Social Service Agency of the City of Kassel. A large construction sign in front of the building made this unmistakably clear and wooden boards in front of all of the windows of the ground floor heightened this 'fictional reality'. For purposes of interim usage, the entrance hall was converted into a real functioning one-Euro shop that visitors had to pass. Further examples of a 'pedestrian zone aesthetics' dominated the building's entire rotunda area: a real game arcade, a 12-meter-high Christmas tree, a tanning studio, a fitness centre and a tourism trade fair for the former East German states enhanced this first aspect. A bowling alley with a restaurant ambience and a ballroom served to display countless scraps from torn-up files of the former German Democratic Republic's Ministry for State Security. This was the second aspect – a historical one.

CURATING THEORY (AWAY) THE CASE OF THE LAST THREE DOCUMENTA SHOWS

Oliver Marchart

Anyone analyzing the art field will find himself witnessing constant shifts of canon which are none other than hegemonic shifts – i.e. shifts in consensus as to what is sayable and seeable at a given point in time. The institutions of the dominant bourgeois culture – museums, collections, exhibitions, etc. – are powerful instruments of hegemony production, as is demonstrated, for example, by the documenta. Whereas Catherine David's dX and the D11 by Okwui Enwezor and his co-curators had carried the process of counter-canonization and hegemonic shifts forward using appropriated institutional means of the machine itself, a number of these progressive shifts were reversed again by the documenta 12 under the direction of Roger Buergel. These shifts of canon can be retraced along several fault lines: they can be referred to as axes of politics, of the post-colonial constellation, of theory and of education. dX and D11 brought about such multiple radicalization of the strategies of exhibition-making in the form of increased politicization, decentralization of the West, uncompromising theorization, and targeted attention to mediation work. In the field of cultural hegemony, however, no territorial gain is ever permanent, and indeed, the d12 reversed these territorial gains at a number of crucial points. What is more, it is to be feared that the next documenta will carry this reversal further. I have discussed this entire complex of canon shifts – along with the background of their analysis in hegemonic theory – in greater detail in my book *Hegemonie im Kunstfeld* (Cologne: König, 2008). Naturally, it would exceed the scope of this publication to repeat that entire discussion. I am therefore grateful for the opportunity to publish an English translation of the chapter which goes into the shifts of canon which came about in the curatorial handling of theory during the last three documenta shows.

The Art Theory Interface

"Think with the senses, feel with the mind", was the motto Robert Storr chose for the 52nd Biennale of 2007 – a motto which picked up where the previous biennials had left off and could thus have applied to Buergel's d12 as well. In this conception of art as primarily a matter of "sensory experience", we not only find a return of the arch-bourgeois conception of art as a means of edification. Such mottos also testify to a certain anti-intellectualism typical of the art field. Whereas the dX and the D11 were branded by the critics as being hyper-intellectual, at the d12

anti-intellectualism sprouted new buds. The cognitive exploration of theory is apparently not supposed to get in the way of the "aesthetic experience". As early as the dX, for example, Thomas Wagner had declared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung*: "Here, however, catharsis can only be attained by those who are prepared to read Foucault and Lacan and who, moreover, are willing to adopt the interpretation the chief ideologists of the documenta X untiringly ram down their throats. Critical thinking that arrives at conclusions different from these is proscribed to the same degree as artistic works which do not fit into the prepared mould, which dictates heterogeneity, political relevance and an anti-commercial demeanour."¹ We ask ourselves what art Thomas Wagner is advocating here when he claims that David demanded heterogeneity, political relevance and an anti-commercial demeanour – surely not homogeneous, politically irrelevant and purely commercial art? To say nothing of the fact that the resentment targeting well-known French theorists here can also apply to other forms of theory. The same FAZ critic later described the D11 as a "travelling advanced seminar in which a small troop of experts politically correctly tutor everyone who wasn't paying attention when 'cultural studies' was on the curriculum, or who simply refuse to submit to this omnipresent paradigm's claim to power."² The concern, therefore, is not so much with the question as to which theory is seeping into the art field; theory in and of itself is already suspect because, in the art field – to return to Storr's motto – you have to use your senses to think, while entrusting feeling and sensation to the mind.

A symptomatological reading of such critiques, however, would detect strong signs of hegemonic shift, to which

¹ Thomas Wagner, *Licht im Schacht von Babel* (Berlin: Merve, 2007), p. 92.

² Ibid., p. 122.



documenta X, 100 days - 100 guests lectures/events documenta - Halle, 1997

Photo: Ryszard Kasiewicz / © documenta Archiv

conservative critics respond with a feeling of unease and a certain helplessness, concealed behind aggression. Here the anti-hegemonic forces are accused of having long been omnipotent (while the accusers portray themselves as being ostracized and persecuted). The critic cited above, for example, claimed that, with his approach, Enwezor was following "the present-day mainstream, purely and simply. And the only art he considers contemporaneous is that which lends itself to being interlinked with topics circulating in certain milieus and their debates".³ He goes on to say that "the outcome is a new form of hegemony."⁴ It never ceases to be amazing how precisely these mainstream discussions – even where they do nothing but reproduce the organic ideology of the art field – pick up on hegemonic shifts and, in this case, even use the correct vocabulary to denote them.⁵ The problem, however, is that the D11 did not represent a new form of hegemony, but rather gave expression to a break in the hegemonic formation of the dominating culture, while at the same time continuing unerringly to work on the shift of that formation.

This break – or one of the breaks – was very evident on the theory axis. Naturally, the documenta exhibitions were never entirely void of theory, even if someone like Rudi Fuchs made a great effort to purify the documenta of all theory (as well as politics). Even Haftmann's Occidentalism conception of a universal language of the West is a kind of theory. And of course the D11 did not represent the first integration of theory and scholarship into the art field; after all, the "accompanying symposium" has meanwhile become a ubiquitous element in the exhibition context. Nevertheless, the D11 was more strongly discourse-oriented than all other comparable events in the art field, even more strongly than Catherine David's "theory documenta". To prove that claim, however, we must first understand what constituted the measures by which David heightened the emphasis on theory.

Three formats were used: a series of magazines, a series of daily lectures, and a theoretical publication accompanying the exhibition. The magazine series, entitled *documents*, was concerned among other things with issues of identity in the age of "mondialization". As a kind of

preparatory instruction, it anticipated the actual dX exhibition, providing insight into David's documenta philosophy and manner of working, which was based on the montage concept. This "cinematic" concept created the documenta virtually as though at an editing table: "Like the film medium, the documenta is to be conceived as a slow and patient montage job: on the basis of a relatively rough script, individual sequences are processed, the final montage ultimately emerging from an internal logic."⁶ The publication of these working papers in advance was intended as a means of recording the documenta's collage process as it evolved. Once the exhibition got underway, a similar forum for theory – more intense than virtually anything that had preceded it – unfolded in the *100 Days – 100 Guests*⁷ programme. Finally, on more than eight hundred pages, the accompanying book *Politics/Poetics* extended the montage principle to cover the entire post-war period. According to the editors, the book represented the endeavour "to stake out a political context for the

³ Ibid., p. 125.

⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

⁵ The blithe use of the term "ideology" may be confusing. Let us define ideology here as all praxes and discourses which repudiate the power-based, contingent, and nevertheless (or for that very reason) in the broadest sense political structuring of the space of society, thus at the same time denying their own positions within and perspectives on that space.

⁶ Catherine David, "Editorial", in: *documenta GmbH, documenta X documents 1* (Ostfildern: Cantz, 1996), p. 1.

⁷ A further module of the dX as a space gradually developing and taking shape over the course of the hundred days was the hybrid workspace in the Orangerie.

interpretation of artistic activity at the end of the twentieth century".⁸ The assembled material was not conceived of "as encyclopaedic, but rather is a polemic reading of historical and cultural interrelationships: certain lines of aesthetic production and political aspirations are pursued which are capable of serving in the necessary contemporary debate as an instrument of productive analysis".⁹ Within this framework, the post-war period was accentuated by four significant dates: 1945 as the year of the founding of Europe's post-war democracies, 1967 as the one in which the wave of protests and anti-imperialist struggles in the "third world" began to rise, 1978 as that in which the restructuring and flexibilization of global capitalism got underway, and 1989 as that marking the end of really existing Socialism. Materials of a wide range of genres and formats were assembled in keeping with the cinematic principle of the montage, and the result was a product resembling a large video clip.¹⁰ This theoretical/journalistic stream of consciousness was interrupted at certain key points – for example 1967 and 1978 – by "picture books" produced by dX artists.

In comparison and contrast to the D11 approach, this genre-transcending montage principle is fraught with a number of decisive strategic disadvantages, as seen, for example, in its treatment of theory. In addition to various original texts (and interviews conducted specifically for this purpose) appearing integrally, the accompanying book contains above all a myriad of theoretical "sound bites" – or "theory bites" – ranging in length from one paragraph to several pages. Theoretical texts by such authors as Edouard Glissant, Jürgen Habermas, Edward Said, Claude Lefort or James Clifford were included only in excerpt form, thus essentially being subordinated to the underlying logic of the art field, while their own specific logic – that of theoretical knowledge production – was not accepted as such. At best, these text fragments can be understood as extended footnotes referring the reader to the integral works. Somewhat less benevolently, they could be measured against the yardstick of their purely iconic quality, which corresponds to the logic of the art field in that the symbolic impact of the famous theorist's name has always tended to outshine what the theory was actually saying.¹¹

The D11 took an entirely different approach in its treatment of theory. It granted the specific format of scholarly or theoretical knowledge production its own birthright and integrally printed the texts by the authors invited to the symposia. The results of the first four platforms were not collaged, but published in their entirety in four clearly structured theory/discussion volumes. What led to this decision is presumably the fact that the chief aim the D11 had set itself was to offer a set of diagnostic tools. Despite a certain voluntarist bias, the instruments of theory do not work if they are arbitrarily disassembled – to say nothing of being literally smashed to bits. When that is the case, they have a warped impact, or none at all. The D11, on the contrary, was conceived as an instrument of cognition which accepted various forms of knowledge production – philosophical, scholarly, artistic – in their heterogeneity. The apparently rigid segregation of the first four platforms from the fifth was therefore in no way illogical.¹² It testified to a recognition of the fact that an exhibition in Kassel was not capable of the same accomplishments as a political convention in New Delhi or one on the theory of democracy in Vienna or Berlin. Yet precisely such events were all to be integral parts of a single project – the D11.

The first four platforms accordingly offered lecture, conference and workshop formats in which various aspects

of the post-colonial constellation could be investigated and debated. In this context, various perspectives – general as well as specialized – were taken. We can cite the Vienna/Berlin *Democracy Unrealized* platform as an example. This platform hosted guests from such areas as philosophy, political theory, legal theory, economics, cultural studies, post-colonial studies and art theory – among them Stuart Hall, Bikhu Parek, Immanuel Wallerstein, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Enrique Dussel, Homi Bhabha, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.

At the same time, activist and artistic-activist praxes, for example *kein mensch ist illegal*, *Arquitectos Sin Fronteras*, the Roma gypsy activist Sean Nazerali or the U.S. American human rights advocate Mark Potok, were also given a forum. In Vienna, in conjunction with the immediately preceding protests against the participation of the right-wing Freedom Party of Austria in that country's government, the decision was made to invite the anti-right-wing *Demokratische Offensive* group.¹³

These meetings can accordingly only be referred to as *theory platforms* if the term *theory* is very broadly defined. Actually, platforms 1–4 were to be understood less as traditional theory events than as platforms for political debate and controversy over a certain pre-established theme and in various media, among others that of scholarship and theory. The fact that the classical formats of the lecture, the symposium and, finally, the symposium publication were chosen to this end, was brought about in my opinion by the fact that an avant-gardist breaking of institutional moulds was not a key aspect of the D11 strategy (as it had been in the first Szeemann concept or, as an unintentional parody of the

8 individual artists, the D11 theory programme was constituted primarily by the first four platforms.

Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Explained as follows: "To do justice to the complex relationships between specific art practices and socio-political situations which are both local and global at once, the form favoured for this book is that of the montage, which permits a productive confrontation between literature and journalistic essays, artworks and documentary photographs, and between critical commentaries on specific historical, philosophical or social themes." *Politics/Poetics* (see note 8), p. 25.

11 With regard to the very different strategic handling of theory cultivated by the dX and the D11, Amina Haase got to the heart of the matter in *Kunstforum*, when she wrote: "David's theoretical tendencies may have paved the way for Enwezor's platforms 1 to 4, but it is almost as if the D11's platform 5 turned all of the dX-based theories topsy turvy. Five years ago, the philosophers and theorists – primarily of French origin, from Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze to Levi Strauss [sic!] and Godard plus Marx and Freud – remained on paper, as theory suppliers, so to speak. Now, art is revealing itself as a concrete extension of ideas – also the ideas of very different thinkers, for example Frantz Fanon, Antonio Gramsci, Guy Debord, Giorgio Agamben, Henri Bergson, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri." Amina Haase, "Keine Zukunft ohne Vergangenheit", in *Kunstforum 161*, August – October 2002, p. 60.

12 While it is true that a few isolated workshops were offered over the course of the documenta summer – for example with Fareed Armary, Walid Ra'ad, Joan Jonas and Andreja Kuluncic – as well as discussions with Okwui Enwezor and a few

13 All of these contributions are to be found in Okwui Enwezor et al. (eds.), *Demokratie als unvollendeter Prozeß. Documenta 11 Plattform* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2002).



documenta X, 100 days - 100 guests lectures/events documenta - Halle, 1997

Photo: Ryszard Kasiewicz / © documenta Archiv

latter, at the 50th Biennale's *Utopia Station*), but rather institutional decentralization. Just as the exhibition platform deliberately granted the individual artworks their own space, the theory platforms granted their guests a certain degree of respect (to use an old-fashioned word) – namely respect for the specific nature of knowledge formation each of them represented. Indeed, the recognition of heterogeneity and specific individual characteristics and qualities – whether the specificity of the artworks or the specific thematic competence of the guests from the area of scholarship and theory – was a major distinguishing factor of the D11. The adherence to "classical" formats, for example the relatively classical design of the Kassel exhibition or the classical symposium structure, should therefore not be misunderstood as a simple affirmation of institutional conventions. On the contrary, the classical institutional form was used deliberately to furnish the content-related shift of canon with symbolic legitimacy. The likewise necessary deconstruction of institutional form, on the other hand, was not achieved by breaking through institutional boundaries with a huge "happening" (which would have led only to the sensationalization of the documenta and, ultimately, to a devaluation of the non-Western works included in it), but by deterritorializing the institution temporally, spatially and thematically.¹⁴

On the theory axis, the d12 – for its part – provided a good example of what I call the strategy of transformism in the art field. A transformist strategy, does not roundly reject certain anti-hegemonic shifts, but transforms them in such a way as to no longer stand in the way of a hegemonic consensus – which we had also termed the "organic ideology" of the art field. Despite the anti-intellectualism of an artistic director who was looking for "aesthetic experience", who prized immediacy, wanted to rehabilitate "beauty", and put out a so-called "picture book" without any text whatsoever, after dX and the D11, no curator could afford to stage a documenta without at least a minimal degree of the intellectual/theoretical in its approach. Certain leitmotifs

were decided on, of which many – such as the decline of the middle classes – were quickly rejected again. What remained until the end were three questions of a markedly vague nature: *Is modernity our antiquity? What is bare life? and What is to be done?*

To the extent that the process of responding to these questions was to take place in the medium of theory, an international magazine consortium – linked with the preceding D11 and at the same time not linked with it – was entrusted with that process. The idea itself – of forming a transnational network of magazines in the art/theory/politics nexus – was undoubtedly the most interesting to come out of the d12, and it carried the philosophy of the D11 forward, though this continuation was not openly acknowledged. In its realization, however, the project proved problematical, since it legitimized the wholesale "outsourcing" of theory – indeed, of intellectuality. The interconnections the D11 had set out to create between art, theory and politics were stunted, and

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The comparison with other exhibition strategies is also worthwhile in terms of how they handled theory. With the 49th Biennale, for example, Szeemann had no intention of concerning himself with theory. Theory, rather, like everything else, was universalized into something common to all mankind: it became "thought". That didn't mean that there were philosophers there, "thinking" in public, but rather "thought" – again like everything else – was exhibited in objectified form: At a central location, Szeemann staged what he referred to as the "platform of thought". He assembled a number of sculptures, secular and religious, of different periods and regions of the world, and placed them around Rodin's *Thinker*. Once again, Szeemann's plateau inadvertently became a "plateau of exoticism" on which the objects from faraway places circled around the figure of the European "thinker".



documenta X, 100 days - 100 quests lectures/events documenta-Halle, 1997. Photo: Ryszard Kasiewicz / © documenta Archiv

documenta 12, book table, documenta-Halle, 2007. Photo: Ryszard Kasiewicz / © documenta Archiv



the theoretical preoccupation with political issues was assigned to sub-contractors all over the world. They were put in charge of text, theory and programme production which the artistic director and curator were either unwilling or unable to handle. The director's team was relieved of the work of furnishing its vague leitmotifs with contents that went beyond mere associations and analogies. They had thus succeeded in involving intellectuals from all over the world to compensate for the lack of intelligence at the site of the exhibition, without having to provide anything at all – money, resources, etc. – in return, even if they had been able to, which they weren't. It is accordingly no wonder that many of the participating magazines were reminded of neo-liberal outsourcing models and ultimately felt they had been given the run-around.¹⁵ The result was three documenta magazine editions which made an honest endeavour to squeeze something relevant and meaningful out of the curators' ambiguous ideas, and nevertheless ended up merely supplying the intellectual fig leaf for a thoroughly anti-intellectual exhibition.

The anti-intellectualism of the d12 was also manifest in another peculiarity. For behind all the talk about form and beauty, a more fundamental discourse seemed to be shaping the d12: the return of the esoteric. Esoteric in the Buergelesque sense is exemplified by Poul Gernes's psychedelic decorative art of the 1960s or John McCracken's *Mandala* paintings of the early 1970s, as well as by the latter's metaphysical sculptures. Here art was returning to its roots in religion or, more specifically, neo-heathenism. As Buergel explained:

"With his mandalas, which were all produced in the autumn following the 'summer of love', McCracken was assuring himself of the spiritual source of artistic creativity. With their three axes of symmetry, mandalas are representative of concepts of holism, but they are not just images which invite you to smoke pot and be amazed at them, but also forms of ancient religious practice, for example in Tibetan Buddhism: painting as meditation. Enough has been said about the currents of the anti-Vietnam movement. These esoteric movements, however, from the French Symbolists to anthroposophy, were always also a facet of modern abstraction. They allude to the re-enchantment of a world thoroughly disenchanted, thanks to the capitalist rationality of the industrial revolution."¹⁶

The last sentence reveals that Buergel would like to see esotericism as a form of anti-rational "critique", with which he affiliates himself curatorially with his exhibition. The quotation is therefore not to be understood as a

description of esotericism in modern art in general, or of the mandala paintings in particular, but also as Buergel's and Noack's "own programme". It is as though the documenta provided Buergel with a stage for fantasizing about holism (thus the mere associations, since in a holistic universe everything is connected to everything else), about "ancient forms" (thus the many pre-modern exhibition objects), about magic and the quasi-religious "re-enchantment" of the world (thus the return of the mandala [John McCracken] and, as Robert Fleck pointed out, the cross [Churchill Madikida] at the d12) – all dipped in a regressive discussion about the "beautiful." What ultimately betrays itself behind Buergel's formalism and aestheticism is a spiritualist and esoteric irrationality which permits him to shake off every text, every true criticism and every instance of politics in the art field. In the end, the transformations which were to be brought about by the d12 in the hegemonic structure of the art field – aided by strategies of decontextualization, formalization and aestheticization (not to forget spiritualization) – add up to a project of curatorial anti-enlightenment.

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See Kati and Beat Weber, "Die Akte documenta", in *malmo* 38, 2008.

16

documenta 12 Katalog (Cologne: Taschen, 2007), p. 88.

A PLATFORM AND SOME PROJECTS, POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM IN CURATING ZURICH

Dorothee Richter

To discuss some aspects of the Postgraduate Program in Curating, Institute Cultural Studies, Zurich University of the Arts, I will present three different projects we developed with the students.

The Postgraduate Program in Curating is conceived of as a discursive platform which imparts key areas of contemporary exhibition-making by way of praxis-oriented project work. The Program focuses less on the 'genius concept' of the exhibition planner as individual author – a highly controversial topic since the 1990s – than on cooperative, interdisciplinary working methods, as employed, for example, in film productions or non-government organizations. Exhibition-making / curating means the creation of innovative structures for the presentation of cultural artifacts through interdisciplinary collaboration. In this field, art, digital media, design, and architecture intermingle in new ways. The manner of working employed by curators, artists, architects, designers, museum educationalists and writers has become increasingly unified, bringing about new forms of mediation, lounges, archives, reading rooms and new virtual forums – and with them new means of access and forms of interpretation. At the same time, we are witnessing a shift in the organization of work processes throughout society. Individual areas of action are merging on new meta-levels, namely those of networks and knowledge transfer. The Postgraduate Program in Curating Zurich responds to these changes in the processes of the production of cultural meaning. The course creates a model situation in which students can gain practical experience of curating and learn to think critically about the issues involved.

I would like to briefly introduce three exemplary projects we have organised with students and in different collaborations.

Emancipatory Education – Emancipatory Forms of Mediation? The READY-TRADE TRAILER as a mobile project platform

READY TRADE TRAILER: From the beginning of June to the end of September 2007, the trailer – the mobile project room of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating – was on tour with the curatorial project *READY-TRADE TRAILER*. As a small, mobile stage, the trailer represents a small-scale version of a regular exhibition institution while at the same time critically questioning that institution. The tour included: Artist residencies Worpswede (D), Künstlerhaus Bremen and Atelierhaus Güterbahnhof Bremen (D) as well as Friedrichsplatz, Kassel (D), Kanzlei Flea Market, Zurich and Festival der Künste (Festival of Arts), Zurich (CH)

On tour with the trailer were multiples produced in direct cooperation with nineteen artists from five European countries: Marion Bösen; Stefan Burger; Diego Castro; Annelise Coste; Stefan Demary; Köken Ergun; Annette Hollywood; Tom Huber; Daniel Knorr; Andres Lutz / Anders Guggisberg; Mickry 3; Dan Perjovschi; Frédéric Post; Egill Saebjoernsson; Jörg Wagner / Ingke Günther; Joseph Zehrer; Silvie Zürcher and one artist XXXX, whose contribution was the edition of deleting his/her name on all publications, cards and press releases accompanying the project. Editions and multiples depart from the auratic artwork and tend towards the everyday object, thus raising questions about the relationship between the original and the reproduction, the creation of value in and the appreciation of art. The project attempted to provide insight into the transformation from cultural and social capital into economic capital. How is art recognized as such and who awards it its value? Does easier accessibility really amount to the democratization of art and is this accessibility/democratization solely a question of price? Taking the multiples as a point of departure, these and other questions were to be considered and discussed with the public in different locations.

To begin with, let us consider the proposals put forward by Oliver Marchart, who suggests the following possibilities (for a anti-hegemonic approach): 1. interruption, 2. counter-canonization. The interruption aims to examine naturalization effects of the exhibition format and the institution. In other words, it formulates an institutional critique



Ready Trade TRAILER, Kassel, 2007



with something that interrupts some hidden rules of representation. The counter-canonization would use the defining power of exhibition institutions chiefly in order to expand their canon with regard to content. From my point of view, however, such an expansion or reinterpretation can only succeed if it is accompanied by a change in the formal parameters. Thus, of the proposed "methods", all that remains is the interruption, since in the traditional setting the "invocation" of the subjects by an exhibition presupposes the latter as inactive, consuming subjects.

Below I would like to discuss the extent to which the predefined parameters can be escaped and used for self-empowering processes. The *READY-TRADE TRAILER* investigated the interrelationships between displays, (re-)presentation strategies, ennoblement and economies in artistic and creative projects.

In this context, the question of mediation to various publics played an important role. "Style & Design" at the ZHdK, Flurina Gradin (student) and Katharina Tietze (director of studies) formulated the display for the presentation of the multiples. Here the association of salesroom, flea market, kiosk and outdoor market was to be evoked. The chequered bags serving as tables and seats made the project immediately accessible to passers-by. Sunshades and carpeting marked the area. In the course of the project it became clear that even the varying arrangements of the "tables" signaled a varying accessibility to the space. A fundamental element of this project was its issue-raising function. The mediation was accordingly not a secondary aspect, but part of the project. The act of purchase or barter as a setting for the negotiation of values was of far greater importance to the organizers than the earnings. The situation of art contemplation was extended because the public was actively involved in the discussion on art and its value and thus co-produced a part of the project. As participating "salesmen/ saleswomen" we observed that, although the public participated in discussions on value assignment, the "sales stand" situation created a certain predisposition which was difficult to break through. Due to the fact that the trailer functioned as a place of sale and communication at different sites, it also functioned within the connotations evoked by its respective location. It was infected, so to speak, by the underlying character of its respective surroundings.

On an idyllic grassy square in front of the little Worpsswede artist residencies museum, the trailer was easily recognizable as an art project and the public which came to see it proved very willing to participate in lively discussions about contemporary art and its statements. Here the multiples' invisible "foil" was the art of Paula Modersohn Becker and Heinrich Vogler. In Bremen the trailer parked at two sites, in the courtyard of the Bremen Künstlerhaus and in front of the open studios in the Güterbahnhof. Here passers-by expected to see contemporary art. Many of them were artists themselves and were accordingly interested in the multiples, which they compared with their own approaches. In Kassel the trailer was located on the edge of the documenta grounds in the downtown pedestrian zone. The public in Kassel was particularly heterogeneous and the "competition" with the gadgets on sale in the documenta shops was significant. In contrast to the documenta activities, the trailer's artifacts did not deny their merchandise character; more in-depth discussion usually reflected the relationship of the visitors – limited to art professionals during the first few days – to the documenta. One topic was therefore the feeling of exclusion and of not being addressed by the "official" art activities. The public included connoisseurs

who recognized and responded to the allusions made by the multiples to pop music, etc. At the Kanzlei Flea Market in Zürich, the organizers soon realized that neither the trailer nor the multiples met the market rules and regulations and we therefore had to vacate our spot there quickly: secondary markets of this kind are likewise governed by rigorous rules and hierarchies. At the Festival der Künste the trailer was located in front of the Museum für Gestaltung along with a number of other outdoor events and presentations; the project was also particularly accessible to the public on account of the notoriety of several participating Swiss artists.

In this setting it proved difficult to conduct more in-depth discussions. There was a good deal of communication, but it was of a rather superficial nature. Only in a few cases was it possible to examine the "sales pitch" situation. The visitors were frequently surprised and happy to be given multiples such as cards bearing maxims on art which were produced by students of the post-graduate programme and distributed free of charge. They also liked to leave some own remarks and comments. The visitors and passers-by generally reacted very positively to the attempt to involve them in the goings-on of contemporary art. It is conceivable that the act of addressing the public by means of the setting, the artifacts, the student group and the respective context triggers processes of re-evaluation of and reflection on art.

The Archive of Shared Interests, Transfer Zone -Temporary Life, Temporary Communities

The Archive of Shared Interests, Transfer Zone -Temporary Life, Temporary Communities: The next project was based on a set of different collaborations: The archive of Shared Interests, Transfer Zone - Temporary Life, Temporary Communities was developed from a research project of the Institute of Critical Theory, ZHDK. It was curated by Siri Peyer, Karin Bernasconi and myself, who selected artists whose work can be seen in the light of this topic. Part of the project was also a list of publications, which was chosen by Elke Bippus, Joerg Huber and myself. This marked the idea that art and critical theory are reflecting, questioning and producing one another. The exhibition display was developed with students of the Postgraduate Program in Curating in cooperation with Jesko Fezer and the design work was conceived by Megan Hall.

Artists: Marina Belobrovaja; Ursula Biemann; Corner College; Jeremy Deller; eggenschlatter; Finger (evolutionäre zellen); forschungsgruppe f; Fritz Haeg; Christina Hemauer/Roman Keller; Michael Hieslmair/Michael Zinganel; interpixel; Martin Kaltwasser/Folke Köbbeling; San Keller; Pia Lanzinger; Michaela Melián; MetroZones; Peles Empire; Frédéric Post; Public Works; Alain Rappaport; raumlaborberlin; RELAX (chiarenza & hauser & co); Oliver Ressler; Shedhalle; Erik Steinbrecher; support structure (Celine Condorelli and Gavin Wade); Szuper Gallery; tat ort ; Jeanne van Heeswijk; Markus Weiss.

The text with which we contacted the artists was a bit complicated (maybe overdetermined), and therefore I will quote only a short paragraph of it:
 "'Transfer' refers to nomadic states of like in Post-Fordist societies encompassing a large number of different subjects. How is this state of temporariness reflected in the pictorial media and architecture of everyday culture? How are communities invoked and organized? And how is this conveyed to the subjects afterward as tolerable and desirable? What role is played here by urban architecture, how does the latter function as de-historicizing power



Exhibition view Archive of Shared Interests – Transfer Zone – Temporary Life – Temporary Communities – 30 Theoretical approaches, architectural and artistic dossiers for communities in the Transfer Zone, 2009/10, White Space // Office for Curating/ Art/ Theory
 Photos: Megan Hall



structures, how do the latter permit other, subversive tendencies? How do subjects create niches and identifications for themselves in these environments dominated by the flow of capital? How do they organize a reversal from power structures to the nodal points, the architecture, the pictorial media, the agreements and the discussions? What temporary alliances and communities are formed in the process?"

The dossiers we received in response to this call were content-wise very different: Communities are defined by artists, scholars and urbanists as an antithesis to general society and its constraints, but they differ widely from one another in the roles they play. Whether the community is thought of as a secret utopia or as a threat to the individual, whether as a cooperative, a neighbourhood or a societal group, and whether or not the respective community is to be dissolved – every time, a certain artistic, architectural or theoretical concept of community initiates a subtext directed toward the public. The invited articulations range from complex urban projects which politicized addressed neighbourhoods like Jeanne van Heeswijck *Twilight* see www.jeanetworks.net, to Jeremy Dellers re-enactment of workers' upheavals, to a project by Patrick Weiss working in a school and implanting social situations for pupils there.

The task of the students group together with Jesko Fezer was not an easy one: this heap of very different material should be made accessible and the difference between theory we have used to enter the theoretical area of communities should be presented in different ways than the artistic dossiers, but also show that they influence each other. For the material we also needed a kind of index situation, so the public could have an idea what they could find in the archive. The situation should reflect the possibility of communication and shared interests, and last but not least we had very little money to realize the project, about 2000 CHF, or 1300 €. Jesko did propose to use the space as a kind of shelf in itself, not to split it up by shelves.

The curatorial and the design project's background was based on a shared reading and discussion group by Elke Bippus, Jörg Huber and myself, some of these ideas I will address here briefly, they are discussed in depth in issue 7 of On-Curating.org about *Being With*. Ontological and political perspectives on notions of community were at the centre of its debate. "We believe that such an explicit discussion of community on a theoretical level is an urgent requirement in the context of "curating" since cultural articulations always implicitly or explicitly address and produce communities. It was Jacques Rancière in particular who in *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the*

Sensible pointed out the importance of access to visibility and audibility since these are what enables or prevents access to a community. "The distribution of the sensible makes visible who can participate in the communal according to what he does. A particular activity determines thus who is and is not capable of being communal." In his perspective, aesthetics, visibility and politics are causally linked.

Jacques Rancière defines equality as a fundamental opposition to the police order, to the limiting power structures of a society. It is impossible for the police order to "respond to the moment of equality of speaking bodies". For Rancière, equality is produced as a process in an open set of practices. He draws two conclusions from this: "First, equality is not a state, and it is not a state that an action seeks to achieve. It is not a precondition that an action sets out to verify. Second, this set of practices has no particular name. Equality has no visibility of its own. Its precondition must be understood in the practices that bring it into play and derived from their implications."

According to Rancière this process approach corresponds to the traditional leftist notion of emancipation: "Emancipation is equality in actu, the logic of equality between speaking beings, which has an impact on the distribution of bodies in the community, a field characterized by inequality. How is this impact created? In order for the political to exist, there must be a space of encounter between the logic of the police and the logic of equality." Following Rancière one such space of encounter would be art. I want to emphasize this quote, because even if Rancière had put art in a somewhat surprising, maybe idealistic position it holds possibilities for cultural producers: some specific kind of art, some specific kind of image production, some specific kind of participation may open up a space for this encounter of the logic of policy and that of equality.

The project apparatus and the artist dossiers allowed the (emancipated) spectator to have access to a broad range of material about im/possible communities.

Project Apparatus with Publications by:

Giorgio Agamben: *Was ist ein Dispositiv?* Zürich, Berlin 2008
 Giorgio Agamben: *Ausnahmestand.* Frankfurt a.M. 2004
 Giorgio Agamben: *Was von Auschwitz bleibt. Das Archiv und der Zeuge.* Frankfurt a.M. 2003
 Giorgio Agamben: *Die kommende Gemeinschaft.* Berlin 2003
 Marie-Luise Angerer: *Vom Begehren nach dem Affekt.* Zürich, Berlin 2007
 Roland Barthes: *Wie zusammen leben.* Frankfurt a.M. 2007
 Zygmunt Baumann: *Flüchtige Moderne.* Frankfurt a.M. 2003
 Zygmunt Baumann: *Gemeinschaften.* Frankfurt a.M. 2009
 Maurice Blanchot: *Die uneingestehbare Gemeinschaft.* Berlin 2008
 Maurice Blanchot: *Museumskrankheit. Das Museum, die Kunst und die Zeit.* Köln, 2007
 Janine Böckelmann, Claas Morgenroth (Hg.): *Zur Konstitution des Politischen in der Gegenwart.* Bielefeld, 2009
 Janine Böckelmann, Frank Meier (Hg.): *Die gouvernementale Maschine. Zur politischen Philosophie Giorgio Agambens.* Münster 2007
 Jens Kastner, Elisabeth Bettina Spörr (Hg.): *nicht alles tun. Cannot do everything.* Münster 2008
 Ernesto Laclau: *Hegemonie und radikale Demokratie.* Wien 2006
 Bruno Latour: *Von der Realpolitik zur Dingpolitik.* Berlin, 2005
 Bruno Latour: *Eine neue Soziologie für eine neue Gesellschaft.* Frankfurt a.M. 2007



Exhibition view Archive of Shared Interests – Transfer Zone – Temporary Life – Temporary Communities – 30 Theoretical approaches, architectural and artistic dossiers for communities in the Transfer Zone, 2009/10, White Space // Office for Curating/ Art/ Theory
 Photo: Dorothee Richter

Chantal Mouffe: *Über das Politische. Wider die kosmopolitische Illusion.* Frankfurt a.M. 2007 (London, New York 2005)

Jean-Luc Nancy: *Die undarstellbare Gemeinschaft.* Stuttgart 1988

Jean-Luc Nancy: *Die herausgeforderte Gemeinschaft.* Zürich, Berlin 2007

Jean-Luc Nancy: *singulär plural sein.* Berlin 2004

Jean-Luc Nancy: *Die Erschaffung der Welt oder Die Globalisierung.* Zürich, Berlin 2003

Jacques Rancière: *Die Aufteilung des Sinnlichen. Die Politik der Kunst und ihre Paradoxien.* Berlin 2006

Jacques Rancière: *Ist Kunst widerständig?* Berlin 2008

Jacques Rancière: *Zehn Thesen zur Politik.* Zürich, Berlin 2008

Gerald Raunig: *Kunst und Revolution. Künstlerischer Aktivismus im langen 20. Jahrhundert.* Wien 2005

Hans Bernhard Schmid, David P. Schweikard (Hg.): *Kollektive Intentionalität.* Frankfurt a.M. 2009

Klaus Schönberger, Ove Sutter (Hg.): *Kommt herunter und reißt Euch ein ... Eine kleine Geschichte der Protestformen sozialer Bewegungen.* Berlin Hamburg 2009

Richard Sennett: *Verfall und Ende des öffentlichen Lebens. Die Tyrannei der Intimität.* Berlin, 1983, 2008

Ferdinand Tönnies: *Community & Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft).* New Brunswick 2007

Gianni Vattimo: *Wie werde ich Kommunist.* Berlin 2008

Joseph Vogl: *Kalkül und Leidenschaft. Poetik des ökonomischen Menschen.* Zürich, Berlin 2008

Joseph Vogl (Hg.): *Gemeinschaften. Positionen zu einer Philosophie des Politischen.* Frankfurt a. M. 1994



Top: Fluxus – exhibition as video bibliotheca, exhibition view, Cabaret Voltaire, 2009

Bottom photos: Dada & Fluxus, Festival and exhibition at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, 2009

Fluxus Festival and "exhibition" as video bibliotheca

This last example of activities around the Postgraduate Program in Curating shows a Fluxus Festival that was curated by myself and Adrian Notz in the Cabaret Voltaire. The students could participate in this example as witnesses of the most interesting artistic productions of the sixties and support the Festival as assistants. They had also some insight in the problematics of re-presenting performative activities, which are now historical positions, but should nonetheless reveal their revolutionary impetus through the way they are displayed. Most displays in museum contexts would position all editions, activity cards and boxes in show cases and shorten film material to a length a contemporary visitor could endure, five minutes of footage instead of two hours, for example. So we decided to invite the artists Alison Knowles, Larry Miller, Hannah Higgins (art historian and daughter of Higgins and Knowles), Ben Patterson, Eric Andersen, Ann Noel to perform the old Fluxus pieces on one evening, and their new productions on

the next evening. Alison Knowles and Hannah Higgins performed contemporary interpretations of some works, supported by video screenings of different versions of the event scores. The following "exhibition" tried to deal with the problematic of the Mausoleum-function of museums that pacifies artwork. Our imperfect proposal was to make around 40 films and film-compilations of Fluxus productions and about Fluxus, accessible in a video-library. Visitors could come and choose their one program and share their experiences.

In all of these projects, it is central that the notions of pedagogy and curating overlap. The production of meaning for an intended public, as well as for students, is the main goal. In this sphere, one could distinguish between more democratic and participatory approaches, which try to constitute a platform of dissent and consent against attitudes concentrating on a 'genius' – whether a curatorial or artistic one – which would highlight, on the level of ideological meaning production, the notions of the individual and of entrepreneurship.

CARTE BLANCHE MINUTES: PREVIEW

San Keller

*Pre-, Pre-, Pre-,
Pre-, Preview*

Kunsthalle Fridericianum,
Friedrichsplatz 18, Kassel
San Keller (SK), Rein
Wolfs (RW)

With the project *Pre-, Pre-, Pre-, Pre-, Preview*, San Keller (born in Berne, 1971) is making even the planning phase of his exhibition public. In doing so, he is undermining the boundaries of conventional formats and rendering institutional processes transparent. Visitors are directly incorporated in the process of development of his exhibition. He not only makes preparatory conversations between artist and curator Rein Wolfs in the conference room accessible to the public. Additionally, after they leave the Fridericianum, San Keller invites visitors to take a stroll, which he calls *Digestiv (Walk)*, with him around the forecourt of the Fridericianum to discuss the current exhibitions.



WALKING AS A FORM OF CRITICAL CURATING

Irene Grillo and Maren Brauner

(Editing: Benjamin Weiss)

Walking is the simplest and most elementary form of human movement. Unlike more advanced forms of transportation, such as travelling by car, train, boat or plane, it allows a special kind of freedom: one can stop, take a rest or change direction anytime. Regardless of the next service area, the next train station, harbour or airport.

This kind of freedom seems to be losing in value. In the age of highly developed mobility and fast connections, walking cannot compete with other forms of transport. The need of getting from A to B as fast as possible has become a fundamental paradigm to the modern idea of freedom. Movement is determined more quantitatively than qualitatively. This shift in the understanding of moving and travelling holds an opportunity to reconsider and investigate anew the role and importance of walking in everyday life. When the act of walking is losing its direct function – namely to get from one place to the other, it achieves a new one. This can be observed and analysed best with the notion of *strolling*.

Strolling

In its more traditional meaning strolling consists in a movement through a space, which is not guided by a particular goal or intent and is usually conducted solely for pleasure. In Harald Neumeyer's terms "Strolling is a form of random going; it is a going, which – regarding the arrival at a specific place or the crossing of a particular space – is to be understood as directionless and aimless; it is also a going, which disposes freely of time."¹

Even though strolling contains the idea of movement in its core, it is important to consider that one becomes a stroller less out of a need to move, but to see and to perceive the surrounding environment. Lucius Burckhardt's² theoretical inquiry on the nature of the stroll brings the discussion in a new direction. Although it always includes a playful component, the stroll does not immediately coincide with a funny, worrisome ramble through a city. According to the founder of the *Spaziergangswissenschaft* (Strollology) the stroll has to be understood as a valid instrument for investigating environments and developing knowledge. As the stroll assumes such a relevant function within Burckhardt's theory, it becomes the central method of the *Spaziergangswissenschaft*. This aims at the exposure of undetected parts of the environment on the one hand and at the critique of conventional processes of perception, which preclude new perspectives on the other.³

Instead of the abstract view "from above", the *strollologist* tries to decipher the city "from below", through his or her physical experience of moving through urban space on foot. In this sense Burckhardt wrote, "The intention of the walks is thus to counter the stereotype views of city



Adrien Tirtiaux, *LE DOMAINE DES DIEUX*. Photo: Siri Peyer

planners [...] with the real views of the citizens."⁴

With this in mind, the *Spaziergangswissenschaft* can be considered as a form of critical curating. Critical curating can be understood as a chance to ask questions about pressing topics of our time, while encouraging new perspectives by means of contemporary art projects. So it is possible to claim a certain proximity between critical curating and the intents of the *Spaziergangswissenschaft*. Both try to further a more conscious and independent perception of "landscapes" (also conceived in a metaphorical sense). This is what we tried to achieve with *kunstpassanten*, a curatorial and educational project realized 2009–2010 in Zurich, in collaboration with the Fabriktheater Rote Fabrik and the *Institute for Contemporary Arts Research* of the Zurich University of the Arts (IFCAR).

1 Harald Neumeyer: "Der Flaneur": *Konzeptionen der Moderne*, Würzburg 1999, p. 11. (Translation by the authors of this article)

2 Lucius Burckhardt (* Davos 1925 – † Basel 2003) was a Swiss sociologist and planning theorist. He is considered to be a mentor of the urbanism's critique of the 60s and 70s as well as the developer and founder of the *Spaziergangswissenschaft* (Strollology). Burckhardt's interests and areas of research are the perception processes of cities and countries, as well as their effects on the urban planning. In his theories Burckhardt developed a drastic critique of the consumer-driven manipulations of cities and a rejection of the programmed life of modernism. On this point we can see correlations between Burckhardt's

theories and the urbanism's critique promoted at the same time by the Situationist International, for instance in the concept of the *dérive* and the concept of *psychogeography*.

3 cf. Lucius Burckhardt: *Warum ist Landschaft schön? Die Spaziergangswissenschaft*, Kassel 2007, p. 265

4 *ibid.* p. 292. (Translation by the authors of this article)



Walk no. 1, San Keller, EGAL. Photo: Thomas Zacharias



Walk no. 2, Laura Kalauz and Diana Rojas, ALWAYS DARKEST BEFORE DAWN. Photo: Robbert van Rooden



Knowbotic Research, MACGHILLIE, 2010

Knowbotic Research, MACGHILLIE, 2009. Photo: Christoph Oeschger



Walk no. 4, Marina Belobrovaia, GEMÜSEBAU. Photo: Irene Grillo



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Walk no. 6, eggerschlatte, DIE MISSBILLIGUNG DER SCHEISSE IST METAPHYSISCHER NATUR. Photo: Florian Bachmann



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Walk no. 8, Karin Frei Bernasconi with Victorine Müller, ONCE UPON A SPACE. Photo: Robbert van Rooden



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Walk no. 9, Christian Ratti with Simon Gaus, MANHOLE COVERS – Industrial Culture and Protection of Amphibians. Photo: Dominik Gross
Adrien Tirtiaux, LE DOMAINE DES DIEUX. Photo: Siri Peyer



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kunstpassanten – Walks through the Public Realm of Zurich

kunstpassanten examined the question of how the format of the walk can be considered and employed as a form of artistic and curatorial practice.

The project investigated the process development and the definition of public realms, as well as the possibilities of improving these processes with public art. In particular we were interested in the following questions: How are artists, theoreticians, and citizens of the city of Zurich perceiving public space? What do they tell about their experience? How do works of art become part of the public sphere in their tales? What images of public space are being established? *kunstpassanten* also aimed to introduce a new practice of how art can be exhibited and perceived: instead of a conventional visit to a museum or gallery, participants took collective walks through the public realm, which was rediscovered as an exhibition space.

kunstpassanten consisted in monthly walks, designed and conducted by artists and theoreticians who were invited to broach the issue. It is important to note at this point, that a *kunstpassanten* - walk differs from the traditional guided tour. Not only in terms of audience involvement, but also in its aim: A guided tour is primarily designed to impart knowledge, whereas a walk is destined to sharpen the stroller's perception. In this respect, the *kunstpassanten* - walks are to be understood less as didactic lesson than as a discursive experience.

In order to create the condition for such a situation, we asked the invited artists and theoreticians to call in a collaborator of their choice. The idea was that during the walk, a discourse could emerge between the two, with the participants allowed to join in. This open structure was a deliberate choice in order to broaden the scope of the project by involving artists and theoreticians who were not directly invited. This curatorial proposition has been conceived and acted out differently and has, in some cases, also been dismissed entirely for conceptual reasons.

To kick off the project, we invited the Rumanian artist Daniel Knorr who asked the participants to explore the city from a garbage point of view. During three walks they collected flat, worthless objects from the streets for Knorr's artist book *Cudesch d'artist*, published on

the occasion of his solo show at Kunsthalle Basel in September 2009.

The walk with San Keller, a performance artist based in Zurich, was the actual beginning of the project in October 2009. He turned down the curatorial proposition of including a so called "expert" in the conception of the walk: San Keller assumed that the citizens of Zurich possess the adequate competence to talk about the function and the aesthetic effect of art in the public sphere. San Keller decided to sketch the route on the spot with the participants and to distribute the honorary fee of the absent "expert" and his own among the people who actively contributed, by telling about a public piece of art of their choice. We consider this six-hour walk as exemplary for the project, because of the mixture of academic, emotional, polemic, didactic and informative speeches. This brought us to a broad range of possible ways to talk about the city and the conception of public space.

We organized eleven walks with the following artists and theoreticians: Daniel Knorr, San Keller, Laura Kalauz with Diana Rojas, Knowbotic Research, Marina Belobrovaja, Kunsthau Aussersihl, eggerschlatte, Stefan Wagner with Georg Keller, Karin Frei Bernasconi with Victorine Müller, !Mediengruppe Bitnik, Adrien Tirtiaux and Christian Ratti with Simon Gaus. They differed greatly in duration, routes and content. Some of them were performative, others informative in nature. Some were critical and some more playful.

After each walk we developed an online documentation in collaboration with the artists and theoreticians. This represents a central element of the project and constitutes its own exhibition format (www.kunstpassanten.ch/en/dokumentation). The idea was not only to create an archive of the conducted walks, but to create a real alternative to a visit in a museum. A mapped, online-route of the walk serves as a basis for each documentation. Speech bubbles pop up at each stop and contain different media such as images, audio files, drawings or videos. The documentation was adapted from the actual walk in order to fit the needs of the lone or collective stroller, who desires to reexperience a *kunstpassanten* - walk at any given moment in the future.

We want to invite you to take a closer look at the documentation and hope to inspire you to take a stroll and experience the city anew!

www.kunstpassanten.ch

MINUTES: PRE- PRE- PRE- PRE- PREVIEW

San Keller

11 December 2009, 5 – 6 p.m.
Kunsthalle Fridericianum,
Conference Room, Untere
Karlsstraße 4, Kassel
Participants: San Keller
(SK), Rein Wolfs (RW) and
approx. 35 guests
Minutes: SK/RW

San Keller (SK) opened the discussion with a brief introduction. Last summer he was encouraged by Rein Wolfs (RW) to come up with some thoughts. This inquiry was worded in very open terms, which is why he wanted to take advantage of this freedom to criticise the vessel 'exhibition'. What form should an exhibition take in his case? He endeavoured to pursue this issue by first of all having discussions with RW in order to criticise the current exhibitions and thus engage in a process of reflection.

In this connection the question arose for artist and curator if whether these discussions between them were already part of the exhibition. Here RW drew attention to the potential and specific difficulties of performative exhibitions. In a relatively large institution such as the Fridericianum it is for instance also necessary to fit in with existing marketing instruments. RW also described his great astonishment about the unexpectedly representational theme of the performance artist Keller's invitation card, on which the porcelain coffee service painted by SK's mother in the 1960s is depicted. SK explained that for some years he had mostly worked with language. For example, minutes were being taken of this preview and would be printed on the next invitation. However, as he was not sure whether he wanted only to work with language in the exhibition, he had chosen representational imagery in order to leave open the search for other forms. Pawel Althamer's exhibition Frühling (April–June 2009 at Kunsthalle Fridericianum) had influenced him when he opted for the porcelain. He could imagine working with older persons for his exhibition, whereas Althamer had worked with children.

In this connection RW was interested to know to what extent SK would need a curator at all or whether he was not already curating his own exhibition. SK replied that curators are certainly needed as critical partners for discussion, and the real question was whether an

institution would be needed. RW explained that as a curator he saw his role rather as making a selection and creating the preconditions for artists to express themselves in a suitable form, whether with tangible materials or in an intangible, conceptual way. SK replied that because he did not specialise in one material, the question of materials repeatedly had to be answered anew.

A further fundamental question to which RW referred was that of the space. Would a statement become art only when it would take place in the particular space of an art institution? RW pointed out that for diverse, i.e. financial reasons some spaces in the Fridericianum such as the Zehrenturm were currently not in use for exhibitions. For RW the tower would have great potential as an exhibition space, as it possesses a historically based aura that transcends the Fridericianum. SK commented that he certainly considered the Zehrenturm as an exhibition site but did not wish to commit himself. RW said he would be pleased if SK could at least provide a few ideas and concepts. During the discussion SK repeatedly emphasised how important this uncertainty was to him. In retrospect he regarded some of his exhibitions as too risk-free, and wished to have more exposure to criticism.

WHO NEEDS ART, WE NEED POTATOES

Renata Stih & Frieder Schnock

Our art is based on dialogue between two artists with mutual and different interests, passions and cultural background. It is principally devoted to exploring how the introduction of new media encourages different modes of seeing and experiencing one's surroundings, and how the intrusion of art into the sphere of everyday life exerts psychological influence on an audience.

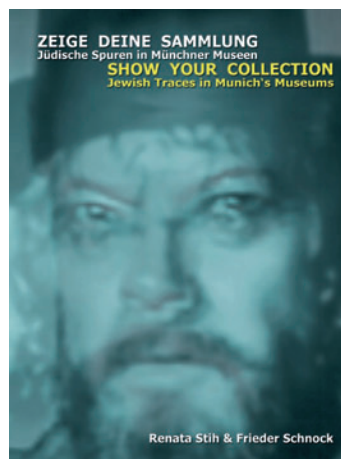
Through our art interventions in public space we invite urban dwellers to develop another consciousness about their immediate surroundings. For us, urban space is the ideal forum for public art as social sculpture; the passers-by are guided and exposed to figurative connections and social networks that may change their attitudes and accustomed points of view. Our work has been shaped by interdisciplinary studies of how art and memory relate in the social sphere and how they are reflected symbolically in the space of the city. In public space, much like the internet, a general audience can be reached and involved in disputes on aesthetics, culture and politics, beyond the secluded formal arenas of art.

Part of our artistic methodology is working with museums, collections and archives in the field of institutional critique, based on research, investigation, interviews, ethnographic research and so on. The methodology is breaking into social and aesthetic orders, acting often in opposition to universalized Western global art trends, analyzing social dynamics, observing concepts of conduct in a field or location, transforming the findings into subjective, engaging art installations.

Our goal is to reposition subjects in new spaces and contexts in ways that not only question dominant masculinist hierarchies and discourses, but also demand dialogues about the very concept of borders within Western cultural institutions, such as Western and Oriental, civilized and primitive, evaluating post-colonial and human rights issues in relationship to collections and their display: If the art object and the aesthetic experience of the art object contains a truth-content, in this sense a non-prepossessed view of the facts will create new dynamics between the exhibits and spectator and his personal experiences. The transformation and transgression of the obvious makes the obvious look *exotic* and the *exotic familiar*, creating a contemplative, transformed environment. That way the display will lose its aesthetic innocence, just as the viewer gains a critical consciousness exploring the art statement.

Looking at museums as inhabited by collected memories of civilizations, we are questioning their content in relation to past and contemporary habits of collecting and display in order to restructure and change the role of museums as *containers of memory* play in society.

With *Show Your Collection – Jewish Traces in Munich Museums*, a project with 16 institutions and their curators, we give



Photos: Stih & Schnock, Berlin / VG BildKunst – ARS NYC



an insight into closed structures, examining taken-for-granted categories of cultural identity, cultural transmission, and cultural memory by drawing new links among the arts, sciences and social sciences.

LIFE BOAT addresses diverse topics through things related to boating throughout cultural history, creating a discourse on the subject of art and gender, memory, and cultural mobility. When looking at ships as metaphors for longings and projections where dreams and nightmares fuse into each other and provide telling examples of social and political hierarchies, it is obvious that boat and civilization are closely linked to images of survival and wars of conquest. Creating a material collection of multiple subjects, using prints and drawings, maps and letters, pictures and sculptures, photos, fiction and documentary films, newspaper clippings, videos and advertisements, - models and - ship relics, we encounter elements of familiar places in the most unlikely of territories and discuss cultural conversion in relation to cultural mobility. By using and exposing diverse material we represent the spherical projection of the geography, crossing physical boundaries. Counterparts from different times and cultures cross paths, providing new insights on aspects of societies. This encounter of naval topics and objects is a *Wunderkammer*, a model of the world in miniature, which exposes cultural hybridity in an abstract kind of travel.

The environment *Who Needs Art, We Need Potatoes* was commissioned by the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart in 1998 as a centerpiece in front of the classicist wing and its Cour d'Honneur. The installation connects history and the values, possessions and tasks of a museum, referring to a proverb and a story in the early 19th century, when the brothers Boisserée offered an outstanding collection of German medieval Art, altarpieces and masters around Dürer, to Wilhelm I., King of Württemberg. Because of a recent famine in the country the king's advisors opposed the acquisition by saying: "Who needs art, we need potatoes", a proverb used in Swabia until today, quoted whenever there are short-sighted discussions about spending money for the arts. Instead the Bavarian King Ludwig I. bought these outstanding artworks, which then became the foundation of one of the most precious museum collections in Europe, the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.

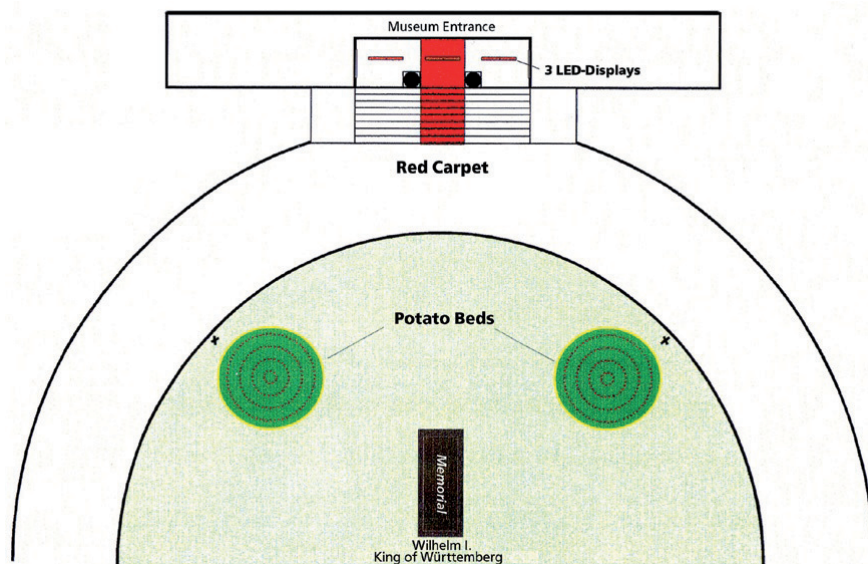


Photo: Stih & Schnock, Berlin / VG BildKunst – ARS NYC

We combined the existing traditional artifacts with unobtrusive additions and the use of electronics, creating a dialogue between art, nature and technology. Two round potato beds, framed with golden acanthus leaves, are laid out on the green grass, next to the equestrian statue of the King of Württemberg. After the annual potato harvest the two golden frames stay empty until spring. A red carpet on the stairs is leading up to the portico where three electronic screens are installed in between the columns right above the entrance. The red carpet links the view and the steps of the visitors to the red text on the LED screens, guiding them into the museum.

The bright light of the screens displays the names of the artists and their art works on the façade in a continuous flow, bringing fragments of the collection to light, and reinventing the traditional habit to attach the names of great artists to institutions dedicated to the Fine Arts. Counterparts from different times and cultures cross paths, providing new insights on aspects of art and society, challenging the spectators' cultural recollection. This questions art and life, the role of art as catalyst for social and cultural developments, our tolerance and our capacity for new visions. The potatoes got planted and harvested every year until the new museum director Sean Rainbird destroyed the installation in 2008.

For many years we have been questioning the complex issues around memorials and commemoration in Germany; well-known examples are "Places of Remembrance" in Berlin-Schöneberg and the BUS STOP concept (see <http://www.stih-schnock.de>).

"The Art of Collecting - Flick in Berlin" is a project that we started with a study group linked to the Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (NGBK) in Berlin in 2003. During a press conference in January 2003, the Berlin state museums announced the coup made with the art collector Friedrich Christian ("Mick") Flick: "We have spoken with all important people of the city. The alliance is forged." One was faced with a *fait accompli*, the seven-year loan contract was signed, no talk about independent, critical curating at all. The official lender of the "Friedrich Christian Flick Collection" is a mailbox company on the island of Guernsey - a so-called tax haven in the English Channel - and the Berlin state museums must cover around

seven million euros in operation costs with tax money. No gifts were made on the occasion of the opening on September 21, 2004. Indeed, it fits together like chalk and cheese, when the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder demanded that tax evaders be ostracized, while on the other hand heartily congratulating the tax-saving Swiss-by-choice Friedrich Christian Flick during the exhibition opening at the Hamburger Bahnhof, the museum of contemporary art in Berlin.

Friedrich Christian Flick inherited his money from his grandfather Friedrich Flick, who made his fortune as an industrialist during the Nazi rule, abusing more than 50,000 slave laborers and concentration camp prisoners. The grandfather, a convicted war criminal, had always denied any responsibility for atrocities and the grandson went along by not contributing to the Slave Labor Fund, which the German government and German companies had set up in 1998 to give compensations to survivors.

To calm down criticism in Berlin, Friedrich Christian Flick established a foundation against racism and xenophobia in Potsdam instead of paying into the slave work fund. But the press replied: "Wouldn't the last surviving slave laborers have deserved the money more than radical right-wing youths in Brandenburg?" Our goal was to spearhead a discussion with our art activities in public space, hopefully forcing "Mick" Flick to pay into the Slave Labor Fund.

Initially Friedrich Christian Flick had planned to build his own museum in Switzerland for his collection of around 2000 works of contemporary art. But in March 2001 Zurich's town council had passed the following resolution, causing F.C. Flick to drop his idea: "In an official statement, the town council made it clear that in regard to the compensation fund, it would have come to a different decision. Apart from that, the city president, in a personal conversation with Friedrich Christian Flick, pointed out that large parts of the Zurich population would welcome the participation of the Flick family in the compensation fund of the German industry. This would be a visible sign that Friedrich Christian Flick takes into account the historical responsibility of the Flick family." Even though it was about establishing a private museum, the inhabitants of Zurich attached to it the demand to compensate the former slave workers.



Photos: Stih & Schnock, Berlin / VG BildKunst – ARS NYC



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In an interview with the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (April 27, 2003; see http://www.stih-schnock.de/flick_in_berlin.pdf) Friedrich Christian Flick made it very clear that he saw no obligation to give money to former forced laborers, since some former Flick companies had paid into the compensation fund. Indeed, Hungarian forced laborers in Friedrich Flick's ammunition companies each received a one-time compensation amounting to 2000 marks from the Deutsche Bank - after it had acquired the Flick consortium.

"The Art of Collecting - Flick in Berlin" was placed straight into the urban environment. http://www.stih-schnock.de/Flick_posters_invalidenstr.jpg. First, we created two posters and installed several of them on billboards in the immediate vicinity of the Flick Collection at the Hamburger Bahnhof, right before the opening. One of them looked like an upside-down German flag, depicting the museum Hamburger Bahnhof and our slogan: "Free admission for former slave workers." The other billboards displayed a floating zeppelin with the label: "F.C. Flick Collection." The headline said: "Tax evaders, show your treasures." The installation caused an instant stir, covered by the media in Germany and abroad. Students with "Gretchen"-wigs handed out invitation cards at the art fair and in front of the Hamburger Bahnhof for our public discussion. A mobile version of our posters, mounted on trucks, drove around Berlin's museums, along Unter den Linden and around the chancellery all week long, causing "thumbs up" activities among Berlin's citizenry. On September 25, 2004, during the evening of the packed, lively public discussion the trucks were installed in front of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin-Tiergarten.

The title of our background publication is "The Art of Collecting" (ISBN 3-926796-91-X) and it deals, roughly speaking, with the eroticism of money. The motif on the cover - titled "Art Lovers - Flick in Berlin" - is from a red light district that makes an unmistakable reference to Bruce Nauman, whose works were purchased in large numbers by Friedrich Christian Flick. Of course, we were especially delighted that the museum made a work by Bruce Nauman the leitmotif of the opening exhibition. What is revealing is the incorrect translation by F.C. Flick of Nauman's title, "Double Poke in the Eye", on the invitation card: he calls it "Faust aufs Auge" [literally: fist in the eye - a German idiom for: like chalk and cheese]. But what is the finger supposed to point at here? Is it really about art opening one's eyes - in the sense of Paul Klee? "Mick"

Flick proved that the innocent belief that art substantially contributes to educating enlightened, better people is nothing but a pious hope. All that counts is that the show must go on - ethics aside.

Everyone can see that Mr. Flick was able to buy a lot of art with a lot of money in a very short period of time. Mr. Flick says he stands in front of the art to protect it from harm. But who protects the art from Mr. Flick, when he makes art an instrument to add a brighter side to his gloomy family history?

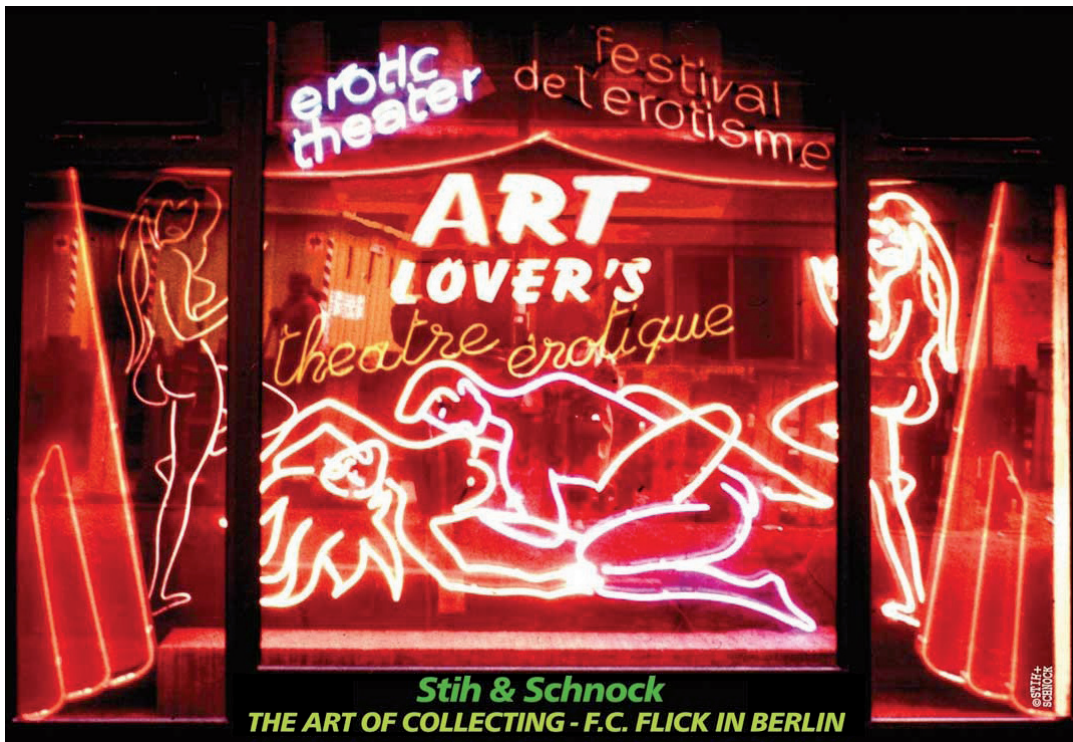
The size and mass of the Collection are incessantly mentioned as features of quality. Raving comments on the length of the transformed shipping storage are reminiscent of games of pubescent boys fiddling around with a measuring tape. By adding the basement as exhibition space it even surpassed the Documenta in Kassel by a few square meters!

The former director of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, Tom Freudenheim, contributed his essay, "The Purging of the Past (Die Säuberung der Vergangenheit)." He describes the origin of the Frick Collection, residing in a plush mansion on Fifth Avenue in New York, and states: "When we view a work of art, the former owner rarely plays a role in our aesthetic perception, but the collector is always present in the background. Such collectors and their collections convey the impression of an elegant masquerade - an attempt to raise oneself above the profane, lowly spheres of everyday life. Perhaps it is time for art museums to adopt a new trademark taken from the iconography of the Western world: the image of Pilate washing his hands in innocence."

Marianne Theil sheds light on the activities of grandfather, uncle and grandsons, in her documentation "La Méthode Flick", where "taking care of the political landscape" in favor of tax breaks, fame and influence is a proven behavior in every generation.

Finally, public pressure made Friedrich Christian Flick pay six million euros into the slave worker compensation fund in 2005.

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MINUTES: PRE- PRE- PRE- PREVIEW

San Keller

26 March 2010, 5 – 6 p.m.
documenta-Halle, Du-Ry-
Straße, Kassel
Participants: San Keller
(SK), Rein Wolfs (RW) and
approx. 190 guests
Minutes: Sylvia Ruttimann

In their second panel discussion taking place prior and in preparation to San Keller's show at the Fridericianum curator Rein Wolfs (RW) and artist San Keller (SK) start out by discussing the first product of SK's project *Digestiv* (Walk), a publication. SK had the conversations between him and Fridericianum visitors about Navid Nuur's and Carlos Amorales' exhibitions transcribed and made into a booklet designed by Zurich graphic designers Norm. He asks RW what he thinks about the result, in artistic terms but also with respect to more institutional matters such as finances, credits and acknowledgements. RW's reaction is very positive. He likes the fact that there is a product and that SK talked with people from all walks of life as well as art professionals. As to SK's fear of exposing and instrumentalising people too much he thinks that these conversations, which at times include rather harsh criticism, can be risky and one has to be careful about it, but that it is part of SK's and other artists' methods. RW is less sure about what to think of the fact that SK decided to do without imprint, not defining it as a product by the Kunsthalle Fridericianum. SK states that he might have pursued those walks and ensuing publication without RW's invitation, so that he did not think it mandatory to mention curator or sponsors. RW muses that this seems to tie in with the whole confusing situation where it is not only not clear who is actually curating – this might even be described a joint curatorship – but also who will be paying for the costs incurred. RW asks SK to outline what further ideas he has for the upcoming exhibition. SK still has no real plan, but is toying with a few ideas, for example of staging a waiting room with desks where people with laptops sit and welcome the visitors, asking them to talk about their lives and writing them down on their laptops. This idea is inspired by his *Digestiv* (Walks), where he concentrates on the end of the exhibition when visitors leave. Now he would like to stress the beginning. Then he is thinking of having a place in the Fridericianum where visitors can drink coffee and eat cake, trying to bring in a visual and haptic aspect. It is these two opposite situations, at the beginning and the end of the exhibition, as well as a yet undefined space in the middle that stick in his mind. Now he is working on the connections between them.

RW seems quite taken with these ideas, especially the potential of building relations and connections. He points

out that as a curator one always tries to build bridges, that he himself made his name as a curator of a practice called 'Relational Aesthetics', working with artists that stressed relations, and that he is interested in involving the visitors in a discussion, cf. the way Pawel Althamer did in his recent project at Fridericianum. Also, SK's idea of serving cakes made him draw a biographical connection to the current exhibition by Thomas Zipp, as Zipp's parents are bakers and owners of a pastry shop. Last but not least though, he is critically reminded of the Dutch idea of things having to be 'gezellig', or cosy, mentioning a museum director who thinks that a museum has to smell of apple pie so as to be inviting for the visitors. SK replies that he is actually interested in the symbolic content of the cakes, in their being part of rituals, as gifts exchanged on particular days, holidays or birthdays for example. One thing RW is not convinced about yet are the biographies, questioning if this might be contemporary enough, formally speaking. There is also not much room for installing desks in the entrance hall, so that they would have to consider other options in terms of space, for example the tower RW mentioned during the last panel discussion. They conclude the conversation by agreeing to have a look at the tower, and especially, to finally try and find someone who can deliver the transcripts of the *Digestiv* (Walks) to the persons they are meant for, artists Navid Nuur and Carlos Amorales, as quickly as possible and in their respective languages, Dutch and Spanish.

CONTEMPORARY ART AND ITS INSTITUTIONAL DILEMMAS

Maria Lind

The joint venture between curatorial practice and institutional critique is volatile. Desires to question the dominant culture and its modes of representation and methods of working sometimes facilitate art and its operations, sometimes it complicates them. I will discuss case studies in which I have myself been involved. For instance the *Christine Borland retrospective* at Kunstverein München; the series *Moderna Museet Projekt (MMP)* at Moderna Museet in Stockholm; *Who Makes and Owns Your Work?* at Iaspis in Stockholm and *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art* at CCS Bard. The case studies are brought up more as discussion points than as 'successful examples' of institutional critique. So I am looking forward to discussing them with you afterwards. I am drawing from various texts which I have written, but also adding sections, and together the old and the new offer a 'smorgasbord' reflecting contemporary art and its institutional dilemmas.

But let me start with some reflections on what critique can be and how 'institution' can be thought of. Critique is an instrument, says Michel Foucault in reply to his own question in the 1978 lecture *What is critique?*. An instrument which is akin to virtue. Critique is a certain way of thinking and acting, a particular relationship to everything around us. It means to doubt and to challenge the politics of truth. Rather than locating the birth of modern critique in the high critical enterprise of Kant, Foucault traces the genealogy of the concept of critique back to medieval mysticism and the religious struggles and spiritual attitudes of the reformation. To the 'little polemical professional activities' of that period, through which individuals established a hotline to celestial powers for doubts and concerns about their emotions, conscience, and beliefs. Their queries did not halt at the spiritual but logically also brought them to the church's representatives on earth and how the land lied there. How to govern was, according to Foucault, a fundamental question during the 15th and 16th centuries. Many subjects came to the conclusion that they did not want to be governed 'just like that' or 'quite as much.' They did not downright refuse to be governed but they wanted government to function otherwise.

The notions of not wanting to be governed 'just like that' and how to 'function otherwise' are to a certain degree embedded in the case studies which I will bring up today. Some people claim that taking artists on board an institution disarms their critical potential. That they get contaminated and end up as accomplices when they interact too closely and intensely with the commissioner. Following the principle that you don't bite the hand that feeds you, they end up not using their teeth anymore. There is definitely a risk of 'disarming'. However, the situation is more complex than a strict dichotomy between the institutions and the artists. Although proximity can certainly be compromising it can just as well stimulate a kind of exchange which allows for the system to be challenged. When this is the case the challenge is carried out from a position which is simultaneously outside and inside, both implicated and distant. Or as Carey Young, one of the 'sputniks', or fellow-travellers, whom we invited to join us on the journey with Kunstverein München 2002-2004, has formulated it in relation to her own practice: "If a resistant ethos becomes hip, it will be marketed back to us as style: a sort of win-win proposition for those consumers who want to associate themselves with bettering the state of the world, but who don't want to think too hard. Right/wrong or inside/outside binaries seem ever more out-moded. To me, it is a question of credibility: a singular stance does not seem credible anymore. This is not to say that moral slippage is acceptable, but I don't make work which moralises, and my reference to my own identity as a business person within my works is intended to say this most clearly, in that what ever commercial process or system I expose or make projects within, I still reveal myself at the same time to be included within that mechanism. It is not oppositional in a traditional sense."

This is a kind of practice which, as Irit Rogoff states, means that we are all implicated in what we are criticising. Dichotomies between inside – outside, institutions – artists, good – bad are difficult. There is no outside and yet we must go on being critical of status quo. I believe in radical context-sensitivity in terms of what and how you do something at a given time and place. Today I also gravitate towards understanding my curatorial work as partaking in the production of a public, or semi-public, sphere rather than think of 'the audience' or even 'audiences'. Participation is a key term and I have drawn a lot from Irit Rogoff's ideas about art institutions, and curating, being sites within largely malfunctioning representative democracies, where precisely representation is the stumble stone. She claims that there is a widespread sense within representative democracies of feeling detached

and that contemporary art and its institutions offer interesting models for participation and engagement. Chantal Mouffe's term 'agonistic space' has been helpful for me thinking through how curatorial projects can be part of a debate, without either subsuming to a generalized third way or foreclosing exchange due to irreconcilable differences. Basically how we can have a discussion with different opinions, which may even be radically opposed, without searching for consensus. Already in 1993 the art critic Douglas Crimp stated that the creative subject of modern aesthetics had been replaced by the institution as a theme and as object of deconstruction. But what is an institution? The speech act philosopher John Searle wisely cautions us against searches for the ontology of institutions. Instead we should be attentive to 'institutional facts,' evidence of what the institution is and does. In order for that to happen, some form of collective assignment of function from a person or group has to take place. In turn, these people need collective assignment of a certain status to be able to perform the first collective assignment. Furthermore, institutions then typically obey 'constitutive rules,' the kind which say that "X counts as Y in context C." Searle argues that education, religion, and science do not follow this equation and therefore cannot be called institutions. However, money, property, and marriage do adhere to such constitutive rules, as does language, the fundamental social institution. Furthermore, Searle proposes that the purpose of human institutions is to create new forms of power relationships. Which in fact brings us back to Foucault and what critique is, to what happens when institutions and critique are attached to each other.

The first phase of institutional critique, famously described by Benjamin Buchloh as moving from the aesthetics of administration of conceptual art to the administration of aesthetics, included work by Hans Haacke and Michael Asher among others. Fault-finding in institutions was the favored method, from an outside position. Thereby the dichotomy between the subject and object of critique could be kept intact. The following phase took subjectivity and identity into consideration in more elaborate ways, still pointing fingers at institutions but now from within. Works from the late 80s and early 90s by Andrea Fraser and Fred Wilson are often evoked as examples. In the late 90s yet another phase could be discerned, for instance in the work of Bikvanderpol and Apolonija Sustersic, where the artists entered a more constructive dialogue with the institutions. Based on institutional problems or dilemmas, they proposed changes which sometimes operated with the institution, at other times against it but always dialogically and avoiding condemnation. The institution then became part of the solution and not only the problem. More recently artists such as Marion von Osten and Carey Young have formulated a critique which could be framed as a fourth phase. Now it is the whole 'institution of art,' the apparatus itself, which is being scrutinised and challenged, not least its economic side. Again from a position inside.

Thinking about the operations of an institution in relation to contemporary art and artists was at the core of the work of the curatorial team at Kunstverein München in Munich when I was the director there from 2002 until 2004. The third and fourth phases of institutional critique were influential in some of the projects which took place there during this period. The curatorial team, which at different times consisted of the curators and assistant curators Sören Grammel, Katharina Schlieben, Judith Schwarzbart, Ana Paula Cohen, Tessa Praun and Julienne Lorz explored four different formats, each with a different rhythm. They came out of questions such as How can you be sensitive to the logic of contemporary art and avoid letting the institution dominate? How can you combine this particular institutional situation with the surprise, the questioning, the contemplation, the problematisation that we call contemporary art? One of these formats was the 'retrospective' or 'survey' and the first artist we invited for this was Christine Borland.

In challenging and inventive ways Borland has for the last 20 years addressed questions of how identity and knowledge are constructed and how psychology plays a role in these processes. Fact and fiction are mixed as she plays with notions of life and death, the organic and the inorganic, horror and beauty. She borrows methods from a wide range of disciplines: archaeology, ethnology, criminology, medicine and science, involving people directly from these disciplines. The resulting works take the form of installations, sculptures, objects, drawings, photographs and videos. Her projects, which often deal with issues of life and death, the passing of time, are unusually laborious and slow as well as accumulative and intensely collaborative. Her art reveals itself slowly, possessing a quiet intensity; it is also very dense and is therefore difficult to consume quickly.

The survey exhibition at the Kunstverein München from April 2002 to May 2003 was the first large scale presentation of Christine Borland's work in Germany. Moreover, it was the first time her work was presented to one and the same audience over a longer period of time. In order to pay respect to, and simultaneously use, the exact, slow and accumulative quality of her work, we presented her works one at a time over a period of a year. Most of the eight pieces were shown in a different space within the KM, or in a public space when appropriate, depending on the character of the piece. This also enabled us to offer the local art audience a unique opportunity to slowly forge a long-term relationship with a contemporary oeuvre which is outstanding in its care, precision and thoughtfulness. The first station in this



Who Makes and Owns Your Work? Iaspis 2006

survey extended in time rather than in space and was shown in the back room of the KM. It was *The Dead Teach the Living*, made for the *Skulptur.Projekte* in Münster in 1997. The second station took place in the same space and consisted of objects submitted by almost eighty of the members of the KM. *Small Objects That Save Lives* is an instruction piece based on the collaboration of people on the mailing list of the institution in question, responding to Christine Borland's request for such 'small objects that save lives'. It was originally presented at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, which is housed in a former hospital for retired soldiers.

Eight coats, both from her private wardrobe and from boot sales, originally exhibited in a gallery of shop windows in Prague and now in the shop windows of the Kunstverein. Here and there a baggy pocket, something shimmering looking out of the one or the other, a gun? Are

they really weapons or is the eye deceived? Printed letters on a wall behind the shop windows, where the coats are hanging, form brief bits of 'information': 9 mm Beretta Pistol. This here is about believing or non-believing. How do we behave when passing by? Are we being provoked, do our own fantasies scare us? Which reactions do these so seemingly harmless coats trigger? Will the window get smashed or not? 'Inside Pocket'.

In this way it can be argued that the consumerist logic of many institutions, i.e. that it is possible to 'get', to behold, an exhibition during one visit, was sidestepped and a different way of encountering art was offered. As you can imagine a format like this one demands different communication strategies, with preparations, special mailouts etc for every station. Here I think we failed. We had not thought through the implications of the new format in relation to the visitors. Yet, I think it was important to break out of some of the routines of institutional work.

When I started working at Moderna Museet at the end of 1997, my question was basically: how can you work with contemporary art in this context? I drew up the lines for the completely new activity *MMP*, with the blessing of the director David Elliott without whom this adventure would not have been possible. It was but one of several ways we worked with contemporary art. It was quite simple: a museum is most commonly functioning as an archive and a showroom, and at least in Sweden at the time less often a place of production and distribution. With *MMP* Moderna Museet could be all of these. This was both a literal activity and a symbolic act: MM is the national museum for modern and contemporary art in Sweden, one with a well-known history and respected legacy. The function that such a museum has, being 'an example'. It is 100% state funded, with some sponsorship and donations serving as icing on the cake.

MMP became a satellite which sometimes was close to the museum, if not inside, and at other times was far away. The first artist to use the temporary, slightly domestic, project space, an assembly room in a former vicarage, was Koo Jeong-a. Her materials are very mundane; everything from bits of wood and plastic beads to wrapping paper and sand. Like an archaeologist of everyday life she finds her materials in and around the venues in which she exhibits and constructs small landscapes and imaginary worlds in which the smallest details are full of significance. She took up residence in the vicarage for a few weeks and the resulting installation consisted of among other things small 'houses' made of pencil lead which fell apart from the slightest touch and perforated plastic covering the windows. A closed world with minute outlets where time and scale were nevertheless distorted and transformed. Here the idea was to privilege art rather than institutional protocols, to shift some of the institutional constraints and to approach the interface between art and the institution from a slightly different angle. It was an attempt to perform institutional critique from the inside.

Now to yet another kind of institution and a different form of critique. The project *Who Makes and Owns Your Work?* was an ongoing discussion about the means of producing, distributing and thinking about artistic and knowledge production today. The project was initiated in the autumn of 2006 by Iaspis together with London based artist Marysia Lewandowska currently a professor at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design and Stockholm based artists Goldin+Senneby. We wanted to address issues such as Who owns the rights to artistic work in today's information-based economy? How can one as an artist or producer of culture position oneself in relation to the existing regimes of copyright and the distribution of material and non-material products? The project *Who Makes and Owns Your Work?* grew out of a year-long discussion held during a series of Open Content meetings which centred on ownership, distribution and forms of sharing within contemporary cultural and knowledge production. Through these monthly meetings hosted by different organisations in Stockholm and a dedicated Wiki site the project evolved to test conceptual and political implications of openness foregrounding specific proposals made by a loose network of artists and other cultural producers.

A one-day public event in the fall of 2007 pulled together various people who presented art projects and debated the issues at hand. The day was co-curated by about a dozen people who had been active during the monthly meetings, including the budget which decided on collectively, involved a discussion of the current copyright debate led by Dr. Jaime Stapleton, Associate Research Fellow of the School of Law, Birkbeck College, University of London, and Anna Eineborg, artist, Stockholm, with Marianne Levin, professor of intellectual property law, Stockholm University; Rasmus Fleischer, Ph.D. candidate at Södertörn University College and co-founder of the Bureau of Piracy; Mats Lindberg, managing director of BUS, Visual Arts Copyright Society in Sweden. - *The Missing Link*, new edition of Jan Lööf's children's book, *The Tale of the Red Apple (Sagan om det röda äpplet)* upgraded by artist Dorinel Marc. - *Opening the Open*, a new thematic issue of the Geist, Swedish based art magazine, addressing the concept of openness in relation to the Swedish law concerning statutory right of access to private land. Organised by Andjeas Ejiksson, Fredrik Ehlin and Oscar Mangione. <http://www.geist.se> - Artists Eileen Simpson and Ben White (Open Music Archive)



Above: Outside View: Moderna Museet Projekt, Stockholm 1998

Below: Koo Jeong-A, ∞/24 for Moderna Museet Projekt, 1998

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present a live electronic set including performances by Per Åhlund and Mathias Josefson (Fylkingen). Plus release of new CD Clips, Blips and Loops featuring out-of-copyright sound recordings and new copyleft remixes. <http://www.openmusicarchive.org> - Men's and Women's Club. Web based project by Konstfack students Sara Wolfert, Maria Lagergren and Lina Persdotter. - Self-reflexive history is a self-reflexive process of writing the history of the WMAOYW initiative, based on a dialectic process organised by the artist Saskia Holmkvist. - Film Screening and discussion by artists Andreas Mangione and Palle Torsson, Rasmus Fleischer, PhD candidate in Contemporary History and the Filmklubben. - Seeders and Lurkers. In dialogue with different organisations working to encourage participation and sharing of knowledge online, a collection of recommendation and advices was put together. Organised by Magnus Liistamo. - A project with Art In The Public Realm. MA students at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design; Cameron MacLeod, Kjersti Vetterstad, Randi Grov Berger, Ulrika Casselbrant, Therese Kristiansson. Organised by Marysia Lewandowska, artist and professor Konstfack, Andrea Creutz, artist and senior lecturer at Konstfack, Per Hasselberg, artist and founder of Konsthall C. - Student projects by Konstfack - Untitled (conceptual artist) (2001) by Hinrich Sachs - The Employed Among Us by Michele Masucci - Therese Kristiansson presents: Stockholm Green Map - Audio/visual documentation by Tomas Nygren

Who Makes and Owns Your Work? turned out to have many more repercussions than we had imagined. It can be argued that it even was much more effective as institutional critique than we had anticipated, or aimed at. Questions concerning whether Iaspis, as part of the national agency The Arts Grants Committee, which sorts under the Ministry of Culture, was allowed to collaborate with people from the Pirate Bureau arose. This was at a time when copyright was debated in media and the Swedish state has a firm stance following conventional lines. The catalyst for this conflict were questions regarding how the project should be represented in press material etc. The Pirate Bureau, which is a think tank for subjects around licensing of intellectual material, decided to donate money to the project when they realized that contributing to the budget allowed for visible logos. The Arts Grants Committee did not want Iaspis to allow the Pirate Bureau to have their logos there - it could reflect badly on them - and they demanded that if they appeared in public, at the event, they must be counteracted by the Anti-Pirate Bureau, a lobby organisation defending existing copyright laws. In addition to this debate, which raged on local blogs for a few weeks, panic broke loose in the office of the Arts Grants Committee when the director found out that one of the Pirate Bureau people, the artist Palle Torsson, had used one of Iaspis computers.

The Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College offers an entirely different set up: a center which is part of a private liberal arts college in upstate New York. With an MA program in curatorial studies, a library and archive, an exhibition space, a private collection on permanent loan and, since 2006, a museum building attached to the old one (from 1992). I was brought in to revamp the program which since its start in the 90s, set up by a philosopher who did a great job but with very limited experience of contemporary art and none of curating, had lost some of its original relevance. *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art* was an attempt to bring together the two parts of the center, on the one hand the MA program and on the other the collection and the museum. At the same time I was interested in stimulating research within the framework of the center, something which had been lacking up until then, and to offer somewhat different pedagogical models. *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art* is a long-term research project on 'the documentary' that aims to investigate the heritage of documentary practices in contemporary art in relation to the history of film, documentary photography, and television, as well as video art. Although such innovative documentary art forms abound, and a large number of exhibitions and other projects dealing with documentary practices and contemporary art have been organised in different parts of the world, the phenomenon remains both under-discussed and under-theorised.

The project wants to situate these contemporary documentary practices within current cultural production and to explore their role within mainstream media and activism. The research project is a collaboration between CCS Bard and the artist and theoretician Hito Steyerl. A reference group, consisting of artists Petra Bauer, Matthew Buckingham, Carles Guerra, Walid Raad, and Hito Steyerl, has been invited to contribute to the project, including the exhibition which was the project's first public manifestation (in fall 2008), in various ways. The research project will run for approximately three years, having started in March 2008.

Documentary practices today, whether lens-based or not, are profoundly ambivalent about rhetorics of truth and strategies of authenticity. In a culture of reality TV, embedded journalists, and YouTube, the uncertain states of images and other recordings have been normalised. Faithful rendering of reality in a classical documentary sense is considered impossible, and yet it is necessary to try and articulate real conditions. Documentary practices are not only one of the most significant developments within art of the last two decades, but also among the most complex tendencies, which - like older documentary work - has continuously challenged and reinvented itself. These documentary practices employ a

variety of media and do not share a formal style. Neither do they comprise a genre. They range from found footage, video reportage, and essayistic mixed-media installations to filmed reenactments of real events and text-based printed matter. They also include sculpture, performance, and even computer animations. Many of them search for suitable forms and methods with which to discuss social content, whether historical material or effects of recent political and economic upheaval. Their rhetorical strategies vary, borrowing from the orator and the historian alike. And yet, we can think of them as having a critical sensibility in common.

Works by more than 70 artists were brought together for this first part of *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art*. It was already existing work, and the selection can be described as a subjective inventory that seeks to explore where the land lies for documentary practices within contemporary art. The selection was distinguished by the fact that a number of non-lens-based projects were included. The works literally permeate the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, occupying the Hessel Museum of Art and parts of the CCS Bard Galleries, but also appearing in the lobby and the library, in classrooms and corridors. An important part of *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art* is the salon-style display of lens-based documentary works from the Marieluise Hessel Collection.

This was both an exhibition based on the paradigm of display and a 'project-in progress,' i.e. something that developed in parts of the exhibition space during the exhibition period. In the middle of the exhibition space, Olivia Plender created an installation that functioned as a discursive space in which lectures, screenings, seminars, performances, and panel discussions take place. With its sunken sitting pit and many curtains it resembled a 1970s TV studio. This is where the elective course Documentation and Its Discontents took place, taught by the members of the reference group, a course format rarely used at CCS. Thus the exhibition space was activated as a space of reflection and debate, and the format of the exhibition was taken closely into consideration. This included an intimate black box cinema space in which a number of works were screened, and the CCS Bard Library, which was used as a reading room with a reference list of more than 90 titles. An anthology of already existing texts written over the last 10 years, assembled from many different contexts, was co-published with Sternberg Press and released at the opening of the exhibition.

The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art is a 'greenroom for documentary practices', not unlike a greenroom at a television station, where staff and guests meet before and after filming and engage in discussions that often differ from those in the limelight. Thereby, the 'just before' and the 'right after' moments of less scripted performances and unexpected encounters are taken seriously. Greenrooms are also used in theaters as a space where actors can prepare for and relax from what happens on stage, a space where they can gear up toward and recover from the production of both fact and fiction. At CCS Bard it was coupled with practices that are not necessarily waiting for events to happen, which should then be documented, but produces their own events.

Since the show came down the members of the reference group have all conducted their individual research. Carles Guerra has for instance co-taught a course on 'Anti-photojournalism' at CCS, which has led to an exhibition on the same topic at La Vereina in Barcelona where Guerra since has become the director. Petra Bauer is exploring the potential of collective film making, in the vein of the 60s and 70s, with some of CCS's students and students and faculty from the film department. Matthew Buckingham researches various notions of historical time in the history of film, conducting some of the research in 'public', in seminars with our students. All of them being examples of research which is not classically academic but certainly rigorous.

Gerald Raunig, philosopher and co-founder of eipcp, has rightly pointed out that the discourse around institutional critique within art has remained strangely insular, not contextualising the critique within a larger cultural or even societal and political critique. His suggestion to move to 'instituent practices,' to the active making of new modes of working and coming together in various ways, including transversal ones, echoes what the 'institution builders' are up to, a fifth phase of institutional critique. I find this an interesting proposal. It is important not to place your bet on only one strategy, only one method. Context-sensitivity often seems more productive to me. Small steps and measures are valuable too. I would also argue for moderate trust in one single project, or even one line of programming, being able to turn the ship around – there is an exaggerated belief in how much can be achieved in and with art. Nevertheless, we have to keep on trying. Although we have a fundamental dilemma right under our noses, namely whether and how critique can be performed. My case studies are only partially enveloped with a rhetoric of 'being critical'. At best they offer structures and procedures which allow for something which differs from most of what the dominant discourses and mainstream activities are doing. This may end up being a wise choice, or not: critique – like love and humour – suffer from the dilemma of enunciation. As soon as we say that we are going to be critical, or that we want to fall in love, or that a joke will be funny – the risk of it failing is immanent.

MINUTES: PRE-, PRE-, PREVIEW

San Keller

17 September 2010, 5 – 6.45 p.m.

Kunsthalle Fridericianum,
Friedrichsplatz 18, Kassel

Participants: San Keller
(SK), Rein Wolfs (RW) and
approx. 19 guests

Minutes: Sylvia Rüttimann

Rein Wolfs (RW) initiates the conversation by asking San Keller (SK) to talk about his recent performance staged at the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen on the occasion of a symposium organised by the local university. This performance, so SK, was exceptional insofar as his first concept had been turned down by the event's organisers, prompting him to thematise this fact in his alternative suggestion: he invited the symposium's participants to a dinner whose main course consisted in him reading out the concept of the original performance. Furthermore, as part of the performance, SK was paid his fee directly after the dinner. As SK mentions this, RW is prompted to bring up the difficult question how performative artists should be remunerated, a question already touched on in prior conversations.

SK then moves to the main subject of the discussion: developing a project for an exhibition. Firstly, he sums up what has happened so far: following RW's rather negative response to a suggestion put forward in the last Preview session, SK rethought the project taking his most recent works as a point of departure and honing in on the conference room as a possible concept for showing an installation work. This, however, also met with little enthusiasm on RW's part. SK now asks the curator to elaborate on his reasons for reacting in this way.

Before answering RW points out his satisfaction with SK's two current works. What RW particularly likes about *Digestiv* (Walk), which also results in publications, and the Preview discussions staged at regular intervals is their daring performative approach opening up new perspectives. He adds that for him even the Preview series works as a performance, stressing that it seems no prerequisite to end this project in an exhibition, even if it does have the process of developing an exhibition at its core. But then RW admits that there is quite a concrete problem to actually staging an exhibition: there is no room left for a large exhibition in the coming year. This is why RW makes a suggestion. Next summer two exhibitions will take place, one of them presenting the collection of the Migros Museum. To help him stage this exhibition RW would like to consult two artists, SK being one of them, particularly because his work suits on account of his intellectual, performative and sometimes even curatorial approach.

SK likes this idea, although he is not sure whether this will tie in with his other projects. Moreover, rather than

working on a reflective level, he is interested in working with real places and examining spatial possibilities. Unfortunately, the discussions between him and RW have not brought him any closer to this objective, so that he cannot help but wonder whether the Preview discussions are adequate tools for developing an exhibition. It might be a good idea to lift the time limit of approximately an hour and keep the discussion going for as long as it takes to come to a conclusion. One might either consult the public or exclude it altogether.

RW on the other hand is quite happy with the format of the discussions and again emphasises their performative character. In the course of the discussion the main discrepancy between RW's and SK's points of view is finally revealed and summarised by RW as follows: whereas he is interested in the performative aspects of SK's art, SK is looking for an opportunity to develop the spatial and visual potential of his works. RW adds that SK has not much experience in developing museum shows, which the artist counters by humorously accusing the curator of not showing much confidence in his aesthetic ability. As the discussion comes to a close, artist and curator finally agree on three things: reconsidering the idea of collaborating on the Migros Museums's collection exhibition, finding a more precise time slot and working on a new concept for an exhibition. For this they now envisage the Fridericianum's rotunda.

A SERIES OF ACTS AND SPACES

Søren Grammel

I will present four projects to you; two are earlier examples of my work: first the *Videonale 9* took place in Bonn in 2001 and second the exhibition *Telling Histories* took place at Kunstverein Munich in 2003. I will not refer too long to these 2 projects, but they form the ground for the argument that I will try to develop today. I will then speak about the projects:

Die Blaue Blume, from 2007 and *Idealismusstudio* from 2008, which both took place at Grazer Kunstverein and which can also be considered as one project in two parts, although they were consciously not advertised like this.

These four projects (assuming the last two to be actually one) look very different on the first view. But what they all share is that they include a level of exploration adjusted both to my own function and possibilities as a curator – as well as to the contexts and institutions that surrounded them. To stimulate the growth of opportunity for both artists and curators, I think that curatorial work should always include examining, questioning, transcending and outmaneuvering some of the co-ordinates in which projects take place. And I very much believe, that the form of the spaces that we produce – and the acts that we generate through them ourselves – are the first things to question and to work with in order to challenge the economies of projects and institutions.

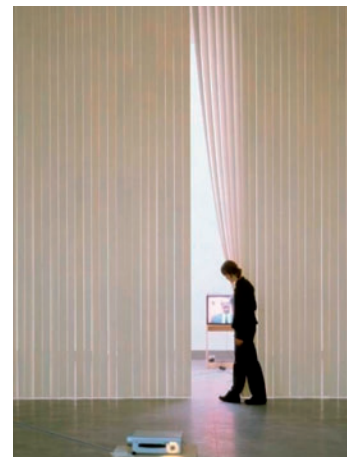
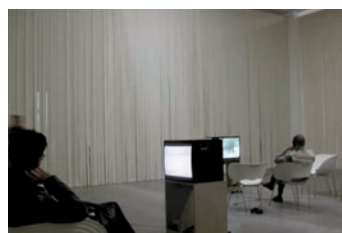
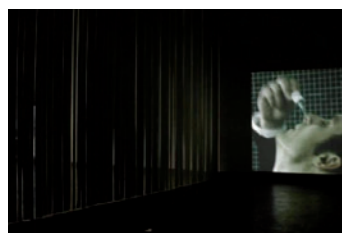
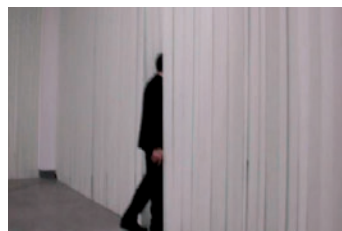
The *videonale 9*¹, in 2001, confronted visitors with an architecture made of 6 meter high felt strips. Right in the beginning of my involvement with *videonale* my concept was based on the attempt to abandon an attribute of all former *videonale* festivals (and video festivals in common): This was the inescapable authority of the one-after-another of the screening – reducing the active, self-directed engagement of the spectators with the display.

As a practical response to my programmatic demand for changing the logics of perception of the festival, a raster of felt walls was developed by the two architects Nikolaus Hirsch and Michael Müller. It divided the large hall into many sections and besides absorbing sounds it allowed moving between works and spaces at any point according solely to the visitors' decisions and interests. The overall hegemony of a linear sequence of presenting works – either in form of the screening or as a string of rooms/black boxes – was suspended. I additionally added purely functional presentation units into that raster that were neutral and worked optionally with a monitor or a projection, ...

... light or dark surrounding, ...and plus different possibilities for transmitting sound – like headphones or loudspeakers.

Due to this standardization, different works with the same presentation characteristics could be shown on the same presentation unit. The participating artists therefore had to individually define which technical requirements were ideal for their works. In this way it was possible to divide the whole program into different groups and to play each group for one day and to then change the program on the

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The ninth edition
of a German video
festival based in
Bonn and founded
in the middle of
the 1980's.



videonale 9, Bonn, 2001

next day. The changing presentation transposed the format of the video screening into a spatial situation. And at the same time, the space returned the decisions about time, sequence and repetitive viewing to the visitors. By adding performative lectures as a part of the program (under the label *Video-Aktionismen*) by people and collectives just like Paper Tiger TV, A-Clip, Eurovision 2000, Rainer Ganahl, Bernd Krauss and others, the format seemed to occupy a blank between exhibition and festival. I called this an 'installational festival'.

For me this is an example, how form can result from dealing with the structural coordinates of a project by expounding its intrinsic problems. The exhibition's design was not at all focused to be a good looking suit, but rather it was an effect from re-organizing the then unquestioned parameters of the videonale-festival: 1. The monument of the format of the screening and 2. the often undefined status of artists' productions working with moving-images in the art context.

Another aspect was to attach an overall thematic focus to the *videonale 9* selection – instead of accepting only the video format as the common denominator. The focus of *videonale 9* became the aesthetic and political correlations and antagonisms of documentary rhetoric and image-formats in contemporary art.

After *videonale 9* I pursued and focused this theme through a series of screenings, lectures and film events. I took along works from the *videonale 9* selection like those of Hito Steyerl, Nasrin Tabatabaei, Ruth Kaaserer or Jesper Nordahl and added new focal points, such as a Jozef Robakowsky retrospective screening organized together with the artist Nina Könnemann (who had also participated in the *videonale 9*). All this took place in 2001 under the name *Es ist schwer das Reale zu berühren* (lit. *It is hard to touch the Real*) at both art-institutional and non-art-institutional places, including e.g. bureau-k and golden pudel club in Hamburg, Edith-Russ Haus für Medienkunst in Oldenburg or the Arbeitnehmerkammer in Bremen.

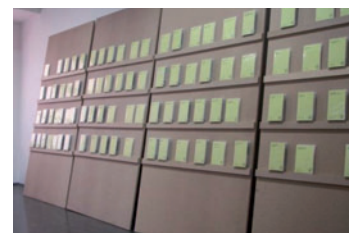
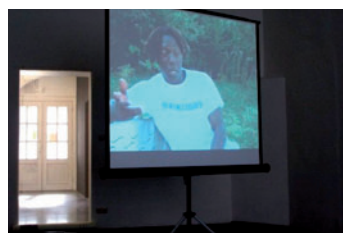
One year later in 2002, when I was invited by Maria Lind to become the curator at the Kunstverein Munich, I 'imported' that project to the Kunstverein. There and beyond it became a widespread and collective and permanently growing activity, co-organized by many others, including not just curators but artists as well.

Now the project is based as an archive of approx. 150 video-works at the Grazer Kunstverein. A book, published by the Grazer Kunstverein and Revolver (published by Vice Versa, Berlin), exists since 2007.

It is hard to touch the real is a quote by the Dutch filmmaker Johan van der Keuken. Although the sentence is related to the TV- and film-format, it can also be read in the wider context of the mediated nature of 'the real' in general. I understand curating as a mediating activity, not because it dresses culture for audiences, but rather because it continuously emphasizes the impossibility of the unmediated.

A practical showcase for this understanding of curating within my work was constituted through introducing the talk show format into the exhibition *Telling Histories*, which took place in 2003 at Kunstverein Munich.

Telling Histories was a collective exhibition, which Maria Lind – then the director at Kunstverein – and I had invented and developed together. It addressed the controversial history of the Kunstverein, among others by constituting a



Top 4 Images: Different Manifestations of the project *Es ist schwer das Reale zu berühren*, between 2002-2007

Bottom Image: *Telling Histories*, Kunstverein München, 2003

display for the archive designed by the artist Liam Gillick. Within that framework I had decided to speak with contemporary witnesses about three exhibitions from the past, in which they had been personally involved or in touch with: *Transform the world! Poetry has to be written by anyone* (1970), *Dove sta memoria* by Gerhard Merz (1984) and *A society of well taste* by Andrea Fraser (1993). But my aim was to let this literal implementation of the title become a formally precise act within the project that would, at the same time, constitute parts of the space.

Looking at Munich with its saturated TV- and tabloid-based boulevard mentality, I chose the talk show as a metaphor for the phantom of mediation in general – or, to put it differently – a metaphor for the promises of the mediation-industry. For this I chose the participants and trained for the role of a talk show host myself. For a while I analyzed the rhetorics and vocabulary of Sabine Christiansen – then the most well known talk show host in Germany.

This Talkshow was dedicated to Fraser's exhibition, for which she had interviewed the members of the board of the Kunstverein Munich in 1993. In the main roles: Helmut Draxler – director, Bazon Brock – professional, Gabi Czöppan – member of the board of the Kunstverein when the project took place, Birgit Sonna – critic, and Ingrid Rein – another member of the board.

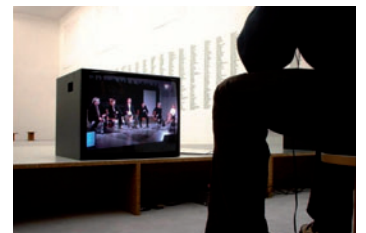
I understood the Talkshows as an act of a practical archeology that was directed towards analyzing the power structures of the Kunstverein. The talk-show project resulted in a collaborative situation with the artist Liam Gillick. Taking tasks is a self-related inversion of the so-called artist's freedom that Liam has been consciously investigating in his work since the 90's in manifold ways. Here, it not only generated the design of a large stage, but also details like the composition of a musical jingle to be played at the beginnings and ends of the shows.

This way of working is based on an interest by both artists and curators in the possibility of including the relationship between artist and curator as the subject – or problem – itself: and keeping its tensions visibly upright.

Beatrice von Bismarck points out the approach of such projects. They aim to shift and at least dynamically shape – if not completely disintegrate – the existing interdependencies in the artfield by questioning the participants' relations and processes of exchange and positioning among one another "supplementing the aspect of competition in the relationship of curators and artists with that of negotiation."

The shows were held just within the first week of the exhibition and edited quickly afterwards, to be able to show them as a part of the exhibition and to try and use the exhibition as a production space. The DVDs were multiplied and functioned both similar to a 'catalogue' and simply as an independent source of information about each of the case-study-exhibitions.

Still, in most cases making an exhibition means wiping out all aspects of time: the first and the last visitor are more or less presented with the same situation. Ironically, this stands in contrast to the development of an exhibition, which is always based on a complex phrasing of particular time intervals by the curators and the artists and everybody else involved. But I am also against theatrically putting the development of an exhibition on stage because this is mostly owed to a sort of event culture aimed at gaining public interest. In contrast, using the exhibition



Top to bottom, left to right:

Still from Sabine Christiansen's Talkshow, 2003

Telling Histories, stage for Talkshows with equipment, Kunstverein München, 2003

Still Talkshow *Eine Gesellschaft des guten Geschmacks*, Andrea Fraser (1993), Kunstverein München, 2003

Looking at Talkshow *Eine Gesellschaft des guten Geschmacks*, Andrea Fraser (1993), Kunstverein München, 2003

Looking at Talkshow *Eine Gesellschaft des guten Geschmacks*, Andrea Fraser (1993), and right: *Poetry has to be written by anyone* (1970), Kunstverein München, 2003

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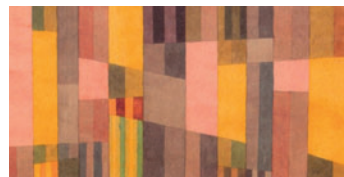
space as a context for research and production should simply help oneself to create a less product-, and presentation-orientated space. Because this is missing very often: time to develop and compile the issues which are at stake. In this sense I try to work with my role as a curator in residence at the art academy in Vienna. The academic context provides not just the time and space but also the social and collective component to generate contents in a different than everyday curatorial work does.

Doesn't curatorial subjectivity deliberately allow itself to be seized and changed by other dynamics? Preparing an exhibition is always primarily a process of social exchange – of an exchange between people and what they know, their skills, possibilities, backgrounds, and ideas. The exhibition format offers the paradox of a simultaneous variety of different, often opposite or contradictory chronologies in a way no other format does. Programmatically playing with breaking up a project into manifold dynamic fragments is what constitutes the specific blurry character of curatorial authorship for me. Therefore, this concept of a consciously 'disseminated' authorship is not necessarily tied to communicative and social processes only! Existing works and documents can also become independent and incalculable actors and partners within the emergence of meaning!

I'd like to exemplify what I have in mind with the 2 exhibitions *Die Blaue Blume* from 2007 and *Idealismusstudio* from 2008, which were strongly connected to each other and jointly traced to construct alternative perspectives on the historical relation between form and social engagement.

The starting point for the project *Idealismusstudio*, in 2008, was the production of a rug. I had sent a postcard of Paul Klee's watercolor *Monument im Fruchtländ* (1929) to a weaving workshop. Klee taught from 1920 to 1931 at the Bauhaus. What interested me was that Klee's courses included a design class for the weaving workshop and had a direct influence on the form vocabulary of the Bauhaus' textile production (cp. Works by Gretel Neter-Kähler or Ruth Hollós-Consemüller). Although function was the main Bauhaus slogan, Klee did not make any functional textiles himself. In contrast, an aesthetic orientation dominated in the weaving workshop for a long time and stood in the way of the usefulness the school demanded. The dispute between the 'applied' and the 'fine' artists became so intense from 1928 to 1931 that Klee left the Bauhaus. The appropriation of Klee's watercolor as a rug is the attempt to visualize problems within the relation of artistic and social, manual and industrial production and expounding the antagonisms of the modern attempt to practically relate aesthetics and social structures to each other.

One year before that, I had worked with a carpet for the exhibition *Die Blaue Blume* based on a design from 1926 by Anni Albers – yet for different reasons. The original design was conceived as a wall hanging, only 1.75 m high. A reconstruction from 1964 exists in the Bauhaus Archive, Berlin, as the original is lost due to Albers' emigration from Nazi-Germany to the US in 1933. My interest here was the political and social dimension of Albers' work which is expressed through formal and technical innovations. Here's a quote from Albers: "It is safe, I suppose, to assume that today most if not all of us have had the experience of looking down from an airplane onto this earth. What we see is a free flow of forms intersected here and there by straight lines, rectangles and evenly drawn curves." I was moved by this relation between looking at the world with a particular interest in form and the experience of travel and involuntary emigration



Paul Klee, *Monument im Fruchtländ*, German Ingres paper on cardboard, 45.7 x 30.8 cm, 1929, courtesy Zentrum Paul Klee Bern
Exhibition *Idealismusstudio* (2008) with Paul Klee-rug in the middle, Grazer Kunstverein



Anni Albers, *Black-White-Red, Triple Weave*, 1926, originally conceived as a wall hanging and executed in cotton and silk (measurements 118 x 175cm). Lost. A reconstruction from 1964 exists in the Bauhaus Archive, Berlin.
Exhibition *Die Blaue Blume* (2007) with appropriated Black-White-Red, Grazer Kunstverein

caused by the social rejection of this view and beyond. The use of the design as a carpet in *Die Blaue Blume* deviates from this metaphor of a landscape you fly across. The copy was enlarged to a length of almost five meters, but keeping the original measurements of the color-fields, becoming an architectural structure of the exhibitions' form itself. On the photo it is surrounded by a lamella installation by Lasse Schmidt-Hansen, a yellow acrylic paint text by Saim Demircan (copying a graffiti-bubble-style filled with the words "celebration of concrete"), a rattan and steel object by Juliane Solmsdorf, a bench by George Nelson and a video by Heidrun Holzfeind about a one mile long building based on Le Corbusier's ideas – built in the periphery of rome and called *Il Corviale*. Please note the formal correlation between the doorway in the video and the bench, or the carpet-pattern.

In contrast to the example put forward by Oliver Marchart – in relation to documenta 12's use of formal analogies – the formal relations which I traced DO have a historical-political context (and not just a personal-formal one, constituted by blurry private associations): This context is linked to the ambivalent realities of modernity's project to realize social utopia through rational design.

In the next space I hung a work by the Russian-Polish sculptor Katarzyna Kobro from 1921.

With Albers, Kobro shares both the experience of emigration and of rejecting abstraction as something private, but regarding it instead as something directed towards the renewal of society. "In western tradition political thought (no matter if left, right or mainstream) rarely considers the potential of imagination in the conception (or improvement) of social structures. Rather, it is far more often disregarded. The imaginary should remain utopian.", Felix Philipp Ingold once wrote.

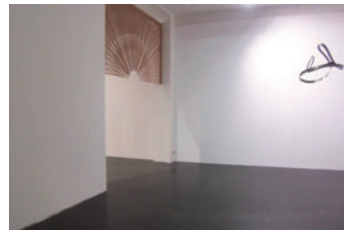
The conflict touched by the 2 exhibitions – briefly outlined here – which allegedly exists between the play of art and actual social engagement, is also part of the personal genesis of the film *Bambule* by Ulrike Meinhof, in turn being shown in the exhibition *Idealismusstudio*.

Here you see a view with Meinhof's film in the foreground. The film should broadcast for the first time in May 1970. Yet something happened in between: Meinhof went underground before the film's completion. *Bambule* explores the situation of young women in state supervised homes. Meinhof analyzes these institutions with regard to their disciplinary function and as an instrument of class creation. The screenplay is the result of collaboration between Meinhof, German filmmaker Itzenplitz and girls from the homes, who also appear in the film as actors. A glass ashtray was put next to it on the floor. The monitor was as well put on the floor and very near to the opposing wall. It was impossible to watch it longer while standing. To find a somehow comfortable position you had to let yourself down on the floor. With this decision I wanted to make it impossible to just passively consume the film for a while. Visitors were really enforced to make an either/or-decision to engage with the film or not.

The curatorial display in these projects is not orientated towards solving conflicts between works, arguments and audience, but rather to focusing them. I see this as a chance to reconsider display- and exhibition-design as practices which not necessarily have to be bound to the affirmation of canonical meanings but to do exactly the opposite and to act as speculative contexts.



Exhibition *Die Blaue Blume* (2007) with Heidrun Holzfeind and George Nelson, Grazer Kunstverein



Exhibition *Die Blaue Blume* (2007) with Katarzyna Kobro and Florian Roithmayr, Grazer Kunstverein



Exhibition *Idealismusstudio* (2008) with a film by Ulrike Meinhof and Silke Otto-Knapp (background), Grazer Kunstverein

In the exhibition, I was interested in *Bambule* as a document that exactly describes the intersection between social-political work – work that still believes that institutions can be changed – and radical (militant) action, a situation that no longer believes in the possibility of change as something that can be produced from within institutions. Whereas *Die Blaue Blume* was more emphatic and utopian in tone, the echo of *Idealismusstudio* appeared to look more at aspects of disillusion and radicalization.

As you see, the display was emphasized and exaggerated in the show. It very much resulted from looking at poster-stand and propaganda-kiosk designs by the Russian artist Gustav Klucis. This authoritative gesture of the exhibition display stands for the notion of a politically applied idealism that presumes to be able to assign everything a place in a system – like the format and history of the exhibition in general maybe. In this arrangement of the work, it was purposely a matter of producing a sense of totalitarian space. The conflict between the exhibition-making gestures and the single works is also part of the theme of the *Idealismusstudio*, which revolves around aspects of authority and discipline within utopian concepts.

I try to critically relocate the ideology of staging and its relationship with mediation throughout my work instead of abandoning it. To reflect on the relationship of display and ideology I also replicated two picture holders like those used by Arnold Bode in 1955 at the Documenta – in the Fridericianum. Here are the originals in a picture. There are very strange verticals coming out of the steel profile, which form something like two arms at the upper end, literally clinging to the wall.

And here are the copies in the exhibition *Idealismusstudio*, on which two pictures by Silke Otto Knapp are mounted. She painted these pictures especially for the exhibition. Of course she was informed about this hanging in advance.

Bode's exhibition in 1955 was intended to be a kind of reparation for the banishing of Modernism from Nazi Germany. Yet at the same time, the history of Modernism in Germany and its political connections was not developed. The whole installation appears to be a symbolic image of a return of art. In a space oddly detached from the architectural framework, the art suspended on steles or framed by large curtain-walls felt almost like a 'spiritual' manifestation. I understood the reconstructed steles in *Idealismusstudio* as an aesthetic way to expound the problems of these correlations and to literally envision the symbolical and ideological impact of this display by de-contextualizing, isolating and actualizing it.

By creating such material and immaterial productions I aim to stimulate an imaginative and associative play with the diversity of interpretation. Curatorial form is nothing total. It is not committed to "the thesis of the identity of thoughts and object" (as Theodor Adorno stated in regard to the form of the essay), but rather operates with the awareness that truth is something artificial and temporary. Exhibitions are imaginary sites, short-time gatherings or dialogues of disparate actors and ideas – e.g. between Anni Albers and Hilary Lloyd or between Ulrike Meinhof and Arnold Bode. The contours of projects designed and realized along the lines of this kind of understanding of curatorial practice entail a continuous interplay between drawing outlines and blurring them. They are forms that emphasize the synthetic nature of all concepts. Curatorial practice should deliberately create unstable constellations contradicting the notion of truth as something accomplished.



Exhibition *Idealismusstudio* (2008), Grazer Kunstverein / Gustav Klucis, Poster-Stand Design, 1920'



Exhibition *Idealismusstudio* (2008) with a piece by Marika Looke and Jüri Okas (placed on a circular mirror that is placed on a part of the steel construction like a side table), Grazer Kunstverein
Arnold Bode, exhibition design of documenta, Kassel, 1955



Exhibition *Idealismusstudio* (2008) with copies of Bode's design (holding paintings by Silke Otto-Knapp), Grazer Kunstverein
Arnold Bode, exhibition design of documenta, Kassel, 1955



MINUTES: PRE-, PREVIEW

San Keller

21 January 2011, 5 p.m. –
6.15 p.m.
Kunsthalle Fridericianum,
Friedrichsplatz 18, Kassel
Participants: San Keller (SK),
Rein Wolfs (RW) and approx.
30 guests
Minutes: Sylvia Rüttimann

After welcoming the guests to the fourth conversation, curator RW announces SK's upcoming Digestiv (Walk). He says that a booklet on the walks will again be published and, as with the preceding walks, the talks will move between mediation and institutional critique. Here SK interrupts: the focus would not be on institutional critique, he says, but on the artist and engagement with his or her work.

The conversation then turns to the actual aim of the talks, the coming exhibition. SK explains that his original intention has changed due to the exhibition For Real at the Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen. He says he further developed the idea of having a conference room built in Fridericianum's exhibition space in original size in which invited artists can meet for a conference to discuss a joint artistic work for the conference room. In St. Gallen, he invited artists to take part in an "exile parliament" in which the same agenda items were addressed that were discussed by politicians in the City Council. On account of this experience, he says, he wants to leave the exhibition space temporarily in order to bring artists who are in Kassel visiting documenta together in random groups to hold talks in real conference rooms, for example, of companies and public authorities. He himself would perform a guiding function which has not been defined yet in detail.

RW asks what exact issues should be addressed at the meetings. SK repeats that he will not provide specific topics, but rather a negotiation structure as well as an atmospheric framework. The conversations will not be public, he says. Only the results will be shown later: the conversations should be filmed and then edited into an end product which will not constitute the exhibition but will serve as a kind of "script" for the exhibition. At issue is the role of the curator, among other things. The curator should be in charge of mounting the exhibition and influence it by adding his own interpretations. Basically, SK would like to create something that RW terms "collectively negotiated creativity", arising from cooperation within the framework of prescribed structures. SK explains that the request for him to contribute art in public space to the project Europaallee in Zurich incited him to make this change. Here, he says, the task of art would be reduced to advertising for the location. However, he envisions having artists participating in the talks about the development of the Europaallee quarter in Zurich and thus having an impact on the projects as well as on the decision-makers.

RW raises a first practical objection: there is no funding available for the proposed period in 2012. But he likes SK's concept, and also likes the prospect of working with the Kunsthalle Fridericianum on another project during the year of the documenta and of being able to communicate it on the Fridericianum's website. He is not sure about what exactly the exhibition might look like. He asks whether SK envisions something similar to Pawel Althamer's procedure. SK sees parallels. He is striving for a collective work and wants to challenge artists to work differently than they usually do. RW counters that while certain artists would benefit from deviating from their accustomed practice, others would not. For the curator, he says, exhibitions of artists whose intentions cannot be predicted offer great opportunities, but can also present difficulties from time to time. While he found the concept of Althamer's collective work very good, he was not always happy with the aesthetic presented. He says that if he now buys a pig in a poke, so to speak, by accepting SK's concept, he could be caught in a similar situation. SK replies that he views RW as the director and definitely wants the curator's influence to be apparent. The project should explicitly not only deal with the relationship between artists, but it should also be influenced by the respective curator – in this case RW – who visualizes and implements it in the temporary guise of an exhibition.

JUST WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES 'CURATING' SO DIFFERENT, SO APPEALING?

Olga Fernández

I have always been intrigued by the fact that, in order to define what a curator is or a curator does, curators think about their practice in terms of analogy. Tom Morton has written on this topic that "curator as ... constructions speak of a welcome self-reflexivity and plurality of approach but (...) there's a faint atmosphere of subterfuge about them, of borrowing the glamour or *gravitas* of another profession"¹. Most analogies are related to other professions² maybe because the difficulty of putting into words a kind of experience and knowledge that is learnt and developed in practice. Curators' expertise is usually defined by a set of procedural skills and organisational abilities, and intellectual production. My argument will be that this knowledge combination is a key element in the post-fordist economy.

In the last years a new understanding of curating has been taking place in which it is seen as a wider cultural practice. It has been stated recently that curating is "a practice which goes decisively beyond the making of exhibitions, within a transdisciplinary and transcultural context, as a genuine method of generating, mediating, and reflecting experience and knowledge"³. The curator is portrayed here as a producer of knowledge, a definition similar to that of curating subjects, "a performative and exemplary agent, acquiring subjectivity in and by the act of mediation"⁴. The connection of curating with knowledge and mediation has increased particularly since curatorial studies have gained a place in Academia, a fact that has encouraged, since the early 2000s, what is known as the 'educational turn'⁵. In this scenario curatorial practice is less a display/meaning production activity and more a mode of inquiry/enquiry. This background resonates too in the current debates that bring together art, education and research in the academic field, especially in PhD practice-based research done by artists⁶.

Research turns out to be a key category in the knowledge/art economy and exhibitions as a mode of enquiry, one of the possible instruments of research. In parallel, the rise of the curator as a producer of immaterial knowledge comes hand in hand with the centrality of innovation and creativity in the post-fordist economic system. We can further look at this topic with two new analogies taken from Paolo Virno's texts. Virno talks about the figure of the artist (*virtuoso*) that can be used metaphorically to think about the post-fordist worker⁷. But Virno also talks about a notion of entrepreneur that fits better with the particular make-up of the curator's job.

"An entrepreneur is someone who manages to combine given elements in a new way, like a wordsmith. Now, "wordsmith"

refers to the linguistic animal; using language means making new combinations with given elements. (...) The work of this liberal economist [Schumpeter] includes the following distinctions: there is the innovative capacity that consists of combining elements differently and, in addition, there is another kind of innovation that consists of the introduction of a new original element. Two forms, and as I suspect, of artistic production"⁸.

This analogy can be explored in two directions, one related to the form of exhibitions and the other related to the role of the curator. Regarding the former we need to go along with Virno's thesis. In the same interview he is asked about the distinction between two types of research practice that he characterises as the 'logic of justification' (distinctive of science and based on methodology and comparability) and the 'logic of discovery' (related to artists' *modus operandi* that use 'unvalidated tools' such as analogy and hybridization.) Most of 'discursive' exhibitions, such as national surveys, thematic or retrospective shows, could be ascribed to the first mode. On the other hand, a defining feature of the second mode, since avant-garde exhibitions, is the use of juxtapositions and associations (physical, material, conceptual or interdisciplinary), that challenge established logics. In this view the more the curator 'combines the elements' under a logic of discovery, the more 'artistic' the exhibitions become. We can think of Hans Ulrich Obrist's shows as examples: "Rather it would be a travelling laboratory that would show its results on its way. Every step of the exhibition would be a step of the research and it would be ongoing over two or three years"⁹, he states about Cities on the move. Another way to explore the idea of 'curator as entrepreneur' is focusing

- 1 Nai Publishers, 2009), 43.
- 2 Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Kraftwerk, Time storage, Laboratory", in *Curating in the 21st century*, ed. Dave Beech and Gavin Wade (Walsall: University of Wolverhampton, The New Art Gallery, 2000), 48.
- 3 In the brochure of the conference *Cultures of the curatorial* (January 2010, Academy of Visual Arts, Leipzig), www.kdk-leipzig.de/veranstaltungen.html?..../Conference%20of%20Cultures%20of%20the%20Curatorial... (accessed March 25, 2010). The italics are mine.
- 4 Soren Andreassen and Lars Bang Larsen, "The Middleman: Beginning to talk about Mediation", in *Curating subjects*, ed. Paul O'Neill (London: Open Editions, 2007), 27.
- 5 Irit Rogoff, "Turning", *e-flux journal*, n° 11 (2008), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/18> (accessed March 25, 2010).
- 6 Check the whole issue of *Art and Research*, vol 2, n° 2, spring 2009, which gathers issues and experiences in artistic research presented on the occasion of significant international conferences and symposia dedicated to artistic research held between May and December 2008.
- 7 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (Los Angeles/New York: Semiotext(e), 2004).
- 8 Sonja Lavaert and Pascal Gielen, "The Dismeasure of Art. An Interview with Paolo Virno" in *Being an artist in post-fordist times*, ed. Pascal Gielen and Paul de Bruyne (Rotterdam:

less on the outcome (the exhibition) and more on the process (curating). Curators are paradigmatic of the way a post-fordist worker performs: flexibility; lifelong learning; subjective collaboration; heterodox application of existing rules in an exceptional situation. We can think about how exhibitions come about and the degree of uncertainties that the curator needs to manage: unpredictable artists, precarious workers, not-always reliable providers, and economic/political dependent institutions. A remarkable amount of immaterial knowledge comes from this laboratory. The paradox is that immaterial knowledge makes it difficult to find the instrumental applicability that characterised to the old scientific-experimental method.

Following from this we could ask how the expanded version of curating relates to institutions. If sociality is inherent to institutional formations, in the post-fordist scenario institutions can be transformed into a medium, not because of themselves, but because post-fordism treats sociality as a medium for wealth creation. In this case, the social is the medium. Some art institutions are still interested in building a public for 'modern' or 'contemporary' art, to exhibit artworks, generate discourses and to expand the educational mission that Enlightenment museums used to have. But some others have incorporated knowledge production in their agendas¹⁰ and this knowledge is primarily about the social. The social is seen not only as the goal of representations (artworks and exhibitions during the 1990s turn to the social), but also as an issue dealing with 'living together' that expands into a reflection on democracy, new forms of political/cultural action, translating difference/s, and so on¹¹. We can look at examples, such as Esche's work at the New Roseum: "The 'community' is created in the 'gallery' rather than the gallery addressing existing fixed groups. Here, the art institution becomes the reason for community and describes the process of its coming-into-being as the responsibility of the gallery itself. (...) What 'particular purpose' would bring people together?"¹².

Another site to examine the topic could be biennials, paradigmatic scenarios of the multi-dimensional activity of the curator, trying to mediate in a particular *Chinese encyclopaedia* of different nations, cultures, all of class of workers, politicians, economists, urbanists, academia, market, media, audiences, communities. In his article trying to characterise biennials as 'unstable institutions', Basualdo affirms that biennial curators "are art professionals who must respond to a variety of extra-artistic conditions and questions, their work is necessarily different from that of those who preceded them"¹³. The kind of immaterial knowledge that is at stake in biennials is translation, not meaning¹⁴. In the international space the multiplicity of visual grammars do not translate into one another, but they translate to produce difference, as Sarat Maharaj asserts¹⁵.

The difference that makes a difference nowadays is translation as mediation. Enwezor's view of the biennial model can be related to this idea: "The biennial model as a place-making device constitutes what the theorist Hakim Bey calls a 'temporary autonomous zone (T.A.Z.)' of encounters (...). The large-scale exhibition model, despite its shortcomings does offer new institutional capacities for curators to articulate the new possibilities of contemporary artistic discourse globally"¹⁶. T.A.Z. and other types of new institutional forms, characterised by collaboration and networking, need to operate through translation, understood "as a mode of social praxis rather

than a mode of epistemological mapping", in Ned Rossiter's words¹⁷. This kind of translation also needs to take place between all kind of social formations - institutions and ekstitutions¹⁸ -, making them complementary rather than antagonistic. In this new scenario whether radicality is placed inside or outside is of no real consequence. While autonomy is a pre-condition for creative production, critique is consubstantial to institutional/capitalist regeneration¹⁹.

It has been widely pointed out that the most prominent result of institutional critique has been the strengthening of the institution. This boomerang effect has been labelled as 'paradoxical' or too much institutionalized critique. From this point of view, artworks and artists are entrapped in a double bind. If, as Andrea Fraser says, institutional critique works "against the exploitation of artwork for economic or symbolic profit because of their autonomy"²⁰, freeing art from the institutional constraints will mean that at the end autonomy is strengthened by institutional critique. However, autonomy is precisely the pre-condition of post-fordist economy²¹. If, on the contrary, we negate all autonomy to art, it becomes incorporated in other fields or dissolves into life and we don't need art institutions anymore. In that case art is bound to the social relations it may produce.

Returning to the original question, we can put forward what makes curatorial practice so appealing, and for whom. The entrepreneurial abilities of the curator and the expanded exhibitions formats are symptomatic of the new economic conditions that require new contexts of collaboration and interaction. Expanded exhibitions are able to produce social relations. In this point they coincide with an increasing number of artists, engaged

10 temporality" in Florian Schneider, "(Extended) Footnotes On Education", *e-flux journal*, nº 14, (2010), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/128> (accessed March 25, 2010).

11 In some cases - i.e. new institutionalism - this knowledge is self-referential, as institutions are themselves under scrutiny.

12 Charles Esche, "The possibility forum", *Artlink*, vol 22, no. 4 (2002).

13 Carlos Basualdo, "The Unstable Institution", in *Manifesta Journal*, nº 2, (2003), 58.

14 Check "The Art Biennial as a Global Phenomenon. Strategies in Neo-Political Times", monographic issue of *Open*, nº 16, (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2009).

15 Sarat Maharaj, "Perfidious Fidelity: The Untranslatability of the Other" in *Modernity and Difference*, Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj, (London: Iniva, 2001).

16 Okwui Enwezor, "Place-making or In the "Wrong Place": Contemporary Art and the Postcolonial condition" in *The History of a Decade that has yet not been named*, ed. Stephanie Moisdon and Hans Ulrich Obrist, (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2007), 217.

17 Ned Rossiter, *Organized Networks. Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions* (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2006).

18 "Networked environments or what could be called "ekstitutions" are based on exactly the opposite principle: they promise to provide instant access to knowledge. Ek-ststitutions exist: their main purpose is to come into being. They exist outside the institutional framework, and instead of infinite progress, they are based on a certain

19 We could try to compound a definition made of a combination of her ideas: "a methodology of critically reflexive site-specificity about forms of domination in its immediate field of activity and against the exploitation of artwork for economic or symbolic profit because of their autonomy" in Andrea Fraser, "What is Institutional Critique" in *Institutional Critique and after*, ed. John C. Welchman (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2006).

21 In Virno's words: "It is a condition for my exploitation that I produce intelligence and collaboration, and I can only do so when I am, to some degree, free. So I need to be granted a certain degree of autonomy in order to be exploited" in Sonja Lavaert and Pascal Gielen, "The Dismeasure of Art. An Interview with Paolo Virno" in *Being an artist in post-fordist times*, ed. Pascal Gielen and Paul de Bruyne (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2009), 31.

in forms of artistic practice that question and experiment with the social as medium. The difference may be that what artists do stays in the realm of representation: their works are not social laboratories, but a *staging* of them. Conversely, curators produce social forms of production more than forms of social production, involving real economic transactions. The relational nature of the curator's job compels him/her to bring forth and develop social encounters and circuits beyond representation.

Taking the institution's sociality as a medium, entrepreneurial curators are in a better position than artists to be actants²². As Simon Sheik states: "managerial critique of institutions has had far more effects on art institutions than the artistic critique from conceptual art practices such as institutional critique"²³. Nevertheless, the idea that exhibitions are being thought about as "construction site, laboratory, think-tank and distribution channel, metaphors borrowed from the lexicons of industry, the media, corporate culture and science"²⁴, may reveal that the curator's practice is very likely to be co-opted. In fact 'curating as institutional critique' seems to be a shortcut in order to update old institutions (museums and kunsthallen) for the new economic paradigm, by reconfiguring them from within. Institutional critique is useful as it points out the limits of a certain institutional formation (a formation of power and knowledge) showing the contingency of it, but it has difficulties to go beyond the frame.

Following Foucault's version of critique, we should ask not only about the processes, but also about the effects produced by a certain discourse²⁵. Curators should be conscious of their participation in the post-fordist process and aware of their responsibility in the consequences. To move in this direction, curators should practice critique upon themselves (as a new institution), and not only upon institutions. They should use self-reflexivity to propose unstable situations and breaking points. Have we learnt something from Manifesta 6's failure? Or from graffiters invasion in the 2008 – void-driven- Sao Paulo Biennial? Curator's intellectual production, procedural skills and organisational abilities (immaterial knowledge, translation abilities and mediation skills) would benefit from more short-circuits and misunderstandings and less smoothness and transparency.

22
A
differentiation
between agents and
actants "All the
actors according
to Boltanski, have
possibilities of
critique at their
disposal, which
they employ in the
everyday life of
society almost
without
interruption (...)
Boltanski's
"pragmatic
sociology" rejects
the model of
"agents", who find
themselves in a
permanent state of
lying,
dissimulation or
schizophrenia (...).
Boltanski defends
"common people"
against
assumptions of
this kind, whom he
does not call
"agents" like
Bourdieu, but
rather "actants",
in Ulf Wuggenig
"Paradoxical
Critique",
Transform, (2008),
<http://transform.eicpp.net/transversal/0808/wuggenig/en#redir>
(accessed March
18, 2010).

23
Simon Sheik,
"Objects of Study
or Commodification
of Knowledge?
Remarks on
Artistic Research"
in Art and
Research, vol 2,
n° 2, (2009).

24
Alex
Farquharson,
"I curate, you
curate", Art
Monthly, n° 269
(2003).

25
Michel Foucault,
"What is
Critique?" in *The
Politics of Truth*,
ed. Sylvère
Lotringer and Lysa
Hochroth (New York:
Semiotext(e),
1997).

MINUTES: PREVIEW

San Keller

1 April 2011, 5 p.m. –
6.15 p.m.
Kunsthalle Fridericianum,
Friedrichsplatz 18, Kassel
Participants: San Keller (SK),
Rein Wolfs (RW) and approx.
20 guests
Minutes: Sylvia Rüttimann

After Rein Wolfs' words of welcome, San Keller takes the floor. He has reflected more on the idea of a conference room, he says, and today wants to take a closer look at the role of the curator and that of the conference room. Incidentally, he says, he has come to the conclusion that there should be no interaction between the artists and the companies and institutions who make the rooms available, because he views the concept of a conference room in a rather general sense. Like an exhibition room in a museum, for him the conference room is a place where something can be negotiated, but nothing concrete has to happen there. For him, it is not essential that the artists create a collective work, found a movement or take decisions. Rather, he would like to do without a work and emphasise the aspect of chance – the artists are being brought together through the principle of chance – and the temporary, fleeting aspect of the project. In a temporally and spatially closed framework, a certain mood should be created, which needs not culminate in a work, but rather is to be processed into an exhibition that the curator is responsible for.

Wolfs agrees with Keller's point that to meet in a conference room doesn't necessarily imply taking decisions, but he is opposed to comparing the conference room with an exhibition room, because in the latter the result is tangible. In addition, he has difficulties with Keller's procedure of intending to separate work and exhibition, which he finds inconceivable. In the end, he asserts, there is always a product that can be called a "work". For him, a work is what an artist produces, while an exhibition is what is negotiated between artist and curator. Thus, in Keller's case, too, he expects a work, although it is not yet known what shape it will take. The work could consist, for instance, solely of video or audio recordings of the meetings. However, he says that during the meetings the participants should definitely discuss the form, the concrete realisation. As a curator, he does not want to deal with the form of the work per se, and clearly states that unlike some other curators he does not view himself as an artist, does not want to mix these roles. But if this is Keller's absolute wish, then they will have to think about engaging a guest curator.

Keller replies that the discussion between the artists itself, the mood that arises, can be called a work. Additionally, he says that he is particularly interested in the role of the institution and the curator. In an institution, artists who otherwise would not come together are brought together and linked by the curator, and it is here that the artwork is given its specific form to begin

with. In this context, he asks Wolfs whether he views the putting together of works for an exhibition as an interpretation. Wolfs raises the consideration that at the beginning of an exhibition project he always has to clearly distinguish between artists who are still alive, with whom he works together on an exhibition, and with the work of dead artists. Regarding the latter, he says, an interpretation by the curator is needed much more; a completely different kind of curatorial work is necessary. Therefore (in reply to the question of what role he should play during the talks in the conference room), he says he would like to be present, but not to participate, because he does not want to intervene in the genesis of a work. But, says Keller, the curator has to be active after the meetings; he would like the curator to take over the leadership at that point.

Wolfs is sceptical, feels the project is slipping away from him a little. In addition to the form of the work, he believes there are still open questions regarding the conversation between the artists. He voices criticisms of Keller's project in St. Gallen for which artists came together for talks in a parliament. Wolfs does not find the formal aesthetic implementation of the concept or the talks themselves entirely convincing. Following this experience, he says, he came to the conclusion that a curator has to intervene more and clarify the direction things should take in advance. Wolfs says he is uncertain about three main things in the current project: Can one trust chance when bringing together artists, will the talks lead to a result, and will this then work as an exhibition? Criteria have to be developed for this, he says. For Keller, too, there are open questions: Will the move from the museum to other institutions arouse false expectations? Does it really have to be Kassel? How should the conversation be moderated and what role should Keller play? Might it perhaps be better to set up a dining room table so that the talks are made more casual? To clarify these issues, Keller would like to have a trial run. Wolfs thinks this is a very good idea and would like to be present to see what methods Keller will use in the process. Keller agrees to this and hopes that during this test run the question of the unpredictability of such an action and the usage of the room can be clarified.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Maren Brauner (*1981 Bamberg, Germany. Lives and works in Zürich and St. Gallen since 2001.), since 2008: Assistant Curator at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen. 2007 – 2008 Assistant to the head of communication at the Zurich Museum of Design. Since 2001: Working experience at museums, galleries, and publishing houses in Zurich and Berlin. 2007 – 2008: Post-graduate Program in Curating (CAS) at the Zurich University of the Arts (Degree: Certificate of Advanced Studies CAS. Title of master thesis: *Out of the Depot. A Relecturing of Collections by Artists*). 2001 – 2006: Studies of Media and Communication Science, English Literature and Art History at the Universities of Zurich and Valladolid (Spain) 2006.

San Keller was born in Berne in 1971. He completed his studies at the Hochschule der Künste in Zurich, where he now lives and works. Among his most recent solo exhibitions are *RS – KPRSGB* at the Neuer Kunstverein Giessen (2009), *Show Show* at the Centre Pasquart, Biel (2008), *Concept and Commerce* at the Maes & Matthys Gallery, Antwerp and *Clever and Smart* at the Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels (both 2007). San Keller participated in several group exhibitions including *Our Subject Is You* at the Weather Spoon Art Museum, Greensboro, *Eine bessere Welt* at the Bonner Kunstverein (beide 2009), *Shifting Identites* at the Kunsthau Zürich (2008), *Wenn Handlungen Form werden* (2007/08) at the Neues Museum Nürnberg and *The Go-Between* at the De Appel, Amsterdam (2007).

Olga Fernández López is teaching Curatorial Strategies – Past and Present at the Curating Contemporary Art Department, Royal College of Art, London and is a visiting lecturer at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. She has previously worked as a curator at Museo Patio Herreriano in Valladolid, Spain.

As a curator **Søren Grammel** has been responsible for numerous exhibitions in contemporary art spaces, which he prepared alone or with others. Since 2005, he has held the post of Artistic Director of the Grazer Kunstverein; the exhibitions there include *Eine Person allein in einem Raum mit Coca-Cola-farbenen Wänden*, *Idealismusstudio*, *Provisorisches Yoga*, *Es ist schwer, das Reale zu berühren*, or *Traurig sicher, im Training*. The show *Die Blaue Blume* was listed among the best themed shows of 2007 by the magazine *frieze*. Since 2009 he also works as a Curator-in-Residence at the Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien. In 2005, he published the theoretical book *Ausstellungsautorschaft. Die Konstruktion der auktorialen Position des Ausstellungsmachers...*, Frankfurt am Main.

Irene Grillo (*1981 Maniago, Italy. Lives and works in Zurich and Basel since 2007.), Assistant at the Master of Arts at the Zurich University of the Arts. July – December 2009: sub. manager and assistant at [plug.in], Basel. February – June 2009: assistant at Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, in the context of the exhibition project *Spring* by Pawel Althamer and the exhibition *Fomuška* by Micol Assaël. April 2008 – January 2009: assistant at [plug.in], Basel. 2007 – 2009: Postgraduate Program in Curating (MAS) at the Zurich University of the Arts (Degree: Master of Advanced Studies MAS. Title of master theses: *Perspectives of Walking as an Artistic and Curatorial Form; Public Places and Rooms. A Research of the 'being public' of Art in the Public Sphere.*). 2007: workshop for curators at Galleria A + A (Slovenian Pavillon at the Biennale) in Venice. 2001 – 2006: Philosophical Studies at the Universities Ca' Foscari in Venice and Freie Universität Berlin. 2006: Degree in Philosophy.

Maria Lind was born in Stockholm in 1966. Since January 2011 director of the Tensta Konsthall. 2005–2007 director of Iaspis in Stockholm. 2002–2004 she was the director of Kunstverein München where she together with a curatorial team ran a program which involved artists such as Deimantas Narkevicius, Oda Projesi, Annika Eriksson, Bojan Sarcevic, Philippe Parreno and Marion von Osten. From 1997–2001 she was curator at Moderna Museet in Stockholm and, in 1998, co-curator of Manifesta 2, Europe's biennale of contemporary art. Responsible for Moderna Museet Projekt, Lind worked with artists on a series of 29 commissions that took place in a temporary project-space, or within or beyond the Museum in Stockholm. Among the artists were Koo Jeong-a, Simon Starling, Jason Dodge, Esra Ersen. There she also curated *What if: Art on the Verge of Architecture and Design*, filtered by Liam Gillick. She has contributed widely to magazines and to numerous catalogues and other publications. She is the co-editor of the recent books *Curating with Light Luggage and Collected Newsletter* (Revolver Archiv für aktuelle Kunst), *Taking the Matter into Common Hands: Collaborative Practices in Contemporary Art* (Blackdog Publishing), as well as the report *European Cultural Policies 2015* (Iaspis and eipcp) and *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art* (Sternberg Press). She is the 2009 recipient of the Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement.

Since 2006 **Oliver Marchart** is Professor at the University of Luzern, 2001–2002 he was Scientific Advisor and Head of the Education Project of documenta 11. He lectured at different universities (University of Vienna, University of Innsbruck, Art Academies, Essex Summer School, University of Basel). Fellowships: Research Fellow at the Centre for Theoretical

Studies, University of Essex (1995); Junior Fellow at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna (1997-1998); Fellow at the Columbia University Institute at Reid Hall and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris (2005).

Dorothee Richter, 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 Artistic Director of the Künstlerhaus Bremen; symposia on questions of contemporary art with the following publications: *Curating Degree Zero* – an international symposium of curators (with B.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. Initiator (with B.Drabble) Curating Degree Zero Archive, archive, travelling exhibition and website on curatorial practice, www.curatingdegreezero.org. Other editions: *Curating Critique* (with B. Drabble) editor of the web journal On-Curating.org.

Frieder Schnock received his PhD in Art History and is a former curator at the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel. He also teaches Art History to film students in Berlin. Together they have taught at numerous European institutions and American universities, including Princeton, Harvard, Chicago and Brown. They live in Berlin.

Renata Stih has taught Art and Technology, Film and Media at the University Applied Sciences in Berlin for many years; she has also been writing on film and reporting from film festivals.

Since January 2008 **Rein Wolfs** is the Artistic Director of the Kunsthalle Fridericianum. From 2002 until 2007 he was the Director of Exhibitions of the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam. In 2003 he curated the Dutch pavilion at the Venice Biennial. From 1996 until 2001 he was the first director of the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Zurich, where he also established the magazine *Material* in 1999. Among his most important exhibitions were shows with Douglas Gordon, Maurizio Cattelan, Angela Bulloch and Cady Noland at Migros Museum and retrospective exhibitions with Bas Jan Ader and Rirkrit Tiravanija as well as large shows with Urs Fischer and Erik van Lieshout at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. At Kunsthalle Fridericianum he curated major exhibitions with Christoph Büchel, Pawel Althamer and Teresa Margolles and shows with Klara Lidén, Latifa Echakhch, Daniel Knorr, Cyprien Gaillard and Navid Nuur among others. Rein Wolfs is a member of several international committees and publishes regularly.

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