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SOCIAL CURATING AND ITS PUBLIC: CURATORS FROM EASTERN EUROPE REPORT ON THEIR PRACTISES

Libia Castro & Olafur Olafsson, *Your country does not exist*, 2009, public space, Banja Luka, 'Can You Speak of This? — Yes I Can', Spaport 2009. (Archives of Protok, Banja Luka and DeLVe, Zagreb.)

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EDITORIAL

Olga Stefan

In the process of conceiving the current issue of *On Curating*, the debate between Claire Bishop and Grant Kester, which in 2006 occupied the pages of *Artforum* with a vehement discussion about the impact and merit of relational art, or what is most commonly referred to as socially engaged art, re-emerged as an unfinished discussion, especially in the context of the publication of each of their books in 2011 further developing their positions. Therefore, Cătălin Gheorghe and myself, decided to revisit the topic and in this issue of On Curating, *Social Curating and Its Public: Curators from Eastern Europe Report on their Practises*, focusing not only on the producers, but as an attempt to understand how the public in socially engaged art relates to projects they participate in, in some cases as co-producer.

Although this discussion is one that might never have a conclusion, it is worthwhile pointing out that questions raised by both parties about socially-engaged art practices have found their way into the positions taken by the contributors to this journal; who are curators and cultural workers operating in some former Eastern European countries. In this geographic area, where societies are still rapidly transforming and where the need for social transformation seems even more urgent, socially engaged practices can be seen as a powerful form of political resistance to the dehumanizing effect of neoliberal policies.

In *The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents*[1] Bishop criticizes socially engaged practices as, according to her, they feed the illusion that art can have an ameliorative effect, and play into government's policies of social inclusion; while sacrificing an important aesthetic element crucial to artistic practice. However, the artist as a vehicle for societal transformation has been at the core of modernist and avant-garde practices long before that, while the current tendency toward co-authorship is just another stage in its continuum, as Grant Kester points out in his book, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (2011).

An awareness of the possibility of being co-opted by government interests should not invalidate the effort to directly impact another's life — it should help the authors carry out their projects in such a way that they do not become pawns, but rather engage in meaningful collaboration and discussion. Furthermore the very present threat of co-option is much more acute in the art world itself, which is predicated on, and helps to advance, the goals of neoliberal economies.

Most initiators of collaborative and socially engaged projects, do not consider theirs as the one and only solution to social injustice and systemic governmental failures — most of the contributors in this very journal actually point to these problems through their projects. Rather they attempt to offer disenfranchised groups the feeling of having some level of self-determination if even for a brief moment. This sense of agency feeds the imagination, which can further lead to some level of transformation. These projects help blur the line between artist, audience, and curator allowing everyone to be active in production, as Marx and Engels proposed for the perfect Communist society[2], resulting in some level of clarity of the "audience's" role in a world that seems to be full of questions and uncertainty.

We have approached this issue by trying to quantitatively understand the benefits of socially engaged projects for those members of the public who are involved in these projects. I was attracted to Bishop's own questioning, "if relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what *types* of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?"[3] and tried to find answers. We wanted to find out how curating can actually function as something other than directing, an attitude which reinforces exactly the hierarchies meant to be dismantled.

We asked the curators and cultural workers to approach some basic questions for this issue:

— how do you define the (your) status as a "curator"?
— what are the motivations and aims/objectives that drive you in curating projects with social concerns?
— are you interested in defining the differences between curatorial and sociological projects and curatorial socially-engaged projects?
— what are the strategies you use to attract a diverse public from different socio-economical environments to create the foundation for dialogue?

1
Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents", *Art Forum*, February 2006.

2
"He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic." Karl Marx, *The German Ideology,* International Publishers Co., London, 1970, p.53.

3
Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," in *October*, n.110, Fall 2004, p.65.

— how do you articulate the artistic language to communicate a clear message for including everyone in the conversation?
— how do you differentiate between the production of curatorial projects with social concerns and the reception of these kind of projects in precarious social environments?
— what kind of public is addressed in social curating?

The responses to these questions demonstrate that many share Bishop's revulsion of art as social work and some even see the threats of being co-opted by governmental agendas of forced integration and the glorification of precarious but independent lifestyles.

In the reports that follow, a great variety of approaches to curating the social emerge, which also shed light on the distinct social and political contexts in each country discussed. **DeLVe│Institute for Duration, Location and Variables** questions the concept of social curating and rejects the need to reach(ing) as many diverse social groups as possible, or articulating clear messages. **Cristian Nae** addresses the mythology of community and its particular discontents. **Larissa Babji** tries to push herself, and the audience, to step out of familiar modes of thinking and perception, to examine them and to open themselves up to new thoughts and actions that they may never have imagined before. **Marina Grzinic** explores social curating's condition of appearance, how and why it emerges at a specific conjuncture of our time. **Marton Pacsika** sketches the history of social curating after the transition, and highlights the possibilities in the current political situation. While **Ştefan Rusu** describes the possibility of extending the potentiality of new public in politically and socially precarious environments.

Our model, is the one offered by the art collective **h.arta** from Timisoara, Romania, which sees its practice from an artistic perspective, without the status ambitions of curating, despite recognizing its role of facilitator and mediator which might place it in that realm. h.arta ultimately functions as curator inasmuch as the curator nowadays functions as an artist or author. The platforms that h.arta has developed for the exchange of ideas, direct engagement with members of the public, and collaborative discussions, attempt to elucidate new strategies for social transformation — which is an ongoing process, never a band-aid solution, but one that continues to offer new possibilities from a plurality of perspectives (admittedly, within a constructed and controlled context). Also **Vladan Jeremić** and **Rena Rädle** tackle the hybridity of their artistic/curatorial practice and offer concrete examples for political action through art.

As a special addition to the journal, a photo project is included in the centerfold of the journal by **Yelena Vorobyeva** and **Viktor Vorobyev** which was made in 2002 during a trip throughout Southern Kazahstan, with curators from various countries and documents locals posing with poster backgrounds of iconic tourist sights from the West.

EDITORIAL

Cătălin Gheorghe

To take positions in an antagonistic culture of disputes is not just a statement of risk. If theory would save only those who assume that they are using visions and concepts to counter-attack or defend convictions, then it remains to decide how we use facts to change the conditions of our dissensions. To put at work an interrogative apparatus assures — if not confirms — the hegemonic treatment of the world, which is strengthening its position through its knowledgeable awareness about the oppositional demands and its use of the imaginary in discrediting the dialectical other. Nonetheless there is still a liberating solution for transformation that resides in the creativity and criticality of (unpredictable) art which can reclaim the counter-hegemonic reality through the tactical decisions of curating.

There are various forms of curating, used by different constituted power formations to perpetuate or to challenge the status quo of the dominant neoliberal order. Any economic political system is supported by cultural forms of reproduction to assure the ideological control of people. Art was always a tool either for religious submission or for political propaganda. There were also cases of autonomous glorification of imagination, not necessarily as expressions of resistance, but as attitudes of ignorance. The curatorial act came to contextualise the art for religious adulation, ideological interpellation, marketing consumption or individual dream-like emancipation. Curating meant to take responsibility, to take care, to heal; that is to take a position for something.

The differences in curatorial practices are based on ideological assumptions or imaginary explorations. The social form of curating is informed by both positions. In opposing 'social curating' to 'market curating' we can encounter ideological determinations and imaginary projections. If market curating presupposes the spectacular construction of the desirable conditions to sell art as a precious commodity — in the contexts of art fairs and different biennials with globalist discourse — then, social curating is supposed to be a critical form of intervention as a reflection on problematic everyday situations in which ordinary people find themselves with the disposition to change something, even for a day, in their living conditions. Even if social curating is not ideologically free, at least it has a concern for dialogue, collaboration, critical participation, and free choices.

One of the contradictory situations in curating contemporary art — as a social tool to investigate different aspects of inequality, injustice, marginality, exploitation, precarity and inaccessibility — is the involvement of (self) culturalized curators in finding (even imaginary) solutions for contextual, structural or existential problems of ordinary, deprived and troubled people. If the subject matter of curatorial approaches (mainly interventions) is the different texture and content of the political and economic situations in the life of these people, it is always confusing who is the public intended to be addressed in the exhibitions or events conceived to raise awareness and engage with these social problems.

Many of the curatorial projects developed in the gorges of the social field are beautifully printed or filmed and presented to the people attending libraries, galleries, art centres and contemporary art museum as heterotopia of education and entertainment. They are mostly known by art historians, art critics, art teachers, artists and other professionals interested in the pleasures of visual culture. When these kinds of events are generated in a gallery or public space, elaborate press releases are sent out and sophisticated discussions are disputed. In many cases, those involved in the intellectualized debates on answering to people's problems are just projecting themselves onto other people's situations. In the end, we are confronted with the paradox that the public — who informs the socially engaged projects — do not really participate directly in the public reception of the artworks, that could be understood as samples of the social field.

There is one discrepancy perceived at the level of an under-evaluated relationship between the educated curator and the ordinary, precarious or persecuted citizens who are directly confronted with real problems. And, there is another discrepancy at the level of a questionable relationship between the emancipated curator and the exhibition's affected public. These kinds of discrepancies can generate a professional dispute regarding the authenticity and the intentions involved in the social curatorial practice.

In responding to this situation, on the one hand, in the curator's work, there could be a question of excavating and dealing with everyday life and exceptional measures, more than a question of discriminating a moral issue in approaching social existential problems of the people. However, it is important in which context, and with which intention, the curatorial work is exhibited — in an art institution or in the public space of a chosen community. If social curating means to approach problems prioritized in a community — and to represent them as socio-analytical artwork — then maybe this could be a case of good practice. But, as a matter of fact, it is ideologically optional and practically controversial to determine and evaluate the reception and the effects of social curating. Different factors — such as different backgrounds of cultural education, understanding situations and behaviour in dealing with problems — are influencing the clarification of the relation between the curatorial intentions and the public attentions. It is up to each person to negotiate in the debate if curators can put themselves in the shoes of their intended public. And if the public can be receptive to the curator's efforts, to intellectually confront and artistically solve real social problems. It is not an easy task to make decisions between the public sphere and the real public.

The authors were invited in this issue to respond to different aspects of social curating and its public. Aspects ranging from how the 'social' is understood and approached in projects by curators to what kind of curatorial projects succeeded in addressing to the people whose problems they approach. Specifiably the authors are key social agents in their working context, engaged in analysis, conversations and the production of emancipatory art practices and discourses with social impact.

SOCIAL CURATING AND ITS PUBLIC
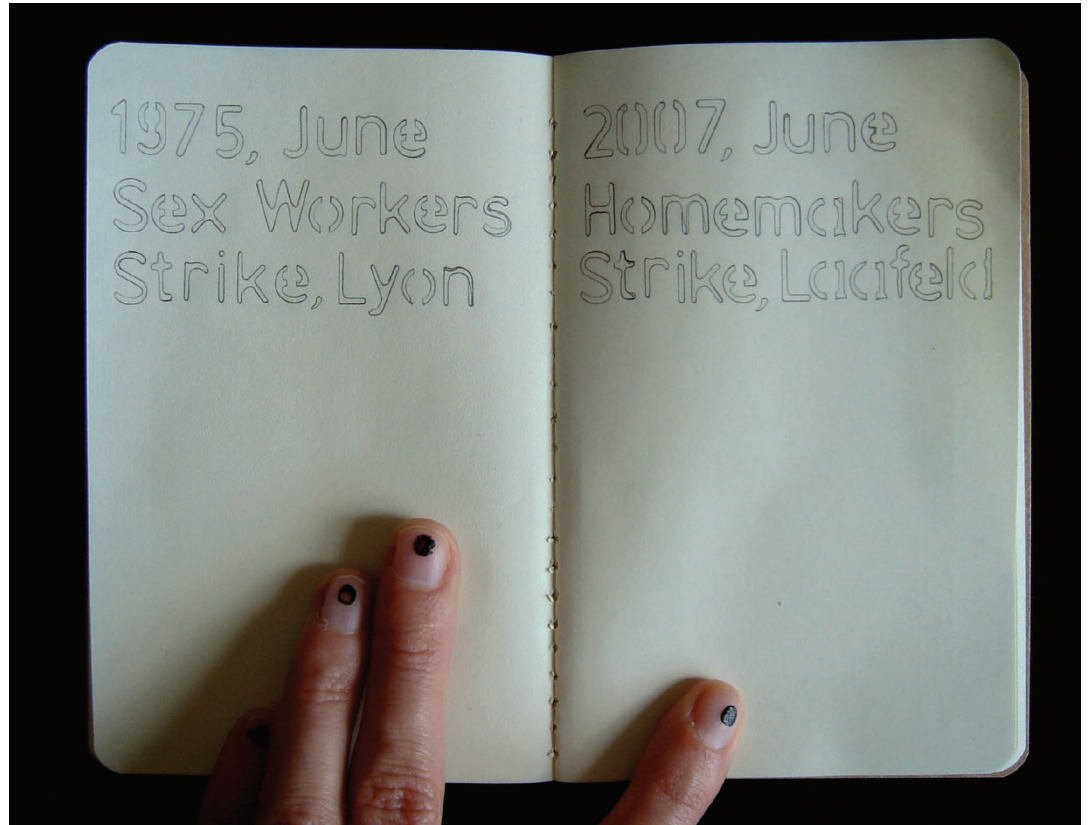
`Marina Grzinic`

Sex Workers vs. Homemakers, a project by Elke Auer, Eva Egermann, Esther Straganz and Julia Wieger (Vienna, 2007), presented in the exhibition *Toposcapes*, curated by Marina Grzinic and Walter Seidl, Pavel House, Laafeld, Austria, 2007.

The most important question is, "in which precise moment curating declares its function as being social?" We have to address social curating's condition of appearance, how and why it emerges at a specific conjuncture of our time. This has to be re-formulated taking into consideration the over-privatization of the institution of contemporary art today and the incommensurate commercialization of all the big curatorial projects — from *Documenta* to Biennales — that works hand in hand with a formation of monopolized curatorial groups and quasi-elite bodies of control and management of the practice and theory of curating. How to proceed? Just to map different curatorial concepts binding them to their particular social conditions is obviously not enough. We have to "grab" curating in an almost Althusserian fashion, and ask for the history of curating to be seen "differentially." Something akin to a "potential history", that is developed by Ariella Azoulay against the background of Jewish and Palestinian co-existence, asking for the development of a curatorial project that she calls an "exhibition on paper."[1]

At stake here is not a division (that was never a case) between on one side of curating, the so-called curatorial elite of big curatorial events, and on the other the plebs of curating (hundreds of small important projects, curatorial struggles dispersed here and there on the globe). This division can be reformulated as the "form" of curating, that traces transformations within the discipline of curating (so to say producing almost an epistemological break), and on the other side the "content" that is termed as the politics, or better yet, the place of ideological struggles within curating. But I will argue we have ideology on both sides. On one side it is the logic of the production of forms of curating and on the other the "bothering" politics of curating that is seen as being directly ideological. In fact, curating was already from its very "beginning" not divided in two poles but "overdetermined" in a double way.

To state therefore that curating is ideological is not enough. The problem is that we never work with two histories when talking about curating. Let's say one side will be the sequences of powerful history of "epistemological breaks" and on the other the "more" ideological ("problematic") positions within the curatorial world. A case at stake here is the Documenta exhibition and what was announced as (post) dOCUMENTA(13), which took place in August 2012 at The Banff Center, Canada. This post-curatorial event is a cynical endeavor if we are to take seriously the fact that it is termed by the organizers as a "visual arts residency" with the title "The Retreat: A Position of dOCUMENTA(13).[2]

What is important is to understand that the ideological is fully present on both sides, on the side of the form and on the content. Even more so in global capitalism, the ideological is no longer functioning on the side of the "content" of curating, on the contrary, the ideological is attached directly to the form, so that the process forming "the knowledge" of curating is now presented as "social" (social curating). While the other side, the political or ideological part of curating, presents itself as completely empty. While we are problematizing the social as ideological we have in fact no content at all or better to say we have a post-ideological setting that is empty; the form is on the other side presented as an extra-ideological form of knowledge that is fully "social." In short, "social curating" has to be seen as a regime of curating that appears precisely in the moment where there is no trace of any social concern, but on the contrary the social hides the conditions and constraints of an invigorated global capitalist over-exploitative conjuncture.

To proceed and offer a possibility to think of curating today as a pertinent political discipline, I will make reference to Achille Mbembe and Sara Ahmed, amongst others. They state that what is at the core of the social and political conjuncture of our time — is racism. Sara Ahmed argues that today it is possible to articulate political art only as an ongoing difficulty of speaking about racism and as well as queer of color activism[3]. Mbembe says that racial profiling have become commonplace, and deportation camps have been created for undesirables in the context of the EU.[4] This is going on to such an extent that today one of the major characteristics of the nation-states in the EU is not them being nation-states but racial-states, as elaborated by Ann Laura Stoler.[5] Mbembe is talking about France though we will take this as features of the EU in general or as they like to call themselves "of the former West" in particular. He argues that we have a paradoxical situation as the idea of republic in the European Union are those of the "colonial republic", and "humanity" then is nothing more than a colonial humanity. This could easily become emblematic for social curating as well. Therefore, let's talk about the social, but again via Mbembe, if we want to talk about the social question of curating then we have to talk about a racial question.

Reflecting on social questions is therefore possible only situating curating in a wider context. In their article "The matrix of Curating"[6], Efrat Shalem & Yanai Toister state that the act of curating can be conceived as a model in which life and reality arrange themselves around curatorial models.

Because of this complexity, curating is presented as a matrix connecting reality and life. This gives us a possibility to connect curating with a "colonial matrix of power", coined in the 1990s by the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano[7]. He conceptualized the neoliberal world of capitalism as an entanglement of different hierarchies that works around the axes of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, linguistic and racial forms of domination and exploitation. This matrix, according to Quijano affects all dimensions of social existence such as sexuality, authority, subjectivity and labor. At the center of the matrix is the viewpoint of how race and racism become the organizing principle of all the social, political, and economical structures of the capitalist regime. Therefore what is necessary is decolonization. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, argues it is necessary to contest the exploitation by neocolonial global capitalism, with the elaboration of anti-racist and decolonization pedagogy.[8]

I want to present a curatorial project that reflects what was briefly elaborated. The exhibition, *Toposcapes: Interventions into Socio-cultural and Political Spaces*, that Walter Seidl and I co-curated in 2007 for Pavel House (Pavlova hiša)[9].

Among the invited positions in the exhibition was The Research Group for Black Austrian History and Presence (Vienna), consisting of Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur, Belinda Kazeem and Njideka Stephanie Iroh. The participants in the exhibition produced a work that precisely captured the political and social space around Pavel House and the possibility of what I will call the "strategy of decolonization of Austrian social and political space". The Research Group for Black Austrian History and Presence displayed a gigantic banner in Slovene and German language placed on the roof of Pavel House and visible while walking or driving. On it we could read ZAVZEMAMO PROSTOR/WIR GREIFEN RAUM (or in English WE ARE CLAIMING SPACE).

2
See http://www.banff centre.ca/programs/ program.aspx?id=1210

3
See Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2012.

4
See Achille Mbembe, "Provincializing France," in *Public Culture*, Volume 23, Number 1, 2011.

5
See Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France," in: *Public Culture*, Volume 23, Number 1, 2011.

6
Efrat Shalem & Yanai Toister, "The Matrix of Curating," in/ *seconds*, http://www. slashseconds.org/ issues/001/003/arti cles/eshalem/index. php

7
See Quijano, Aníbal, "Coloniality of Power, Ethnocentrism, and Latin America," in *Nepantla* Vol.1, No.3, 2000, pp.533—580.

8
See Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2003.

9
Pavel House is a small cultural association situated in Laafeld (Austria), a village at the frontier between Austria and Slovenia, known as the Styria region. Pavel House is the Slovenian minority cultural center in Austria established by the association "article 7" in Austria. This is an important point as the Slovenes in Styria are explicitly mentioned in Article 7 of the Austrian State Treaty of 1955.

WE ARE CLAIMING SPACE, a project by *The Research Group for Black Austrian History and Presence* (Vienna, 2007), consisting of Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur, Belinda Kazeem and Njideka Stephanie Iroh, presented in the exhibition *Toposcapes*, curated by Marina Grzinic and Walter Seidl, Pavel House, Laafeld, Austria, 2007.

The work succeeded to connect two political demands. The first one was the demand in relation to Article 7, paragraph 3, of the Austrian State Treaty concerning the rights of the Slovene and Croat minorities: "In administrative and judicial areas of Carinthia, Burgenland, and Styria with Slovene, Croat and mixed populations, the Slovene and Croatian languages, along with German, shall be permitted as official languages. Signposts and signs in these areas shall be in the Slovene and Croatian as well as German languages." Though Article 7, paragraph 3 of the Austrian State Treaty unambiguously defines the erection of bilingual signs, the problem arises, however, because the article does not define the area or criteria for the erection of signposts, which allows for different interpretations (from 92 to 394 signposts). The final request to be fulfilled is the erection of a total of 394 bilingual signs, i.e. in all localities with more than 10% Slovene-speaking inhabitants. This is still open, though a compromise was established in 2011. The second demand was to connect two demands that at first sight are divided and unrelated, on the one side the generations of Black Austrian citizens and immigrants that fight for their rights and on the other the generations of (hopefully only for now) white Slovene minority that fight as well for their minority rights.

The other project from the same exhibition was *Sex Workers vs. Homemakers*, by Elke Auer, Eva Egermann, Esther Straganz and Julia Wieger. Their collaboration developed out of a shared interest in questions of gender performance, sexuality, intimate economies, pop and labor — and how and where these issues manifest themselves in their everyday lives. In the project for the exhibition they intervened into spaces of global histories, by re-connecting migration and the trafficking of women with women's labor — at home and on the street. In order to de-link them from institutionalized discrimination and normalized (i.e. accepted) enslavement to capital, power and law. The work centered on struggles against neoliberalism and its unprecedented "flexibility" of labor conditions allowing for an intensified capital over-expropriation.

In the end what is it that we can state regarding the impact of the art works for curatorial practice? The works from the exhibition *Toposcapes* opened one of the most important points today and this question of alliances — who builds the political subjectivity for the future on what. In both cases we see how to constitute new alliances in the struggle against discrimination to which both sides are subjected, though differently. The Research Group for Black Austrian History and Presence in its struggle against structural racism showed clearly that is important to which histories we attach our representational politics, and how we re-situate our artistic and curatorial positions within a certain social, economic and political territory.

The works opened the question how spaces and places are contextualized in art and in the larger social and political context.

FORGET ABOUT SOCIAL CURATING

Larissa Babij

As a curator and art critic based in Kyiv, Ukraine, I am surrounded by socially-politically oriented artistic activity. Spearheaded by the younger generation of artists who have been working publicly since the 2004 "Orange Revolution", Ukrainian contemporary art is saturated with projects aimed at raising awareness of social problems. This is certainly tied to the absence of adequately functioning (uncorrupt, transparent, independent) social institutions including media, education, museums and other cultural institutions. As a curator, it is my responsibility to think through and reflect on what I see, and to transform my view into a situation that invites others to explore these ideas for themselves.

While my projects respond to the conditions where my artist-colleagues and I work and live, I have never considered my work as a curator and organizer/participant in experimental projects as directly aimed at addressing social issues or problems. Rather, in the conceptual structures that I develop — often in collaboration with others — I try to push myself, my colleagues, and the audience to step out of familiar modes of thinking and perception; to examine them and to open ourselves up to new thoughts and actions that we may have never imagined before. I believe that only through subtle shifts in individuals' ways of thinking and perceiving, and people beginning to take responsibility for their own interests, can social change perhaps transpire.

One question that pervades my practice is: how can we be together? I understand "social" in its broadest meaning: "of or relating to the interaction of the individual and the group." Whether organizing discussions "On the Floor" at the Foundation Center for Contemporary Art or exploring PERFORMATIVITY with performance group TanzLaboratorium, I am drawn to the potential of collective practice, where my own ideas or desires collide with others and there is no predictable outcome. Inspired by the projects of Viktor Misiano, from "Interpol" to "Impossible Community", I believe that by investigating, manifesting and analyzing the limits of collaboration or community through art, we unleash possibilities for re-imagining these concepts.

Responding to a dire lack of critical discourse and common educational foundation in the Ukrainian art community, I initiated a platform for regular discussions about contemporary art issues, *On the Floor* at the Foundation Center for Contemporary Art[1] in Kyiv in 2010. The project aimed to make visible the infrastructure of the small, developing artistic community, to identify active players and to reveal the gaps produced by our varied background knowledge, lexicon, and conceptions of artistic practice, institutional support, criticism, viewing, etc. Since there is very little critical writing on contemporary art in Ukraine, the platform provided an opportunity for interested individuals to discuss relevant events and issues. It was also a public manifestation of my personal interest in meeting and bringing together various members of the community.

Each discussion at *On the Floor*, focused on particular thematic questions and offered all the participants the opportunity to express their thoughts, based on their

From top to bottom, 1: Laboratory *InSite*, PERFORMATIVITY Educational Art Project, Kyiv, July 2011. 2: Discussion On the Floor, Foundation Center for Contemporary Art, Kyiv, June 2011. 3: Laboratory *Real Time Composition Method*, PERFORMATIVITY Educational Art Project, Kyiv, June 2011.

own positions and values. The discussions were announced through the Internet (by myself and the FCCA and shared through people's personal networks) and were open to any-one who was interested in the given topic. This attracted people who often had some prior experience, professional or otherwise, in relation to the issue. The situation de-manded active participation, which meant that participants acknowledge their own presence, that their bodies and ex-pressions may inform the discussion, that they are avai-lable to being questioned by others. I believe that "real communication" can happen among any people, no matter how diverse their backgrounds, when they consciously step into the zone of communication. If each one is listening and looking and responding according to their interests, then a common territory can emerge in-between. In practice, however, some people would "just listen", producing a split between "performers" and "audience".

Over the nine discussions I organized, it became clearer how various participants think, what motivates their remarks, how they envisioned the "point" of the discus-sion. In spite of our common position, the project con-tinuously revealed the gaps and divisions separating members of the Ukrainian art community. There were conflic-ting understandings of notions from aesthetics to the function of art and differences in education and training. The only thing that could unite all these diverse positions is collective listening to one another and active reflec-tion. While people were ready to voice their own opinions and argue with opposing ones, few participants strove to see what was happening and involve their own subjective reactions. The discussions were popular, but after a year I decided to withdraw from this forum to continue the conversation in more intimate settings. One of my initial hopes for the project was that it would support a process of self-organization of the community, and this process is episodic and decentralized.

PERFORMATIVITY Educational Art Project[2], produced in col-laboration with Kyiv-based performance group TanzLabo-ratorium in 2011, also emerged in the context of the frag-mented and conservative Ukrainian art scene. One of its aims was to provoke social-artistic discussion about the necessity of creating alternative structures for art edu-cation, and the project was realized as one possible alter-native. For two weeks in Kyiv, participants were invited to "learn by doing" and explore performative practice together through a series of interrelated events, inclu-ding performances, workshops, lectures and discussions. Here, everyone involved in the project was considered a "participant", thus acknowledging the active work that goes into perceiving, as well as performing.

The performative nature of the project was manifested in all stages of the project, beginning from its organization and publicity. *PERFORMATIVITY* was announced on the Inter-net, through personal networks and public posters; but the specificity of the activities drew specialized partici-pants. Because we were not interested in entertaining pas-sive spectators, people had to declare their intent to participate in events through prior registration or by wri-ting motivational letters. Performative communication in-volves simultaneous action (articulation) and self-reflec-tion, where the process of reflection may affect the action, and the discrepancy between action and reflection may produce a gap that reveals new thoughts. In group communication, when participants are challenged to act, per-ceive and think simultaneously, a sort of collective con-sciousness may arise, where thoughts can be present in a moment in the general space, no longer "belonging to" any one individual.

My view of collaborative work has been shaped by the Real Time Composition Method (RTCM) developed and taught by Portuguese performer-theorist Joao Fiadeiro, who led a re-search laboratory during *PERFORMATIVITY*. In RTCM work, everyone is included through their active participation, listening, reflecting, thinking, responding. Each partici-pant carries responsibility for his/her own actions and must respect the contributions of others, which often means letting go of one's own desires. Clarity of intention opens communication to others, who can understand, misunder-stand, ask questions, disagree, reflect on their own posi-tion, respond or make their own conclusions.

My aim as a curator is not to convince another of my point of view; rather I am performing the struggle of searching for and articulating my interest/position in the appropriate language. When we speak from our own position, expose our own work through articulation (its impossibility), we make our point of view available to the other. This model points toward radical democracy, where every voice and every po-sition has a right to be articulated and heard. It acknow-ledges the risk (and fear) involved in unveiling oneself, in offering one's own subjective view to be met with the unknown. It is about the potential that does not promise any result — and yet demands a lot of work.

Precarious social environments, such as the Ukrainian con-text for contemporary art, provide real danger — of mis-understanding, of violent or repressive response, of apathe-tic ignorance, of appropriation for personal means. By producing art in Ukraine, we are always dealing with a deep-ly ingrained history of authoritarianism, where people expect everything — opportunity, ideas, material benefits, suffering, etc. — to be handed down from above. Yet when there are no established rights or conventions or fundamen-tal traditions governing artistic practice, freedom comes with great responsibility and risk.

Recently I have become involved in the Art Workers' Self-defense Initiative, together with Ukrainian artists and activists, like those of the 2004 generation. On the one hand, this group attests that art workers face many disad-vantages when working with social and cultural institu-tions; on the other hand, the Initiative stands on individual agency. Rather than relying on outside support, the group is founded on the common interest of its members in inves-tigating local art labor practices and demanding fair treatment. The precarious situation of art workers becomes the object of artistic thinking and transformation through collective action.

The performative act of acknowledging the thought, that is imminent in every action-articulation is one of self-awareness and individual agency. It involves the continuous work of discovering one's own interest, articulating it, and listening to others. If we insist that equal rights also carry with them equal responsibility, then we can begin to talk about new forms of citizenship and other ways of existing together as human beings. Artistic practice, as a space of exploration, experimentation and (self-)reflec-tion is a territory upon which we can reexamine the basic premises and underlying agreements that we enter into as social beings.

Weather Manipulation Station by Klaus Schafler.
Photos by Max Kuzmenko. Image courtesy by KSAK Center.

EXTENDING THE POTENTIALITY OF NEW PUBLIC IN POLITICALLY AND SOCIALLY PRECARIOUS ENVIRONMENTS

Stefan Rusu

When referring to the period just before 1991, and espe-
cially the one after 1991, there is no doubt that the
definition of public sphere given by Habermas[1] does not
correspond to the context of post-socialist societies.
In this context, the ideal bourgeois model and concept
based on universality and rationality — which does not
explain the fragmentation of postmodern society — ceased
to be current. At the same time, the aspirations of the
Moldavian society after the proclamation of independence
and the transformation into a new, democratic country
did not materialize during the 1990s when the liberal-
democratic coalition was in government. Citizens' wishes
were not fulfilled even after 2001, when the CPRM (Com-
munist Party of the Republic of Moldova) came to power by
way of a coup de theatre in the parliament. The situation
did not change after 2004, although after a reform the
party turned into one based on capitalist principles. None
of these political regimes has excelled in promoting and
expanding the public sphere as an area of debate, open
and democratic negotiation between the society and the
authority.

Opening of *Romashka — Centre for Entertainment and Recreation*
by Tatiana Fiodorova. Photos by Max Kuzmenko. Image courtesy by
KSAK Center.

2
*Chisinau — Art, Re-
search in the Public
Sphere*, a project
organized by KSAK —
Center for Contem-
porary Art, Chisinau.
Project details:
http://www.art.md/
2010/sfera_publica.
html

3
The TV STILL channel
did not obtain a
broadcasting license,
and TVR lost its
license, which was
accredited to Canal
2 Plus

4
Oliver Marchart,
"Aesthetics of
Public Sphere" in
*Cultural Obser-
vatory*, no. 398,
September 2007.

5
On 7th April 2009
anti-communist
protesters stormed
Moldova parliament
after election,
which they dismissed
as fraudulent, to
demand a new vote.
http://www.guardian.
co.uk/world/2009/
apr/07/moldova-pro
tests-chisinau

In 2010, as a part of the project CHISINAU — *Art, Research in the Public Sphere*[2] the plurality of these aspects were analyzed — as well as the precariousness of the public sphere within the post-socialist area, after the fall of the Berlin wall. The interdisciplinary research platform launched during this project aimed at analysing the political and economical contradictions, which can be identified in various management patterns within the public area. The outcome consisted of several projects. I will mention in this context just those that activated various locations around the city. Dumitru Oboroc proposed to change the title to the monuments from soviet era, while Klaus Schafler launched *Weather Manipulation Station* on the site of demolished hotel National and Tatiana Fiodorova established the *Romashka Centre for Entertainment and Recreation* on the top floor of the block tower. The interventions realised in the public space by the participating artists contributed to the activation of a new type of public, beside the conventional one that is well familiar with contemporary art practices.

Therefore, two decades after becoming independent (1992), and during an unstable period of transition towards a democratic regime, the theorists and visual artists who took part in the project have set upon studying and analysing the present-day situations where a public sphere will be possible. The lack of the notion of "public sphere" in the SSRM not only created a vacuum regarding the notion of "public" but also opened the door for political instability and antagonism, mostly based on ethnic criteria. On the other hand, whilst immediately after 1989, and also during the 1990s, there was a vague freedom of

expression, between 2001—2008 (during PCRM ruling, in alliance with CDPP); a vacuum occurred regarding the compliance with human rights. The independent mass media functioned under conditional terms (the PRO TV Channel was openly threatened with loss of license by the leaders of the PCRM and CDPP). Clientelism was a regular occurrence, and a series of regulations replaced censorship.[3] Therefore, it is easy to understand the reason why for two decades the society was entangled in a mechanism within which various political platforms were openly competing for votes, while the mass media (newspapers, TV channels, radio, internet) were exclusively used as tools of conveyance of political capital, thus rendering the society a passive spectator.

Actually, today one can say that there is not only "one public" but a configuration of multiple "publics" and "counter-publics" in continuous transformation, and it is erroneous to believe in the pattern of an existing public sphere, which only awaits to be conquered. According to Oliver Marchart, the public sphere is not a space in a physical sense nor an institutional space (as mass media or pedestrian recourses).[4] In the context of the aesthetic of the public sphere, Marchart mentions that the public sphere is actually always occurring and recurring in conflictual situations. Where there is a conflict, or more precisely, antagonism, there is a public sphere. When they disappear, the public sphere disappears. An example of this type of occurrence of the public sphere can be seen in the events of 7 April 2009[5] — which caused only a superficial change, not a real repositioning of the society and political elite. This would have manifested itself in truly demo-

The *Feminism Monument* from the project *The game of memories*.
How to explain a monument to the people. Public intervention by
Dumitru Oboroc. Image courtesy by KSAK Center.

Removing *The Feminism Monument* title by PCRM activists.
Image courtesy by KSAK Center.

cratic decisions and actions. For the time being a whole
spectrum of vagueness persists regarding the transparency
of the political act and the management of public poli-
tics.

Thus, some aspects of the democratic transition that took
place in the post-communist area, and the changes affec-
ting the critical discourse referring to the public sphere,
were reflected in the contributions of participants to
the project CHISINAU — *Art, Research in the Public Sphere*
that attracted the new public by various means and which
I would like to present below.

The public campaign and intervention *Chisinau 2050— Weather
Manipulation Station*, developed by *Klaus Schafler* (AU),
proposed the opening of an utopian Station for the manipu-
lation of climate conditions, designed to be built on
the foundation of the "National" Hotel. The launch campaign
for the station emerged while a message was sent to the
authorities, and the local public concerning the current
owner's plans to demolish the hotel. The launch of the
Station was accompanied by a video screening and by a lec-
ture held by the director of the Institute of Electronic
Engineering and Nanotechnologies of the Moldavian Academy
of Science: Professor Anatolie Sidorenko. During the pre-
sentation of the station, the artist distributed a hundred
rain-jackets to the audience that came after the public
campaign — organised by artist around the city anticipa-
ting the event.
A participatory model of practice was used by *Tatiana Fio-
dorova (MD)* in the *Romashka* project, her reference point
was the attic of building called the "Romaşka" in oral
culture, erected in the 1970s in the Botanica district of

Chisinau (29/2 Testimţeanu Street). In this space — which
remained unused since the inauguration of the building —
Fiodorova decided to establish the "Romashka" Centre for
Entertainment and Recreation; with the aim of reviving the
initial function of that space with the help of the resi-
dents. An important stage in developing her initiative was
the idea to organise in the attic a birthday party, dedi-
cated to people who celebrated their birthday on that day,
which become a collective party joined by the inhabitants
of the whole building. In fact Fiodorova while collabora-
ting with the community from the *Romashka* building acti-
vated and mobilised for the launch of the Centre, a totally
different public that was not familiar with contemporary
art.

In this case, the artists acted as agents in the process
of enlarging the new public and expansion of public space
in its political sense when they proposed to identify the
processes behind urban transformation. Different theoretical
models and everyday political events have highlighted the
fact that what was once idealistically imagined as a homo-
geneous public is now clearly perceived as far from sharing
common interests, and equal rights of access. Therefore,
the question concerning the utopian nature of the public
space becomes truly urgent.[6] Several factors support the
need to rebuild the foundations of the public sphere con-
cept, especially if we wish to understand some political
aspects of the public sphere. The coming to power and con-
solidation of the democratic regime have brought a new
spirit in the process, and the voice of civil society had
its role in promoting freedoms and expanding the public
sphere in a number of neighbouring countries with similar
historical and political paths.

The events that followed included the intervention entitled *Game with memories. How to explain a people's monument? by Dumitru Oboroc (RO),* of which the subject was a monument dedicated to the heroes of the Leninist, Komsomol. The intervention consisted of the re-signification of monuments erected in the Soviet period by temporarily changing their titles. According to the artist, this re-signification is desperately needed because the current meaning of the monuments is anachronistic and serves a totalitarian ideology. In this way, these relics of the art of that time can be kept, giving them a fresh significance in the social memory by simply changing their names. While he was applying the temporary title, the artist was stopped by security forces and escorted to the police station, where he was interrogated for several hours along with his assistant. They were later released, but only after the police seized documents and materials — such as the original copy of the authorities' approval for this intervention given to the KSAK Centre. As well as, fluorescent paint, brushes, etc. It later emerged that the police had been informed by a group of activists affiliated with CPRM and in during next day, his intervention was removed, after it was declared an act of vandalism.

This incident points to a different symbolic clash between cultural producers and the nostalgic attitudes that remain in Moldavian society. Efforts to raise awareness into public opinion of Moldavia — with leftist politics and methods — will have no positive effect as long as a part of society is associated with an archaic collective mentality. Attitudes, such as this, are preserved within communities that are for the moment resistant to change. They perceive artistic interventions as a threat and define them not as being from an antagonistic position. In this regard, Dumitru Oboroc succeeded to intervene and challenge the positions of hostility regarding the monuments left over from the Soviet era.

In referring to the significance of the protests of April 2009, followed by the ousting of the Communist Party. We found that those events have meant a chance — to both express the democratic wishes of society — and transform the public sphere in terms of going beyond the Habermas model, promoted by political regimes in Eastern Europe.

Immediately afterwards, while the AIE was in power, there was space for a broadening of free expression through the emergence of a new media — television, new radio channels, magazines, newspapers, etc. — that promoted open politics and public debate practices. Beyond these positive changes, the new politicians have activated initiatives of a vengeful nature, that asked for mandatory changes in public space through the demolition/relocation of monuments; the removal of important historical buildings from the city map, designated as heritage structures; public canteens; the monument dedicated to the Heroes of Leninist Komsomol; architectural complexes, such as the stepped waterfall in Valea Morilor park; the "Romashka" tower block; Republican Stadium; and the National Hotel. Such tendencies are counterproductive as they attempt to rewrite history, as happened in previous periods; and if this rewriting becomes a common practice, it brings with itself deletion of the collective memory and sterilization of urban space.

In conclusion, we can say that the promotion of contemporary art projects and activities concerned with investigating the public sphere today, urgently requires that visual art practices become an instrument of critical engagement with political and social connotations. As opposed to being used for decorative means, associated with an aggressive capitalist society. Exploring the urban space means extending the notion of public that goes beyond conventional art spaces — museums, galleries — and one of the visible effect of this process is accessing the new type of public.

The current situation in the Republic of Moldova, three years after the incidents of April 7, and under a new government — which announced major changes in society — rather obscured decision making but also marked a period full of conflicts between members of the AIE[7] coalition. We cannot say that there would be no desire to become more open, and to carry out some reforms, but many of these goals and expectations remain only statements and are disguised by slogans and projections of the future. The development of the public sphere in an objective sense, to date, remains a goal to be conquered on all levels: on the streets, online, on the air and in mass media.

PHOTO FOR MEMORY.
IF A MOUNTAIN DOESN'T
GO TO MAHOMET…

Photo action / 2002 / colour photos
Yelena Vorobyeva, Viktor Vorobyev

In April 2002 we took part in the international traveling workshop, "Non-Silk Way" organized by Almaty artists and the public association "Asia-Art+". It was a ten-day journey in Southern Kazakhstan. Our international company, was comprised of artists and curators from Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Armenia, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Austria. We went all over the endless steep roads in a little bus from town to town.

In the process of those displacements the project, *Photo for Memory. If a Mountain Doesn't Go to Mahomet...* was realized. In an accidental and unfamiliar manner to us, people fell into the sphere of our — as they say — interactive action. We pretended to be photographers on tour, with all necessary equipment and accessories. In every new place we asked the volunteers to choose the background and to take photo. We had big posters with the pictures of standard tourist sights, including the Kremlin, Eiffel Tower, and New York, which still included the World Trade Center. We intentionally prepared this poster, as many people had in their minds an image of New York City, complete with skyscrapers. Only once did somebody mention that it was an image of the World Trade Center.

People posed with pleasure — having known that it was free of charge — they imagined they were transferred to another space, from the Kazakhstan province to the famous centers of Western world. There was something touching in the concentration, and confidence of the people looking into the camera, after forgetting about their everyday troubles. Girls, in general, were eager to imagine themselves in Paris — the center of perfumery and beauty. Men preferred New-York City, and middle-aged women dreamt to be in Moscow, the capital of former Soviet motherland, the USSR. All of their dreams, through our efforts, came true.
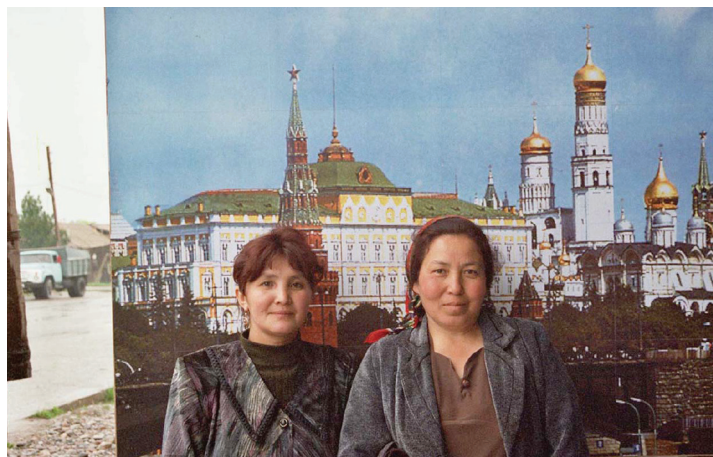
After the journey more than 50 shots were printed. All of them were sent by post to Zhanatas, Taraz, Turkestan, Shimkent to the addresses of our accidental acquaintances.
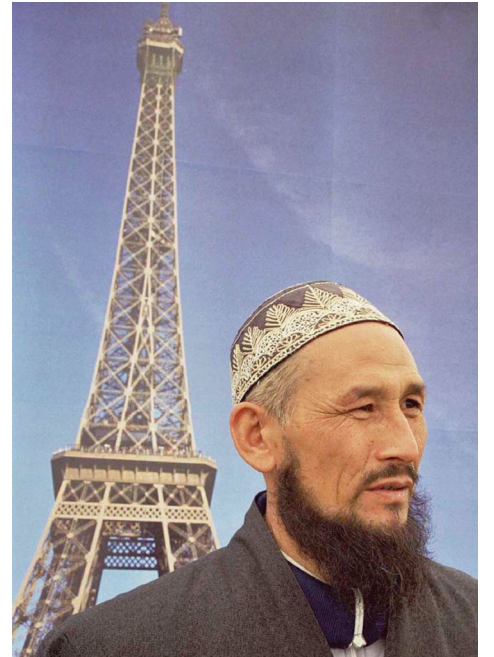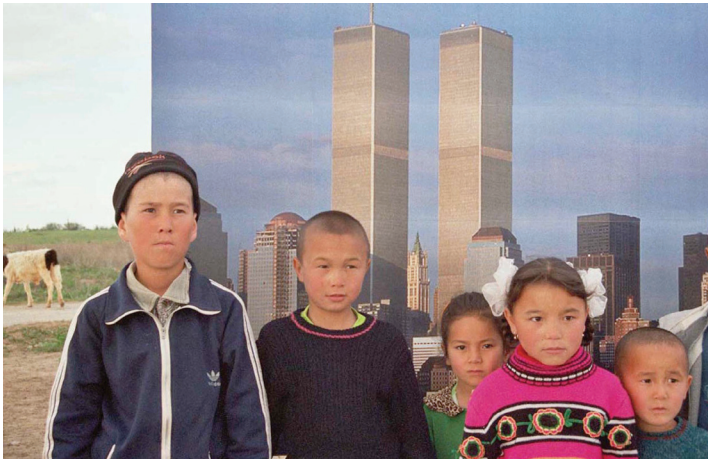
CHANGES IN THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL CURATOR IN HUNGARY

Marton Pacsika

Exhibition of Tamás St. Auby (IPUT), organized by the collective of KMKK (Two Artists — Two Curators — Róza El-Hassan, János Sugár — Dóra Hegyi, Emese Süvecz), Budapest, Hungary, 2001. Photo: KMKK

1
Polyphony, curated by Szuzanne Mészöly, Soros Center for Contemporary Arts, Budapest 1993. See: http://pa.c3.hu/

2
http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/2-articles/250-special-section-focus-public-art-in-hungary

3
Katalin Keserü is a Hungarian art historian. He was director of Kunsthalle Budapest between 1992 and 1995.

4
The term was used in the text produced for the catalogue of the exhibiton "Polyphony — Social Commentary in Hungarian Art", edited by Barnabás Bencsik, Szuzanne Mészöly, C3, Budapest, 1993

The position of the "social curator" emerged in the 2000s after a slow process of development. The main curators associated with this practice have become the leaders of museums, galleries and art institutions. However, this process was drastically changed by the authoritarian turn in 2010. In this article I am going to sketch the history of social curating after the transition and I also intend to highlight the possibilities in the current political situation.

It is characteristic of the Hungarian art scene that the social turn reached curatorial practices before it could have been detected in artistic practices. One reason for this phenomenon is that, as a consequence of the ideologically determined propaganda art of the Socialist regime, artistic practice has become solipsistic and autonomous ever since the 1960s and the rejection of political topics remained a dominant attitude even after the transition. After the advent of neoliberal capitalism and democracy in the 1990s, Hungarian society underwent drastic and painful transformations. However, these problems remained invisible in artistic production, with the exception of a few internationally relevant artists — such as János Sugár and Róza El-Hassan — the ambition to engage with social concerns emerged in the new wave of curatorial practice of the 1990s.

An early example of the aforementioned curatorial approach is a public art project entitled *Polyphony*, curated by Suzanne Mészöly in 1993.[1] The project was realized in the framework of the art support programme of George Soros's Open Society Foundation. This might have contributed to the fact that Mészöly came up with an extraordinarily political curatorial statement already in the early 1990s, although the works were not in accordance with it. To present socially involved art in 1993, only four years after the fall of the Wall, had its risks, for it could be labelled "politically engaged", and in the context of those days, this was a negative connotation."[2] As art historian, Edit András, argues. In spite of the fact that the project did not achieve its original goal, it became a significant reference point in Hungarian contemporary art. It was the first time when an extensive discourse concerning the role of art in society emerged. A very typical criticism for the era was articulated by Katalin Keserü[3], who labelled Mészöly's curatorial initiative as "marxist."[4]

Another important point of reference in the history of Hungarian social curating is the exhibition Service curated by Judit Angel in 2001 in Kunsthalle — Budapest.[5] In the curatorial call Angel requested the participating artists to address the audience through services and create a link between art and society. As she writes in the call, "by bringing services into the art sphere, this exhibition resorts to a model which has the social feedback inscribed in its very structure."[6] The project entitled *Manamana*[7] (by Miklós Erhardt and Tibor Várnagy) is worth mentioning in regards to the exhibition. The two artists published a socially critical magazine, which reported about various anti-globalization movements as well as translated texts of leftist intellectuals such as Slavoj Zizek among others. Even though the majority of the works did not engage with socio-political concerns — except for *Manamana* — the exhibition was a slight shift towards the political in comparison with the autonomous artistic practices of the age.

The exhibition *DEMO*,[8] curated by Hajnalka Somogyi in 2003, marked a significant shift in the history of social curating. The regular annual exhibition of FKSE (Association of Young Artists) took place in the both historically and sociologically specific city of Dunaújváros. Mainly young artists were asked to provide works that reflected upon the changes taking place in the former Stalinist industrial city in the "post-transition" era. Besides the fact that the exhibition can be considered relevant *per se*, it is also significant because it was the first community-based project after 1989 in which not only the curator, but also the artists intended to shape the local socio-political discourse.

The New Spectator was a community development programme ran by Krétakör in 2010. The aim of the project was to create a public forum for social dialogue between Roma and non-Roma people in two villages (Ároktö, Szomolya) in Hungary. Photograph taken from the website www.ujnezo.hu. Photo: Máté Tóth-Ridovics

Propaganda Barricade by Tamás Kaszás, at DEMO (curated by Hajnalka Somogyi), ICA-D, Dunaújváros, Hungary, 2003. Photograph taken from the website www.balkon.hu.

Miklós Erhardt, Tibor Várnagy, Klímaszervíz, at Service
(curated by Judit Angel), Kunsthalle Budapest, Hungary, 2001
Photograph taken from the website www.balkon.hu.

As part of the transformation to socially-engaged curatorial practices, major institutions in Budapest underwent changes in leadership.

Recently Hungary is undergoing severe political and cultural changes. The current right-wing government (since 2010) has further narrowed constitutional limitations and introduced budget cuts in social, educational and cultural terms.[9] Consequently, the institutional system — which depends tightly on public funding as a heritage of the Socialist regime — is drastically decreasing. Numerous galleries, journals and institutions have ceased to exist and new directors have been appointed in the leading art institutions.

As a consequence, the role of the curator is being re-evaluated. In this new situation the curator is excluded from the space of his or her expertise, that is, the gallery space. At the same time, in the current state of exclusion from the establishment, the curator might be able to react more directly on the drastically transforming socio-political situation.

In the last decades of the Kádár regime artists chose socialism as a means of survival and passive resistance. For the consolidation of socialism the passivity of the intellectuals was suitable, as, characteristically for soft dictatorships, artists and citizens in general were consciously kept apart from an active participation in politics. Although it is not yet clear what direction the current political changes will take, it can be observed that the system bears resemblance with the 1980s situation to a certain extent. Similarity to the Kádár regime, the cultural policy of the current government also propagates both entertaining and ideologically determined forms of art. "It is high time that aesthetics changes ideology in exhibition spaces"[10] — announced Gábor Gulyás, the newly appointed (2011) director of the Kunsthalle Budapest. His comment sheds light on the proliferation of a certain kind of art theoretical approach that links socially committed artistic and curatorial practice with state-supported political art of the 1950s.

The new task of the social curator, since they are unable to practice in their original position, might be the organization of a grassroots civil society. It can be achieved not necessarily through exhibitions but the formation of new communities, an alternative public.

This new curatorial role is realized most efficiently by the collective of tranzit.hu. The curators of tranzit.hu[11] — sponsored by Erste Stiftung — collaborate with progressive civil initiatives besides the contemporary art scene, and organize seminars and workshops. They run a blog focusing on social issues and art criticism, tranzit.blog.hu. Apart from functioning as an exhibition maker, the traditional curator, for instance, in the case of Manifesta 8[12], focuses on art as being a platform for activism, social and art criticism. The significance of this institution is based on the recognition that traditional artistic and curatorial strategies cannot be applied efficiently for the current socio-political discourse.

Interestingly, the significance of the social curator is exemplified maybe even more clearly by the history of an alternative theatrical company, which is becoming more and more popular recently. Krétakör (*Chalk circle*), a term appropriated from Bertolt Brecht[13], is led by Árpád Schilling, and has been one of the most progressive circle in the 2000s both in terms of form and content of their performances. In 2008 Schilling dissolved the alternative theatre and recreated it as a production company (keeping the name of Krétakör), which organizes conferences that deal with socio-political and cultural problems as well as theatres for local communities in the countryside. They engage with actual political issues in their performances even more emphatically than before. The practice of Schilling, even though he is not originated from the contemporary art scene, can be considered as a model of a new social curator.

In conclusion, the authoritarian turn of the system might be beneficial for the realization of the transition in cultural and civil spheres. The role of the social curator under these circumstances can therefore be the formation of a milieu, that does not only analyse society, but is able to shape it as well. This way the resumption of art would not be dependent on the state and the government but could be realized on a social base wider than before.

Translated by Réka Deim

13
The Caucasian Chalk Circle, written by Bertold Brecht in 1944, while he was living in the USA. About the company see http://kretakor. eu/#/work/2009

BEING IN COMMON, IN POST-COMMUNISM: THE MYTHOLOGY OF COMMUNITY AND ITS PARTICULAR DIS- CONTENTS

Cristian Nae

The question of social work undertaken by means of curatorial practice, in the formats of artistic research in former Eastern Europe countries, necessarily revolves around two central issues. One is the question of the definition of public sphere and its artistic reconfiguration. This question also means that there is a distinction between exhibition and the public space. Reflecting or commenting one another should be collapsed, in order to properly understand the stakes and means of artistic intervention and be able at least to assess, if not to evaluate, their outcomes. By this statement, I do not mean that the exhibition replicates the given public space to the point of indistinction, which may also be the case. I rather make the ontological claim that, under a performative understanding, that the exhibition is interwoven with the existing conditions of the public sphere; as a meaningful alteration of the existing conditions of participation to social and political life, thus liberating critical potentialities and political imaginary. Not only that the art exhibition, by its modes of address and aesthetic formats proposes a specific configuration of the public sphere, but that it also works within the network of its multiple constituencies in order to select a specific "distribution of the sensible"[1] and thus, modes of participation and exclusion. Given that they relate to a specific mode of interpellation of its public, art exhibitions propose and create specific subjectivities. The second major question concerns the institutionalization of curatorial agency as work, therefore, the way artistic projects, intended as catalysts and models of the public sphere, may be articulated in relation to the distribution of the workforce and the status of intellectual labor.

In historical terms, this means that we should first define the contextual conditions circumscribing the social and political constituency of the public sphere and their historical background in a certain geographical space. In the case of former Eastern Europe, this definition has to do with its former ideological conditions of publicity and commonality, often equated with the communist political imaginary. Which are not only increasingly privatized after 1989 — under its democratic redefinition of participation and agency — but also reconfigured in conditions of precarious institutionalization. In even more concrete terms, socially engaged curatorial work — attempting to reconstitute commonality and create viable counter-publics against the increasing privatization and commodification of the public sphere — found themselves in the curious position of having to reconsider the discarded potentialities of former ways of living, now ostracised by the dominant neoliberal ideology. They also had to take into account that collaboration, participation and collective work does not face the same conditions everywhere: in this case, that curators work in a space already defined by alternative ways of collaboration, a precarious art market, alternative forms of economy, spontaneous collective agency and unpaid intellectual labor. It is only the neoliberal phantasm of economic globalization now claiming for the internationalization of the political regime and the same artistic language which actually redirects and absorbs the critical effects of this artistic vocabulary.

The task of the curator, is not only that of mediating the meaning of an artist's work which is already produced. But that of creating a meaningful context for performative intervention, offering what he or she may consider to be the proper conditions of participation and reflexivity for the public. This also means that site-specific and ephemeral social interventions start to lose their primary status as soon as they are transposed and exhibited for a different public in a different exhibition context. Let us say, in our case, from a local condition in Eastern Europe (or Russia) to somewhere in the West. During this process of translation, curatorial work becomes, once again the representation of an action instead of a performative gesture; a model of artistic agency, instead of the immanent and open space for participatory and reflexive engagement. It is in this movement of de-localization and through its narrative devices that a mythology of community is created, working for the dominant neoliberal mode of production to maintain the actual *status quo*.

Such mythology of community, in socially engaged curatorial practices — as opposed to the fragmented public sphere of neoliberal virtual connectivity, capitalizing on human relations as well as on intellectual concepts — risks becoming the byproduct of the critical discourse which is meant to challenge neoliberal social life and politics. This mythology of the spontaneous community, multiple authorship and egalitarian collaboration as the counter-model to the dominant model of the (hyper-bourgeois and fragmented) public sphere is today, unwillingly circulated when concepts are borrowed from "leftist theory". Then these models are implanted by curators, in otherwise divergent contexts of use, like in the case of the former Eastern Europe.

I would like to discuss two very different approaches in order to exemplify my hypothesis. Specifically, that socially engaged projects capitalise on collaboration and com-

monality. Thus, leading to very different outcomes, given the ways they attempt to relate to the existing "relational space" — predefined by the communists political agenda. Curators critically engage in modes of collaboration, in the way their projects constitute a public sphere.

First, let us take a closer look at the well-known *Hamburg Project* curated in 1993—1994 by Victor Misiano in Moscow at the relatively new Contemporary Art Centre. Although it was conceived for two different audiences, both local and Western. The curator chose to present the agonistic constitution of the art institution itself as a micro-public sphere — instead of presenting already created works or engaging in the production of new ones. The artists engaged in a collaborative activity by creating, in the end, an installation of subjectively chosen objects. By closing the circle more and more to their audience in Moscow, but remaining open to artistic participation, the project did not succumb to the representational logic of modelization in relation to the public sphere. Instead, the project chose to interrogate the very structures of labour that underpin intellectual labour, affective economy and collaborative practices in the neo-capitalist economy and market. Proclaiming the right to intellectual labour under the guise of aesthetic autonomy and transporting discourse in the aesthetic sphere defined by Kant. The project collapsed the boundaries between leisure and work, as well as those between production and reception. As Misiano regards it, the project was conceived as a reaction to the crisis of the disciplinary institution. Thus, taking into account the new collective subjectivity engaged in the project and the dependency of the artist on the community and its dialogical practices. It also did not take any prerequisites for this dialogue to occur. What was exhibited was *only mediation*, as an excessive and never-ending intertextual structure, an endless commentary. In my opinion, it is its failure to re-present the existing communitarian practice in intelligible terms, or in Adorno's terms, to reduce form to mere concepts that may be commodified as intellectual products. This makes the project unique and untransportable as an exhibition, since it contained nothing to display, except for the incomprehensible remains of an otherwise living organism. It is its fundamental *uselessness* as a model of community that makes its strength, its strategic aestheticization that creates its political effects.

Attempts at reconnecting social groups, that were otherwise disconnected by new urbanization plans, and activating rural life as a self-reflexive exercise on routine and obedience, are at the core of Katerina Seda's acclaimed artistic projects. Seda's artistic gestures such as *There is Nothing There* (2004), at Modern Art Oxford, included the synchronized activities of 300 inhabitants of the Czech village of Ponetovice. Her work is nothing but a choreography of the common, in which politics are ultimately aestheticized. Although it involved a given "disconnected" but potential community, Seda's project creates a spectacular exercise of routine and participation. Her works are quoting the collective subject created by the communist ideology, under a specific representation, which largely depended on the scopic regime of socialist modernity as a display of cohesive unity and power.

The representational outcome of such projects do not interrupt the routine of the art institutions. On the contrary, artistic projects support the mythology of community. In turn, curatorial work becomes the production of an intellectual labor force and the capitalization of the affective regimes of its participants. Which demonstrate the potential menaces to an abstract socio-political system ("the neoliberal condition") that ultimately fail to threaten everybody. Seda's, seemingly conscious play with institutional conditions, often exaggerate the pitfalls of collaborative engagement. Perhaps it should be interpreted as a warning signal, in a growing institutionalized artistic expansion of the public sphere, rather than as an index of the performative production of the common, through art.

COLLABORATIVE WORK AND PRACTICAL FORUMS FOR LEARNING

`h.arta`

h.arta space, "Media, Art and Gender," a series of workshops, presentations and exhibition by Danica Minic, 2003. Photo: h.arta

We never define our work as curatorial, although we have a practice of conceptualizing and organising programmes of events for art spaces that we were involved with at different periods of time. Our work involves often intense collaborations with people from different fields, which sometimes means creating frames to be filled with different voices, ideas and perspectives. Our work sometimes takes hybrid forms that bring together activism, education and art. But we see our work as artistic work, strongly based on collaboration with other artists and with people active in different fields (such as activism and education) and with a definite interest in analysing and thinking of strategies of changing the status quo, which is based on inequality and violence.

We started to work as artists in a moment of our lives when we were deeply confused about the meanings and possibilities of art. We graduated from the Art Academy (with which we were profoundly disappointed) and we were seeking a possibility to work as artists in an art context, that at that point seemed very difficult to comprehend and enter. Our work together started on the basis of a common feeling of inadequacy as fresh graduates with an obsolete and useless education, of enthusiasm and curiosity about art, and of a need to work collectively. Finding strategies of informal, non-hierarchical education and working collaboratively remained constants in our practice, like threads that give form and meaning to our projects, as we consider art to be a useful means for a practical way of learning, of finding self-reflexive strategies of critique and change, that are the result of cooperation and sharing by people from different fields and contexts.

The projects that we want to refer to here first, due to their strong collaborative aspect, are h.arta space, Project Space, and Feminisms, three project spaces that we ran at different times. h.arta was a space located in a former industrial hall in Timişoara where we organised meetings,

Feminisme, "Gender of the City", video workshop on gender and urbanism, workshop by Katharina Koch and h.arta, February—March 2009. Photo: h.arta

talks, workshops and exhibitions between 2001 and 2006, bringing into discussion the possibilities of art, sketching out and testing ways of using the everyday, the trivial, the body and the emotions as valuable materials for art. Project Space had a programme of events conceptualized and organised in collaboration with artists, activists and theorists active in Romania and Europe during an entire month, in 2007, with daily activities structured around four conceptual modules: post-communism, feminism, education and display. Between September 2008 and May 2009, we conceived and put into practice a project entitled *Feminisms. Histories, free spaces, participatory democracy, economic justice*, a project that aimed to be a means of stating a meaningful and powerful feminist position with an anti-capitalist perspective. The project consisted in a program of events that took place in a space in Timişoara and in the public space of the city and was realised in collaboration with artists, activists and theorists from Romania and from abroad, whose work involves different facets of an anti-capitalist feminism.

These three projects happened at different moments in time and in different phases of our artistic practice. The approaches, the forms and the audiences were different in these projects. h.arta space's primary focus was art and what can constitute as its working material, at a time when our feminist ideas were mostly intuitions, and we were trying to find the language to shape them. Project Space was a project during which we stepped beyond the field of art, enlarging our interest and collaborations outside that of art, the project taking the role of a meeting space for various fields, a place for debate where art is used as a set of methods to work with a more complex content, content relating to different issues such as the analysis of racism, sexism, exclusion and systemic violence and the discussion of possibilities to subvert them. The project was a space where different voices from various fields, with different perspectives and backgrounds, were brought together in order to approach these issues in a multifaceted way. We used this same approach in the project Feminisms, but deepening its focus on the topic of anti-capitalist feminisms. In relation with the project we developed a publication that took the form of a manual on feminism, with chapters written with an open pedagogical intention and nuanced by "supplementary reading", consisting of texts and artistic interventions created by different artists and activists.

What these three projects have in common is the fact that they were openly and intentionally meant as practical tools for learning. We invited people interested in sharing and learning during presentations, discussions, workshops, creation of content for publications, etc., which had a fluid and flexible character. We were interested in creating spaces where the boundaries between the producers of content and the audiences were blurred, where the concept of "expertise" was fluid, and where all the participants, in their fluctuating roles, could contribute to a production of knowledge that is based on the analysis of daily life and situations, and on a constant testing of ideas and opinions against the different experiences and backgrounds of the others. A production of knowledge that is deeply aware of its own limitations, that is permanently under scrutiny and change, that includes a constant questioning of issues such as: Who determines what is relevant? Who has the power to give definitions? How can art become a methodology for learning, for producing change? How can art, theory and critique be much more than a beautiful and coherent intellectual exercise and become truly a lived experience?

This way of using art as a methodology for understanding the social context, of enlarging the space for analysis and critique, for hopefully finding strategies for change; this way of constantly making visible the point of view from which we speak, of continually examining our own roles and position, cannot be done outside collective practices, outside a work that is inter-disciplinary, while we try to create models of working that would make it possible to diminish the gap between theory and practice. In order to use art as a way to attain lived knowledge, as a means of understanding a context that is so much shaped by inequalities, and as a means of imagining and hopefully starting to create a difference, we used forms and formats of collaborative work that are similar to some sort of "social curating."

Thinking about the social concerns of our projects, we are not interested in "saving" the ones who are marginal and excluded in a paternalistic, hypocritical way by projecting the problems that need to be solved elsewhere, in the realm of the exoticed "other." In 2009—2010, in a mixed group of Roma and non-Roma women, we co-authored a project, *See me as I am. Words and Images of Roma Women*. One of the outcomes of this project was also a manual, intended to be used in high schools for debating the issues of racism, sexism, marginalization and solutions to effectively address them. The book analyses the ways in which the image of Roma women — and the processes by which this image is constructed — are connected to the appearance of stereotypes and the practices of marginalization and exclusion, in a society whose main urge is the multiplication of capital, based on the continuing status of isolation and poverty of certain categories of people. We wanted to address the publication both to those marginalized — in hope that it will become an instrument of analysis and change — but also to those in the majority, who need to become aware of their own privileged situation, whether we talk about the privilege of being "white," male, of higher class, etc. Examining our own inherent hierarchies and manifestations of hidden racism, thinking about the ways in which we all contribute to a society which marginalizes and exploits large categories of people, are the first steps for acting in solidarity with the ones that are excluded.
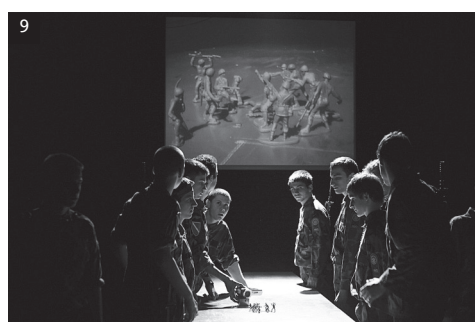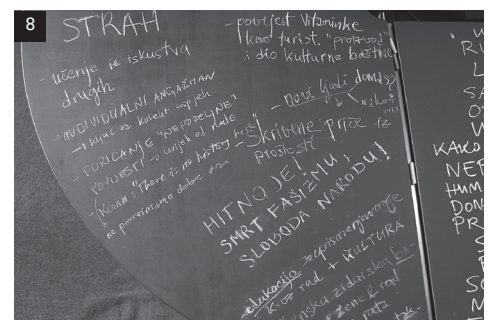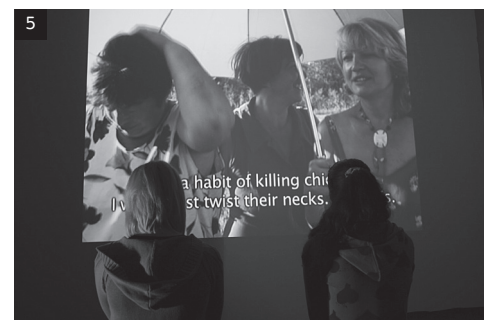
h.arta is a group of 3 women artists whose projects focus on art in public space, knowledge production and alternative educational models. The events and exhibitions we organize attempt to create new spaces for political expression and action. Our projects are always based on collaboration and we frequently work together with other artists, NGOs, human rights activists and schools. Our methodology is based on friendship, which we understand as an everyday negotiation of differences, as a way of learning from each other, and as a political statement about the power of solidarity. www.hartagroup.ro
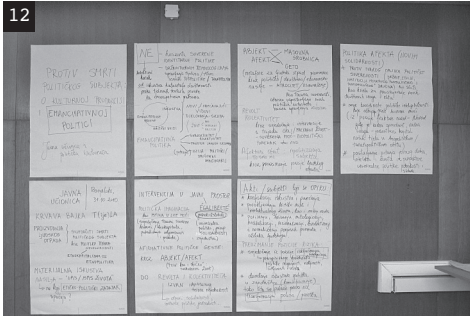
WHERE EVERYTHING IS YET TO HAPPEN: POLITICS OF EXPOSURE – THE EXHIBITION AS A CLASSROOM OF DIFFICULT QUESTIONS[1]

Ivana Bago & Antonia Majača
DeLVe | Institute for Duration, Location and Variables

1
"The classroom of difficult questions" was the term by which Jasmina Husanović described her work-shop that was part of the WEIYTH project.

15
Jasmina Husanović, (Grupa Spomenik/Monument Group), *Against the Death of the Political Subject, On Cultural Production and Emancipatory Politics*, public classroom and political workshop, 2010, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

16
Jelena Petrović, (Grupa Spomenik/Monument Group) & Stanislav Tomic, *History of the Present*, public reading, 2010, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

17
Working Group 'Four Faces of Omarska', *Public working meeting*, wall notes, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

18
Working Group 'Four Faces of Omarska', field research on Omarska concentration camp, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

19
Libia Castro & Olafur Olafsson, *Your country does not exist*, 2009, public space, Banja Luka, 'Can You Speak of This? — Yes I Can', Spaport 2009

All images: Archives of *Protok*, Banja Luka and *DeLVe*, Zagreb. All images courtesy of the artists if not stated otherwise.

1
Nicoline van Harskamp, *Testing the Collective*, 2008, interactive installation, installation view, 'Can You Speak of This — Yes I can', Spaport 2009

2
Damir Arsenijević (Grupa Spomenik/Monument Group), *It's Time we Got to Know Each Other as We Really Are*, 2010, workshop and reading group, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

3
Eyal Weizman, *665: The Lesser Evil*, mixed media installation, detail, 2008, 'Can You Speak of This? — Yes I can', Spaport 2009

4
Working Group 'Four Faces of Omarska', *Public working meeting*, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

5
Dragan Nikolić, *National Park*, video 27', 2006, installation view, 'Can You Speak of This? — Yes I can', Spaport 2009

6—8
STEALTH.unlimited, *Taking Common Matters Into One's Own Hands*, Open conversations and research archive, installation view, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

9
Goran Ferčec & Borut Šeparović, *Generation '91—95'*: *Croatian History Class*, theater play/multimedia project presentation, 2010, detail, photo by Mara Bratoš, courtesy of ZKM, Zagreb

10
Vahida Ramujkic, *Disputed Histories Library*, workshop, collection of textbooks, workshop reader, 2010, installation view, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

11
Radenko Milak, *And what else did you see? — I could not see everything,* painting series, 2010, exhibition view, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

12
Jasmina Husanović, (Grupa Spomenik/Monument Group), *Against the Death of the Political Subject, On Cultural Production and Emancipatory Politics*, public classroom and political workshop, 2010, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

13—14
Jelena Petrović, (Grupa Spomenik/Monument Group) & Stanislav Tomic, *History of the Present*, public reading, 2010, 'Exposures', Spaport 2010

The editorial letter for this issue of On Curating invited us to reflect on our curatorial practice in relation to the concept of "social curating". We are not convinced that this term can be productive in considering the political potentials of curatorial practice. On the one hand, we read it as a pleonasm, since curating is already a "social" activity, regardless of the issues it tackles or approaches it takes on. On the other hand, it could be read as a category analogous to social work, i.e. as curating that tries to alleviate or fix social ailments or aid specific social groups, with the risk of serving merely as a depoliticized appendix of society.

Our work at the DeLVe | Institute for Duration, Location and Variables is not concerned with reaching as many diverse social groups as possible, or articulating "clear messages", which are again some of the questions posed by the editorial invitation. The discourse on reaching diverse audiences and articulating clear messages is rather the discourse of the European Union's bureaucratic apparatuses, imposed through oppressive application and financing schemes that don't enable but rather enforce not only collaboration, but also the self-imposition of "added European value". Instead of clearly articulated and thus marketable and PR friendly messages, our work aims at asking difficult questions and doesn't assume the existence of easy answers. It attempts not to be attractive and to avoid spectacle, as well as a self-righteous "socially-engaged" approach. Refuting the tiring dictate of perpetual openness and inclusion, our projects try to search for ways of autonomous and non-servile work and collaboration that cannot be appropriated by capitalist and State machineries of happy co-existence of differences and self-exploitative hyper-production.

In what follows, we will depart from some of these postulates, in order to examine how they were reflected in our long-term project *Where Everything Is Yet to Happen* (2009/10). Its first part was conceived in the framework of the Spaport Biennial (2009/2010), organized by Protok — Center for Visual Communications in Banja Luka. Its recent configu-ration was presented in the form of an exhibition at MUAC in Mexico City. Due to the short nature of this contribution we wish to focus solely on the part of the project that we developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Upon being invited to Banja Luka to curate a new edition of the Spaport Biennial, we decided to replace the spectacularity of a one-time event with a temporal subversion of the "biennial" format, turning it into a slow, two-year project, gradually constructing and restructuring an unstable community gathered in various stages of its realization. The first part, developing through several stages in 2009, was international, both in terms of involving participants from various contexts and shifting the topics usually and exotically identified with the Balkans to different geopolitical constellations, particularly Western Europe. The second part, evolving throughout 2010, focused exclusively on the post-Yugoslav context and gathered a community of artists, thinkers, writers, and activists around a set of difficult "transitional" and unresolved questions. All stages of the project achieved extremely low visibility. Particularly the last one was received mainly by (active) silence in the local context. However, for the small number of people that joined this classroom of difficult questions, including ourselves, it turned out to be extremely empowering and transformative, and this was not achieved easily and without antagonisms and confrontation. The outcomes of these processes cannot be summarized in a short project report, as in many cases they include a set of "consequences", aftereffects and echoes that are no longer necessarily identified with the project or our own agency. And it is precisely these kinds of outcomes that we wish to incite — often delayed, impossible to count or measure. In that sense, the project itself could be thought of as merely a preparation for something that is itself always "yet to happen" — a soft incipiency of a long line of resonances in the future, going beyond the more or less abstract task of prospectively oriented thinking, so often present in the curatorial rhetorics of today.

In its long-term and modular format, *Where Everything Is Yet To Happen (WEIYTH)* takes up a set of pressing issues, which we believe will gain even more relevance in the near future. First and foremost, it proposes to think of ways to articulate the meaning of "community" today and speculates about the possible common vision of the future among the ruins on both imaginary sides of Europe: those of socialist and communist projects on one side, and the neoliberal democracies on the other side of the "short" 20th Century. Even though *WEIYTH* wishes to think through these very general issues and possibly create that space of new forms of common probabilities in different contexts, the project departs from a very specific context of the post-Yugoslav space. Here, socialist Yugoslavia (and its different historical facets), is taken as a catalyst that can help us in the analysis of the present and in desiring the future. *WEIYTH's* meanderings and its growing set of "worries" are deeply and structurally rooted in those matters that have been constituting our reality in this space, especially in the last two decades. These issues — post-conflict society, "transitional justice", violence and memory — are, through

this project, all brought into relation with forms of governance, neoliberal enclosures of the common, and the often hidden relations between law, power and violence in democracy.

Where Everything Is Yet To Happen started in Banja Luka, in collaboration with a curatorial team consisting of Anselm Franke, Ana Janevski, Vit Havranek and Zbynek Baladran, Erden Kosova, Nina Möntmann and Jelena Vesić. The outcome of this joint work was the exhibition *Can you speak of this? — Yes, I can*[2] in October 2009, which, by taking up the title question and the explicitly positive answer to it, activated the space of potentiality, in which the realm of "speech" could be established, along with a reexamination of factors that impair this possibility. Above all, the fundamental question was posed: what can art — and critical, intellectual and theoretical practice related to it — speak of, or rather: what must it speak of in complex, divided and traumatized social and political environments?

The exhibition *Can you speak of this? — Yes, I can* worked out some of the topics that had materialized gradually — questions of complicity, collaboration, solidarity, the articulation of trauma, politics of language, politics of memory, exile and return and the politicization of art as against the culturalization of politics. These questions in the second year of the project became the basis for the conception of new collaborations — through the gathering and generation of new ad hoc communities of theorists, activists, students, artists and curators, in parallel with spontaneously developing new topics and vocabularies.

Exposures, the second chapter of the project remained grounded in the insistence on posing the question: "Can you speak of this?", with the positive answer suggesting primarily the readiness for continued interrogation of the position of us all (the participants) vis-à-vis the social and political context of post-war Yugoslavia, and for radically exposing ourselves to complex questions directed at each other and within the environment in which we work. We believe that this invitation to "exposure", understood as an activity and not as condition, is the only acceptable curatorial model in which critical contemporary artistic and intellectual practice can and should participate and act in any context marked by continuous conflict or (recent) violence.

Seventeen years after the Dayton Peace Accords, Bosnia and Herzegovina — and this applies as well to the whole post-Yugoslav space — is without doubt, still at war, a war in which the political elites unscrupulously manipulate its citizens, instilling a feeling of reciprocal menace. Recent history in these territories is being rewritten on a daily basis, and the wartime past is part of the quotidian, present in all spheres of social life. On the one hand, trauma is uncompromisingly and pitilessly administered by the legal bodies and on the other, contaminated and profaned by the politics of the day. At the same time, no real confrontation occurs; the complex net of causes and consequences are rarely discussed within a well-argued and insightful debate. In such a space of permanent war where 'normalization' seems to have started taking place 'too fast', processed by the long arm of what is called the 'international community', the society remains deeply divided, exhausted with the blood spilling, the camps, the mass graves. Such a traumatized and broken community hastened to simply try to live 'normally', adapting to the laws of the new economic and social system. In parallel, the postcommunist and post-war societies like those of former Yugoslavia are perfect nurseries for the corruption and clientelism in which wartime profiteering (in its broadest possible sense) is legitimized in the processes of uncontrolled and grotesque rise of neoliberalism orchestrated to a large extent by foreign capitalist enterprises.

In short, this was the location where our temporary classroom was situated... In order to create such a space of speech, it was necessary to develop a methodology that would reject the idea of art as representation and art events as a tool for the culturalization of politics. It was necessary to instigate the production of political subjectivities. The research that we conducted as well as many workshops, reading groups, seminars, conversations and field trips acted as a public and open diagnosis of this situation and instigated a debate that was not loud, but that instead, formed an unstable community of difference and asymmetry in the context governed by ethno-politics and essentialist understanding of community.

Many projects presented at *Exposures* were long-term projects that were in some cases only initiated in the framework of the exhibition, but continued their life later, involving new developments and collaborations. The projects by "Monument Group" were conceived as a series of workshops with students and young people discussing issues such as the relation of poetry and genocide. For example in the workshop by Damir Arsenijević, reading poetry was used as a way of involving participants from various backgrounds into a discussion of their own traumatic past and their present life in the post-conflict society still haunted by the recent war and ethnic cleansing. The project *Four Faces of Omarska*

was initiated by Milica Tomić and gathered a community of students, researchers and death camp survivors into an ongoing process of debate, research and activism revolving around the history of the Omarska mine near Prijedor in Republic of Srpska in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This former socialist mine, which previously provided employment to the local population was transformed, in the 1990s, into a death camp for the non-Serbian population. Nowadays, once again, it is a mine owned by one of the world's wealthiest corporations, Mittal Company. This project also meant tackling the history of the entire Yugoslav space, its break-up in the violent war and the recent appropriation by global capital. Together with the local nationalist politics, the capitalist appropriation erased both the history of socialism and the working class struggle, as well as the traumatic history of the nineties. The project evolved into a series of research trips and public working meetings, involving the survivors of the prison camp and joining them in their struggle with the local authorities for creating a memorial inside the mine, which today bears no single reference to this history.

Several projects in the exhibition dealt with the young generations born during the 1990s and their views on the recent past. The project by Vahida Ramujkić *Disputed Histories* involved a group of students in an analysis of history schoolbooks and a deconstruction of ideologies that forged new and disparate national histories in the 1990s. The project by Abart, in Mostar, revolved around the fans of the two football teams in Mostar, representing also the two divided ethnic communities, again engaging students in small research and artistic projects and workshops.

Stealth.unlimited questioned the potentials of self-organization in the present, based on researching concrete examples of socialist self-management in Yugoslavia. Again, various participants joined the workshops and sketched ideas for thinking and practicing entrepreneurship that has wider social and political aims — and not just private gain.

The results of all these processes were presented in the exhibition. However, what is more important is that many of them continued independently outside of the project. For some of them, *Exposures* served as a starting point, an initial gathering of a community, sketching out and testing of various methodologies of work.

To send and accept the invitation to participate in this process meant to emancipate the process of searching, while accepting the uncertainty of the outcome. The continuous commitment of all those involved created conditions for empowering the existing alliances and new mutualities. Most importantly, it enabled a humble and almost invisible process of learning and unlearning in the "classroom of difficult questions". This also meant agreeing to the conditions of induced slowness and reflection, while retaining a strong prospective impetus, and all this in a framework of an exhibition without results that can be comprehended at a glance and easily defined.

Finally, with the decision to privilege 'exposure' against spectacularisation, representation and exhibiting artifacts, we once again embraced 'resultlessness' and incompleteness, endeavoring to constitute a field of speech and critical reflection in which all the roles set in advance are destabilized and brought into question, in which all are involved equally as researchers, creators of content, curators, participants, learners and audience members.

For all those involved in the process — the organizers, the curators, all the invited artists and the many participants in different programs — this has meant agreeing to, and being disturbed by, an uncompromising politics of exposure. On a practical level, it meant exposure to precarious circumstances of funding and production or to the gap between the expected representativeness of the project and the decision to subvert the imperative of representativeness. On a political level, it meant articulating artistic and curatorial work not through tangible, measurable results or as targeted to a specific audience, but as the process of political subjectivisation and articulation of meaningful and empowering relations and alliances among those who are, or will be, involved in the process.

NOTES ON CURATORIAL ARTISTIC PRACTICES AT THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND POLITICS

Rena Rädle and Vladan Jeremić

Jaroslav Supek, "I slept under the photos of those killed in the wars in Ex-Yugoslavia" (re-enactment) and Alma Suljević during her performance, "Holy warrioress", Exhibition *I will never talk about the war again*, Färgfabriken, Stockholm 2011.

As cultural and political workers we understand our curatorial and artistic practice as taking place at the points of intersection of art and politics. For us, it is crucial to produce critical knowledge and to support artistic practices that are not explicitly oriented towards the art market, galleries and institutional systems or towards the capitalist agendas of banks and foundations. We support practices that aim to have an impact on the socio-political reality. Through the emission of audio-visual representations certain changes of the socio-political reality can be achieved or it can be influenced. The emission of representations can be seen as a kind of "aggression" towards potential recipients. Each representation that is articulated by a societal political consensus (the media) or by a societal esthetic normative (the art) contains

quality, intensity and other characteristics. In this respect it is crucial to consider with which policy this "aggressive" representation is mediated (or rather transformed) and if it contains certain use value in favor of the commons that could "legitimize" its existence. Exactly in the societal political mediation of the representations placed by the art producer and in their transformation lies the crucial aspect of the curatorial practice.

Nikolay Oleynikov, "The years of the bonecrusher queen", wall painting.
Exhibition *I will never talk about the war again*, Färgfabriken, Stockholm 2011.

"On use value of art", exhibition at Roma
Cultural Center in Leskovac, Serbia, 2009 (top).
"On use value of art", exhibition at Babel
Art Space, Trondheim, Norway, 2010 (bottom).

1
See Karl Marx, *Capital*,
Volume 1, Part I:
Commodities and Money,
available online at
http:/www. marxists.
org/archive/marx/
works/1867-c1/ch01.
htm#S1

Of importance for our work is the definition of the socie-
tal role and the use value of art. The term "use value"
should be understood in the sense of Marx's definitions of
value and his distinction between use value and exchange
value.[1] In the case of artistic production, use value can
serve the commons in terms of the production of emancipa-
tory politics of knowledge. Use value can be observed in
contrast to the exchange value (i.e. the price that an art
product generates on the art market). In times of eco-
nomical crisis, financial speculation on artworks becomes
especially evident. We witness that banks, companies and
the super-rich invest in gold, pink diamonds and contempo-
rary art. Shortage, uniqueness and economic growth are
some of the concepts of capitalism that raise the price of
the art product and makes its exclusivity sustainable. The
exchange of art works produces profit and symbolical capi-
tal and art transforms into a means for maintenance or
acquisition of social status of the ruling class and becomes
itself commodity and fetish.

Being active in both fields makes our practice not ex-
clusively artistic or curatorial, as understood by dominant
mainstream work relations and hierarchies. The focus is
rather on the transformation of socio-political reality
and not on formalist results, quantity and curatorial bran-
ding. This is why the market has problems to recognize
those results that could not be easily consumed.

At first glance there might seem to be a difference be-
tween socially engaged curatorial practice and other
curatorial practices. Every public activity has a reflec-
tion in the field of politics and appears therefore as
socially engaged practice. Politically non-engaged curato-
rial approach doesn't exist. This leads us to the question,
what kind of politics a certain curatorial and artistic
practice represents and promotes? The political field is
defined by a political concept, by the conditions of the
curators engagement and economy of production. We clearly
support leftist emancipatory politics through our work.
Obviously a more common model today is the promotion of
neoliberal right-wing politics in curatorial practice that
is shaped and controlled by the ruling class. The usual
way is to source art pieces for biennials and big exhibi-
tions on loan from private galleries or collections, often
without involving the artist in the exhibition process.
This kind of curatorial practice is similar to shopping of
luxury goods and the following promotion of the purchases.

The method of production of the artworks or exhibitions,
as well as the context within which the artworks are
presented are crucial for conceptualizing our working stra-
tegy. This becomes especially important when curatorial
and art projects are dealing with burning social issues and
are relevant for broader social contexts. An artist dealing
with social themes, depicting misery, investigating in-

justice or other socio-political issues stays in compliance with the questioned condition if he/she focuses on creating exchange value only. If there is no use value in favor of the commons in such kind of artistic production, it stays "politically passive", a sheer exploitation of conditions other people suffer from and the consumption of such art in the worst case becomes a cynical act of fetishism. In previous working processes we have initiated methodologies and infrastructures for a use value production in arts, and some of the following postulates were stressed: producer and recipient are not distinguished, the participants in the process are related reciprocally, that means they are producers and recipients/users of the work at the same time. It is the qualitative aspect of value that meets the concrete needs of human beings, the value that can change and expand our everyday lives, the value in favor of the commons.

We have tried to develop such methodologies in our project "On use value of art" (2009—2010)[2], a production and exhibitions of works done in collaboration with activists, artists, youths and organizations about the situation of youth and migrants in Serbia, France and Germany. The collaborative way of production was part of the initial concept.[3]

Artist and activist from France Ivan Basso worked with unaccompanied minors living on the streets of Paris and made photos and a video questioning the ethics of youth protection, André Raatzsch and Emese Benkö developed a sound sculpture with youths in Berlin, of a fictional Roma female superhero. Sibylle Hofter from Berlin worked in the city of Leskovac in South Serbia and realized staged photo-portraits. The works were exhibited in many different places, sometimes on the initiative of the young people in their schools, sometimes by the activist associations or in art spaces. The photographs of Sibylle Hofter were for the first time exhibited in the Roma Cultural Center in Leskovac, a unique public institution in Serbia, established by the local Roma community during socialism. Ivan Basso made an exhibition in a Parisian organization that works with street children.

Often contemporary artworks don't formulate a message that could engage the public beyond the art professionals into knowledge production. The question arises, if the curator or artist have this intention at all. Usual practice shows a more "hermetic" piece of art and supports it by another, more context-related one. Biennialization and festivalization are pushing art practitioners to avoid a didactic approach and to be satisfied with involving a few site-specific or contextual artworks. In contrary we insist on presenting artworks which are clearly didactic and try to involve the audience in a learning process. For the exhibition "I will never talk about the war again" in Stockholm's Färgfabriken (2011)[4] and in Kibla in Maribor, Slovenia (2012)[5] — that focuses on critical social analysis and testimonies of violence and trauma connected with recent wars in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, with works from artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and Russia — we invited artist from Moscow Nikolay Oleynikov to produce a mural installation based on a historical timeline of the destruction of Yugoslavia. Providing the political and historical context, the mentioned artwork became a didactic tool for reading the exhibition, pointing to the causes of war generated by neoliberal capitalism's ideology.

Working conditions in neoliberal capitalism are the main problem, and brought individuals and institutions into a precarious situation with the lack of stable funding. It seems that the current position is hard to keep and this will sooner or later lead to the abolition of transparent public institutional spaces for art and culture. On the other hand, there are the "successful" private institutions, promotional projects of private collections and banks that have replaced the public institutions from the times of the welfare system, promoting corporate social responsibility instead of the commons.

The rich and the art collectors must not be the ones that lead the trend. On the other hand, independent cultural practice without alternative economy is not sustainable and cannot have a strong impact. We need a network of economic self-help that can secure a stable position for cultural workers. Establishing an international union of cultural workers could be a relevant step. Insisting on economic democracy is a good point. A recent example of an initiative formed to fight against the abuse of cultural workers' professional integrity and the open infraction of their labor rights is the platform ArtLeaks[6], established by international cultural workers.

2
Rena Rädle and Vladan Jeremi, *On Use Value of Art*, exhibition catalogue, Babel Art Space, Trondheim, Norway, 2010. http:www.birobegrad.info/pdf/On_Use_Value_of_Art.pdf

3
About the problems of collaboration and "participatory practices" we have written elsewhere: http://www.rueckkopplungen.de/?cat=48

4
Vladan Jeremi and Elsa Ekesiöö Thambert, *Psychosis part I—I will never talk about the war again*, exhibition catalogue, Fargfabriken, Stockholm, Sweden, 2011. http://www.fargfabriken.se/en archive/item/download/71_96c7443fd7fe3d 044ea 123c 3a26d9a31

5
Kibla, announcement of the exhibition "I will never talk about the war again", Maribor, Slovenia, 2012: http://www.kibla.org/en/news/news /?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=1849&tx_ttnws[backPid]= 1&cHash=535f55ce37

6
ArtLeaks, "It is time to break the silence!": http://art-leaks.org/about/

BIOGRAPHIES

Larissa Babij works in Ukraine as a writer, curator and participant of experimental projects. She regularly writes about Ukrainian contemporary art for ARTMargins Online (www.artmargins.com), Korydor (korydor.in.ua) and other publications. She is currently a member of the ARTMargins Online Editorial Collective. In 2010—2011, she organized a series of performances in the National Art Museum of Ukraine "Hostage in NAMU", collaborated with Kyiv-based performance group TanzLaboratorium to produce "PERFORMATIVITY Educational Art Project", and initiated a platform of informal discussions about contemporary art "On the Floor" at the Foundation Center for Contemporary Art.

DeLVe (Ivana Bago & Antonia Majača) engages in a series of research, exhibition and publishing projects, taking up the space between 'academia' and the sphere of production of contemporary art, thus allowing for innovative, interdisciplinary and 'emancipated' modes of research and knowledge production, with the vision of being unbound by rules, deadlines and the pressures of 'performance'. DeLVe takes a step back from the immediate visibility of curatorial work and exhibition making to delve into a curatorial/artistic/intellectual practice informed by in-depth research, close-reading, performative writing, and close exchange between various actors gathering around a specific endeavour.

Cătălin Gheorghe is an editor, curator and teacher based in Iași, Romania. He is coordinating editor of Vector — critical research in context publication and project coordinator of Vector — studio for art practices and debates, which is an educational platform for critical research, art production and mediation run by Vector Association in collaboration with the Research Centre of the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, Iași. As teacher, he holds a PhD in Aesthetics and Visual Studies and he is a Lecturer at the Arts University in Iași.

Dr. Marina Grzinic is philosopher, artist and theoretician. She is professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Her latest book is Re-Politicizing art, Theory, Representation and New Media Technology, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna and Schlebrügge. Editor, Vienna 2008. Grzinic has been involved with video art since 1982. She lives in Ljubljana, works in Ljubljana, Slovenia and Vienna, Austria.

h.arta is a group of 3 women artists, Maria Crista, Anca Gyemant and Rodica Tache, whose projects focus on art in public space, knowledge production and alternative educational models. The events and exhibitions we organize attempt to create new spaces for political expression and action. Our projects are always based on collaboration and we frequently work together with other artists, NGOs, human rights activists and schools. Their methodology is based on friendship, which they understand as an everyday negotiation of differences, as a way of learning from each other, and as a political statement about the power of solidarity. www.hartagroup.ro

Cristian Nae is Lecturer at the University of Arts in Iași, Getty fellow of New Europe College in Bucharest, postdoctoral researcher with a grant from CNCS in Bucharest, guest editor of Vector — critical research in context publications and collaborative curator of Vector — studio for art practices and debates in Iași.

Márton Pacsika is an emerging curator based in Budapest. He studied sociology and curatorial studies. His main fields of research include the twentieth century Hungarian Progressivism, cultural policy and socially engaged art. He is the co-founder and curator of the Demo Gallery-Budapest since 2010.

Vladan Jeremić and Rena Rädle are curators and artists from Belgrade, Serbia. In their curatorial and artistic practice they research the intersection between contemporary art and politics. Jeremi was director of the Gallery DOB of the city's Cultural Center of Belgrade (2008/2009). He has curated more than thirty exhibitions in local and international contexts. Recently curated exhibitions and projects includes: I Will Never Talk About the War Again realized in Färgfabriken in Stockholm (2011) and in Kibla, Maribor (2012); The Perspectives, Part 1 — The scope of political practices of moving images today, Tulca, Galway, Ireland (2011); On Use Value of Art, Babel Art Space, Trondheim (2010); Queer Salon, Cultural Centre of Belgrade (2010); Balkan Exotic, Ondrej Brody & Kristofer Paetau, Cultural Center DOB, Belgrade (2009). Jeremić & Rädle were initiators of the project Call the Witness — 2nd Roma Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennial and are co-authors of artworks within the collective Chto Delat?. Their artworks are in the collection of MUDAM, Luxemburg, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and Museum Reina Sofia, Madrid.

Stefan Rusu is based in Chisinau and Bucharest. His artistic/curatorial agenda is geared towards the processes/changes in post-socialist societies after 1989. He is involved in the development of KSAK Center, where he designs, fundraises and manages curatorial projects, programs and film productions. In 2004 he completed an MA in cultural management from Belgrade Art University, following the years 2005—06 he attended the Curatorial Training Program at Stichting De Appel in Amsterdam, where he co-curated Mercury in Retrograde. Currently he works as a curator and project & programmes manager at the KSAK Center for Contemporary Art in Chisinau. In 2010 he curated CHISINAU — Art, Research in the Public Sphere — a cross-disciplinary platform that investigated the connections between political and cultural symbols and propaganda and its impact on the urban environment, the interference between personal narratives and imported ideologies and cultural discourses in relation to the public sphere. (http://www.art.md/2010/sfera_publica_en.html)

Olga Stefan is a freelance arts writer, curator, but mostly an arts mediator based in Zurich. Her projects can be found online at: www.olgaistefan.wordpress.com

Yelena Vorobyeva (Turkmenistan) was born in 1959 in Nebit-Dag, Turkmenistan, **and Victor Vorobyev** (Kazakhstan) was born in 1959 in Pavlodar, Kazakhstan. They live and work in Almaty, Kazakhstan, as artists, writers, and curators. As a married couple, the Vorobyev's began working together on conceptual art projects in the early 1990s. They earnestly play with the world using painting, photography, humour, stone, video, vegetables from their garden, people's reactions, and more. The results are multi-layered works that comment either on the simplicity or complexity of life in Central Asia. They have exhibited widely in Central Asia, Russia, and Eastern Europe.

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