



Every Curator's Handbook

Initiated and edited by Anne Klontz, Karen MacDonald and Yulia Usova
in partnership with Perfect Art Institution

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Contents

<i>Introduction: Every Curator's Handbook</i>	4
<i>Dissenting Manufacture</i>	5
An Overview by Karen Macdonald	
<i>The Difficult but Enriching Paths of Collaborative Practices</i>	9
Haizea Barcenilla	
<i>Peter Bonnell, Dan Howard-Birt and Mike Marshall: The Evolution of the Commission Process</i>	12
<i>Spatial Practices: The Broken Border Between Art, History and Curating</i>	16
Magdalena Holdar	
<i>Forming Your Own Practice in the Deformalized Context</i>	20
Marianna Hovhannisyan	
<i>Rants no. 2 and no. 5</i>	25
Toby Huddleston	
<i>Apartment: A short account of an artist led space in a domestic environment</i>	28
Hilary Jack and Paul Harfleet	
<i>I Am Not Going to Uncover Anything Precious</i>	31
Helen Kaplinsky	
<i>Make Your Audience</i>	36
Ruba Katrib	
<i>In Conversation with Curator Richard Julin</i>	38
Anne Klontz	
<i>Do It Yourself – Do It Together</i>	42
Yulia Kostereva and Yuriy Kruchak	
<i>Curating – A game of Skill</i>	44
Ben Lewis	
<i>Five Terms to Fly to Space</i>	49
Kateryna Radchenko	
<i>Curating as a Methodological Tool</i>	51
Maija Rudovska	
<i>We Are for a Curating</i>	53
Username	
<i>An Alternative to 'Swiss' Money</i>	55
Yulia Usova	
<i>A Curator's Diary of Humiliation and Disgrace</i>	59
Iliana Veinberga	
<i>Occupy the Walls: The International Guerrilla Video Festival</i>	62
Jason Waite	
<i>Individual Utopia</i>	64
Josip Zanki	
<i>About the Contributors</i>	68

Introduction: Every Curator's Handbook

Pontus Hultén, the founder and past director of the Modern Museum Stockholm, created a unique publication titled, *Curator's Handbook*. In the introduction of the book Hultén writes, "The celebrated curator which echoes his approach to exhibition making, offers a selective view of his career generated by serendipitous, incidental and seemingly arbitrary connections between life and world events".

Inspired by Hultén's words, our project, *Every Curator's Handbook* covers a variety of practices, projects and situations to provide a montage of snapshots and questions which intersect in both planned and unforeseen ways. Our project invites sharing of experiences and problems which, in turn, help promote professional insight, debate and collaboration *with* and *for* cultural practitioners and beyond.

The handbook is a collection of 19 essays and texts by international artists and curators. Among our contributors are Magdalena Holdar, P.h.D and head of the Curating Art Master's program at Stockholm University; Ukrainian artists Yuriy Kruchak and Yulia Kostereva, founders of the public forum Open Place; and curator Marianna Hovhannisyan, who works for Armenian Open University, Department of Fine Arts.

The handbook includes a range of topics such as interviews, artist-run projects, artist/curator collaborations, exhibition creation and public events, and perspectives about today's curatorial education. In an interview, Swedish curator Richard Julin shares both past and present experiences working as curator at Magasin 3; Josip Zanki muses on a career in artistic activism within the former Yugoslavia; Maija Rudovska describes a film as a curatorial gesture within the developing artistic context of post-Soviet Latvia; and Jason Waite provides a do-it-yourself guide to setting up a guerrilla film festival. As each writer reflects upon their own experiences with art and curating and what has shaped them, new insight is shared to form a valuable foundation for emerging curators to learn from.

The aim of our project has been to create a resource dealing with the practical questions that arise when one begins their curatorial career in the field of art; a valuable and much needed companion to the standard theoretical texts often issued within systems of curatorial education. This type of compendium is unique because it addresses the needs of a new generation of professionals and most importantly, the book welcomes emerging voices, ideas and shared experiences from both western and non-western cultural practitioners. We have therefore invited writers from Armenia, Latvia, Ukraine and former Yugoslavia in addition to participants from Europe and North America.

We believe it is important to share knowledge with peers working beyond western contexts whose significance is rising on the world stage but where the infrastructure doesn't necessarily support or equal the aspiration. As a way to assuage this issue, *Every Curator's Handbook* has been made into a digital e-book in order to maximize accessibility for an international audience of users.

On a final note, we hope that *Every Curator's Handbook* will be used, as Hultén describes, to 'talk things into being' and provide a platform for discussion and observation within a uniquely diverse and thriving professional field.

— Anne Klontz, Karen Macdonald and Yulia Usova

Dissenting Manufacture

An Overview by Karen Macdonald

When I met Yulia Usova through Vision Forum,¹ she had recently graduated from Stockholm University's curator programme,² and I was halfway through a Masters at Goldsmiths in London. She invited me to discuss the experience of studying curating in a series of talks she was organising: 'Your place in the industry of contemporary art'. One of the first things she explained was the lack of any formal curatorial education in Ukraine and shortage of contemporary art courses; the same situation is found in many countries whose economies have not been 'developed' for as long as the rest of Europe and the U.S.A. The west, the UK being a prime example, has erupted in a rash of curating courses over the past ten or fifteen years, with the first generation of graduates coming to maturity in some very high profile roles.

At the time, I was feeling a bit jaded. Working full time to support myself through the course, it seemed that I now barely had time to even think about *doing* stuff; and reading Ranciere felt very remote from the issues in daily work. Faced with presenting to people who wanted the kinds of course I was lucky enough to be doing, I felt like a fraud. I wanted to say: most of what you're looking for, you won't find in the seminar room. It's out there, in the meeting places, and the empty shops where conceptual as well as visible frameworks of exhibitions can be manually assembled like bricks and mortar. Everyone learns through doing, right?

For those without access to it, it seems obvious that formal education will solve some problems, maybe allowing a new generation of cultural producers to transform (for example) an internally market-driven and product-centric art scene into something radical and critically competitive. From a western perspective it can be easy to romanticise the informal or unstructured approach and hanker after some sort of artistic or curatorial state of grace — 'learning through play', that would circumvent repetitive arguments about authorship and professionalisation and let everyone just get on with it.

At first I thought of attempting a whistle-stop thought-tour of the slippery concept of 'teaching' people to be curators — the accusations that the knowledge economy tempts universities to try the impossible: to manufacture curators and cultural producers, at the risk of stymieing or instrumentalising creativity. But The Banff Centre and Koenig Books got there first with the excellent

Raising Frankenstein: Curatorial Education and Its Discontents,³ a short, highly readable book adapted from a conference. So instead, I decided on a simpler task: to look at some of the texts in this handbook alongside *Raising Frankenstein*, each through the prism of the other. Did the theory/practice disconnect I'd experienced echo a divide between formal and informal learning? And how do people find ways round it?

'Tasks formerly reserved for art critics, fundraisers, connoisseurs, artists, dealers, cultural politicians, museum designers, archivists, impresarios, historians, activists, theorists, fans, secretaries and sparring partners, are fused into a veritable postmodern mélange. Each curator is, by a rule, some kind of Frankenstein composite of those formerly stable identities.' (ibid p30).

Cuauhtemoc Medina makes the curator sound rather dashing despite the monster connotation; a bit of a chancer, a professional wideboy, who plucks a handful of this knowledge and that vocabulary and the other experience to throw into the cultural cocktail mixer. It also contains the two key questions of *Raising Frankenstein*: what do you need to know to be a curator? And how can you learn, or teach it? These issues arise time and again, in different guises, throughout many of the texts in *Every Curator's Handbook*.

In *Forming Your Own Practice in the Deformalized Context*, Marianna Hovhannisyan identifies a new resistance to academic research in Armenia amongst emerging and aspiring curators. She proposes that it may be part of a new strain of 'hybrid practice' arising out of necessity in her own generation, parallel to the hybridity Medina describes. A cavalier attitude towards academic learning may arise from lack of opportunity: if the infrastructure to train is not going to be enabled by the state, we will disregard the conventions of training and make our own success.

Formal curatorial courses tend to emerge where contemporary art markets and infrastructures are already well established, providing ready material to play with and models to deconstruct or aspire to. It is notable that burgeoning curatorial programmes in still-developing 'art scenes', such as Teratoma's 2003-6 curatorial studies course in Mexico (discussed by Lourdes Morales in *Raising Frankenstein*) haven't yet solidified into long term academic structures. It will be interesting to see

1 Vision Forum is an international platform for artists and curators: www.visionforum.eu

2 Kiev, October/November 2009.

3 Scott, K (ed), 2011: *Raising Frankenstein: Curatorial Education and Its Discontents*, Koenig Books / The Banff Centre, London.

what will emerge in Russia and its peer countries —where the contemporary art market has had an accelerated development. The flip side of anti-academic expediency is a hunger for serious, critical dialogue and research which can equally take an improvisatory DIY approach, a key feature of many practices in this volume. Self-starter activity can perhaps be more responsive, more fleet-footed and better able to engage with local and specific contexts than academic structures allow.

The emphasis on practice in Marianna's and other⁴ texts underlines the inadequacy of academic study alone: she advocates using the institutional environment as a platform for direct action, for hands-on practice, the two being interdependent. Skills from previous and parallel specialisms come into play and can be usefully applied in the context of curating, such as Yulia's knowledge of marketing and business to open up creative opportunities with the corporate sector. In his interview with Anne Klontz, Richard Julin gives a frank account of his transition from designer to curator; how the two went side by side for some time, one funding and also informing the other, but also how he came to change his view of what was important in a curator's approach — what he calls 'the intuitive side', which could possibly be seen as the fjord between curating and art practice.

That of course is a thorny perennial for those starting out in curating, and still haunts seminar rooms in the UK. Francesco Manacorda conceptualises exhibitions as texts, which can be written and read from a more or less subjective point of view: *'...the "individual" might be considered the pressing impulse towards innovation that can be noticed in every aspiring curator...The risk of the radicalized version of this approach is innovation for its own sake. The performance of a meta-linguistic act of speech merely preoccupied with its linguistic conditions rather than the speech as a whole.'* (ibid p39) Learning to curate, therefore, could be defined as learning the skills of authorship. Helen Kaplinsky, in *I Am Not Going to Uncover Anything Precious*, conceptualises curatorial practice as montage, and argues for the inevitability of a (diffused) authorial position ('curators are unavoidably complicit in a reality of shared authorship which can also be witnessed in creative fields other than fine art').

A fundamental assumption about the authorial stance — love it or hate it — is underlined in Manacorda's use of the word 'individual'. This is a western, patriarchal, romantic conception of the artist/curator/author as a lone voice differentiating him/herself against a field which doesn't know yet that it needs his/her input. What recently seems

to be gathering momentum, in both west and east, is collectivity — as Helen and other⁵ writers here imply. This drive is clearly acknowledged by institutions but when they attempt to promote or assimilate it, the result can be uneasy, like a middle aged parent trying to be 'down with the kids'. (I'm thinking here of instances like the ICA in London giving over its space to Chto delat?⁶ and Tate Modern's 'festival of independents' *no soul for sale*⁷). It's unpleasantly resonant with the UK government's cynical 'Big Society' rhetoric.⁸ But where does collectivity fit in the role of the curator, and can it be genuine and unforced?

Parallel to Helen's assertion that curating (whilst inevitably authorial) cannot be wholly original, Haizea Barcenilla argues that curating is an inherently collaborative activity; it is never possible for the curator to be an auteur in the singular sense because there are always other creative inputs coming from the audience as well as, of course, the artists. The only way to present a truly autonomous curatorial project would be to have yourself as the only creator and the only viewer. She writes about the learning potential of cross-disciplinary collaborations, *'...embarking into collaborative projects with artists in which the lines between what was curatorial and what was artistic were so fluid that the question began to lose any kind of relevance...'*

The natural extension of the two-way dialogue and blurring of boundaries between artist and curator is to extend the authorial net to the viewer as well. Obviously this is a well worn concept, but it has new purchase in a context where individuality is losing its sheen. Open Place was founded on a desire to redress a divide between arts practice and society — a concern obliquely expressed by Francesco Manacorda: *'very often in curatorial*

5 See texts by Haizea Barcenilla, Yuriy Kruchak & Yulia Kostereva, Ruba Katrib and Josip Zanki.

6 Chto delat? ('what is to be done?', a Russian artists' collective) presented *The Urgent Need to Struggle* at ICA in September/October 2010. At the time of writing, you can still find information at <http://www.ica.org.uk/chtodelat>

7 No soul for sale: a festival of independents (May 2010) saw Tate Modern give artistic collectives and independent projects 'stalls' within its Turbine Hall space. At the time of writing, you can still find information at <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/nosoulsforsale/default.shtm>

8 An initiative of the UK Prime Minister David Cameron (Conservative Party head of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government). Basically it proposes that the public work together to improve society and take — and be given — greater responsibility for it. Cameron's strategies for promoting this initiative are greatly contested not least because they are encompassing huge public spending cuts. You can find the government's proposal at <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/big-society> and information and debates at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/can-the-big-society-work-2207352.html>, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/97c67eac-361d-11e0-9b3b-00144feabdco.html#axzz1XfH8EGvb>, <http://blog.practicaethics.ox.ac.uk/2011/02/what-is-the-big-society/>

4 See texts by Iliana Veinberga, Haizea Barcenilla and Maija Rudovska.

studies, people disregard one of the two final 'clients' of the curator, for lack of a better word (ibid p45). Open Place's solution, or rather the process that they had to go through to find a solution, was to create a new concept of the institution: as something mobile and context specific, a participatory model where artists and curators are learning alongside non artists and non curators. Broadly speaking you could say this is exemplary of Rancière's figure the 'Ignorant Schoolmaster'.⁹

Ruba Katrib, too, underlines the importance of 'making your audience' (this time from within the institution—but allowing them to educate and to influence that institution). Not only does this ensure your lovingly nurtured curatorial project doesn't disappear unseen into the bottomless well of 'meta-linguistic acts' but it enables you to actively learn, within the project and beyond, from the experiences of other people, many of whom are entirely outside the art world but for that brief foray. Manacorda writes about the 'ideal public' that every curator, consciously or not, construes for his or her project, and the idea that these fictional people could collaborate and open it up for real audiences; but Ruba and Open Place say why not have the real thing — a live, reciprocal relationship?

This leads on to the boundaries between curatorial knowledge and the rest of the world. Open Place in particular play at the outer suburbs of the art conurbation — albeit within a defined space. Jason Waite's 'guerilla video festival' seems to challenge the democracy of the curatorial act. Hijacking the public domain, it gives people the option to engage or to walk away. But it still plays with shared authorship: people may not be able to fundamentally influence or shape it but it may provoke or inspire them to respond with their own actions, and they must to some extent contextualise the presented work within the context of their own experience and society. Username propose something even more radical through their co-opting of Claes Oldenburg's prose poem, a manifesto for a curating which is one with everyday life. This could not possibly be learnt through study. These fundamentally un-teachable approaches produce projects whose strength lies in their locality and specificity; the strategies may be transferable but the results in each case are irreproducible and possibly even ungraspable outside of their original context.

At this point you may be thinking, why bother trying to 'learn' about curating (or art) at all if all of life is your wellspring and the most fruitful experiences are those which arise between people and in the moment? But wouldn't you have to

create some kind of institution/academy/paradigm to give you something to take issue with? One of the loudest and most frequent complaints among curators is the lack of written histories of curating; how can we make progress if we're never sure where we're coming from? In her introduction, Teresa Gleadowe writes: '*Curatorial history, exhibition history (as well as art history) helps to define the parameters of a practice. It also provides a compendium of possibilities to be interpreted, replayed or reinvented.*' (ibid p25).

Maybe that's one of the issues formal curatorial courses can help address. As well as exposing students to a wide range of existing practices, projects and theories, they create a living archive of what is current and urgent through the amassed essays and early output of the next generation of curators. Moreover, with their seemingly inevitable bent towards institutional critique, formal courses may function as a kind of electorate — a critically validated body which monitors the habits and shortcomings that the institutions around them might fall into. In turn, the institutions provide opportunities for students to cut their teeth, through internships and actual or theoretical project opportunities. Magdalena Holdar touches on the unspoken connections between the academy and the institution — '*the silent practice-based knowledge of the curator*' as she called it in her synopsis, which requires training to verbalise when the situation demands. Curating courses are about attempting to articulate this practice-based knowledge, though they often do it in a roundabout way rather than head on. At their best, they promote a multi-layered curiosity and engagement with a subject that roams outside of the usual borders of curating.

Iliana Veinberga also advocates the academic-autodidactic crossover. She sees potential as well as necessity in the breadth of tasks, from the authorial to the menial, which the 'independent' curator takes on a potential for autonomy and for freedom from the need to explain, justify, or meet criteria. Ben Lewis' script *Affinities – A Game of Curating* offers a deliciously off-hand, faux naïve dismantling of the concept of learning to curate and the very existence of stable protocol. It illustrates the necessity, and perhaps inevitability, of falling back on one's own resources and instincts when the obligations to justify or meet criteria tie you in knots.

To grossly generalise, most conceptions of curatorial education fall into three categories: the academic-institutional model; the autodidactic model; and, the oldest, the apprenticeship model. Whilst all of these undoubtedly have their place in any healthy infrastructure, where it seems to get really interesting, in this volume and in *Raising*

⁹ Jacques Rancière, 1991 (trans): *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, Stanford University Press. You can find it online.

Frankenstein, is in the combination of these models with each other and with other, more discursive, more cross-disciplinary opportunities. These seem to be akin to 'crowd-sourcing': pooling knowledge, experience—and resources, within specific projects—to increase the possibilities for what can happen and who can be part of it. If we can now understand exhibitions as 'non-linear narratives', with multiple interpretations, themes, resonances between works and so on, then it seems fitting to embrace a non linear way of learning to curate, with access to multiple influences, voices and fields of knowledge.

Communications technologies and increased mobility across greater parts of the world are helping these opportunities to be shared across borders of nationality, language and means. Those without the security and backing of an institutional post or support can create dialogues and exchanges with others at similar levels, realising projects locally which, in Pip Day's words, represent '*Site-specific approaches to problem-specific situations*' (ibid p22) but sharing histories and strategies globally. It is this aspiration that prompted Anne, Yulia and me to embark on creating *Every Curator's Handbook*. And if that sounds idealistic, it isn't meant to be. As Haizea says about collaborations, taking on board other people's practices can be difficult, tiring and time consuming. It can also open up totally unforeseen opportunities and areas of knowledge; we're barely scratching the surface yet.

Will the march of the curating courses continue as economies slowly recover? I hope the post-Soviet countries get their courses because they provide a valuable form of hot-house for the accumulation of knowledge and formulation of perspective. They can also provide important havens where a developing practice can be insulated to some extent from the pressures of markets and state politics. The most successful courses already embrace multiplicities of input and influence, not least in their admission of students from a wide variety of backgrounds. There is a danger in a formal course that habits and consensus will creep in, and they need to keep open as many channels of communication with a wide range of practices as possible, or as Teresa Gleadowe writes '*...the curating course needs to be a permanently unstable institution*' (ibid p26)—one for a dissident form of manufacture. It will be interesting to see whether this is maintained or whether the umbrella model of the curating course, as it attempts to embrace the tensions between local/specific and global imperatives and address the demand for professionalism, splits and diversifies again into different facets: curating and markets, curating as criticism, and social curating, perhaps.

The obvious reading of Medina's *Frankenstein* comparison is the curator as the monster, as a composite of different people and roles; but of course *Frankenstein* was the doctor who created the monster, not the monster itself. We always have to use the materials to hand—and if those include formal taught courses, they are one considerable material to use; but we can and ultimately have to orchestrate our own sutures.

The Difficult but Enriching Paths of Collaborative Practices

This article is based on actual events.

by Haizea Barcenilla

How many times have you been sitting in front of a coffee, a beer or just a computer screen with a curator friend talking about common interest points, research subjects or about those projects that you always wanted to undertake and you end up discovering that he or she has had a similar idea and never took it into practice? And how many times, at this point, have the words 'should we do it together?' emerged?

Out of this situation, two possible scenarios can result. In the first one, you feel excited for a couple of days, look for possibilities, but seeing that you have too many things going on individually, or that economical resources for such a project might be difficult to get and would ask for a long-time commitment, you let it die with a scent of regret and shame for having acted in such an effusive way in the first place.

In the second scenario however, either one or more of the partners feel excited about the project for more than a couple of days. You insist upon it, your friend looks for possible resources, you both try to find some free time to make it happen and in the best of cases you get some economical help or a possibility for showing, publishing or enacting the project. So you start a common adventure that leads you through the Difficult but Enriching Paths of Collaborative Practices.

Collaborative curating often fits the motto "no one said it was easy", since it provokes discussions, debates and misunderstandings. It demands certain flexibility and some rejection to unique authorship that not everyone is keen on accepting. It assures that, even in the smoothest of collaborations, there will be at some point, disagreement and arguments. Some people tend to think that working collaboratively will create less work for all partners when, on the contrary, it frequently requires more, since the time for meeting, discussing, evaluating and agreeing can be considerable.

After this introduction, the reader will find no reason to embark into such a venture. Nevertheless, many curators get into collaborative projects once and again. If working with others can become a pain, why aren't we able to stop doing it?

It is because collaborations often open up ways of seeing, of working and of analyzing to which we would not have access otherwise. Collaborations bring our positioning into question repeatedly,

even in levels and around subjects which would stay fixed when working alone. They have the capacity of, in a prototypical sentence, bringing up the best of you as well as of others. Even if it is not easy, it is usually rewarding enough to make you repeat.

As I stated in the subtitle, this text does not aim to be academic or to fix some universal basis of behavior useful in each and any collaborative project. This text emerges of my own experience working with other people and might be able to offer some hints and propositions, but surely not state any kind of regular procedure.

To start with, we should stress the fact that when we talk about "individual curatorial projects" we are occurring into a paradox. A curatorial project can by definition never be absolutely individual, since it involves a larger or scarcer number of people, but always needs presence and help from other parties. The artist could be individual or autonomous (and I have many reservations about this possibility)¹, since the work can be produced by the artist with no external help, and exist by itself. On the contrary, curatorial practices are in all cases based on activities performed by more than one subject; the curator could be compared to a theatre director who is ahead of a whole production but still depends on many individual performances.

In the first place, curatorial projects do not exist without the participation of the artist. Even in the cases where artists are not involved, such as in the production of this publication, curators curate curators, theoreticians, critics or musicians, for example. In fact, if a curator organizes an event where only she takes part, a creative presentation or a performance, it is generally said that she transfers into the role of the artist. Therefore, the first step of any curatorial project (even if not

¹ The myth of the romantic artists has pushed the idea of the artist working alone, excluded from the world, in his closed studio, expressing the representation of his soul. Nevertheless, even the most technically autonomous and independent artists, those who do not need any technical or practical help to produce their pieces, do embark on conversations with fellow artists, curators, friends or family around the pieces they are producing; they visit museums and exhibitions, pay attention to previous works of art, go to the cinema, see television, consult the Internet and absorb an enormous quantity of "outside world" before starting their work. Even more, if they exclude themselves from society and work as genies in the woods, we try to consider them old fashion bohemians and underestimate their work.

considered collaborative) consists on identifying actual collaborators to work with.

To this foundation we could add that not so many curatorial projects are completely autonomous. Normally, apart from the artist's participation, other agents take part, be it on the planning, the production or the promotion of the project. The bigger the institution, the larger the number of people working and therefore the group of discussion even if hierarchies are applied. And of course, we should not forget problems such as exhibition policies, rules of institutions or performing spaces, that, despite not counting as any kind of collaboration, do exercise a pressure that often alters bits and pieces of that original autonomous project of the curator.

All this to say that, even if we take it for granted, as curators we are regularly involved in discussion logics, implying negotiation, debate, conversations and certain amounts of diplomacy. In this sense, the phantom of the effort of collaborative curating should be abolished, since it does not differ terribly from many dynamics we see ourselves repeatedly implicated in.

Still, the reader might think, it was stated before that collaborative practices are not easy. And it is true: they are often complex. Yet complex and difficult are two different things. In fact, many curatorial projects are in any case complex, demanding and even extenuating, also those that are not collaborative. The complications presented in each case are different and at the same time, impossible to rate as more or less important, just particular to each situation.

The problem I consider to affect most the collaborative projects I have tried to put into practice has been, simple as it might seem, scheduling. When working in an institution, procedures are more functional and formalized. In the case of freelance curators, finding the right timing is one of the biggest obstacles a project can suffer from. Since most people are involved in several projects at a time, dedicating the same amount of time in the same moment can prove complicated, especially at the beginning of projects, when the financial resources (if there is to be any) are not assured, it is challenging to steal some moments from paying endeavours to put into a newcomer.

My clearest experience of this problematic situation happened in 2007-2008, when Ana Garcia-Pineda and I formed the Damas collective. Ana worked both as an artist and as a curator, and at that time both of us were living in London. Together, we developed the Copyzine project, awarded with the Abisal scholarship in Bilbao, and our collaboration seemed, to both of us, one of the most productive we had ever experienced.

Nonetheless, it all had an end when Ana moved back to Barcelona due to producing opportunities as an artist. Although we stayed in close contact and tried several times to produce new projects, our schedules had become so different that it proved impossible to find time and dedication at the same time and even if we are always wishing for the moment to work together again, we have not reached this point yet.

In long-term projects scheduling can also be problematic, since it is usual that one of the involved parties gets the possibility of developing another project, of lecturing, of doing a residency abroad or other occupations which hinder her committed dedication to the collective project. Internet and other communication methods have helped solving situations of distance, yet when collaborators move to other places and the direct contact diminishes, it can become a real hindrance.

Another problem in collaborations (very often the source of most problems, actually) is what I call "fake collaborations". There are different kinds of these: the most typical is the one imposed on participants of curatorial courses, symposiums or similar circumstances. That is, a project is offered to students or participants, but they carry it out together with other participating members that they often have just met or with whom they do not forcefully share views and interests. There are countless examples of this: De Appel in Amsterdam, the Royal College of Art final year exhibition, or projects by Goldsmiths College Curating MFA, both in London.

It happened when I was a student in the MFA Curating at Goldsmiths College and seven of us were picked to organize a big photo exhibition in a very short amount of time. Among my working group there were people coming from very different places: one of them, for example, had directed his own independent space where he concentrated primarily on production and exhibition of very young artists' work, while another two had only worked in major commercial galleries and institutions with established and renowned artists. Already our views of what type of artists we should concentrate on were diverging. Our discussions were often long and fruitless. The communication with some people in the group got so bad that we saw ourselves forced to "fire" one of us. The resulting exhibition matched the schedule and the requirements, but our general conclusion was that we would never work in a project under such conditions again. Although these exhibitions might produce some pedagogic processes for the participants, they mostly provoke countless void discussions, and more than often, arid and irrelevant final projects that do not seem enriching either for the authors or for the viewers.

Curiously, these fake collaborations mostly work when they are really fake, that is, when they accept a common “envelope” which supposes a shared format to which each participant can include her own interpretation without much agreement with others. That is the case of several “collective” books by the Pavilion of the Palais de Tokyo, for example, that are labelled as “collaborative” but which do not differ so much from any other curated publication.

Another kind of “fake collaboration” happens in some independent spaces where different curators co-exist under a common name, while actually working on their own projects without any kind of collaboration between them whatsoever. This is a model that has a reason to exist, since it allows for lower expenses per project and per space, it divides maintenance work, it serves as a way of asking for common funding and it gives an entity to a given space. Nevertheless, it does not really provide for the discussion, the together-working and the communal processes that collaborative practices as I understand them must offer.

For collaborative practices to work, one of the few rules is that they should be genuine, as terrible as this word might sound. By this I mean that they must depart from a common interest to which both (or more) partners are willing to dedicate time and investigation, and be grounded on a series of common understandings of matters (ways of working, of looking towards projects, of starting processes with artists...). Two common mistakes consist on jumping into a project because you like the person you are going to do it with, although you have absolutely no interest on the topic; or the contrary, starting it because you like the topic or the exhibition possibilities, but you really dislike the person. Simple and obvious as it might seem, these are two very common causes for ruined collaborative projects.

Now, even if it is evident that there must be some common ground, it is not mandatory to agree on everything from the first moment. On the contrary, it is healthy to have distinct points of view around specificities, angles of looking at the issue or ways of developing it. It is at this point when discussions come by and it becomes often one of the most enriching moments of the process. The ideal situation arrives when you and your partner have such a fluid working relationship that you can discuss any point you have different views upon, ponder solutions, spot weak points, consider and discuss modes to make the project the strongest it could get, all without getting anxious or upset. When working alone, we take for granted many methods and habits of our proceeding system and we have more difficulties to spot elements that are not forcefully working. Of course, even when we work alone we discuss our ideas and

doubts with friends and colleagues, but when we collaborate we do this systematically, continuously and consistently upon points where you would not have asked for opinion when working individually because you had been sure of them.

Developing collective projects is also very rewarding when performed with people other than curators, be it artists, cinema makers or writers. The way these other specialities work differs from the curatorial processes in many points and make us reconsider some of our proceedings and it especially opens up our habits to more experimental ways of thinking. In my experience, coming from quite an academic background, embarking into collaborative projects with artists in which the lines between what was curatorial and what was artistic were so fluid that the question began to lose any kind of relevance was a substantial step forward in my mind-set. This happened precisely with the project Wiki-histories (www.wiki-historias.org), where I worked with artist Saïoa Olmo who is interested on participatory and socially-researching methods. Wiki-histories is a project that she conceives of as artistic, while I participate as a historian and researcher and do not consider myself an artist. We work basically together for all activities and do the same tasks, but our definition of “what it really is” differs from each other. This opens up my views of what a curator can do or not, a discussion very vivid in curatorial educational circles which seems more and more futile to me.

Therefore, it is true that collaboration asks for a bigger flexibility, for a real will for debating and understanding the other’s premises and sometimes it leads to long discussions. Nevertheless, it brings back more than most other curatorial experiences I have been through.

Moreover, collaborative practices drive us to the interesting point of dialogue where we admit that we may not perhaps be of the same opinion, but we try to see how we can work out our differences to produce something enriching and interesting for all of us. It gets over the singular understanding of an art piece or a subject to involve a more open field of comprehension and creates a plural understanding of art projects.

Collaborative practices can be tiring when discussions get long; they can get overwhelming or repetitive at some precise points. But in general, they deepen our understanding of what we do and how we do it, and in the moment of over-production and consumption we are living; this capacity is a rare one.

Peter Bonnell, Dan Howard-Birt and Mike Marshall:

The evolution of the commission process

The following conversation between artist Mike Marshall, Dan Howard-Birt, curator at Stour Valley Arts (SVA) and Peter Bonnell, curator at ArtSway took place in December 2010 in a conference room at King's Place in London, courtesy of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. This edited version is intended to give an overview of the developmental process of Marshall's new joint commission for ArtSway and SVA.

Stour Valley Arts is based in the ancient 1500 acre King's Wood in Kent, England. Since 1994, artists have spent time in the forest developing new works. It is not a sculpture trail; works' locations are determined by artists, and visitors can encounter different works on each visit, including remains of former works returning to the forest floor. Previous commissioned artists include Hamish Fulton (1999), Tessa Farmer (2001), Jem Finer (2006), Bethan Huws (2009 co-commissioned by Turner Contemporary) and Lee Patterson (2010). SVA also supports UK-based artists to undertake residencies in Australia and hosts Australian artists in King's Wood. www.stourvalleyarts.org.uk

ArtSway is a unique place in the UK's New Forest to see, discuss, make and engage with contemporary visual art. A purpose built gallery space—designed by renowned architect Tony Fretton—hosts a changing programme of exhibitions and creative opportunities for all. Since 2000 ArtSway has supported and commissioned almost 30 young and emerging artists through its Production Residency scheme—often in partnership with other organisations, such as Arts University College at Bournemouth, Autograph ABP, The Photographers' Gallery and Stour Valley Arts. A selection of commissioned artists are included in ArtSway's New Forest Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. www.artsway.org.uk

Peter Bonnell: Dan and I met last year on a trip organised by Turning Point South East and Visiting Arts to Istanbul Biennale, and we got to know about each other's programmes. ArtSway tries to commission two artists a year if we can – and to work in partnership with other organisations as well. When looking for partners for a new residency I thought of you and Stour Valley Arts, because you do a huge amount of fantastic commissioning.

Dan Howard-Birt: Our organisations were set up within one or two years of each other but evolved their own identities. ArtSway has studios where an artist can reside and make work, and a gallery where that work can have its first public airing. SVA works without those facilities, but artists are invited to respond to the woodland where we work. About half of our commissions result in work manifested in that site. Working together proved a little more complicated than it first seemed; ArtSway requires a kind of outcome, and timetable, however flexible that might in fact be. SVA's commissions have always been allowed to develop over a period, even up to four years, dictated by the artist and needs of the research, especially when they relate to things like seasonal change or forestry cycles. So it was unusual for SVA to co-commission with one known outcome — Mike's exhibition for ArtSway. It was a good challenge for SVA.

PB: Partnerships are crucial to us, as is getting the work out to other venues. One outcome, of course, is the ArtSway exhibition — scheduled for June 2011 — and potentially ArtSway's New Forest Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, also in 2011

and an exhibition for SVA's new Ashford venue too. Although for me this isn't a crucial thing, it is interesting, Dan, you saying that artists come to react to the locale. A lot of artists have done that at ArtSway, but it isn't something we prescribe. One of the things you and I did have a slight problem with was defining this in the brief. ArtSway wanted to be open regarding the artist's approach, and you wanted the artist to respond to the place, so I thought we came to a good compromise in terms of response to the rural aspect of both venues. We were open to see how the artist would investigate and find common occurrences.

DHB: I completely agree. The brief was key to attracting the right artist. Responding to the site is the *modus operandi* of our organisation. So our coming together did involve thrashing out the brief to a point where we felt it was neither so restrictive that nobody would want to do it, nor too complicated. It allowed the opportunity for an artist to come and go between the two sites at their leisure over an extended period of research. We put it out as an open submission call, which is not something SVA regularly does and ArtSway has more experience of, so we were rather in your hands on that.

PB: I first came across Mike's work in the Tate Triennial 2003, *Days Like These*, named after one of your (Marshall's) works. We opened this opportunity to artists from all around the world and a huge number of very established and substantial practitioners applied. Our short-list was quite incredible. It was the quality of your work, Mike,

and the quality of your proposal *Ambient Ecologies* that made you stand out. Can we talk about what you proposed and how you approached the opportunity?



"Flood Plain" by Mike Marshall, 2009.
C-Type photograph.

Mike Marshall: At the time I was on a working holiday in an oasis in the desert. It was spring 2010 and air travel around Northern Europe was affected by the volcano in Iceland. So, in a sense, that oasis was psychologically amplified by the possibility of not being able to return when one wanted to. At that time of year it can get quite windy, and yet the oasis itself is sealed by foliage. It acts as a protection from the sun and wind. So, outside of the oasis it becomes incredibly windy. When you step back inside you have something quite serene by comparison. And it was in that location that I was thinking about 'ambient ecologies'. I began to think about how weather conditions affect us, and the way things are constructed, socially and psychologically, by relations between weather conditions and organic habitus.

PB: Let's discuss how we went about the selection process. There was no great mystery; we had a hundred or so artists apply and Dan and I made a short-list of six. There is a degree of serendipity involved; it's often how interesting the artist's practice appears in the contracted form of an application — we sometimes knew the artist's practice too, and we both knew Mike's work quite well. The strength of the proposal, which was both focused and open ended, gave it a head start. How did you feel about the process and what might the impact on your work be?

MM: I still am excited about it. I know there are a lot of artists who write proposals that are very specific, describing what exactly they are going to do and how they will achieve that. I'm not very

good at that because I like to respond to a place, change my mind and make things up as I go along. Some organisations are less receptive to an open proposal, and prefer to have more control.

PB: In my experience there are open proposals, and there are open proposals (laughter). I mean, artists being very cagey about what they will do... Some artists will say, "Yes, I'll make a cup of tea, then we'll decide what to do. I'll have a look around..." and... nothing. You said that your proposal *Ambient Ecologies* was open, which was its strength, but it was also incredibly detailed.

DHB: It was backed up with a methodology and a track record. An open submission opportunity suggests, to an extent, giving over curatorial responsibility; but underpinning the whole process is research, which remains a guide to decision making. Our awareness of Mike's practice only helped flesh out his approach to the brief. There was a sense of being open but guided — as opposed to open and chaotic — and certainly at SVA we look to support and nurture the former. We are keen to provide opportunities for artists to take risks, or try out new approaches, where they are allowed to miss deadlines and that is okay, and we do all we can to support the development of the work through it all.

PB: We too try to be flexible and accommodating towards artists' working methods. I think this flexibility extends to how Dan and I have worked together because the twin-site research has made the process very separated. We haven't had an opportunity yet to all meet and discuss progress. You have been in residence at ArtSway for seven months now, but it's been intermittent; it's the same case at King's Wood. How has it been for you with two separate curators working together in the development of this project?

MM: I don't see it as two separate curators, strangely. Obviously you are different people, but I see it more as differences between the organisations and their relationship to their environment and I wonder as to the expectations of each. You have probably got slightly different expectations and I have to try not to concern myself too much with that, but at the same time I do think about it.

DHB: That is very interesting for Peter and me to hear. We'd like to think that we give you some money and some access to these sites and we'd just like you to concentrate on the work. But it's interesting to hear that you're also trying to unpick what is expected of you.

PB: One thing I should say is that the curatorial approach Dan and I have applied is very much syncopated. We discuss a lot via email, by 'phone, and I hope it's given you the time to make work. That's one of the things I aim to give; the space, the support, the network — and I know this is exactly what SVA have done too — to help you develop the work over a fairly long period. Though I know to some artists a year is nothing in terms of developing a practice. I'm interested too in terms of expectations. Our expectations are an exhibition. How does that differ from what you've seen so far?

MM: I might respond to an environment, but my responses are heavily influenced by people's responses to both myself and the work. This is a different perspective on the idea that the artist is somehow above and sealed from their audience and has to act in a way that is hidden. So I fully admit to feeling quite influenced by people's perceptions of me and my work. What I find fascinating about artwork is that you can come up with something quite obscure, quite personal and that other people might actually understand it. I find peoples' similarities very interesting.

DHB: So, people can be a conduit, or a way of sharing your work, in the context of a brief. But you are referring to organisations, curators and those kinds of people, as well as an audience in the public realm. When you work in the commercial realm, do you also consider the people who might be the dealers, curators or collectors?

MM: Well, I don't because I don't make work thinking I'm making work for curators or buyers, and I don't think about making work for a popular general notion of the public either. I think about making work for people who think like me! (Laughter)

PB: I find that intriguing because you're talking about making work for 'people', but we should reassert that ArtSway is in a rural location. We are constantly asked 'who is your audience, where does your audience come from?' Our audience comes from visitors to the forest at particular times of the year, London specifically, other areas too, but people are very purposeful in terms of making a visit. I'm wondering about your desire to make work for people like you — that realisation hasn't appeared overnight, has it? This has built up over your career, and I'm wondering when that started to take hold and why you feel that way.

MM: I don't know how deeply to go into it. You could say that we live idiosyncratic lives, and it is not at all elitist to do that. We can live in unusual

ways and that can seem completely normal, and some normal ways of living can seem strangely idiosyncratic. But I suppose the reason I'm saying this is that the interest in work sometimes comes from strange places, from places that you wouldn't expect. So in terms of knowing who an audience is, it's not a demographic, it's just that some people are into similar things.

PB: The viewer completes your work, as you say; we each bring our own context to the work. How do you, as an artist, feel about a gallery's use of a front text, or a handout explaining the work, so the viewer goes in forearmed?

MM: Forearmed with what? Forearmed with their own capacity? I think of the work as a situation the viewer encounters with their own context. It is a take it or leave it situation. You can try to persuade people to stay if you want, you can give them a story that sounds appealing, you can try to sell it to them. This is a commercial strategy. I am rarely interested in the story behind the work. Giving people a handout is something galleries feel they need to do. Of course artists sometimes choose to do that as well, but this is a different area of investigation to the one I'm really interested in.

DHB: Would you prefer it if Peter and I decided a strategy for presenting the work that you were not entirely party to, because it's extraneous to your practice?

MM: No. I talk about work a lot, because I like to think about it. But I don't want to tell somebody else what to think about the work. It's interesting to have a discussion about things in a general way; about what it's like to be alive. But I'm not interested in designating the meaning of work.

DHB: We're planning to produce a book alongside this residency. An organisation might feel that it offered dissemination of the work — not the work as experienced within gallery installations — but approaches to the work. There is an intellectual value in conversations like the one we're having, that a book can in some way embody. There is an impetus for the reader to search out the work in future installations or exhibitions or collections. Or perhaps a book is able to have a life of its own?

PB: This is the nub of it isn't it? Should the book be a survey of a number of works complete with critical texts, as with your substantial book published by Ikon, or an artwork in itself?

MM: I look at a book by, say Roni Horn, and I see it as a book made by an artist that has longevity beyond the exhibition. I think people will find it interesting 10 or 20 years from now. I'm interested in the experience aspect of things, and I don't really like them re-represented, so I find myself asking, "how does an image work?" and "how does writing work?" I think books are great if they operate as books rather than purely as representations of things.

PB: A book can be equal to an exhibition. We've talked about ArtSway, Venice, Kent, and then the book becomes the fourth element. The book you did with Ikon includes screen shots from your films, and I think it's fantastic. It discusses your work — it aspires to validate the work — it acts as a legacy tool, it's good for universities, it's good for students.

MM: But that's because you've seen the work. If you haven't, those screen shots will mean very little. There can be an air of vanity about it. You select somebody to write about your work who likes what you do, and pay them. Should a book really be a validating exercise, or should it be an exercise in trying to interpret and understand?

DHB: There is the option of not involving yourself in any of this. We will obviously get you to guide the publication, but it is possible to side step the vanity element of it. It remains something that is good for us as publicly funded organisations to offer to artists.

PB: Dan is right, we need certain tangible outcomes, and a book is a great way to do that from a residency, and from our partnership. Likewise, for a book to work for you it needs to gather together the research and other material — maps and things like that — to give an idea of what you did.

MM: It is possible to supply a context around the work that doesn't designate the meaning of the work, a way to understand that contextualisation, and I don't think that this is in any way superficial — is the feel of a book. The feel of a book can contain the approach of the artist.

There are some artists who do not like being commissioned; they never go for commissions because they think it affects their practice in the wrong way, whereas they have no problem at all working with a commercial gallery. It is really interesting how you have set up a commission so that it doesn't restrict or over-designate an artist's work.

DHB: And we need to be led by artists on that, in terms of defining those briefs so they are not too restrictive. We pitch a project together, and we do the best we can, but we rely on artists to tell us what could be improved.

MM: This is a particularly good commission, from my perspective, and I think, from a lot of other artists' perspectives in the sense that it doesn't predetermine the output, and it doesn't try to shape the artist's practice, and that's really important. A lot of commissioning organisations will try to control things a lot more, because there may be a lot of money involved, a lot at stake. What has been very good about this is that I feel like I am allowed to experiment and take risks.

PB: I understand that you can't turn that creativity on and off like a light switch. My ethos is to be as light touch as possible, unless an artist requires otherwise. Similarly in partnership with another curator, I think you can have a light touch strategy and yet show support and a structure. I think that you can shape work, in a way, as a curator, simply by listening and discussing.

MM: But shaping work as a curator is different from shaping work as a commissioner in that often commissions have some kind of responsibility toward the context and environment. Public art, for example, can make it a more complex and difficult area. And this is much more luxurious because I am being allowed and encouraged to make my own work — that's a perfect commission.

Spatial Practices: The broken border between art, history and curating

by Magdalena Holdar

With its combination of practical, administrative work and a more philosophical, artistic practice, the curator undoubtedly moves between a wide range of fields and practices. However, the creative and artistic aspect cannot be underestimated: her creation of exhibitions, the handling of spaces and the interpretation of phenomena in various modes of expression present the multitude of other essential components involved. Indeed, is there not an almost ontological similarity between the curator's role and that of the director or conductor?

Nevertheless, unlike both the director's and conductor's line of work, the work of the curator is both extremely visible but at the same time also extraordinarily invisible. To exhibit something is to mark it as important — whether it is an artwork, an artist, an artifact, or a subject. "To exhibit" is literally "to highlight." But the activity "to highlight" is paradoxically enough strangely invisible, often hid by the exhibited objects. Once an exhibition is over, we lose the possibility of wandering in the space, encountering the artworks, experiencing the physical reminiscent of sound, scents and the passing of time. We are generally left with lists of exhibited pieces, catalogues, reviews and the occasional photograph.

In this article, I will focus on how art is activated in a space and in the meeting with a viewer. I will furthermore touch upon the fundamental links between theory and practice; between the art world and the Academy — fundamental, but nonetheless strangely unexpressed in research and literature. There is a need for a more developed exchange of knowledge between different actors in the art world and I wish to exemplify this with cases that expose the importance of an interaction between academic knowledge and the expertise of the curator. In order to be able to stand up for artistic freedom, all actors in the art field (artists and curators as well as scholars, critics and others) must work towards debate and engagement in these issues. Particularly now, as the trend in recent years has been a sloping hill in which art is more and more seen as a purely aesthetical enterprise or (worse) an instrument for politicians to use and direct as they see fit.¹

An effect of this can for instance be viewed in

exhibitions of the 1950s Japanese artist group Gutai. Gutai has received increased attention in recent years, with retrospective exhibitions in both Europe and the US. The group aimed at transcribing painting and sculpting into light and action, working primarily with performance, ephemera and outdoor exhibitions in which the material was subordinated to the handling of it and the actions related to it. Gutai is now recognized as one of the most important avant-garde movements of the last century as it preceded both Action painting, Happenings and Fluxus. However, it becomes utterly difficult to grasp the performative core in Gutai art only by, say, looking at photographs and remaining artifacts from the performances. Gutai's experimental work aimed at actions and situations, in which the material was seen as a tool rather than a goal in itself. But this heart of Gutai practice has — as often is the case — become but a footnote in re-stagings of Gutai art. Gutai was incorporated in the 2009 Venice Biennale and thereby marked as a group that had been "Making Worlds", to quote the title of the show. Its presence was primarily understood in relation to the group's connection to a Western avant-garde, with artists such as Yoko Ono, John Cage and Allan Kaprow.

I think that the specific case of Gutai exposes difficulties in both exhibition practice and the art historian's understanding of a certain kind of art. Whereas the curator often has developed knowledge in the visual and communicative potential in a wide range of artistic objects and practices, the scholar has the theoretical tools that can contextualize other aspects of the art, such as its references to different (philosophical) systems of thinking. In the best of worlds, however, would we not like to see a thorough understanding stemming from a combination of the two? Creating an exhibition is in many ways a matter of power; of setting the agenda; of formulating a "truth"; and of narrating a story. Indeed, if the act of exhibiting corresponds to the telling of a story, do we not need to understand what kind of story it is, how it is narrated — and what is left out from the plot?

Exhibitions are often difficult to analyze and we (meaning all of us who attend art exhibitions, professionals or not) get in fact also very little training in doing so. This affects our ability to understand the interaction between objects and space, and how different curatorial choices communicate to us, on both a conscious and subconscious level. Given these preconditions, it is

1. Naturally, this tendency embraces the view on culture at large and also, in fact, the view on the Academy, which needs to prove its future economic value in order to take part in government issued investments on research and higher education.

not surprising that an exhibition is often described only from its individual artworks, rather than how they interact and how different constellations create new meaning. This difficulty is very apparent both in art criticism and scholarly writings. When Professor Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlöf published her book *Empathy and Science (Inlevelse och vetenskap)* in 2007 she attempted to create a bridge between the exhibition as a curatorial utterance, and the viewer's (and scholar's) understanding of that same utterance in the meeting with an artwork. How can this subjective experience serve as starting point for a discussion on art and/or a scientific analysis? With this approach, Rossholm Lagerlöf brought in a spatial category into the experience of art that is generally left out when we talk about art from a scholarly perspective. This spatial category could either be apprehended from the actual exposure of art — how it is installed — or from an artwork's own, intrinsic qualities. Irrespective of which, she presented a way of apprehending art via an *additional* category, a category that perhaps could be seen as immaterial, but is nonetheless essential in the actual encounter with art.

Outside the Academy, however, there has been a striking lack of theorization and research on curatorial practices. Theorizing texts on curating are generally written from *within* the field itself, by curators, and the effect of this has been that many texts get the character of policy statements, closely linked to the author's own practice. This need not be a problem, were it not for the field's general want of a reflective, scientifically critical approach towards itself.

Sites for statements

With a deeper knowledge of curatorial practices, art historians would be better adapted to identify nuances in exhibitions and the potential inherent in an artwork. And with an interest in the history and theory of art, the curator would be able to situate and express the relevance of the art she works with. But the borderline between a curated exhibition and an artwork is not necessarily evident and easily recognized. I could illustrate this with a number of examples but have for different reasons chosen the American artist Josef Kosuth and his work *The Play of the Unmentionable*, exhibited at Brooklyn Museum in 1990.

Brooklyn Museum had engaged Kosuth to create a new work for The Grand Lobby in the museum, as part of its Grand Lobby Series started in 1984. Kosuth chose to build his artwork by combining objects and material from the museum collection — selecting pieces from different times, in different materials and of different geographical origins. Brooklyn Museum is one of the oldest art museums

in the USA, established in the late 1800s. Its collection contains artworks in all genres, but also ethnographical and scientific material. Whatever kind of material or knowledge, the Brooklyn Museum would cover it: it should be "a Museum of Everything", according to one of its earlier directors, Thomas S. Buechner.

Kosuth used this "collection of everything" in order to create a new work that in all its diversity could communicate something fundamentally new, something that none of the objects would have communicated separately or in another context. They were intertwined with quotations from artists, politicians, scholars and authors; all of them dealing with opinions on art's character and function. The quotations, the juxtaposed images, and the combination of objects created an ambivalent, complex and possibly provoking whole. And so, Kosuth's work, constructed from more than a hundred "found objects," focused on the fact that art has the power to produce meaning that is "unmentionable" in that it exposes actions, views, and social issues that have been erased or are repressed from the normative, public discourse. Thus, when entwined with artworks and artifacts, the quotations exposed the power that we provide images with, as if images in themselves had this power as an intrinsic quality.

Knowledge of Josef Kosuth's art is central for understanding *The Play of the Unmentionable* as an artwork and not as a curated exhibition. In it, we find his recurrent use of found objects together with the juxtaposition artifacts, images and text. Just as in the case with other conceptual artworks, i.e. by Marcel Broodthaers or Hans Haacke, we find a piece that problematizes the actual act of exhibiting. Interpreting each exhibited piece as acting on its own would be to misunderstand the meaning of the overall space—the performative, site specific and activated whole whose communication would misfire without this particular spatial setting; this particular combination of objects, text, space and light.

The Play of the Unmentionable is not merely artwork acting on its own; it is simultaneously a conversation with another artist's work. Earlier that year, 1990, the Contemporary Arts Centre in Cincinnati had a major retrospective of recently deceased photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. The exhibition, called *The Perfect Moment*, presented Mapplethorpe's whole oeuvre, stretching from portraits and still life to staged situations. Despite his sometimes disparate motifs, Mapplethorpe had an aesthetic expression that held the production together.

Included in the exhibition was also Mapplethorpe's so-called *X Portfolio*, a collection of 7 images that he worked on shortly before

his death. The content of the *X Portfolio* has on the one hand a sexually explicit content. On the other hand, the images continue to act within the extremely well-balanced and exact aesthetic that characterizes all of Mapplethorpe's work.

However, the *X Portfolio* was not in fact spatially integrated in the exhibition, but placed in a separate room, into which minors were not allowed unless in company with an adult. Nevertheless, the images led to a heated debate on the expectations on publicly funded institutions and – not least – on the definition of art. The museum's director Dennis Barrie and the CCA were eventually charged with "pandering obscenity and illegal use of a minor in nudity oriented material."

It is obvious that the content of the *X Portfolio* set the key for the whole exhibition, tuning the apprehension of all the 175 presented works. The 1976 image *Rosie*, therefore, was no longer a portrait of a little girl. Instead, all focus in the charge was directed towards the fact that she did not have any underwear. Thus, Rosie came to be part of the charge. She was stigmatized as the "minor" that motivated the lawsuit against Barrie and the CCA, and her portrait was coded as "nudity oriented."

And this was also one of the main issues in the Brooklyn exhibition of Josef Kosuth's artwork, which coincidentally opened on the first day of the trial. In it, he asked the question: What consequences does the institutionalization of art have on artistic freedom? By his combination of objects, his explicit use of the Brooklyn Museum's collection, the chosen quotations and the obvious link to the Cincinnati exhibition and trial, Kosuth created a work that in every part raised the question of the relation between *art*, *moral* and *censorship*. His own juxtaposition of the highly aesthetic images by Mapplethorpe and the rough, documentary pictures of naked, drug injecting youngsters by Larry Clark certainly put the legal aftermath of the Cincinnati exhibition in a new light.

It is easy to think of curatorship as a matter of creating exhibitions, of co-operating with artists and institutions. But the Cincinnati trial (which is only one of many examples, but nonetheless a very explicit one) shows the importance of knowing your history, as curator and as art historian. To be able to argue around and explain art that provokes or is not politically correct.

This shows that it is the problematic and difficult examples within the arts that most explicitly expose the importance of an interaction between academic knowledge and curating, as mentioned earlier. As editor David McClean states in the postscript of *The Trials of Art* (a book that discussed a number of more or less well-known cases of legal

processes, in which art and artists have acted as either accused or defendant): the more that artists and art institutions rely on law to spell out their working relationships and to claim control over art works, the less flexible the processes of artistic collaboration, and even production, become. Artistic production and the system of law seem to bear little resemblance and, as McClean so correctly states, if the former would start to lean too much onto the other in order to receive credibility and support we would soon see a confined — even castrated — scene for contemporary art. When art student Anna Odell was planning her final exam project at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm in 2009, she did her best to be legally safe when working on her piece *Unknown, Woman, 2009-349701*. Odell discussed her project with people with insight in both law and psychiatry, incorporating the recorded conversations in the final installation. But her restaging of a self-experienced suicide attempt a couple of years earlier had everything but the expected well-prepared and legally stable result. The story and the final trial was endlessly debated in the media — undoubtedly the most covered and discussed artwork in Sweden for many years — but what is more interesting is perhaps the ambivalence shown by the art world, who did not unite in the support of Odell (which might not have been expected) but furthermore had great trouble in formulating an informed argumentation. The different voices' general lack of knowledge, contextualization and historical anchoring proved to be both a bad supporter of Odell and a provider of a relevant debate.

The interface of art

The university provides a context for curator students that give access to assembled knowledge. In many respects, art functions according to a logic that goes quite contrary to the logic of the juridical system and this only proves the importance of knowing how to navigate both waters. For example: juridical cases and examples are generally categorized with similarity as fundamental principal. This means that a case becomes precedential for other cases that bear a basic resemblance to it. Resemblance is thus central for the categorization and judgment of a case, which naturally complicates the situation for conceptual art and artistic expressions in which similarity, via quotations and appropriation, acts as marker for difference.

So when the Sherrie Levine appropriated the work by photographer Walker Evans in the early 1980s, the art world recognized the *action* rather than the *motif* as central: how she used the original and how her action transformed its meaning into

something fundamentally different. Levine re-photographed images from a catalogue of Evans' 1930s series *Let Us Now Praise Great Men* and exhibited them under her own name, however without further manipulation. The pictures were close to identical to Evans' originals, but as Levine's images had passed several layers of mediation, we find *The Sharecropper's Wife – After Walker Evans* to be a completely new artwork. To the art world—as opposed to the juridical system — this was obviously a new, original work. By appropriating Evans's image, Levine highlighted the importance of space, time and authorship in relation to how we apprehend art.

The very act of appropriation was in other words a precondition for Levine to communicate the contextual differences between her work and Evans's, differences that are generally invisible but nonetheless constantly present in our understanding and analysis of art. In this case, the artistic act of choosing your object of appropriation is vital. It needs to satisfy certain preconditions; it needs to be the most relevant point of departure for her statement.

It is also true that the *lack* of likeness can generate other juridical obstacles. When the sculptor Constantin Brancusi met the US government on trial in 1928, it was due to the fact that his sculpture *Bird in Space* did not, in fact, look like a bird at all. When Brancusi's piece was to enter the U.S., customs officials did not recognize this work as art, but rather as a utilitarian object, based on its abstract expression and industrial-style finish. As art, it would be free from the payment of import tax. As a utilitarian object, however, its owner (museum director Edward Steichen) would need to pay tax based on the bronze value of the object. Needless to say, this trial was of massive importance for art's transportability in a globalized art world. It is also an interesting case when juxtaposed with the Fluxus art that constitutes my own field of research. For it was exactly the fact that Fluxus art *did not* look like art that enabled Western artists to export their work to friends in the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War. As opposed to being recognized as a subversive, politically challenging artistic expression, the boxes and artifacts that were sent from West to East were passed off as "games."

In different ways, the examples here show how art and curating are constantly moving and transgressing academic disciplines, functions and institutions. The curator needs to combine a great number of different competencies and moreover translate or transform a concept into a new form of materialization: into an event, an exhibition, or a publication. She transcribes the works into a spatial category, similar — but not identical — to the meaning-bearing space that appears in Kosuth's juxtaposition of object, image and text in *The Play of the Unmentionable*. Or in the gap between Levine's appropriated photograph and Evans's so-called original. Or in the complex structure of Mapplethorpe's body of work.

This article is based on a lecture given at the symposium "Inlevelse och vetenskap" ("Empathy and Science") in honour of Professor Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlöf, at Moderna Museet in Stockholm 10 September 2010.

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Forming Your Own Practice in the Deformalized Context

by Marianna Hovhannisyan

In regards to curatorial practice and the Armenian contemporary art scene, I would like to begin with two important interrelated concepts: the idea of a locality and the hybrid characteristics of a practice. By "locality" I am referring to the current social-cultural, political and economical conditions of the Armenian contemporary art field and its institutions. The "hybrid" characteristics of a curator's practice are, for me, the intertwining of distinct experiences and roles such as "artist/curator" or "organizer/curator" or "cultural manager/curator". To be a curator is to be someone somehow in-between, operating in a hybrid creative practice rooted in context sensitivity.

I will go on to consider a few examples of art institutions in Armenia which are focusing on educational work. Through these I would also like to speak about my own experience in the Armenian contemporary art context, offering it as a set of markers by which to map out the process (that I position myself within) of becoming a curator and the current situation for a younger generation of practitioners.

LOCALITY:

To begin with, I would like to make it clear that I consider my practice not to be about satisfying some fixed curatorial definition. In fact, my thoughts and ambitions to be a curator have developed through working in the many "in-between" situations that are the part of the reality of the field, particularly in Armenia. My professional experience has evolved since 2004 largely through my role in coordination and assistance, specifically in the Department of Fine Arts at the Armenian Open University.¹ This activity is a result of the larger picture that I will call for now "the locality" or "local situation". I mean this in respect to the history of Armenian contemporary art (if I can call it history in this way) and the current situation, which is characterized by a lack of professional art institutions, especially educational and official ones (alternative or independent study routes do exist, for example some regular programs run by AICA-Armenia²), that would be able to provide a structured education, methodology and experience in curatorial studies for the younger generation, as well as a space to develop them afterwards.

In Armenia, it is not easy to speak about the refinement of institutional work based on large-scale and objective activities. I prefer to approach it through certain independent initiatives that evoke a sense of momentum or a certain puzzle developed and ruled by precise number of individuals. In these terms, curatorial practice as a profession is still in its stages of development. Despite the enormous efforts and initiatives of various Armenian artists, curators, art critics, cultural workers and institutions since the early 1990s, there is a lack of institutionalization (in the sense of legitimation) of the contemporary art field, especially in the shared knowledge base and development of curatorial practice. This is mainly the result of state policy towards culture and the arts, where the official structures and institutions still paradoxically adhere to the remains of Soviet based ideologies, activities and behaviors. The other problem is a lack of resources — from human (particularly the younger generation) to financial ones.

To understand the historical part and its connection with the current situation, it is worth introducing a short, loose and practical chronology used by me as well as by some other curators and critics.³ It divides the

1 The Department of Fine Arts at the Armenian Open University has been established officially on the basis of National Center of Aesthetics, Fine Arts and Decorative Applied Arts studio-college by Armenian conceptual-contemporary artists (Samvel and Manvel Baghdasaryans and Ara Gurzadyan) in 1998. It provides four years professional education in artistic production and knowledge. The Department differs from academic programs that are still in use in the Armenian educational system since the Soviet period (e.g. Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts, Armenian State Pedagogical University and many other preparative colleges specialized in arts). The methods are based on the collective artistic collaborations, (both between students and between students and professors) and individual projects proposed by students. Yet it remains as an experimental space, by the teaching staff comprised of current active curators and artists. As well it involves local and international artists and curators in its educational programs by workshops, seminars or meetings.

2 AICA-Armenia was founded in 2005 under the name of National Associations of Art Critics as an Armenian section of AICA International (The International Association of Art Critics). The motivation behind creating such an association was to enable the realization of regular projects in art criticism and development of theoretical discourses, organization of exhibitions, seminars and reconsideration of the educational work in curatorial and critical dimensions in the post-Soviet context. One of the best-known initiatives of AICA-Armenia is the International Summer School for Art Curators (initiated by Nazareth Karoyan and Angela Harutyunyan) organized annually since 2006 as well as the last three years development of alternative classes called Art Criticism and Curatorial Training School for the local young professionals. For detailed projects, please follow: <http://www.aica.am/>

3 "Adieu Parajanov" contemporary art from Armenia; Publication; Authors: Hedwig Saxenhuber, Georg Schöllhammer. Publisher, Springerin, 2003; ENG; Exhibition: projectspace Kunsthalle Wien 11.07.2003-12.12.2003; http://www.allianz-kulturstiftung.de/dokumente_videos_de_und_en/o8_adieu_parajanov.pdf

development of the Armenian contemporary art field into the 1980s, the 1990s and the 2000s, in regards to how and under what conditions the notion and work of being a curator have been formed, keeping in mind that fundamentally, as in many post-Soviet countries, “curator” is a Western concept, but it has its own development and appearances in various non-western countries and initially in many examples it had been formed from artistic practices and demands.

1980s

The context of the Nagorno-Karabakh War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union (Independence followed in 1991), new artistic initiatives were positioning themselves as non conformist to the official art and heritage of Soviet traditions, e.g. “The 3rd floor”.⁴ Another interesting phenomenon was the Yerevan Modern Art Museum⁵ (founded in 1972 in the Soviet Bloc)

1990s

The 1990s saw the establishment of the first private galleries and associations, like “Goyak” association, “Bunker”, “Ex Voto”, “TAAK”, “Ch. Khachadourian” galleries and *In Vitro* and *Garoun* art magazines, The Gyumri Center of Contemporary Art that founded Gyumri International Biennale,⁶ Armenian Center for Contemporary Art/ NPAK,⁷ Hay-Art Cultural Center,⁸ Armenian Open University, Department of Fine Arts and so on. In this decade, the first Armenian Pavilion took place in the Venice Biennale,⁹ the GEO-Kunst expedition¹⁰ to Documenta X, the activities of the socially oriented ACT group,¹¹ various local and international exhibitions and so on. In this context the 1980s and 1990s generation connected to the roots of a new school of thought that introduced so-called avant-garde and contemporary tendencies. They are the same artists who now establish new institutions as a sign of legitimization, form alternative practices to the state run policy, and as artist-curators, stand for a new hybrid creative situation.

2000s

Changes in State politics resulted in the closure of Hay-Art Cultural Center and the development of international relations and collaborations, while establishing AICA Armenia and National Association of Art

⁴ The most active period of the “The 3rd floor” (sometimes called as a group and sometimes as an artistic-cultural movement) lasted from 1987 till 1994, and its creation was tightly connected with the Perestroika context. “The 3rd floor” gathered around it a group of artists, writers, musicians and theoreticians to resist and confront dominant ideological manifestations and traditions of socialist realism by “happenings”, performances, artistic manifestoes, (one of the famous examples is the “Manifesto of Dead Art” by Arman Grigoryan and Kiki), artistic approach to the painting with the expressive scale and aggressive intentions. The name of “The 3rd floor” came out from the first happening-intervention at the 3rd floor in the Artists’ Union in Yerevan, 1987.

“The 3rd floor” by Arman Grigoryan, written in 2007 and dedicated to the 20th anniversary of “the 3rd floor”; Author: Arman Grigoryan, January 21, 2008, ARM; Publisher: <http://www.inknagir.org/>; Inknagir 3, Documentary prose section. Read full article in ARM here: <http://www.inknagir.org/?p=1968>

“Art Communities, Public Spaces and Collective Action in Armenian Contemporary Art” by Vardan Azatyan, p. 43, chapter 4; Published in “Art Theory in the Socialist Space”, Authors: Mel Jordan, Malcolm Miles; 2008, Intellect Ltd. Webpage of the book in ENG: http://books.google.com/books/about/Art_and_theory_after_socialism.html?id=LmTkGXD8oqQC

⁵ Yerevan Modern Art Museum was founded in 1972 by art historian Henrik Igityan (who was the director of the museum till 2009) and with the great support of many Armenian artists of 1960’s (considered as late modernists). It was the first Modern Art Museum in the whole Soviet Bloc and it remained as a phenomenon for about 20 years in that context. Different generations of Armenian artists from 1960’s till nowadays have formed their artistic biographies and practices through experiencing and in/directly being related with the museum or being opposite and criticizing its position to the art developed after 1980’s in Armenia. It involves in its collection artists from 1960’s onwards. Nowadays the museum is in its transitional period of establishing new programs and rethinking its history.

⁶ <http://www.biennialfoundation.org/biennials/gyumri-international-biennial-of-contemporary-art/>

⁷ <http://www.accea.info>

⁸ The Hay-Art Cultural Center (1997-2004) was one of two largest contemporary art centers in Yerevan that was initiated and run by the local artistic community. The artistic director was Ruben Arveshatyan. Over seven years it produced collaborative projects within the local artistic scene and as well within an international network. By 2004, the Municipality of the Yerevan City decided to close down the Cultural Center, turning it into another sign of the changing political, economical and world outlooks then effecting Armenia.

⁹ <http://www.accea.info/en/events/biennale/ven1995/>

¹⁰ GEO-Kunst expedition was an artistic initiative and alternative project by Armenian artists, Karen Andresseian, Manvel Baghdasaryan, Samvel Baghdasaryan, Ara Hovsepyan, Harutyun Simonyan and Gagik Tschartschyan. It was a result of one year research (from conceptual till financial) to participate as art-reporters in the Documenta X (1997) who were not part of the Documenta X’s exhibition. GEO-Kunst expedition presented 100 posters-blanks produced by artists themselves signed by Catherine David (curator of Documenta X) and stamped by the Documenta X office that artists were spreading in the city of Kassel and developing an activity to challenge public for interactive participation. Afterwards, the most important part of that alternative participation to the Documenta X was presented in Yerevan by 100 hand-made catalogues and film-documentations.

¹¹ “On the Ruins of a Utopia: Armenian Avant-Garde and the Group Act” by Angela Harutyunyan, p. 33, chapter 3; Published in “Art Theory in the Socialist Space”, Authors: Mel Jordan, Malcolm Miles; 2008, Intellect Ltd. Webpage of the book in ENG: http://books.google.am/books/about/Art_and_theory_after_socialism.html?id=LmTkGXD8oqQC&redir_esc=y

Critics,¹² Art and Cultural Studies Laboratory (ACSL),¹³ Utopiana, a cultural-creative organization (based both in Geneva and Yerevan),¹⁴ "Art Laboratory" collective group of artists and NGO,¹⁵ Fine Arts School at the "Mkhitar Sebasatci" Educational Complex¹⁶ and Suburb Cultural Center.¹⁷

Today's curators and art critics who are active here and work both in the local and international art fields come from artistic, philosophical and linguistic backgrounds and through self-education. In general, they still work with a sense of enthusiasm despite only a few having managed, so far, to work inside the official structures. At the state level, the future development of art institutions for curators and artists surely has to consider an educational mission and developing proper infrastructures. It was the lack of institutions and possibilities that stimulated a new situation for some local curators and artists, where it was more possible and even necessary to engage in international projects and collaborations, and realize projects and exhibitions outside rather than within Armenia, while trying to keep a local creative link or connection. It is important to consider the flip side of this, however; the possibility that the lack of resources *creates* the impetus, flexible activities providing polyphonic discourses both institutional and individual (strengthening the local network, searching for new spaces, collaborations, curators with hybrid and multi-tasking practices and so on). Past examples have shown that when resources were abundant the art institutions become so powerful and monopolizing that they started to generate policy and power according to initiators' egos — in short, they tended to "occupy a territory" in the art scene.

HYBRID PRACTICES:

As a young professional with ambitions to be a curator, one of my solutions to the above-mentioned scenario was to stay involved in the educational structure, which in my case is the Department of Fine Arts at the Armenian Open University. From the very beginning the department was led by artists who were directly involved with "developing" contemporary art and are from the 1990s generation. The main aim of this platform is to provide an educational alternative to the Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts. Perhaps this choice was a challenge, proposing that the first platform for the young curator has its basis in education. In relation to that, I try to consider the dialogue and exchanges between generations in order to find a particular reference to the Armenian art discourse. The intentions of the department have always been to provide an alternative space and assistance for local and international artists and curators, to realize their creative and artistic projects based on collaboration with students and independent young artists. One of its strategies has been to provide students space to be an assistant or collaborator for different art representatives and in that way to gain professional experience. Besides the department, there are external art professionals who initiate projects that directly and indirectly connect with the younger generation.

I am involved with these projects mainly as a coordinator. Through this approach, I believe it's possible to make a transition to curatorial practice. This allows me to gain insight and experience for my own future projects, enabling me to move from representation to conceptual realization, and managing the many requirements associated with the contemporary curator's role.

I began to acquire an understanding of curating, specifically while working on the following projects:

- Soviet AgitArt. Restoration,¹⁸ an exhibition curated by Turkish curator Beral Madra and involving Armenian artists Samvel Baghdasaryan and Armine Hovhannisyan (2008);
- Strategies of History/ Strategies of Art, a collaborative project with French curator Dominique Abensour and president of AICA Armenia, Nazareth Karoyan, (2008)
- My long term collaboration with Armenian curator Ruben Arveshatyan on Changes through Exchanges, an experimental educational project organized by the Armenian Open University, Department of Fine Arts (ongoing since 2006).

¹² <http://www.naac.am>

¹³ <http://www.acsl.am/>

¹⁴ <http://www.utopiana.am/>

¹⁵ From the beginning Art-Laboratory was a group of artists, who came together as a NGO- a creative organization attempting to become a new subject in the field of art after the March 1st in 2008 (opposition demonstrations in Yerevan, stated as; the Armenian police clashed with peaceful opposition rally protesting against allegedly fraudulent presidential elections). Now it combines progressive and activist artists to resist the state policy repression in Armenia. Founders of the group are comprised of the following artists and theoreticians: Edgar Amroyan, Hovhannes Margaryan, Karen Ohanyan, Ara Petrosyan, Arthur Petrosyan, Hovnan Qartashyan, Samvel Vanoyan, Garik Yengibaryan, Narine Zolyan and Harutyun Zulumyan. For more information and project, please visit: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/131022313580934/>

¹⁶ <http://www.mskh.am/>

¹⁷ <http://www.suburb.am>

¹⁸ <http://www.armine.am/>

The second important milestone in my practice happened during my studies at l'Ecole du Magasin¹⁹ international curatorial training program (2008-2009, Grenoble, France), one of the familiar platforms for curatorial and artistic practices in developing countries. Having gone in search of an educational framework outside of Armenia, I had a chance to observe the methods and policies of a French art center (e.g. CNAC-Magasin), differing greatly from my previous experiences, but the most important outcome of this for me was that I started to consider my role as a representative of the younger generation and established *Archive-Practice*,²⁰ a collaborative curatorial project.

I began the research during my l'Ecole du Magasin studies, researching and articulating "case studies" of the Armenian contemporary art field, in relation to what I was finding outside Armenia; one of the common shared learning scenarios is when you discover yourself and your context as a curator or an artist in relation with others.

Looking at Armenia from a distance, and from a more general position, I was able to recognize the sense of gaps in history. That brought me to my initial interest in a form of enquiry, and in its turn, to a project proposal — an educational model of research that provides insight into the developments of the Armenian contemporary art field from the mid 1980s to the present. The purpose of the project is to create an ongoing process as well as an "archaeology" of the process in order to provide a clear way to connect dialogues and build an "architecture of discussion" in terms of the art field. The project "site" is developed by collecting a series of interviews from different representatives of the Armenian contemporary art field through a blog.

Working with research subjects, the transcript of each interview leads to the choice of an artifact standing for the discussion, memories and history, experiences and references to the past, in order to discover certain creative links with the present. At the end, the Archive-Practice project presented a collection of artifacts in the form of "a book that doesn't exist yet, set within a dialogue that does". The idea of the artifact as a set of markers, and also reflecting the idea of a collection, touches on the important issues of documentation and archiving. There is also an alternative notion of "the exhibition" evidenced in the book. The final realization is shaped out of the dialogue and interrelation between contemporary narratives of Armenian art discourse.

The project for me was an illustration of an important difference between practices in the "West" and Post-Soviet art worlds. In the West, when you are challenged to realize a project about your local art situation you can build on existing templates and models. In post-Soviet countries, the lack of practices, documentation, methodologies and your own experience to approach your local situation in regard to its social, political and cultural transformation, make you more likely to adopt the role of the artist/curator in order to find creative methodologies and concepts to realize a project. Even though one can argue that this is one of the "dangerous" models of curatorial practice.

The last, but not least element of my formation as a curator was an encounter and cooperation with AICA-Armenia or National Association of the Art Critics of Armenia, which organizes the International Summer School for Art Curators. The school focuses on curating as a critical practice and a methodology, particularly focusing on the Post-Soviet countries within their broader contexts. The objectives are to contribute to the development of the institution of curatorship, especially focusing on upcoming local generations. AICA-Armenia's first experiences led them to think about the local generation and to initiate a one year program called "Art Criticism and Curatorial Training School". As it says in its introductory text, "It aims to provide training in conceptualization, management and interpretation of exhibitions and art events." It offers local curators, cultural theoreticians and critics the opportunity to lead courses on urban space, new technologies, cultural studies, art history and theory. As a result, the participants are supposed to organize a joint project and as an evaluation they take part in the summer schools.

While I consider this initiative and the interrelation of the local program with the summer schools important, my conclusion here comments on my observations of the upcoming generation of curators. One of the evident changes is less enthusiasm for knowledge and research-based activities. With the 1990s generation we saw the approach to curatorship set within the context of the collapse of the Soviet Union, providing a certain continuation of narrative, and still creating solidarity, despite various conflicts. For the current generation, to be a curator is more about arts as entertainment, judged on prestige and requiring organization or management of projects rather than engagement with research; there seems to be a disconnection between practice and theory — a new generation of hybrid practice. As history often shows with the arts, all those different initiatives have their benefits and may even have surprising cross-influences with their different ideas of "experimentation", and so they contribute to the whole ecosystem. Meanwhile, the current situation remains problematic in regard to the above mentioned thoughts and issues, and particularly in a relation with the educational work, constantly making a transition and shifting between remembering/forgetting the

¹⁹ <http://www.ecoledumagasin.com/?lang=en>

²⁰ Some parts of interviews are available at: <http://www.season18.com/blog/category/archive-practice/>. More coming soon at <http://archivepractice.com>

history and individuals that field created or reconsidering roles and positions, but I think it is evident that the context and aura of the field itself is hybrid (permanently attaching, connecting, relating and deleting), that promises new challenges and formations, and maybe one day a transition from hybrid into multi.

I prefer, for now, to not have answers but focus on enquiries or issues I can identify with, that combine aspects of the educational, the curatorial, the artistic and the need to understand the relations that comprise institutional discourse. In this sense, curating is for me a kind of search pattern, and from this, a way to develop a method that I would hope shows how my perspective reflects a contemporary situation that positions me in a critical and reflexive way within Armenia and also within larger international contexts.

Rants

No. 2 and No. 5

by Toby Huddleston

PRACTICE

Practice is practice.

It is never complete. It is always complicit with an inherent failure.

It is designed to stumble, fail, find its feet, stumble again, get up again, carry on. Practice more.

So for you selectors who tell me my practice isn't solid and developed enough, I say to you 'Fucking idiot(s), that's the whole fucking point. If I wanted a practice that was solid I'd become a fucking mechanic.'

I want it fluid. It needs to move. It needs to be at times ridiculously ambitious and naive. It needs to be frightening, anxious and uncertain. It need not be a churning machine, like .

It is absolutely about questions, doubt and uncertainty.
It is absolutely not about answers.
Fucking idiots.'

11 AUG 2009

RANT No.5

UNFULFILLED PROMISE (IGNORE PLACE, TAKE ON CONTEXT)

Produced on residency at Outhouse/Outpost during CONTEMPORARY
ART NORWICH 09 (CAN 09)

=====

Art tourism. Biennial as meeting place. Cultural colonisation.
THE BIENNIAL/CONTEMPORARY ART FESTIVAL

The biennial acts as meeting place between different worlds - geo-
graphical, cultural, professional, etc.
It is a meeting place where the global and the local come together.
It is a meeting place where one capitalises on the idea of intel-
lectual exchange in order to produce a certain 'brand value'.
It is a form of cultural colonisation adopted by the Western world
of Third world countries to become Second world countries.
It is where actors from many different worlds engage with one an-
other - the cultural event becomes an ideal cipher for the meeting
of international and local.*

* Taken from (and adapted) Thinking Worlds: An Introduction (Joseph
Backstein, Daniel Birnbaum, Sven-Olav Wallenstein), Cities as
Frontier Zones: Making Informal Politics (Saskia Sassens), Curating
Wrong Places... Or where have all the penguins gone? (Claire Doherty)

"Address and empower a place as having value" - Liverpool Biennial
04.

"A privileged social site and catalytic trigger" - press release,
Manifesta 5

"An impetus to the city to be reborn as a geographical metaphor"
- Gwangju Biennial exhibition concept.*

Biennials operate merely as stopovers on the international circuit.
...and have little or no lasting impact on the inhabitants or cul-
tural life of their host cities.*

*Taken (and adapted) from Introduction: Curating Subjects (Paul
O'Neill), Curating Wrong Places... (Claire Doherty)

Art tourism. Words like interlocutor, relational, socially-engaged.
Role. Nomadic quasi-anthropology.
THE ARTIST

I am one of the invited special ones; a nomadic anthropological
genius; come to tell you something about the place you live; gonna
respond to things you don't notice; come and get paid to patronise
you.

What's that?
You don't care what I've got to tell you?
Didn't know a biennial was on?
Haven't got time for art?
I don't blame you mate...know what, I'm not going to tell you anything anyway.
I don't want to be a cultural catalyst. Nice city by the way.
An apology.

Art tourism. Urban regeneration. Sustainability. Cultural tourism.
Engagement.
The CITY/ PLACE

Send the artists in. make it cool. make it culturally appealing.
increase interest potential. put it on the map. kick out the drab.
How? Easy, 'develop'. increase land/house prices. increase rent.
the drab relocate. perfect. tourism potential.
enough said.



UNFULFILLED PROMISE (BILLBOARD FOR CAN09), Billboard located on the major road route into Norwich, facing away from the dual-carriageway

Apartment: A short account of an artist led space in a domestic environment

by Hilary Jack and Paul Harfleet

The introductory text was first printed in Issue 1 of InterCity Mainline in 2009, a publication produced by a Bristol based artist group of the same name. (www.intercitymainline.co.uk).

The interview at the end is new material.

Early in 2003, just a few months after finishing our Masters course in Art, Paul and I set up Apartment; and soon found our startled selves being formally introduced as 'Co-directors' at an event hosted by Midwest, with Catherine David as keynote speaker.¹ Apartment had just had its second group show (an eclectic mix of Manchester and London based emerging artists), funded by a large jam jar of small change donated in return for copious amounts of beer at the previous preview.

At this early stage we certainly didn't see ourselves as directors of an organisation or as curators – we saw Apartment as an extension of our practice as artists. For the subsequent five years we ran Apartment on a spontaneous and intuitive basis from Paul's one bedroom council flat on the sixth floor of Lamport Court, a nineteen sixties tower block in central Manchester. Artists responded to the nature of the space in a variety of extraordinary and poetic ways, while the placement of artwork amongst Paul's possessions led visitors to question what was — and what was not — art.

Initially, we did not pursue funding, and had no idea how long Apartment would last. The Midwest event made us aware that our activities had the potential to be taken seriously and in some way this crystallised our ideas. Paul's flat quickly became a strange and tiny beacon of creativity in Manchester. Many visitors made the usually rainy and arduous journey across Manchester and up to the sixth floor to attend our previews and exhibitions. Those who did not make it to the space could access comprehensive information about individual artists and events on our blog.

From small beginnings, Apartment found its place on the cultural map, becoming a destination for artists, musicians, friends and curators from the region and from much further afield. We found our feet as directors and as a result received

mentoring from Castlefield Gallery², were offered a networking bursary by A-N Magazine³ and finally secured small amounts of Arts Council⁴ funding for exhibiting artists and expenses. We were also invited to attend numerous events and activities which would previously have been beyond our reach, to give talks about our activities and to curate shows outside Manchester.

During the five years Apartment existed we hosted twenty-one projects, including the work of emerging and established artists from the UK and abroad in solo and group shows, one off events, and a series of postgraduate residencies. We held a 'micro gig' by Willy Mason, as part of the UK strand of his 'Home' tour, and a fundraising gig for Lonelady prior to her attendance of 'South x SouthWest'. We facilitated a 'happening' by New York artist Ken Chu to celebrate the legalisation civil partnerships, and in the summer of 2006 we were invited to curate a group show of ten Apartment artists in 'Meeting Point' at Axel Lapp Projects in Berlin.

We rarely showed our own work at Apartment, but we continued to be proactive as artists, managing to fit our annual programme around our own commitments.

In 2009 we finally peeled off the white vinyl lettering from the high rise window. At just a few inches high, it had been an externally almost

² Castlefield Gallery is in Manchester and was established in 1984 by Manchester Artists Studio Association. It supports artists to produce and develop new work as well as staging exhibitions. www.castlefieldgallery.co.uk

³ A-N (The Artists' Newsletter) was a national magazine for artists with reviews, previews, features on specific artists, articles and interviews on practical and theoretical aspects of art practice, jobs, opportunities and classified adverts. It has since renamed itself a-n The Artists' Information Company, and whilst it still has a printed magazine, is perhaps now more widely used for its extensive online resources, including research, directories, networks and benefits of subscription, which include public liability insurance for artists.

To find out more visit www.a-n.co.uk

⁴ Arts Council England (www.artscouncil.org.uk) is the national public funding distributor for the arts in England. (Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own Councils.) It distributes funds from central government and from the National Lottery to support arts related activity with a public benefit. Individuals and organisations all have the same application process, and a new 'National Portfolio' of regularly funded organisations has recently been announced as part of a restructuring following public spending cuts.

¹ Midwest (2003-2008) was developed by Jason E Bowman, Rachel Bradley and Julie Crawshaw to serve the west midlands area of England. It aimed to develop regional, national and international dialogue and partnerships within the visual arts profession through a web based community and on the ground programme of events. For more information see http://www.a-n.co.uk/arts_organisers/knowledge_bank/article/910503/75007

invisible indicator of Apartment's presence, but for the past five years it had perpetually cast a jolly shadow over the white walls of Paul's flat. The last show, a solo exhibition by Giorgio Sadotti, marked the ending of Apartment and reinstated Paul's flat to its original function: a residential space.

In many ways Apartment existed due to the generosity of its occupant and the ingenuity and creativity of the artists who showed there. Apartment ended because it felt like a good time to quit. Not because of boredom or bickering, but because all good things must come to an end. Paul and I continue to work together and our blog, which has offered a global presence for each artist exhibiting at Apartment, will continue to remain active.

You can see the archive of all Apartment's shows at: <http://apartmentmanchester.blogspot.com>

E-interview between the editors and the artists

Ed: What prompted you to set up Apartment? You hint at there not being much creative activity in Manchester at that time, but what made you choose to use Paul's flat rather than a more public space?

HJ & PH: Apartment was born out of our friendship, and we worked together well. We had a lot of fun and were able to achieve a lot quite quickly. In 2003 there were plenty of artist led spaces in Manchester but none were showing the kind of work we made ourselves...the site referential work we were especially interested in. We set up Apartment to show the sort of work we liked and to keep up the creative momentum we had discovered on our M.A.

Ed: You expressed surprise that Apartment gained attention quite early on. How did people get to hear about it in those early days?

HJ & PH: We had a lot of support from our peers and our tutors on the M.A, and Apartment quickly became part of the Manchester art scene. Visiting artists, academics and curators from outside the region, such as Mark Dion, Lisa Le Feuvre, Axel Lapp, and Mikka Hanula, were brought to Apartment by lecturers at the Art School in Manchester and by curators at Manchester galleries. Our previews were great fun, a bit like a house party, so news spread via word of mouth and they became very well attended by a loyal crowd. We also worked hard to publicise our shows via the blog and through various media channels. The blog was really important and received a lot of international traffic. We put in much effort to document each show and each individual artist, giving them their

own page, information and images, thereby raising the artists' profiles on a global stage. It's still live at www.apartmentmanchester.blogspot.com

Ed: What was the general profile of your audience like? As well as friends and the art crowd, did you get lots of local residents coming in?

HJ & PH: Our previews were really mixed with some residents and non artists from Lamport Court and the surrounding housing estate attending, but mainly the Manchester art and music crowd and interested visitors.

Ed: Could you elaborate a bit more on how the domestic environment of Apartment shaped the experiences of artists and visitors, and what it did that a gallery or museum couldn't?

HJ & PH: Artists responded to the space and the surrounding location by making site referential work or work that referred to the politics of the location, and by placing their art amongst Paul's everyday possessions and in the surrounding area of Lamport Court. This set up a dialogue between the art and the domestic items, and sparked debate surrounding what does and does not constitute an art object. The domestic surroundings put visitors at ease and they often sat down with us on the sofa for a cup of tea and an informal chat, staying for ages.

Ed: Clearly Apartment was a very personal and independent project. Yet you could imagine a local authority funding a project like Apartment to support their social or regenerative agenda. Did you ever find that people imposed that kind of reading on it? And where do you stand on the issue of arts funding and instrumentalisation?

HJ & PH: We had our own very strong agenda. We were not interested in community projects and had no dialogue with the local authority. We knew what we wanted to show and what we wanted to do. We were fiercely independent. At first we existed without funding, raising our own funds from the bar, but later applied for small amounts of Arts Council funding to support exhibiting artists from further afield and to pay artists' fees and expenses. We were never able to pay ourselves.

Ed: You said that early on you did not see yourselves as curators or directors. Do you now? If so, was there a point when this perception shifted—and has it changed your practice or approach?

HJ & PH: We are artists who ran an artist led space for five years. Curating became part of our

practice and may do again. It didn't change our practice but may have changed the way we operate as artists.

Ed: Did you tend to give the artists 'free rein' in the space or were you more hands-on in the development of works and installations?

HJ & PH: We selected artists because we liked their work and thought it would work well at Apartment, and by their previous track record. We discussed what they would make for Apartment with them in detail, but the artists always made new work and had a free rein on the production. The placement of it was often discussed in detail as it had to be installed around Paul's stuff, and while we sometimes moved furniture and things around a bit, we didn't alter anything dramatically unless the project dictated it...

Ed: Following on from that, did you find that other artists viewed you in a different way? For example, do you think the fact that you were practicing artists influenced the way other artists, especially the ones you invited and commissioned, related to you as curators or organisers?

HJ & PH: That's difficult to answer. Some artists tended to see us solely as curators who may show their work, while others were drawn to take a more in depth look at our practice as artists. For us our artistic practices were always at the forefront.

Ed: Can you tell us briefly about one or two other curatorial projects you've been involved in and where people can find out more about them?

HJ & PH: We did a couple of commissioned curatorial projects for established public galleries such as 'Social Work' for Cornerhouse, in Manchester, during the British Art Show 6 and 'beneath' at Surface Gallery in Nottingham. We were also really excited to be invited to show the work of ten Apartment artists — including our own work — at Axel Lapp Projects in Berlin, as part of Axel's Interludes Programme http://axellapp.de/past_en.html#apartment. This was a great opportunity for all of us involved and we spent a month or so in Berlin, realising the project.

But the project that stands out for me is 'Artranspennineo8'. We were approached by Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson who asked us if we would take over the guerrilla curation of the project, a multi site exhibition held mostly in outdoor locations across the Trans Pennine Way, a trade route which runs from Hull across the northwest of the UK and on to Dublin in the Republic of Ireland.

This had first been generously funded in 1998 by Arts Council, with a number of commissioned new works by high profile artists such as Anya Gallacio, Lawrence Weiner, Christine Borland and many others creating temporary and permanent site specific works. There had been talk that this would become a regular event, every five years. This didn't happen, however, and the second Artranspennine in 2003 was conceived as a guerrilla action by Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson for a budget of £200! It was a great success, with around fifty artists making work in the public domain right across the Trans Pennine Way. They then handed it over to us in 2008. We applied for Arts Council support and were rejected but we did it anyway... it was almost like a call to arms for artists. Again it was hugely successful, and though it proved to be an immense amount of work some fantastic projects were realised. Each project remains documented on our blog www.atpo8.blogspot.com which still receives plenty of traffic and continues to raise the profile of each participating artist.

Ed: Finally, if you had to give just one piece of advice to other artist-curators just starting out on their first projects, what would it be?

HJ & PH: Just do it.....

Hilary Jack and Paul Harfleet, 2010

I Am Not Going to Uncover Anything Precious

by Helen Kaplinsky

From Marcel Broodthaers' *Un Jardin d'Hiver* (1974) to Harald Szeeman's Documenta 5 the seamless merging of the territories of artist and curator today appears as an inevitable flattening out, which occurred long ago, somewhere back when artistic authorship was considered autonomous. The melding of these two professions and the slaying of the author can be seen through the formal deconstruction of the art object throughout the twentieth century, epitomised by the advent of montage. This correlation is defined by labour relations: the subject and object of the montage points to the author's means of production. The artwork is representative of the subjectivity of the artist, and this subjectivity is not something new but a multiplication of the infinite relations between cultural references. The loss of agency on behalf of the author correspondingly produces autonomy of the art object. Both artist and curator are cultural producers with heterogeneous authorship, collating ephemera in a manner comparable to montage.¹

Montage and collage are adjacent but not the same. Both appropriate various media and can be used to describe applied techniques such as literature, film, sound and photography. A collage is a composition of materials and objects pasted over a surface whereas a montage is a single composition created by juxtaposing a series of pieces of paper, photos or other media to create an artistic image. Accordingly the montage is more formal than a collage and often thematic.² Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* implicates montage within capital's processes, arising during modernity and the advent of mass production "[Technical reproduction] had captured a place of its own among the artistic processes. For the study of this standard nothing is more revealing than the nature of the repercussions of these two different manifestations—the reproduction of works of art and the art of the film."³ Reproduction makes collage possible and film or photography is the incorporation of these spliced elements into a whole, montage.

Arguably the synthesizing of artistic and curatorial roles has been in practice for many decades, so why are we still hashing over it? The contemporary art curation courses which were

set up in the last 15 years are maturing, and the necessary historicizing, textbook themes and dichotomies are being drawn up with them.⁴ Currently studying one of the many flourishing curatorial MFA courses myself, one of my fellow students was told by an artist two generations above her that emerging curators today know *a little about everything* and what is preferable, in accordance with any academic field is discipline; a niche. This advice suggests curators are being trained to work with an artistic sensibility which is non-linear, therefore outside what is traditionally considered academically rigorous. Irene Calderoni describes her perception of the roles of artist and curator in a similar fashion: "I knew there were two ways of doing exhibitions, one didactic, the other investigative. The first was the gold standard: art historians organised exhibitions in order to share their expertise with the public, to show them what was worth looking at and how it look at it. The investigative model was rarely used because it meant organising a show in order to learn something, moving full-tilt ahead without really knowing what the end result might be. It's what artists do all the time, of course. With the exception of hacks, they always work without the knowledge of the outcome. Scary, but then, artists always were the intrepid ones. Why not take a clue from them?"⁵ The division between 'investigative' artistic intuition and 'gold standard' academic rationality can be traced back to the age of Enlightenment, whereupon Romanticism presented an alternative realm of emotional and subjective engagement.

Whilst this division of a supposed mental process into rational and intuitive seems unnecessary and regressive, what are the economic means that enable and result from the production processes of artists and curators? It is worth noting that curators increasingly operate on a freelance basis, unattached to a single institution, and even from within the institution the curator claims a degree of subjective authorship. This trend for precarious

¹ Pavel Buchler referred to curating as 'collage', 'The Trouble With Curating', ICA London, 9/12/10. The techniques of montage and collage are closely linked.

² <http://www.tate.org.uk/collections/glossary/definition.jsp?entryId=612>

³ Benjamin, Walter, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, J. A. Underwood (trans), UK: Penguin, part I.

⁴ In *Art Power* (2008) Boris Groys tackles the issue in *Multiple Authorship*, Anton Vidokle's systematic attack on curatorial authorship *Art Without Artists?* in e-flux journal #16, May 2010 elicited a massive response from eminent practitioners, subsequently published as *Letters to the Editors: Eleven Responses to Anton Vidokle's "Art Without Artists?"* in e-flux journal #18, September 2010, Manifesta Journal's next issue #10 is titled *Curator as Producer*, additionally Manifesta #5 from 2005 was dedicated to the blurry line between the roles with an issue titled *Artist & Curator*.

⁵ Marcia Tucker <http://www.marciatucker.com/excerpts.html#november> quoted by Irene Calderoni 'Creating Shows: Some Notes on Exhibition Aesthetics at the End of the Sixties' in *Curating Subjects*, Paul O'Neil (Ed), Amsterdam: De Appel, 2007.

free-lance labour relations emulates the artist throughout history. The artist has always been the ultimate post-fordist worker; artwork produces new markets rather than simply responding to them. The disintegration of the logic of capital (that the demand must drive supply) amounts to the loss of distinction between subject and object. One can view increasingly precarious labour relations as a condition that was prefigured by the medium of montage. The montage is an aesthetic language, which through its production and interpretation perfectly amalgamates subject and object.

The discussions thus far have suggested that curators are becoming artists. However, there are the equally problematic claims that artists have appropriated the means of the curator.

I say this is problematic, as the conversation is often a territorial one. Artists get annoyed by curators overshadowing artists with their heavy authorship of exhibitions, or artists appropriate the word 'curatorial' to give a kind of gloss to their practice.

Boris Groys continues to distinguish between the historically established positions of 'artist as creator' and 'curator as selector'.⁶ According to Groys the 'artist creator' produces novel and autonomous art objects (equivalent to Calderoni's investigative model of knowledge production). Groys goes on to describe the transformation of the 'artist creator' into the 'artist selector'. The 'artist selector' does not claim to produce novel art objects; instead the artist makes a selection of ready-mades and combines them in a practice of montage. This does not mean that today artists and curators have practices without distinction from one another. As the position of the artist shifted, so too did the positions of the curator and critic. According to Calderoni the curator has appropriated the means of the critic.⁷ Rather than acting as the protector of the artwork, the curator undertakes the process of exhibition as one of critical investigation. As the sanctioned reader of the work the critic interprets and critically deduces the relative success of a given aesthetic experience. If one is to submit to the totems of Barthe's *The Death of the Author*⁸ and Benjamin's *The Author as Producer*⁹ the critic as reader and writer is indeed the author. My suspicion is that Boris Groys' position of *Multiple Authorship*¹⁰ needs to go further. Groys concludes that the "...sovereign

authorship of an individual artist has de facto disappeared..."¹¹ Rather than placing the curator as Vidokle does as the "...single totalising figure..."¹² one could extend Groys' discussion and declare it's not simply the artist's identity which has been corroded, one can trace the multiple appropriations of the roles of artist, curator and critic as an allusion to the meta-practice of montage.

When suggesting that contemporary curatorial practice amounts to montage I'm not arguing that curators are becoming artists; rather that curators are unavoidably complicit in a reality of shared authorship which can also be witnessed in creative fields other than fine art such as literature, the performing arts and design. Montage emerged in the form of photo-montage and expressed political contestation to the Weimar government in Germany. If the Nazi regime represented an apogee of enlightenment rationalism then photo-montage was the weapon developed to counter this rationalism. The curator's authorship is written in the subjectivity of this montage, as Benjamin claims for literary montage "...I am not going to uncover anything precious or attribute to myself spiritual formulae. But rags and castoffs: I do not want to make their inventory, but allow them to obtain justice in the only possible way: by using them".¹³ The point at which Enlightenment rationalism was corroded, and every decision given a subjective implication, curators could no longer profess to be disinterested guardians of knowledge. As cultural producers, both artists and curators remain gatekeepers of bodies of knowledge, veiling and unveiling multiple cultural subjectivities and proposing them as mediated encounters in the art context.

In 1975 at the time of writing *History of Collage*, artist Eddie Wolfram had been making auto-destructive work for six years.¹⁴ His both scholarly and opinionated history of collage traced back further back than modernism. Collage is a cousin of the ancient art of paper cutting practiced in 10th century Japan and its eventual spread from the east to the west via Persia and Turkey (then Constantinople) to fifteenth century Germany, saw paper-cutters become collaborators of the bookbinders and calligraphers of the day. By the seventeenth century this tradition has developed to combine a wider set of materials such as cloth, skin, paper and paint, significant for the symbolic power

6 Groys, Boris, *Art Power*, Cambridge Massachussetes and London, England: The MIT Press, 2008, pp. 93.

7 Calderoni op. cit. pp. 79.

8 Barthe, Roland, *The Death of the Author in Image, Music, Text*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1978.

9 Benjamin, Walter, *The Author as Producer*, New Left Review 1/62, July- August 1970, <http://newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=135>, accessed 12/11/2010.

10 Groys, op. cit. pp. 93-100.

11 Groys, op. cit. pp. 96.

12 Vidokle, Anton, *Art Without Artists?* in e-flux journal #16, May 2010.

13 Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge Massachussetes and London, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999, pp. 460.

14 Wolfram, Eddie, *History of Collage: An anthology of collage, assemblage and event structures*, London, England: Cassel and Collier Macmillian Publishers, pp. 178.

to communicate the unification of political orders and genealogies. Later, in the eighteenth century collages were typically diminutive religious images, usually made by nuns and composed from lace, silk, parchment and painting and wire. Notably these were the predecessors to the nineteenth century emergence of the manufactured greeting cards made from paper and decorated with lace, and painted or embossed. With mass production furniture such as coffee tables and trays became 'collaged' under glass with shells, butterflies and lace; and room dividers were also commonly pasted with scraps of printed ephemera before being varnished.¹⁵ This aesthetic must have appeared as curious and novel. The collage is reminiscent of the renaissance wunderkammer, an encyclopaedic delectation for collecting valuable trinkets, often anthropological or natural history based. The distinction between the collage and the wunderkammer lies in the comparably unvaluable and everyday quality of objects in a collage. Trompe l'oeil artists such as John Haberle painted playing cards, bank notes and pocket watches, objects of the day, in a congregation prefiguring Dada aesthetics.



"Time and Eternity" by John Haberle ca. 1890.

Historically the curator is the guardian of a collection, the gatekeeper of knowledge. Within this tradition the curator has a formal obligation to the artwork. Where the artist is alive, the curator is expected to consult the intention of the artist, especially in the case of a commission. Obligation

¹⁵ Wolfram op cit. pp. 7-9.

to intention can be stultifying, preventing critique by relapsing back to the days when the artist was considered autonomous. The artist's sovereignty is often cited as first being defended from the heavy hands of the curator by Daniel Buren who accused Harald Szeeman of using artists "like paint on canvas"¹⁶ in the Documenta 5 exhibition of 1972 and famously imposed what had become his signature by wallpapering with stripes the walls on which the works of other artists hung. To update Buren's observation, one can turn the focus to the artist-curated exhibitions that have proliferated over recent years.¹⁷ These have often operated as institutional critiques of curating and gift the artist-curator the paradoxical privilege of curation without obligation to the autonomy of other artists. The breed of artist-curated exhibition appear in some cases as indistinguishable from a solo show by the artist-curator. In an interview about his position in relation to authorship, the artist and artist-curator Ryan Gander cites inspiration from the words of his father: "never let the truth get in the way of a good story"¹⁸ calling to mind conspiracy theories, like some kind of contemporary folklore. While an institution may still hang onto the vague notion that a curator's job is to tell the audience the *correct* way in which to view an artwork, featuring historical and educational meat, the artist is given permission to put together exhibitions which do not allay to the pretence of delivering knowledge to the visitor, providing an unapologetically subjective offering.

In 2008 Ryan Gander was the Art Now guest curator at Tate Britain. The exhibition Gander staged was entitled *The Way In Which It Landed*¹⁹ and saw him hang works from the Tate collection based upon the layout in their storage facility. The historical paintings from the Tate collection appeared in conversation with installation and sculpture by contemporary artists including Lucy Clout. Clout's work *Untitled (eyebrow)* (2008), a narrow, MDF grey screen spanning the width of the entrance and dividing the room at head height formed a fitting metaphor for the opaqueness of

¹⁶ Zolghadr, Tirdad, *Letters to the Editors: Eleven Responses to Anton Vidokle's "Art Without Artists?"* in e-flux journal #18, September 2010.

¹⁷ Recent flagships of the artist curated exhibition include the Camden Arts Centre series and the Mark Wallinger show *The Russian Linesman* at The Hayward Gallery.

¹⁸ Gander, Ryan interviewed by Paul Carter Robinson at gallery 176 / Zabłudowicz Collection for ArtLyst, 14 November 2009. In conjunction with the Pete And Repeat exhibition 23rd September- 13th December 2009, 176 Gallery, London, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IU2lw1eVuFg&feature=channel>, accessed on 05/01/2011.

¹⁹ Tate Britain, London, 2 August –26 October 2008.

meaning that critics expressed.²⁰ The element of chance in the hanging of the Tate collection is a tactic whereby Gander avoids authorship. The chance associations result in the artworks floating with no given authoritative connection. The removal of the curator's usual interpretive material could be described as a *décollage*²¹ peeling back the layers of ascribed knowledge as a critique of the curator's usual text based commentary. The artist-curator's sanctioned position of criticality and subjectivity, it could be argued, is the ultimate in multiple authorship.²² To calculate and distinguish between the intuitive and rational balance performed by the artist-curator and any other curator appears perverse and for this reason any exhibition must be regarded as a site of montage-authorship.

Much like Groys' concept of the artist as selector,²³ Ryan Gander talks about artistry as a series of decisions. In the age of the death of the author, Gander declares he is "trying to find ways where I don't have to make the decisions...like employing, commissioning, animators or graphic designers and musicians so that all aesthetic decisions are taken out of my hands"²⁴ Gander is essentially montaging the skills of others. The skills utilised are quotes in the labour relations of production. What is at stake here is the question of creation and production. What Gander is trying to achieve is an over identification with the mechanisms of production. The notion of the artist-creator²⁵ is critiqued through a relinquishing of responsibility, considering the imperative to produce and suspending this imperative. Not only is the sovereignty of the artist an illusion, but the aesthetics of an art work or exhibition is entirely arbitrary. As Benjamin concludes in *The Author as Producer* one cannot transmit without transforming, therefore attention must be paid to the quality of production. Benjamin is the ultimate idealist and on the surface Gander seems to attend to Benjamin's advice that all art must be revolutionary by definition. Indeed "...the only

way to make this production politically useful is to master the competencies in the process of intellectual production which, according to the bourgeois notion, constitutes their hierarchy; and more exactly, the barriers which were erected to separate the skills of both productive forces must be simultaneously broken down."²⁶ Gander's project can be seen as a commentary on production in that today's conceptual artist owns the means of production and assistants undertake the manufacturing as a material rather than mindful process. However, Gander is allaying as many mindful decisions as possible to the worker, thereby turning the production process on its head.

The use of chance and appropriation present in Gander's practice could lead him to be described as Neo-Dada. He is one of many artists continuing to riff on the elimination of indexical authorship, the same stakes which began with photo-montage. However Gander attends to the materialism of the art object without the idealism of Benjamin. The artist as a producer of subjectivity is lost on Gander. Instead art is equivalent to any other cultural object, it is atelic; it doesn't tell you anything. Despite this obvious departure from modernism, where modernism and postmodernism share common ground is an object's "determinant factor is the exemplary character of a production that enables it".²⁷ Therefore when considering the implications of an art work or exhibition "apparatus is better to the degree that it leads consumers to production".²⁸ For Gander and many other artists operating after modernism, the artwork comes into being as an organising function with no distinct frame. In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin's trope of literary montage saw him aim outside conventional framing devices; the author claimed that "quoting without quotation marks" is the highest form of art.²⁹ The traditional exhibition has a curatorial frame which artworks can be pasted within; the disintegration of this frame occurred alongside the intention of the artist and the autonomy of the art object. The modernist montage has a definite frame, whereas 'the happening', and now 'the installation' blur art and life.³⁰ Whilst the function of the collage is to idealistically place all manner of

20 Griffin, Jonathan, *The Way In Which It Landed*, Frieze Magazine online, Darwent, Charles, *The Way in Which It Landed*, Tate Britain, London, The Independent, 24th August 2008, http://www.frieze.com/shows/review/the_way_in_which_it_landed/, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/the-way-in-which-it-landed-tate-britain-london-907033.html>, Huyton, James, Art now; the way in which it landed, <http://www.a-n.co.uk/interface/reviews/single/461597>. All accessed 06/01/2011.

21 The French word 'décollage' translates in English as 'take off'. Décollage is the opposite of collage; it involves the removal of layers to reveal multiple strata.

22 Groys, op. cit. pp.93-100.

23 Groys, op. cit. pp.93.

24 Gander, Ryan interviewed by tank.tv for *Fresh Moves: New Moving Images from the UK* (DVD), 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7Wm2TxDOTA&NR=1>, accessed on 05/01/2011.

25 Groys, op. cit. pp. 93.

26 Benjamin, Walter, *The Author as Producer*, New Left Review 1/62, July- August 1970, <http://newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=135>, accessed 12/11/2010.

27 Benjamin, Walter, *The Author as Producer*, New Left Review 1/62, July- August 1970, <http://newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=135>, accessed 12/11/2010.

28 Benjamin, Walter, *The Author as Producer*, New Left Review 1/62, July- August 1970, <http://newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=135>, accessed 12/11/2010.

29 Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999, pp. 458

30 Kaprow, Allan, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, London England: University of California Press, 2003.

culture on an apparently non-hierarchical plane, the function of the montage is to completely disregard the distinction between the given levels of culture, rejecting the notion of a single identity. The reason why the artist as a producer of subjectivity is lost on Gander, is because he doesn't attend to materials with the same attentiveness that Kurt Schwitters did. Every element in Schwitters collage had a significance.

If collage and montage are modernist phenomena, driven by the industry of reproduction which Benjamin cites, how can it simultaneously appear curatorially as an essentially post-modern condition? The curator of the exhibition *New Forms – New Media 1* at Martha Jackson Gallery New York in 1960 makes the distinction. The show contained works by 71 artists including the Dada generation such as Kurt Schwitters and Hans Arp (contained in 'Historical Section') as well as those from the contemporary New York Junk scene (who more commonly became known as Neo-Dada) represented by Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Dan Flavin, Allan Kaprow and Jim Dine. Lawrence Alloway pinpoints the departure between generations in his essay *Junk Culture as a Tradition* which was published in the catalogue for the show. He says of Schwitters, "He assembled untransformed objects with the care that bibliophiles give to first editions".³¹ This suggests the artist as the curator, the guardian of culture, selecting and exalting the ephemera of the everyday into an aesthetic frame, to be consolidated into a definite and valuable totality whilst also retaining the cheap object's "original identity"³² the object according to Alloway is "untransformed". "New York Junk however, by rejecting the album and locket aesthetic of Schwitters, accepts the radical implications of junk".³³

With contemporary means of reproduction we are surrounded by junk. Poor quality images are easily distributed online in a partially organised world; the internet is often proffered as the ultimate montage. Just like Gander's exhibition, in many cases associations are made by chance. The user is told they can be taken anywhere, but the indifference of the material suggests there is no radical implication in this sea of junk, everything is reduced to junk; the same poor quality image.³⁴ The subject of the internet is a parting thought which cannot be expanded now, other than to suggest that it reflects a situation where on first appearance the means of production lie with the user. The quality of content is not important, simply the platform through which it's accessed. This emphasis on distribution is curatorial as well as investigative (going back to Calderoni's model) where we're not sure where we'll end up. It's most likely that the shifts in the position of the curator and artist reflect this wider phenomenon of a montage of authorships in the economy of mediation.

³¹ Alloway, Lawrence, *Junk Culture as a Tradition*, in the catalogue for the exhibition *New Forms- New Media 1* at New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, 1960.

³² Alloway op. cit.

³³ Alloway op. cit.

³⁴ Steyerl, Hito, *In Defense of the Poor Image*, e-flux journal #10, November 2009.

Make Your Audience

by Ruba Katrib

Perhaps, like I did, many curators start their careers imagining that they will be working in an institution in a city where people naturally flock to their clearly engaging exhibitions and programs. When I was living in Chicago during my undergraduate studies in the early 2000s, that's certainly what I thought happened. Curators in the institutions in that city at the time (I am not entirely sure of the current situation) were not only highly respected, but had an avid and informed audience at all openings and events. During this time, when a few colleagues and I started a non-profit artist residency and exhibition space called *ThreeWalls*, we had to build our audience. Through hosting fiery debates and salon discussions as well as performances and the traditional opening events, we developed a lively and stimulating crowd for the exchange of several cases of beer. This all seemed incredibly natural at the time, bringing our friends and colleagues together to share experiences and as a result support the institution. I truly believe that these early initiatives in community building were crucial to the continued success of *ThreeWalls*.

When I left Chicago and *ThreeWalls* to pursue my MA in Curatorial Studies at the Center for Curatorial Studies (CCS) at Bard College in New York, for the most part, I took my past experiences for granted. There was nothing about being upstate at CCS that caused me to spend too much time analyzing what took place at *ThreeWalls*, other than considering it to be part of my early curatorial development. Being in such close proximity to New York City and its thriving art community catapulted me into different concerns about my work as a curator. We never longed for audience, other than perhaps for certain individuals we hoped would visit our exhibitions, the student shows never lacked in numbers. CCS offered the perfect combination of isolation to complete our work and connection to an international art world.

It was after I graduated from CCS that a new reality of the curatorial profession became evident. While there is some recent conversation circulating in different platforms across the field about the status of the curatorial position as a possible usurpation of that of the artist (for instance Anton Vidokle's ranting essay, "Art Without Artists" in *E-Flux Journal* #16 05/2010), I strongly believe that the reality of most employed curators is quite different. Some curators may seem too "arrogant" and "powerful" to the extent that they could compromise the value of artists, but I find that the curators who could be perceived as such are a small minority. There are very few top positions

in institutions in cities like New York, Berlin, or London that could yield such a scenario. There is a small amount of curators who are able to curate international biennales, and the ones who do seem to keep getting rehired for similar jobs leaving little room for "fresh blood." What this means is that most curators who are employed today (independent curators comprise another complex scenario), live in cities with smaller art scenes and less high profile institutions. They have an entirely different set of challenges, roles and tasks. A major task is fighting for the representation of certain artists in the institution as well as making sure the artist's work is as legible in all its complexities to the local audience.

After receiving an offer for a curatorial position at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Miami I was both elated and dismayed. Of course it was terrific to land a job straight out of school, but the move to Miami was daunting. By this time I was already living in Brooklyn and felt very comfortable participating in the New York art scene, even though my unemployment status was a little dubious. In Miami, I went from audience member to audience maker. There is an exciting art scene in Miami, but like many smaller and mid-sized cities, there were things missing. It was hard to galvanize people and it was a devastating experience during my first efforts at organizing exciting lectures and performances at the museum when there were only a few dedicated artists in the audience. It was after many efforts that I understood that this was my responsibility and borrowed from my early experiences at *ThreeWalls*.

I believe this discussion is relevant for all curators, but especially those who find themselves working outside of major art centers. Cultivating and responding to your audience is key. For instance, if I organize a talk with an artist or theorist, I have to prepare my audience beforehand. I can't expect hoards of well read MFA students to attend and drill my guest speaker with stimulating questions. While every art scene can understand and relate to a certain speaker, it may take a little guidance.

This guidance doesn't necessarily need to be direct either, it is about creating a climate on a social level where the exhibitions and programs organized are no longer intimidating or dull, but incredibly relevant. It is important to develop an audience who is invested in the content you are presenting. Of course, perhaps people just aren't interested in what you are doing, but I think in most cases, it's a problem of communication and commitment.

In this sense, the curator is not only in an academic or administrative position working on presenting art and programs to an audience, but the curator is someone who is actively presenting an audience as well. This is a social role, where the curator almost works as matchmaker; prepping two individuals you think will hit it off. While this can backfire when the match isn't right, generally, it provides a more stimulating experience for everyone involved.

For exhibitions, the programs created around the show are integral for how a local community can interact and enter the artwork. For most institutions, there is a local audience and international audience. Outside of major art centers that gain regular art travelers; the international face of an exhibition is limited. While it is essential to get that face out there, my main concern in this text is with the local response to an exhibition. I recently curated the first retrospective of the collective artist Claire Fontaine; it opened at MOCA during the summer of 2010. I was incredibly proud of the exhibition, it was intelligent and elegant, but I knew that many in the local community needed something more to really appreciate the artwork. We hosted an artist talk with Claire Fontaine, but I also worked with them to select four of the most important films to their development as people and as artists. We screened these films throughout a dedicated area within the exhibition on a loop, but we also had them individually screened on select nights throughout the run of the show and I personally promoted them to people in the community who would appreciate the films. While these films weren't part of Claire Fontaine's work and perhaps they seemed unrelated, they brought viewers into the tone of the work, the focus, the interests, the hopes, and the doubts of Claire Fontaine's project. This is just one example of creating an entry point into an exhibition, but I think it is significant because it was also done in collaboration with the artist. In many institutions, public programs are the realm of the education department or another entity. But I believe that these programs are stronger when they are developed in tandem with the curator, artists and during the planning of the exhibition. They become reliable ways to build an audience and motivate them to connect with the exhibitions and programming a curator organizes.

Some institutions are better at this than others, but despite the specific institutional tradition, I believe that a curator is responsible for the content they are presenting to the public and has to follow through in all aspects. It is easy to organize an exhibition and walk away, but I think that key programming as well as an active role in the constant development of building a targeted audience is a way to extend the life of your efforts. Rather than filling your schedule with programming and planning, as a curator, I think it is more fulfilling to take the time to reach into the various areas in your community and to really pull out the content that is already there. Use that content to respond to and incorporate into the environment you hope to create as a curator.

In Conversation With Curator Richard Julin

by Anne Klontz

"Richard is focused, devoted and he knows a lot. He is correct, clear and honest."¹
Pipilotti Rist

A curator since 1999, Julin has been creating memorable exhibitions and forging relationships with several of the art world's leading artists, helping place Magasin 3 Stockholm on the international radar as one of the most innovative konsthalls for contemporary art. Despite his established credentials, Julin's career as a curator wasn't immediately clear to him. Looking back in time, one could find him studying industrial design at the École nationale supérieure de création industrielle in Paris. Yet, it was over the course of his time as a student that he realized his interest in contemporary art was the true direction he wanted to pursue instead. Julin clearly remembers the moment when he decided to become a curator was when he was at an exhibition about the Spanish director Luis Buñuel. "It just hit me," Julin recalls, "this is what I want to do; I want to work in museums. At the time I thought of it more as a design thing or more architectural, but then I realized there is a person who actually makes choices that are not only architectural and spatial, but are also artistic and in relation to the art."

It was his background in design that helped Julin to get his foot in the door as a curator. He began as a freelance curator doing contemporary design shows for Stockholm's Moderna Museet and the Swedish Institute. On the weekends, he worked as a guard at Magasin 3 to supplement his freelance earnings and the job provided him the opportunity to get to know David Neuman, the founding director of the konsthall. In 1998, Stockholm was the cultural capitol of Europe and Julin was appointed one of two positions as exhibition coordinator for the project "Archipelago" which Neuman directed. It proved to be an invaluable experience for Julin as he worked on over 40 exhibitions in collaboration with numerous curators including Harald Szeemann, Lynne Cooke and Hans-Ulrich Obrist.

During our interview, as Julin reflected on his experiences, I was attracted to the discernible note of ambition he maintained while pursuing his dream to become a curator, but also greatly inspired by how this ambition has translated into genuine confidence, which — as Pipilotti Rist describes — is truly correct, clear and honest.

AK: What were other (curatorial) experiences prior to your current position?

RJ: I was freelance for a little over four years. I would say that over half that time, I worked with curating, but since I had my company, I did a lot of work just to earn money. The way to earn the most was to do trade fairs designing booths. I worked for Svensk Form a lot and that was a mixture of architectural and curatorial work. I did a show for them at the furniture fair and one year I was responsible for "Utmärkt Svensk Form", which was a big award for design products and services in Stockholm. Another design show was "PULSE, Young Swedish Design" that was first shown at the Bauhaus Archive in Berlin. During these years it was a massive amount of work because I would do everything, but I didn't really curate any art exhibitions prior to Archipelago, it was more design shows.

AK: Describe yourself as a curator when you first started working.

RJ: I'm from the design field and when I first started working I was very much a curator geared toward the organization of things. I had this idea as long as I'm super in control of time frame, budget and all the aspects involved in the task, I will be

fine. I was little aware of intuitive parts of the process. When I would be a partner in discussing artistic ideas, I was not very strong because I didn't know yet what I thought was right or wrong or the right way to go. It was very understandable because I wasn't experienced. I think I became quickly aware of this fact that I could be a partner in artistic decisions because to some degree artists want and need that.

AK: Describe yourself as a curator today.

RJ: As you can imagine, the side that I feel has grown a lot is the intuitive side. I realized I started to feel what I like, what I think is important and what I dislike and what I find quite uninteresting. It became increasingly fun for me to work with artists and I'm not scared of it or insecure, but rather embrace the fact that an artist wants to talk and have a platform where we can discuss what we are going to show and to stay in that realm that is intuitive and a discussion. It is really important to me that I feel whether this person wants to be "curated", but also a thing that has changed is that I realize sometimes I need to curate although the artist might not really want that; this other person or group of people might have this feeling they totally know what they are doing, but in fact

I need to go in and say something and that is very much the diplomatic side of curating. What I am as a curator right now, is a person who dares to go in and say that an artist should stop. It's hard for a person who is in the limelight and in the process to stop before there is a deadline. That is something I was entirely unaware of as a new curator, to go in and stop an artistic process is one of the most important things — in my view right now. We will see how I think of this in five years or 10 years.

AK: Have you noticed any changes in regards to the role of the curator from the time you started in the field up to today?

RJ: When I started it was really the time of the star curator— the 80s and end of 90s. It's still a bit there today, but it's not as obvious as it was back then. I think I had the feeling that was the way you had to go, which I was unhappy about. I couldn't see myself working like that for many reasons. One of them being it seemed to be a job where you had to travel an amazing amount and it seemed to be quite superficial after my experience with Archipelago and meeting these people and how they actually worked and it didn't really lead to any true encounters.

I think the museum and the museum curator have come back into the limelight. In these 10 years that I have been a professional curator, I think that is the biggest shift—from the freelance to the institution. It's a really good thing that people look to history, which is where the institutional curator comes in, people who can work with collections and history and make sense of things or at least propose things for an audience to relate to and think about and also have fun and pose more positive questions. I like that movement and of course I say this because it is exactly what I've been doing and why I feel it so much.

AK: Where do you find inspiration and ideas for exhibitions?

RJ: Of course it is seeing a lot of art and then going to the places I have to see, the biennales and certain exhibitions and the inspiration comes from the art itself. This has changed over the years. Now when I see something I find interesting, I note it and try to follow the art, artist or idea. It might not be a specific artist but a certain direction that I feel things might be going in and I follow it for awhile to see if that inspiration is still there, if it still feels interesting.

In parallel, I think it's important to follow other fields in culture that I enjoy because when you say "inspiration" it's about energy and having fun. Art is my work, that doesn't exclude those feelings of inspiration and fun, but I when I see art these days

I always analyze. I feel things, but it is much more complex things than for instance contemporary dance, which I really like and I've always kept on the side as something I never try to analyze too much. Dance is something that inspires me a lot in relation to exhibitions. I can see a lot of things in dance and I can feel a lot of things that are in parallel to the art world.

AK: You have worked with a number of established and unique contemporary artists, for example Pipilotti Rist (2007) and Tino Sehgal (2008) which have resulted in monograph exhibitions in the konsthall. Can you reflect on one (or both) of these experiences and describe the working process you went through from first ideas to final realization of the exhibition?

RJ: It is interesting that you picked these two because they were very different processes. I can try to compare the two perhaps. Pipi is the longest process I've had. We were in contact for many years and the idea to make an exhibition came up about four years before the show actually opened. It was after the Venice Biennale in 2005 that she started working on our piece that we did here. The piece is called "Gravity Be My Friend" and it is a sibling to the piece in Venice. It was about how you perceive the moving image when you lie down.

Then to jump over to Tino, I met him for the first time in Venice also, when he was representing Germany in the German Pavilion. We had been emailing for perhaps a year before that in fact, so you can already hear that it takes a long time to get to the point where you decide to make a large exhibition. In Tino's case, once we started, it took a year to do the actual process. But you know the process is so different with him. With Pipilotti, it was going to Zurich to meet her and her whole team of architects. She made scale models of the space and I could sit there and lie down and be in that model and she made test films. Whereas with Tino, we met and I told him what we wanted to do, and in total contrast to Pipilotti, he said: I don't make new work just because you want a new work. I make new work when it comes towards me and this is not the time for that. I never in fact make a new work for a space. With Tino, I had one piece that I really wanted to show, "Instead of allowing some thing to rise up to your face dancing bruce and dan and other things, 2000" with Dan Graham and Bruce Naumann and certain movements they had made in videos in the late 60s and early 70s that Tino took from them and transcribed into a new piece that is made by a dancer in space. So the dancer in a sense becomes a sculpture and in the end we had that piece. The other two works he picked. One piece called "This is New" and it ended

up being a piece our staff made at the entrance.

Pipilotti is a lot about physical things when you make the exhibition. It was the longest exhibition installation period ever. For seven weeks we installed. With Tino, it's a rehearsal, but we also spent a long time. Prior to rehearsal you have to find the people so we spent a couple of weeks interviewing over a hundred people to choose them and once we chose them we rehearsed for weeks, especially for one piece that involved five people doing specific choreographic things and to learn to improvise within that piece. It was complex and totally amazing.

AK: Magasin 3 is unique in that artists are invited to produce a work for an event which in turn becomes part of the konsthall's collection. How do you research and select the artists you want to work with?

RJ: To answer it simply, I look at a lot of art. I meet artists and I try to allow for time these days. It usually takes time before I have this moment where I ask an artist about working together. It's good to be able to spend time with art to see whether one should really do something because once you decide, it's usually at least a year that you work with it and always in parallel to other things, but you invest so much time that you want to make sure you like it.

AK: How do you establish an understanding or agreement between your role and the artist's role and the tasks that need to be completed when working together on an exhibition?

RJ: I don't do it officially when I work with an artist or group of people. I don't bring this up as an issue, basically ever, with one exception with Tom Friedman who I worked with recently. We actually spoke about the limits of my role as a curator and him as an artist because he was interested in it. Other artists, not to put a value into it, are really not curators, and they're not supposed to be either, so it is always different how much I need to curate. That is, being a person who is there and aware of limitations that we need to keep within for that project. I think that is one of the biggest responsibilities I have as a curator, to try to understand the level at which I'm going to be on the artistic level—a person who the artist can discuss with in order to make decisions and how much this person wants to be left alone.

AK: It seems that you share a close working relationship to an artist when developing a monograph exhibition. How does this translate when you curate a group exhibition?



"Up in the Air" works by Tom Friedman at Magasin 3 Stockholm, 2010. Richard Julin pictured.

RJ: I've just come out of the process of curating a group exhibition and it was very nice to decide to not talk to any of the artists for once—as much as I love that—it has been quite liberating for the first time in many years to work on a show in a whole different way. I picked a lot of different artworks from over 30 artists. I worked architecturally, much more than I usually do, on this show. I created a space that I designed and a crew of people built the space in relation to the choice of art works and the ideas of how an audience could move around the space and how it could be lighted. All of this came together in a quite different process than the others. The big difference, essentially, is the contact with the artists is much less. I like both.

AK: Since every exhibition is unique, what information and details do you try to confirm ahead of time and what details, if any, do you make an allowance for change to happen?

RJ: There are certain aspects that you really have to decide on way ahead. I never write a contract with the artist, but my contract is the confirmation via email and these are the basic things. As you can imagine, it is impossible without having made sure the artist understands when the press viewing is, when they should be here, what time and what the budget of the project is.

Allowing for things to change is incredibly important when you produce new pieces. With time I have become more open towards it in the sense that I'm not afraid of it. But when bigger changes come up, whatever it might be, I usually stop and say: I need 24 hours to see how to make it, that I will do my utmost to make it happen and if you still feel the same tomorrow, I will tell you how we can do it, but I can't decide it right now. If it is a major thing that makes budget changes or whatever it might be. And this has worked really well, but

you have to think about it and do it every time to actually allow for change, but to also have the tools to deal with them.

AK: In what ways do you archive and document the exhibitions you create?

RJ: We always take a lot of pictures, the obvious thing. I film every exhibition that I've done since I started here. Of course we have exhibition catalogues, we archive the media's reaction to the exhibition and other things like artists' talks and online pod casts. The best tool for me is the films and the photographs. Films are good because you also get the sound and sometimes the photograph is not enough.

AK: In what ways do you expand your work as a curator into other spectrums of the field?

RJ: To think about the field of curating and to be involved with students is important to me and I know I learn a lot from that. I also think it's good for my work that I show students what I have been working on and I rephrase it every year. It allows for me to see how my work has changed and hopefully it gives students something.

I've also been involved for many years with Filmform in Stockholm, which is a film archive of experimental cinema and video art that dates back to 1924 up until today. I've always loved it since I discovered experimental cinema back when I lived in Paris because there is a really active scene there around film as art. And then I was awarded a stipend to do some research as a Getty Research Institute scholar this fall.

AK: How do you push yourself beyond your curatorial comfort zone?

RJ: Up to the point before working on the Tino Sehgal exhibition, I was really tired of my own process and I guess that is what you describe as the comfort zone. I had done up to 15 shows and they were major in the sense that I put a lot of time into them and I just knew so well what I was doing. It is not a question of being bored, but a question of not feeling any energy in my work. I'd been trying consciously to work with artists where I could see the process was going to be different and it's going to change the results and I'm going to have to rethink how I work. That was why Tino was so perfect; the process was entirely different from anything I had ever experienced in my life.

I'm still trying to do this and that is why I applied for the stipend at the Getty. I guess it happens to everyone at some point, you just need to do something different. I was recently appointed Deputy Director and it feels like a good direction for me, I will continue to curate in the exact way I have

been doing before, but I will be more involved with questions of staff and it actually interests me a lot because we are moving more toward a museum-like institution.

AK: What do you hope to accomplish as a curator during the next five years?

RJ: I recently thought about different directions. One is that it is really fun to make a show that a lot of people come to look at. Pipilotti was the wake-up call for us. I knew that would be popular because of the nature of her art and how great it is, but we were not prepared for the onslaught of people that turned out. Tino was not massively popular, I think it was one of those shows that the people who came loved it and it is the show that the most people have reacted to. Tom Friedman was also a popular show. So when you talk about the next five years, I do have certain artists in mind that I've always wanted to work with. Apart from that, I hope to find other ways of challenging myself and this institution, hopefully as much as Tino did as an artist and that is what I'm looking for right now. I've tried to bring dance and music into the program. I'm hoping to do more of that and performance related things, in fact that is what I'm going to do here this spring, something in between a show and performance.

AK: What are some words of wisdom you would share with an emerging curator?

RJ: I don't know about that word "wisdom" but I do have experience! Whether it's wise, time will tell when a person has tried it and seen whether it's for them or not. I think with a question like this, the clichés start raining, but I think it's really important to try to stay broad; not to lose sight of other surrounding fields. I think it's important to try to understand what you really like and that takes time—and "like" is a light word, but also very difficult to understand: Why am I so interested in this type of painting apart from the fact that I think it looks good? For me to embrace dance has helped me understand why I like certain paintings because after awhile I understood there are choreographic qualities and spatial qualities in certain paintings that I really like. It took me quite awhile to understand this and it's only because I've tried to stay broad and I've stayed with fields outside of art.

—September 2010

1. Quoted from an email exchange with the artist; April 16, 2011.

Do It Yourself – Do It Together

by Yulia Kostereva and Yuriy Kruchak

Three main things about Ukraine's cultural context led us to organize the platform Open Place, namely: constriction of the field of artistic activity, self-removal of the artistic community from public engagement and loss of continuity. The paradox of the situation in post-Soviet society is that during the recent reconstruction a mass culture developed that destroyed the connection with the previous cultural stratum. Features that were considered at the beginning as a manifestation of freedom, have twenty years later become a source of income for a small group of people, leaving to society only the role of consumer.

For Ukrainian curators now, there are three unpopular questions, responses to which we are searching in our work. 1. What is the purpose of artist and curator, in a society where the basic model of relations is built on the vertical axis of the state / big business, and the horizontal axis of the Christian Orthodox church, that is seeking to replace Soviet ideology and become the judiciary? 2. What is role of the art institution in a society where all political ideologies are devalued? 3. Is it possible to develop the institution *with* that society, existing as it does at different socio-cultural poles, producing art and together answering the questions of what art should be, and how it should look?

Initially, when we asked ourselves these questions, they seemed impossible to satisfy. The basic contradiction was that the forms of contemporary art institution existing at that moment didn't satisfy the main drives of the program we wanted to implement, namely to create a cultural context where the public, on an equal footing with the artist, would be an active participant in the cultural field, a co-creator of common values, artistic events and cultural context. Our strategy to deal with this was to include curatorial practice in our artistic methods: to rethink the notion of the institution, its basis, models of relationships and interactions between curator, artist and society, approaches to programming and physical outputs.

Here we will review aspects projects recently realized under the umbrella of Open Place. These works are focusing on building institutions as media.

The first manifestations of our institutional model demonstrated the efficacy of a mobile structure with a flexible, invisible frame linking to both artistic and social centers. This could be placed directly into a real social context, to make changes and to establish communication between

different communities. The development of this model of the institution and the construction of its three-dimensional concept became the significant moment in the development of Open Place. This migratory structure strives to blend with its everyday urban environment — to be present in a certain place, and simultaneously change it temporarily, accept artistic, social, and economic conditions and use them as starting points for the formation of new artistic values, public strategies and methods. The institution in this situation serves both as a platform for artistic and social activities, and as mapping of the hidden potential of the space.

The project *Dotted Lines of Speech* aimed to acquire practical and artistic experience outside of the art space. It was action research in the field of public communication, developing concepts and applying event-based scenarios in public environments. Artists, musicians and writers from Ukraine and Lithuania were invited to participate. Some models and principles were tested in 2006 in Kiev, Ukraine at Zhitny Market and in 2007 in Vilnius, Lithuania at the cafe in the writers' house. The nature of actions was improvised, and although outlines had been agreed upon in advance, the substance was formed during the action. Those invited could play the part of their personal story, and spectators could become protagonists. What emerged during the course of events was close to a public happening in form, with a paradoxical way of thinking about communication, allowing an understanding of everyday reality through new experiences, in a new way.

After the first exercises it became obvious that the space of creation and study plays a more important role, for such event-oriented structures as ours, than the place of representation; and likewise that the interventional nature of the mobile institution gives more extensive results than the facility located in one site with clearly defined boundaries.

To continue the development of Open Place it was necessary to work out a model of behavior, one which would make the figure of artist and curator 'invisible' and would allow a focus on the potential of artistic practices in the border zone between the visible and invisible social realms — active and excluded communities. Actions in real social contexts demand tactics and strategies capable of making evident invisible processes, hidden deep in the thickness of the existing cultural environment, that help to transform the extant relations and create new links between society and the artistic

process.

In the course of our work we have developed several kinds of action, moving from one to the next on achieving certain goals. These actions were based on the principles of camouflage and were modeled on different professions' methods - the journalist, the anthropologist, the psychologist and the sociologist. This tactic is manifested most clearly in the project *Invisible Way*, launched as a journalistic investigation of the socio-cultural space of the Ukrainian Association of Blind People. Eventually the project grew into a revision of the cultural space of relationships, between us — artists, whose nature is open to the world — and blind people, a largely isolated, socially sharpened group with clearly defined requirements of society, with a certain system of values and perceptions of the world. A series of interrelated artistic and social events resulted, which allowed the sighted people to experience the world of the blind people; for the blind people it was an opportunity to be seen, as well as to participate in making art.

An important stage in the development of the platform was the search for an appropriate institutional language, which would allow participants to make conscious decisions and interact with different socio-cultural groups on the creation of collaborative works. We had to rethink the concept of 'artwork' — to realize it as an accumulative structure, open to development, consisting of independent but interrelated levels with both artistic and social components. This approach assumes collaborative work with the spectators, and gives a certain equality, as well as freedom, both for artist and for spectator. The mantle of the creator, in this situation, can be taken on by curator, artist or spectator. Regardless of biases, ideological and political disagreements provide primary conditions in which different communities can collaborate to develop the art work, specify its content and how it should be manifested?.

Referring to the narrative of a Post-soviet park, its eclectic structure, we initiated the project *Start Time*, the leitmotif of which was an idea developing the park. The challenge was to find a balance — a system of human interaction with the exterior of the park, with its past, present and future culture, in the self-organization of leisure activities by different social groups. Building upon the previous projects, we invited people with visual impairments and young Ukrainian artists to cooperate, as well as residents and visitors to Kiev who we reached through the mass media. Those who wished to take part built on the territory of the "Hydropark" (a designated site of culture and recreation) an artistic platform with both physical and intellectual manifestations. About

fifty people — representatives of different social strata — cooperated on a program of artistic and social activity. We presented a number of artifacts, and identified several places that epitomized past and present culture of the park. Participants were invited on the basis of these objects and places, having created or transformed them as necessary, to reveal other, hidden meanings, or to determine new meanings. The result of this experiment was a series of interrelated, interpenetrating time-based events — consisting of objects, performances, happenings and sporting competitions, the course of development, and evaluation of which were determined by participants themselves. Work became the medium, uncovering the hidden meanings of the park.

We consider our institution as a social agent in public space, which questions the boundaries of knowledge and ignorance of social and creative processes in the society. To conclude, it is necessary to note that despite the problems existing in the Ukrainian cultural context, in society there are the groups with colossal creative potential — open to dialogue and interaction. A gap, existing between 'executive authority' and 'the church', allows one to create situations and spaces where people can work together to find a form appropriate to their needs, their perception of past, present and future.



"The 7th of November" by Yuriy Kruchak and Yulia Kostereva, November 7, 2009. Place of Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

Curating—A Game of Skill

by Ben Lewis

This text is an excerpt from the original film script "Affinities".

Opening Scene:

Ben with pack of cards. Casino croupier fans out cards.

This is not just a pack of cards. It's also an exhibition at the Berlin Guggenheim. There are thirty artists in the show... they have been divided into fifteen pairs... occasionally there's a trio. I've turned every work of art into an individual card. Each group of works have something in common, hence the title "Affinities". I'm in the exhibition too, and so is the person I am about to meet, the German contemporary artist Tobias Rehberger. Neither he nor any other artist in the show knows who they are paired with... I'm going to ask him to guess.

Tobias Rehberger, Artist

No [this is putting cards into right hand pile]
Possibly... [this is putting cards into left hand pile]
Possibly...
Don't think so [right hand pile]
Could be...
No...
No...

Ben: No to me?

Tobias: I'm just being nasty. I don't know your stuff.

Curators are the most powerful people in the art world today. They make and break an artist's career by deciding who to exhibit them with and where. But they hardly ever ask the artists if they agree with their decisions. Tobias knew nothing about me, and yet the Affinities curator had put him with me. That didn't seem fair.

Ben: I didn't think that joke was so funny, because in the Affinities exhibition Tobias Rehberger had been paired with me. The artist had customised a DVD player and I was meant to be the DVD inside it. But if Tobias didn't want to be with me then I certainly didn't want to force myself on him. I decided to try to re-arrange the exhibition.

This is the headquarters of the Deutsche Bank. The exhibition is a celebration of ten years of their collaboration with the Guggenheim. It combines the bank's latest acquisitions of emerging artists with modern masterpieces from the Guggenheim and other museums. The Deutsche Bank is the owner of the world's largest corporate art collection — some



of it is displayed in their lobby of their offices. I've an appointment with the director of the bank's art collection.

Ariane Grigoteit,
Director, Deutsche Bank Art Collection

Ariane: Let me show you Polke's "Rotation", one of my favourite works ... in the collection, though one shouldn't really say which....

I've come here to find out the ideas behind the pairings in Affinities. To find new partners for Tobias and myself, I need to know how the show has been curated. Some of the combinations were easy to understand. Collage was the common denominator between Isa Genzken, who will represent Germany at the Venice Biennale this year and early twentieth century dada-ist Kurt Schwitters. A James Turrell sculpture based on a light box had been paired with photographs by the Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto — the artists were working in very different media, but they shared the theme of light and shadow. But others combinations were more enigmatic. A James Turrell sculpture based on a light box had been paired with photographs by the Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto — the artists were working in very different media, but they shared the theme of light and shadow. But others combinations were more enigmatic ... Polke is one of those artists who came to West Germany from East Germany. And when he came here, he discovered the world of the so called West... a world full of stereotyped American images like this dinner party. The woman is emotionally upset by an argument. The man in the background is being very composed. It's a description of how men and

women relate to each other. In your exhibition, which artist did you decide to pair up with the Polke? I put Polke together with a young Turkish artist, Inci Eviner, whom I discovered in Istanbul I thought "what can I combine with this large format drawing, which brings nature back into art?" It's a fantastic combination. And I thought that when you look at the two paintings then the differences between the two sexes that Polke describes in his picture are paralleled by the differences between these two artists, one female, one male, one from Turkey, the other from the former East Germany...

In the old days, curating was a simple game to play — you just assembled a group of artists from the same city or with the same style, medium or theme. But recently it's got more complicated. The curating of Affinities was an example of this. The placing of a corporate collection in a public institution was a controversial new development in the art world. It was a way of making the bank's new purchases look more important, but there was more to the concept of Affinities than this — the curator was making unusual and poetic juxtapositions across styles, continents and decades. I often was baffled.

Ben: Barbara Kruger, Marc Chagall — are you crazy?

Ariane: No. What I like about this pairing is that you can't imagine greater opposites. One is alive, one is dead, man-woman, America-Russia... Everything about them says they shouldn't go together, and yet ...when you see these pictures hanging next to each other, you notice that...in both the figures ascend towards heaven. Both pictures are about supernatural forces, despite their different religions. On the one side there's the Russian who's concerned with Judaism, on the other the American...dealing with consumerism, the new value system which defines our lives.

There was often a surprising reasoning to Ariane's pairings, but one pairing was more surprising than any other. That of me and Tobias Rehberger. Other younger generation artists in the show have been partnered with the famous names of twentieth century art. I'd never made a work of art before — but I had been tattooed by the Belgian artist Wim Delvoye — so I put a picture of that on my card, Laura Owens had landed the inventor of abstract painting, Kandinsky... Andreas Slominski got the super-trendy Francis Picabia, one of the first artists to produce artworks that mocked art... and the little known American surrealist William Copley was with the greatest colourist of the last century Henri Matisse.

But Rehberger had pulled the short straw... He was with me, and the most creative thing I'd ever done

was get tattooed by an artist on television.

Ben: You've put me with Tobias Rehberger. Why?

Ariane: I don't think that Tobias and you have anything in common. What attracted me to this pairing was the idea of two people who didn't know each other and who simply found themselves brought together. With the theme of this exhibition — affinities, relationships, partnerships, exchanges, connections... I am excited to see what's going to come out of this juxtaposition.

I had to do something. [Tobias would have been horrified to hear these words]. The Deutsche Bank curator had thought out imaginative reasons for every pairing in her exhibition — except for us. I was determined to find an artist of suitable importance for Tobias. But who? I remembered Ariane's description of the Polke. He'd fit with Rehberger— two German artists working with popular culture, one generation apart. But the German pop artist was with Inci Eviner — so first I would need to find out if there was another artist who she'd prefer to be with.

Inci Eviner, Artist

Inci's art used found motifs like Polke's — but its feminine theme made me think she might prefer to be with another artist of the same sex. It was time to show my cards.

Inci: I see an emotional attachment between myself and the way in which these hands are moving across the surface. When I first saw Louise Bourgeois her work taught me not to be ashamed of my own feelings. It enabled me to relate my own emotional intensity with all the things that are going on in the world. Many years later, when Louise Bourgeois and I met in New York, I showed her this book of drawings and she said that we had things in common.

Inci had been easy, but she was only the start... She would swap Polke for Louise Bourgeois, but the veteran surrealist, was in a threesome with two other French artists — the post war primitivist Dubuffet and the psychoanalysis-influenced Sylvie Fleury. Without Bourgeois to hold them together, these two artists would need other partners, and then their partners partners would need new partners and so on [and their partners partners partners partners]. The knock-on effect meant I would have to re-curate the whole show [but I'd never done any curating before. I needed the help of a professional. I arranged to meet a former director of the Istanbul Biennale...

Fulya Erdemci, International Curator

Fulya: These are like reading tarot cards.

Ben: Do you think you can read my future in these cards?

Fulya: Yes, I can match Louise Bourgeois with Inci Eviner – here also the hands are used as the signs of music Maybe Francis Picabia and Sugimoto ... also here there is a trio.... Then I will match this with Kandinsky.

Ben: The Slominskis with the Kandinskys. Is that because they rhyme?

Fulya: No, the colour and shape. Now I am using many different criteria. Here I used the signs, here the formal organisation of the work, here just the portrait tradition. Actually these are very classical portraits. The faces and hands.

The Turkish curator had made an entirely different show with the same works of art as the Deutsche Bank curator. If we put Inci and Louise together, then Debuffet could go with Chagall and Nara and Sylvie Fleury's mushrooms with Immendorf's starfish? Jan Pei Ming went with Laura Owens instead of Kandinsky, who was now with Slominsky... and Tobias would go with Polke. By the end of our meeting there was just one card left out...

Daniel Birnbaum,
International Curator

Daniel: I like the whole idea of on the spot curating, quick decisions, working more like associations.

Ben: I imagine nowadays super curators like yourself have to work quite fast now.

Daniel: Yes this is probably the normal situation for us now. 10 am is when you come to me.

It started well — Birnbaum was making the same pairings to the curator of the Deutsche Bank — but he was also adding a wild card.

Daniel: I would put this little piece which I don't really know but why not... It's a space about drawing in two and three dimensions... This is an early, very effective James Turrell working with light. People talk about a James Turrell piece happening not in front of your eyes but behind your eye. It's all about messing up your brain. I think light and shadows, this might sound a bit obvious but I would let Sugimoto and Turrell go together and then I will find one more thing for them. I would put this in here.

Ben: Light

Daniel: Yes... I would market Laura Owens work quite heavily. This is about colour and figuration.

Ben: Do you think if you hang Laura Owens and Wassily Kandinsky and Emil Nolde together the value of Laura Owens work will go up.

Daniel: Yes, what do you think?

Ben: Yuh

Daniel: The time of art is not the same time measured by clocks or the natural sciences. It could be interesting, not that I know it is so many different generations to see if one could find... a contemporary piece which retroactively throws light on the previous bit... in the way Duchamp is not the same artist after Warhol. It's Warhol influencing our understanding of and the meaning of Duchamp...

I asked Birnbaum to illustrate his theory of how an older artist could rise in importance, as a younger generation of artists drew inspiration from them — but his choice of artists was most unfortunate.

Daniel: And I think Kurt Schwitters is someone who is constantly revisited not only by artists, but by curators. His piece Merzbau in Hannover is a mixture of a display and sculpture and installation and Tobias has done fantastic things, which are between sculpture and installation and art and technology.

Daniel's art theory was not much help with Tobias, who hadn't given me Schwitters as an option, but the super curator did have a good idea for me.

In the Affinities exhibition, the contemporary photographer Erwin Wurm had made a portrait of the head of the Guggenheim museum's, Thomas Krens, standing on a pedestal, which contained the director of the Deutsche Bank, Ariane Grigoteit. It was an ironic image of power in the art world. This work had been partnered with three portraits of the board of the Deutsche Bank, taken by Israeli conceptualists Clegg and Guttmann. Birnbaum wanted to reassign these works.

Daniel: I would put these guys... they will have to go with the King. It's important how this is installed of course, but this could be beautiful, highly stylised and yet personal and I think they should go with a symbol of power. Intuitively I think you, Ben, and Thomas Krens have something in common. But I feel both of you have a role in this endeavour... that I haven't quite figured out yet. We'll see where we go with this.

Daniel had dealt me a good hand. My luck was beginning to turn... The Koons and Nolde were together with Jan Pei-Ming. If I could pair up Koons with Clegg and Guttmann, I could easily find a portrait to put with the Pei Ming, then Tobias could go with Nolde, and then I could be with Erwin Wurm. But I would first need to persuade Wurm and Clegg and Guttmann to part ways. These artists had never met before. I decided to introduce them to each other. Clegg and Guttmann were highly

analytical conceptual artists. Erwin Wurm work was full of gags. I thought there was a good chance they wouldn't get on.

Erwin Wurm, Artist

Michael Clegg & Martin Guttman, Artists

Erwin: When I looked at your images I always feel a close relationship to the renaissance and baroque and images of the emperors — is this what you were looking for?

Martin: Yes definitely. When we started doing the portrait we said we'd go back as far as possible and look at the canonical images of power and we'd try to ask what makes those canonical images of power and try to treat it as a series of effects which could be analysed and reassembled together in a transparent way.

Ben: Does 17th century Dutch portraiture play a role in your work?

Erwin: Not exactly, but there is a strong relationship to the traditional portrayal of powerful people. The person is on a pedestal that means he's raised in certain way, then the organisation in the picture is so constructed that as he is raised he shrinks in relation to the architecture and to the institution. The pedestal is open at the back, and there is Ariane Grigoteit sitting.

Martin: How did they feel when you put them in that position?

Erwin: I offered Mr. Krens several positions and this was the one he accepted.

Ben: Which were the ones he didn't accept?

Erwin: I first asked him to stand very close to the museum wall with a pen out of his trousers like a penis and it looked like he was peeing against the museum wall. Obviously he did not because it's just a pen, but he said he cannot do this; absolutely not.

Yet again, my plan had backfired. The artists were finding more and more things in common. But I had one last card to play. Erwin Wurm was a great artist but there were others in the pack that were more famous, and who might tempt Clegg & Guttman.

Ben: I was just wondering if I have one option, which is to join your group, because I have also been commissioned by the Deutsche Bank.

Michael: Have we got anything in common?

Martin: It's about portraiture...

Ben: I had this one theory if the curator is difficult I could separate you two. Let's theorise we have Francis Picabia with Tobias Rehberger and he's happy... You must tell me if you think this is a

different pairing. But if I take the Jeff Koons...

Ben: Do you think there is something in common?

Michael: Well, of course we are from the eighties and we are both concerned with similar issues.

Martin: This is about the representation of power.

Wurm studio. At last I had a winning hand... I was on a winning streak... Now all I had to do was ask Erwin Wurm a favour. The title of his work made me think his photo and my card game had one obvious thing in common. Neither of us trusted the curator, but Erwin's mind was working on a completely different track.

Erwin: What is this?



Ben: This is me getting tattooed on Wim Delvoye's pig farm in China.

Erwin: Then we definitely have something in common. I am sorry for you. It's the victimising of the models. But this seems connected to what I am doing because I use the models and you are using this as an art piece on your back.

Ben: And are you happy to be alone with me?

Erwin: I am happy in any way.

Deutsche Bank Headquarters, Frankfurt. I returned to Frankfurt to visit the Deutsche Bank with my new Affinities exhibition. Ariane's Affinities had been based on lateral similarities of approach and biography, Daniel Birnbaum's how contemporary art made us think again about modernism — but my pairings had a different purpose.

Ben: I spoke to Tobias and asked him who he wanted to be with and he said he didn't want to be with me...

Ariane: Who did he want to be with? A woman?

Ben: No, he said he really wanted to be with Emil Nolde...

Ariane: So you are on the market again.

Ben: Yes, I'm on the market again.

My curating idea was to make pairing which emphasised the radicality of the works of art.

Ben: I have a very good pairing — this would be with Henri Matisse.

Ariane: Why?

Ben: Different descriptions of women — one from the male perspective and the other, a political critique of representations of the feminine in the twentieth century.

Ariane: Okay the Copleys... yes exactly [In English: heightened reality]

That is absolutely superb. In this instance, I would really consider here if we should make a small change in the layout of the exhibition.

The director of the world's largest corporate collection was very polite to me at first, but curating a show like this meant that every juxtaposition and combination had to have a well-thought-out reason — and soon my curating efforts came under fire. Ariane was very polite to me at first, but soon my curating efforts came under fire.

Ben: Exactly...Naivety, childishness...Yoshitomo Nara and Marc Chagall.

Ariane: If it's about metaphors, then we can put Anselm Kiefer and Diamantos Sotiropoulos together...

Ben: That's so boring.

Ben: I spoke to Inci Eviner and she said she wanted to go with Louise Bourgeois

Ariane: Why?

Ben: Because she says she's inspired by Inci Eviner....

Ariane: Why?

Ben: And she sees a similarity in the use of symbols...

Ariane: I think that if you put these three together you take away the power of each one. To say these works are naïve is like a clip round the ears for Chagall, Nara and Dubuffet...which they don't deserve.

Ben: Sorry

Ariane: Okay

Despite this setback, I pressed on with my key changes.

Ben: I spoke to Clegg and Guttman and this is my big coup... I convinced them they should be with Koons

Ariane: Very nice.

Ben: So now Erwin Wurm is free and his work is called "Don't Trust The Curator", so...

Ariane: Yes?

Ben: Would it be possible to rearrange your show like this?

Ariane: No. Because you and Tobias won't actually be on show in the exhibition, we'd have two gaps. We'd have to take you and Tobias out and then shuffle the deck again.

Ben: But I am also making a work of art.

Ariane: I know.

Ben: I want to be in the exhibition.

Ariane: You are, but you are a hidden pearl in the oyster.

Five Terms to Fly to Space

by Kateryna Radchenko

When I was a child I dreamed of becoming an astronaut. It was not extraordinary as Yuri Gagarin and documentary films about space were shown on a TV screen every day.

I was always flying, but only in my dreams. When I went to school, I decided that in the future I would protect forests from poachers and to drink herbal tea with honey every day. In high school, my dreams changed into a real goal, to become a sports journalist — or even better — a sports photographer. A few years later, my goal was achieved; photography and sports prevailed in my life for four years.

I was recently asked how and why I became an art curator. It turned out to be difficult to answer. Have you ever noticed that our childhood dreams predetermine our adult life? Sometimes they vary and change but they still come true. I didn't become an astronaut (due to collapse of this field in independent Ukraine), but my desire to reach the stars became stronger. It's not so easy to be an art curator; this profession is difficult to obtain in high schools of Ukraine and only now is it gaining popularity. After some time, people just start calling you a "curator" because of your activity.

Being a student, I was full of desire to create fundamentally new art events, invite interesting people and show society what is new in visual art. To implement my first project, I needed this strong desire and a dozen good friends.

A Modern View, 2004

Lack of experience gives courage, creative ideas and the willingness to take risks and under these circumstances, I held my first international festival *A Modern View* in Odessa. It was my first project without experience or money, but I discovered a useful concept, "**barter**", which is the first of my "Five Terms to Fly to Space".

During the winter of 2004, I and seven other students gathered around coffee table in downtown Odessa to discuss new photographs. We were part of the youth art club "7", which at the time had been supported by the Odessa Photography Association. We came up with the idea of inviting young photographers from Lithuania and during that same evening, a four-day festival plan was sketched on a sheet of paper, yet it had to be implemented in reality.

There was a desire to organize a youth festival where all individuals could present their works and easily show their creativity, share ideas and evoke public interest. Yet there was no experience in organizing big projects, finding financial resources

or sponsors. Three months were spent searching for partners, making a technical and daily schedule, writing a budget, inviting participants, writing PRs and articles about *A Modern View* while at the same time attending university. By the end of April, the opening of the *First International Festival of Youth Art: A Modern View* was implemented without financial support, sponsors or other partners, but was driven by a week of extreme motivation.

The festival lasted four days and had several streams of culture to include folk music, video art and other photo projects. There were also prizes, certificates and catalogues. Participants were from Lithuania as well as other Post-Soviet countries and Germany. We launched the project and spent time talking about art and drinking cheap wine at nights on the beach.

The most important part of the event was our courage to act and take risks even when there was no financial support. The older we became, the more we forgot this taste of euphoria after the project ended. Priorities change along with time, but the taste of every first experience in life (a kiss, love, festival) lasts forever...

As organizer of the project, I thought it was the first and the last festival I would ever organize. However, I was wrong because I had made friends from Vilnius, Moscow and Lviv who helped to organize the festival and the result lead to a new project, *Beyond the Borders* which was a photo biennale that took place in 2006.

Beyond the Borders, 2006

As you gain experience, you have more contacts in your phone book and the term "**cooperation**" becomes much broader. At first you feel lonely in this noble, although not profitable, process of cultural management, but later you find more people in other cities or countries with the same way of thinking. These "new contacts" become your friends and partners for new ideas and when you are surrounded by such people you don't feel so lonely when flying to the stars.

It's commonly accepted that money determines everything, but if you try to substitute it with an exchange of some other resources (with physical labor or material goods) you can easily make a project without financial aid. According to this system, *Beyond the Borders* was created to include four photo exhibitions in various art galleries in Odessa and was supported with assistance from volunteers and promotion through other partners. The event lasted one month and included works from the best young Ukrainian and

Lithuanian photographers. One of the brightest parts of exhibition was the work *Trees*, by Karolis Medzikauskas, made of two 1x1 meter black and white canvas paintings. His work initiated discussions on modern photography (i.e., what it is, how tight is the connection between reality and picture and the meaning of concept in the photo art). These events became a starting point for a new trend in Odessa — conceptual youth photography.

Sometime later, when the passion became a bigger part of my life and the projects took more than eight working hours per day, I decided to find out how it had happened. What exactly got out of control that the line between private life work was washed away? After the end of one project, I would say to myself: "That's all! This was the last one and no more." Yet as soon as some part of society began to mess with my soul and mind, I started to develop new art events.

I can't remain calm unless I can express my opinion through art. In this way, I can reflect my inner reaction to social and political events. I'm concerned about what is happening now in the world and in my country which is very "real" and I want to articulate it in artistic way. Influenced by the lack of education in contemporary art in Ukraine, I started delivering lectures on contemporary art in Odessa, inviting modern artists and writers to show what is happening outside our town. It wasn't a popular project, but if at least five of thirty students were interested in new information, it would be a good result.

Trolley Bus № 9, 2010

Once, when visiting an exhibit, I felt frustrated. Every time you meet the same people. The question is — who are these art events organized for? For friends whom you can show your works to while drinking coffee or beer? Working with an "audience" is, perhaps, the most important factor of cultural management. Reporting the aesthetic message to the average citizen is one of the main goals of a curator; to be a communicator between the artist and a society and establish a dialogue between them. If you can't make an audience come to museums or galleries, then you should move your exhibition to the audience and into public places. In this way, *Trolley Bus № 9* appeared with the aim to invade public transport with modern art. One ordinary day turned into a trolley bus artistic playground. The result exceeded all my expectations as the unprepared audience integrated into the new and unusual conditions.

This project developed when people stopped using public transport like trolley busses or trams and replaced them with mini-vans. On April 17, 2010 we launched our first pilot art trolley bus to stress its importance in society. We invited

famous Ukrainian writers who read their works, music bands and held theatre performances. For instance, the Swedish dance tandem Sofia and Joel Gabrielsson started their performance at the bus stop waiting for our trolley bus to arrive and continued inside the trolley astonishing passengers and seizing the whole space in the double movement of the trolley and dancers. The audience consisted of the regular passengers who used public transport daily, but they never regarded it as a ground for creativity and self realization.

But what is this all for? Why should I waste my efforts and energy? Art enriches the soul but rarely wallet. What is the purpose of the existence and functioning of art curators? What is the "result"? Is it the demand of a society or an egocentric culture-vulture enthusiasm and an attempt to draw attention to one's self? There are too many questions, as well as a variety of answers. It is also subjective, yet so pleasant when you can involve a crowd of new people in your space and to see passionate eyes and smiles. In my opinion, this is the outcome that inspires brave, new steps.

I create my projects because I want art to carry this world away. I speak to the audience in an artistic manner and enjoy watching its feedback. However, I do not consider myself an art curator as I was called. A curator is someone who leads a process from A to Z and controls all stages of its development. For me, my work is just the way to the stars because I once dreamed about becoming an astronaut.

Curating as a Methodological Tool

by Maija Rudovska

My task in this essay is not to delve into the theoretical aspects and formulations of curating and neither is it to elucidate what a curator is, what he does and why what he does is necessary for himself or someone else. My aim is rather to detail the tools of this practice (if we may call it that) and their application. To be more precise, how can curating be used as a methodological weapon while the curator is simultaneously working in several fields and disciplines and ignoring the boundaries of these fields and disciplines.

The reason that to some extent has led me to write the essay in this vein is my subjective experience and experiments in the field of curating. Important too is the context and what has shaped it, that is, to be more precise, the fact that I come from Latvia, Eastern Europe. Although my experience has been influenced by many negative aspects — the post-Soviet space with traumatic memories of the past, a traditionally oriented education and constant financial hardship that prevents engaging in long-term initiatives — at the same time this environment offers many positive aspects too — a space that is open to experiments and new creative possibilities where there is greater potential to create new innovative discourses and develop creativity. All these aspects have taught the curator from Eastern Europe to drift from one discipline to another working simultaneously as a professional in several fields and freely crossing and uniting any boundaries at will.

Last year, while studying in the international curators' programme CuratorLab at the Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, I took the opportunity to make use of the open and democratic platform of the study programme in my own interests that is, to conduct an experiment in the field of curating. I was interested in applying curating not as a direct experience based in the discipline itself but rather as a method. In parallel I was engaged in doctoral studies at the Latvian Academy of Art where my subject is the architecture of the Soviet years so I decided to combine the two fields — curating and academic studies. How could I do this? I didn't choose the usual path — to publish on my research theme or organise an exhibition but to do something I hadn't done up till then from which I could learn something new. I've always been interested in the cinema and so I decided to make a film about the house of culture as a phenomenon of the architecture of the Soviet era. I chose a specific building, the VEF Palace of Culture in Riga, a typical example of Stalinist architecture. Moreover, I

attempted to take a step further by creating not just documentary material but combining this with fiction. The idea was to depict an "outsider's" view of the heritage of that time with the help of visually impressive and to a certain extent sentimental scenes. As the curator of this project I chose to work in a team and so I invited people to do the filming (Mārcis Ābele, Māris Zommers) and a young artist from Iran, Shirin Sabahi, who edited the filmed material. Because it was a low-budget project we were only four people in all. The title of the film is *Expired Monument: Story of a Culture Palace*.

The main idea of the project was an experiment, the process itself during which I was interested to know at which moment I had decisive control and at which point the artist or filmmaker gave their contribution. Thus from the very beginning, the conceptual task was presented as a variable and open value. Although the initial idea was mine, in the end the film is a team effort. Conceptually the contribution of Shirin Sabahi was very important. I think in this way I was trying to test curating tools on a different 'surface' by getting into the skin of a director. This, perhaps, could be a classic example of when a curator partly becomes a creator working not only as an artist's assistant but closely alongside the artist taking equivalent positions. Here I would like to quote: "...Art has become a subgenre of 'the Curatorial'. [...] The Curatorial — a practice which goes decisively beyond the making of exhibitions — within a transdisciplinary and transcultural context and exploring it as a genuine method of generating, mediating and reflecting experience and knowledge."¹ Artist Anton Vidokle came out strongly against this in a recent edition of *e-flux*. He poses the question of how far can the work of the curator extend, where are its boundaries, is the curator usurping the role of the artist? "They nevertheless carry with them the danger of lending credibility to something like a potential colonization of artistic practice by academia and a new class of cultural managers,"² as he puts it. Although the problem raised by Vidokle is topical and merits broader discussion, I absolutely disagree with the view that in the sphere of contemporary art we should adhere to such a strict division and that we should cross swords over where and in which way a curator should or should not work.

In the end, the question which I tried to avoid in the beginning must, nevertheless, be asked —

¹ Anton Vidokle. "Art Without Artists?" *e-flux*.

<<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/136>>

² Ibid.

what is a curator? Is he only a mediator, an intermediary, servant or does he in fact become a co-creator, a creative partner? I believe a curator is not only an organizer of exhibitions and their manager; the work of a curator can extend into any field and be expressed in various ways, crossing boundaries and not remaining tied to specific frameworks within a specific discipline. In my opinion this is one of the most essential issues in contemporary art. It cannot be denied that in recent years curating as a practice has strengthened its foothold and in this context we are obliged to speak of its role and power in contemporary art. However, we should bear in mind that curating may be used not only as an institutional tool but rather as a method — an opportunity to cross-pollinate different disciplines or at least to provide a platform where they can meet. In the film *Expired Monument. Story of A Culture Palace* too, I combined my curatorial experience with an interest in various layers of interpretation. This was carried over from an academic discipline into the creative, freely organisable environment of video. In addition, this provided the people involved in this project with a field for experimental expression and the opportunity to enjoy the creative process as a team effort. To sum up, I would like to quote Norwegian art historian Jorunn Veiteberg: "There is no longer one dominant view on art, but a multitude of views (...) the late-modernist concept of "crossover" which became fashionable in the 1980s is already *passé*. Contemporary postmodern artists are no longer interested in crossing boundaries within art; they simply take no notice of them. As the Swedish ceramicist Pontus Lindvall said, "Instead of crossing boundaries, you can just ignore them," or to put it in sociological terms, "They do not try to shift the boundaries but prefer to leap over them from one field to another instead. They move freely between art, design, and applied arts, including advertising."³ I would like to relate Veiteberg's words also to the practice of curating, but on this much discussion lies ahead.

Translated by Andris Mellakauls

³ Jorunn Veiteberg. *Craft in Transition*. Bergen National Academy of the Arts. 2005. P. 13

We Are for a Curating

by Username

We are for a curating that is political-erotic-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum.

We are for a curating that grows up not knowing it is curating at all, a curating given the chance of having a starting point of zero.

We are for a curating that embroils itself with the everyday crap & still comes out on top.

We are for a curating that imitates the human, that is comic, if necessary, or violent, or whatever is necessary.

We are for a curating that takes its form from the lines of life itself, that twists and extends and accumulates and spits and drips, and is heavy and coarse and blunt and sweet and stupid as life itself.

We are for a curating who vanishes, turning up in a white cap painting signs or hallways.

We are for a curating that comes out of a chimney like black hair and scatters in the sky.

We are for a curating that spills out of an old man's purse when he is bounced off a passing fender.

We are for curating out of a doggy's mouth, falling five stories from the roof.

We are for the curating that a kid licks, after peeling away the wrapper.

We are for a curating that joggles like everyone's knees, when the bus traverses an excavation.

We are for a curating that is smoked, like a cigarette, smells, like a pair of shoes.

We are for curating that flaps like a flag or helps blow noses, like a handkerchief.

We are for curating that is put on and taken off, like pants, which develops holes, like socks, which is eaten, like a piece of pie, or abandoned with great contempt, like a piece of shit.

We are for curating covered with bandages, We are for curating that limps and rolls and runs and jumps. We are for curating that comes in a can or washes up on the shore.

We are for curating that coils and grunts like a wrestler. We are for curating that sheds hair.

We are for curating you can sit on. We are for curating you can pick your nose with or stub your toes on.

We are for curating from a pocket, from deep channels of the ear, from the edge of a knife, from the corners of the mouth, stuck in the eye or worn on the wrist.

We are for curating under the skirts, and the art of pinching cockroaches.

We are for the curating of conversation between the sidewalk and a blind man's metal stick.

We are for the curating that grows in a pot, that comes down out of the skies at night, like lightning, that hides in the clouds and grows. We are for curating that is flipped on and off with a switch.

We are for curating that unfolds like a map, that you can squeeze, like your sweetie's arm, or kiss, like a pet dog. Which expands and squeaks, like an accordion, which you can spill your dinner on, like an old tablecloth.

We are for a curating that you can hammer with, stitch with, sew with, paste with, file with.

We are for a curating that tells you the time of day, or where such and such a street is.

We are for a curating that helps old ladies across the street.

We are for the curating of the washing machine. We are for the curating of a government check. We are for the curating of last wars raincoat.

We are for a curating that comes up in fogs from sewer-holes in winter. We are the curating that splits when you step on a frozen puddle. We are for the worms curating inside the apple. We are for the curating of sweat that develops between crossed legs.

We are for the curating of neck-hair and caked tea-cups, for the curating between the tines of restaurant forks, for the odor of boiling dishwater.

We are for the curating of sailing on Sunday, and the curating of red and white gasoline pumps.

We are for the curating of bright blue factory columns and blinking biscuit signs.

We are for the curating of cheap plaster and enamel. We are for the curating of worn marble and smashed slate. We are for the curating of rolling cobblestones and sliding sand. We are for the curating of slag and black coal. We are for the curating of dead birds.

We are for the curating of scratchings in the asphalt, daubing at the walls. We are for the art of bending and kicking metal and breaking glass, and pulling at things to make them fall down. We are for the curating of punching and skinned knees and sat-on bananas. We are for the curating of kids' smells. We are for the curating of mama-babble.

We are for the curating of bar-babble, tooth-picking, beerdrinking, egg-salting, in-sulting. We are for the curating of falling off a barstool. We are for the curating of underwear and the art of taxicabs. We are for the curating of ice-cream cones dropped on concrete. We are for the majestic curating of dog-turds, rising like cathedrals. We are for the blinking curating, lighting up the night. We are for curating falling, splashing, wiggling, jumping, going on and off. We are for the curating of fat truck-tires and black eyes.

We are for Kool-curating, 7-UP curating, Pepsi-curating, Sunshine curating, 39 cents curating, 15 cents curating, Vatrol curating, Dro-bomb curating, Vam curating, Menthol curating, L & M curating, Ex-lax curating, Venida curating, Heaven Hill curating, Pamryl curating, San-o-med curating, Rx curating, 9.99 curating, Now curating, New curating, How curating, Fire sale curating, Last Chance curating, Only curating, Diamond curating, Tomorrow curating, Franks curating, Ducks curating, Meat-o-rama curating.

We are for the curating of bread wet by rain. We are for the rat's dance between floors. We are for the curating of flies walking on a slick pear in the electric light. We are for the curating of soggy onions and firm green shoots. We are for the curating of clicking among the nuts when the roaches come and go. We are for the brown sad curating of rotting apples. We are for the curating of meowls and clatter of cats and for the curating of their dumb electric eyes.

We are for the white curating of refrigerators and their muscular openings and closing. We are for the curating of rust and mould. We are for the curating of hearts, funeral hearts or sweetheart hearts, full of nougat. We are for the curating of worn meathooks and singing barrels of red, white, blue and yellow meat.

We are for the curating of things lost or thrown away, coming home from school. We are for the curating of cock-and-ball trees and flying cows and the noise of rectangles and squares. We are for the curating of crayons and weak grey pencil-lead, and grainy wash and sticky oil paint, and the curating of

windshield wipers and the curating of the finger on a cold window, on dusty steel or in the bubbles on the sides of a bathtub.

We are for the curating of teddy-bears and guns and decapitated rabbits, exploded umbrellas, raped beds, chairs with their brown bones broken, burning trees, firecracker ends, chicken bones, pigeon bones, and boxes with men sleeping in them.

We are for the curating of slightly rotten funeral flowers, hung bloody rabbits and wrinkly yellow chickens, bass drums & tambourines, and plastic phonographs.

We are for the curating of abandoned boxes, tied like pharaohs. We are for a curating of watertanks and speeding clouds and flapping shades. We are for U.S. Government Inspected Curating, Grade A Curating, Regular Price Curating, Yellow Ripe Curating, Extra Fancy Curating, Ready-to-eat Curating, Best-for-less curating, Ready-to-cook curating, Fully cleaned curating, Spend Less curating, Eat Better curating, Ham curating, Pork curating, chicken curating, tomato curating, bana curating, apple curating, turkey curating, cake curating, cookie curating. add:

We are for a curating that is combed down, that is hung from each ear, that is laid on the lips and under the eyes, that is shaved from the legs, that is brushed on the teeth, that is fixed on the thighs, that is slipped on the foot. square which becomes blobby

This is a free interpretation of International Festival's famous rewriting of Claes Oldenburg's text "I Am for an Art" (1961).

An Alternative to 'Swiss' Money

by Yulia Usova

There is no such thing as corporate art. There is art created by artists and there are corporations, which collect it...

The British Consultancy Agency, Art & Business

Having eight years experience in corporate PR and advertising, and a strong interest in the arts and culture, I progressed to a Master's course in International Curating Management at Stockholm University, Sweden. It helped me to strengthen my interests and introduced me to such aspects as change through democracy and culture, aesthetic management and corporate social responsibility. Since my graduation in 2008, I have pursued a career as a freelance curator, taking part in various projects on an international level.

I see my previous experience in the corporate sphere as a strong advantage for establishing a dialogue between art and business in order to promote the support of art and culture. In this article, I argue in favor of cooperation between art and business or, at least, the possibility of it and I discuss this relationship using examples from both artistic and curatorial perspectives.

This area of research has already been explored by scholars in the west and enlightenment can be found in many books. However, I believe that an overview of relevant aspects will be helpful and of immediate use to many of today's cultural operators both in Eastern Europe, which historically and consistently has limited funding, and those in the west who are experiencing significant cuts from the public purse and where only a few have successfully established a cooperative relationship with private sponsors.

'Swiss' Money

To start with, I recollect a conversation held at an outdoor coffee table on a hot afternoon in Yerevan a few years ago. While waiting for other international participants to arrive to a workshop I was attending, myself and a female duo of Armenian artists engaged in an introductory conversation about each other's practices. When I mentioned to them my interest in different forms of cooperation between art and business, their immediate reaction was disgust. They asked whether it was simply research or my professional practice as such and subsequently questioned the morals of it.

Indeed, it was not the first time I experienced such a reaction. Many artists who are contemporary pioneers in the sphere of art and business and relevant to my research have warned me that this 'magic' combination of words could in most cases trigger a negative reaction among other art

practitioners and it would be wiser to disguise it under such terms as art and organizing.¹

Perhaps it is wiser, but not accurate because I consider that art and organizing is just one of the many forms of art and business cooperation and therefore can't be a substitute for the other.

Returning to my aforementioned conversation with the two artists I asked, "So where do you get your funding from?" I was curious what they would say knowing the position of Armenia with its problematic past and present with a still dominant patriarchal tradition in society, particularly within the arts. I already knew that the collective had their own space, library and some prime financial resources to support their challenging and quite controversial (in the Armenian context) practices. "Well, we do not work with any corporations or businesses! And we would never put their logos on our posters" they said eloquently and unambiguously. "We receive our funding from a Swiss foundation..." Once they told me this, I thought to myself, "Don't they realize these foundations can be just as 'corrupt' as any business?" I doubt there are many foundations in the world who can argue their financial resources are 'clean' from arms industries, environmental and human abuse, and are subject to fair trade and wages. I don't want to go too deep into this matter, but in any case, even those who wish their funding to come from such sources would still fail to trace all links of the chain.

Certainly, I have no right to argue that the Swiss foundation in question poses these negative characteristics. Instead, I'd like to emphasize the fact that these two artists rejected the idea of cooperation with business so dismissively and definitely and this is very much the point I am trying to resolve in this text.

Another point to underline is how funding of public museums and institutions (except private ones) also comes from tax payers, which consists of the corporate sector. Yet, we often see a cultural institution as something sacred that exists above these mundane problems. Furthermore, one can also think of several examples where art is employed to serve the system. In the modern understanding of a democratic state we can talk

¹ Dutch artist Teike Asselbergs provides the following description of art and organizing practice as "artists that work with people in organizations and/or reflect in their art projects on existential questions in/of organizations or working life."

about institutionalization of art—a situation when artists and other cultural operators have to adapt to this or that cultural policy (literally adjusting their applications) and hence, political agenda in order to receive funding. However, neither is an objective of this text.

I believe what the artists' reactions really indicated was a fear of threat and a potential danger to their artistic practices and integrity.

A threat or an opportunity?

Another instance of an artist's negative attitude toward the corporate world was a remark made by a Ukrainian artist regarding those working for companies. "He thinks he can work a bit in design, and then—'bang'—he is 'back' and can be an artist again? No way! An 'office' has a profound negative impact on one's artistic practice."

Hasn't he heard about Andy Warhol?

Corporate influence on artistic integrity and on curatorial practice can be considerable, and is not always positive. But one may produce absolutely the same argument for artists working with a commercial gallery. Does it mean that artists must support the views and the ideas of their sponsors, collectors or art-dealers through their works? It is highly unlikely today.

The Russian art critic and curator Kateryna Degot explains, "[n]either in Germany, nor in France, nor in the USA does contemporary art (at least, active contemporary artists) have a personal connection to capital and express its interests. What is more, capital does not expect and does not need it." She also argues that there already are some instances of 'civilized patrons' (an emerging class of new bourgeoisie) in Russia who highly respect the artist.²

In any case, the number of corporations, i.e. potential sponsors in our case, outweighs the number of cultural foundations when compared to the growing number of art projects and initiatives that need funding.

Forms of cooperation

Based on my current research, I see that the relationship between art and business is part of an old tradition in the west. Today, many companies embellish their business premises with high-quality collections (UBS, Deutsche Bank, Saatchi&Saatchi, Telenor), open corporate museums (Mercedes, Zegna), sponsor cultural events (Unilever), and also welcome artistic involvement in educational activities (Copenhagen School of Business, London Business School) or even involve artists in the



Telenor headquarters. Fornebu, Norway.

production of business reports, advertising campaigns and training strategies. Some companies establish their own art prizes (Citibank, Furla, MaxMara), bring artistic performance and artists in residence to the work place (Zegna Group, Microsoft), and arrange arts-based training (Halifax, The UniCredit Group.³)

While some artists have their doubts, there are other artists whose practices are well integrated in the economic system. What is more, they successfully use it as a tool, an environment, an object and a subject for their artistic practices. There are several artists in Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK among others using this to their advantage. Here are some interesting examples provided by four artists:

Henrik Schrat (b. 1968, Berlin, Germany)

Ever since his first project for the cultural foundation of Dresdner Bank in 1999, Schrat's work has been infected by the economic system; the artist simply became an ethnologist of the economic system. Today he is deeply steeped in organizational theory and critical management studies. Schrat works repeatedly with institutions at the center of the political and economic establishment, that is, with economic foundations, banks, the German Bundestag—he is here by no means an 'embedded artist' but rather an alert commentator. The fact that these institutions voluntarily put the Schrat louse in their fur simply serves as proof of the confusing ambiguity and complexity of modern power structures one must face up to: the artist's strategy is concentrated description rather than escapism.

Some of the projects initiated and curated by Henrik Schrat include *Produkt & Vision* (Berlin,

² <http://www.openspace.ru/art/projects/121/details/18163/>

³ The UniCredit group can serve as an example for almost all of the mentioned activities.

2005) where the artist realized a chain story written by the employees of the company. *Swarm* realized at GASAG, Berlin in 2006. *Swarm* stands for the intelligence and ability of an organization to learn and produced through the interaction of many individuals involved. In this form, the GASAG company is a swarm of employees, working together. *Made in India* (Mysore, India; Berlin, Germany; 2007) is dedicated to the issue of outsourcing in a world of economic globalization.



"Outsourcing" by Henrik Schrat, 2007.

Kent Hansen (b.1962, Copenhagen, Denmark)

Over an extensive period of time, Kent Hansen has functioned as an international pioneer in the interplay between art, organizations and working life issues. He realized a number of joint projects with the structures of different institutions and organizations, including corporate businesses. Hansen was also affiliated with Centre for Art and Leadership, Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy, Copenhagen Business School.

Teike Asselbergs (b.1973, the Netherlands) and **Elias Tieleman** (b.1970, England) have worked together since 1997 on their initiative *Orgacom* (www.orgacom.nl) which focuses on visualizing the culture of organizations (companies as well as non-profit organizations) and other groups of people (classes, municipal quarters) through contemporary art. When culture is defined as the symbolic representation of the values that a group of people cherishes, and art as a professional area, then *Orgacom* researches the overlap of these domains. Apart from this main theme, *Orgacom* has been researching and making work about the relationship between art and economy, art and organization and future plausible art-worlds.

Today there are many forms of engagement to choose from. An artist can even dedicate his practice on scrutinizing institutions, their funding sources and business ethics just like the legendary German-American artist Hans Haacke did. Why not see business like a research field, a source of inspiration or critique?

A role for a curator

Regardless of his or her practice, an artist may one day end up at the negotiating table with potential sponsors such as an event organizer (who might be local politicians, community workers or representatives of the corporate world), and might feel more confident in asking for or accepting the money not seeing it as a threat to artistic production and integrity, but as a possibility for new cooperation and creativity.

In this case, a curator can possibly act as a mediator and a negotiator (isn't he or she already a jack of all trades and a scapegoat?) Apart from one of the curator's roles to be a mediator between the art, artist and the public, he/she can become a link between the former and the sponsor, seeking and handling all issues related to the funding, hence liberating an artist from the financial routine and skillfully putting it to mutual benefit.

Indeed, why not turn the tables around and change the roles, from 'beggar' to a strong partnership and approach a sponsor directly by providing him with arguments in favor of art sponsorship? With this in mind, my own experiences in seeking business sponsorship for a project I curated in 2008 was rather successful. I convinced three Ukrainian companies (A, B, C), that it would be appropriate for them to provide financial support for the project, but in turn, each company had particular demands regarding the benefits of its support.

Using my past experiences as a PR and advertising manager, I outlined solid commercial benefits through their being associated with this particular venture in my initial offer to my potential sponsors. Being familiar with the local media market and having practical experience in publicity, I promised that the sponsor would receive exposure in the press as well as other smaller benefits such as using their logo on the entire exhibition's marketing collateral. Four months before the actual time of my exhibition, I wrote 10 letters to different companies asking for support. The level of my contacts varied from a marketing manager to a company owner or executive. No one said 'no' directly, but most of them needed more time to think or ask additional questions. Naturally, no one was eager to provide the money. Later,

negotiations progressed to a second stage with representatives of three companies: a top manager of an IT company (Company A), an assistant to the director of an energy company (Company B) and an editor of an IT magazine (Company C). All of them took a personal interest in supporting the exhibition and continued to negotiate the sponsorship with their bosses.

As a result, a positive decision was made and Company A provided a substantial sum and Company B a rather more modest sum. Company C provided a free space for the publication that I planned to use for the publicity for both Company A and Company C. An important remark—neither of these companies influenced my curatorial work or the work of the artists even though the projects held some controversy. I connect it to the fact that ‘business’ respects others’ competency and would not interfere in something beyond its field of proficiency.

Arguments and recommendations

In addition, I’d like to provide reasons for why art and businesses should cooperate and have outlined a simple guide which can also be used by artists or curators when approaching a prospective business sponsor. It may also help both sides to establish a rationale for such cooperation and to define the benefits. When there are many different activities to engage in, why should a business, which may already be sponsoring sports or television programs, invest in arts sponsorship?

Six strengths of arts sponsorship for a company:

- 1) Attracting key decision-makers to events
-The arts provide an effective way to influence senior clients and other key decision-makers.
- 2) Involving politicians
-Politicians want these sorts of companies on their side and they view them positively.
- 3) Generating goodwill for the sponsor
-Demonstrating their human face and corporate social responsibility (CSR).⁴
- 4) Creating good stories
-Journalists are interested in innovative companies and shareholders want to invest in them.
- 5) Building brand values of creativity and innovation
-Part of a long-term strategy of a company.
- 6) Value for money
-Unlike the millions usually required for sports sponsorship the sums required for those in the arts are relatively modest.⁵

Chris Hadfield also points out that aesthetic experience can provide a foundation for human connectedness that reaches deeper than do connections based in technical solutions alone. What is more, specific practices modeled by artists can generate ideas for improving the organizing and communicative practices of business.⁶

On the basis of my experience and the information given above, I came to the following practical recommendations. First, it is better to make clear the potential benefits and limitations to the sponsors at the very beginning since very often it is impossible to approach people twice and you need to be ready with all necessary information. For that purpose, it is important to undertake preliminary research, establishing basic facts about the company. Second, it is a big plus to know at least one person within the company (not necessarily a top manager), who can connect you with the decision-makers and help to keep negotiations going when they seem to cease, serving as ‘an internal lobbyist’. Third, it is of high importance to keep your promises and to keep your sponsors informed and happy. You may need them again and your reputation is one of your strongest assets. And finally, in my opinion, business and private sponsorship can be considered as a possible support for art and culture in place of an absent state or institutional support, such as countries like Ukraine and Armenia for example. It can be an alternative to limited art grant programs initiated by private charity foundations whose activities are rather uneven and whose policy of grant allocation is unclear.

I believe that a new generation of managers and art operators will be able to start a dialogue, find unique ways to cooperate and eventually, establish a favorable milieu for sponsorship and patronage of art, raising the prestige of such social partnership.

⁴ According to Mallen Baker CSR is about how companies manage the business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society.

⁵ David Cowan. *Forensics: An evidence based case for arts sponsorship*. 2005. <http://www.aandb.org.uk>

⁶ ‘A Creative Education’ written for Art & Business.

A Curator's Diary of Humiliation and Disgrace

by Iliana Veinberga

Zeige mir Deine Wunde.
Joseph Beuys

It was a lovely Thursday morning, the 1st of September which in this country (Latvia) is the first day of the school year, therefore streets and vehicles are filled with smaller and more grown-up school children. They were absent during the summer season, mostly spending their time in the country, but now, almost overnight, every place was flooded by festive looking, vibrant young people. Especially captivating were the high-school boys and girls, with their sleek limbs, sexy dress, makeup and the fact that 1st September happened to be a nice bright sunny summer day and most of them after the official registration will go to the beach and return in the evening for some club or pub (never mind the age limit). So these people were crowding the bus and tram stops. And they were cramming in the buses and trams. And there was I. Sitting in a trolleybus at 09:00 in the morning in plain clothes, with no much make up and definitely no amazing hairdo, holding in my both hands two big shopping bags (from the cheapest commodity shop in Latvia), containing a vacuum cleaner, broom, mop, glass cleaner and other items. Although the age difference between everyday me and the primped up younger generation didn't seem that great, the contrast was stark enough—beautiful, bright people with a possibly beautiful and bright future and then me, relatively young, but apparently missing out on all the opportunities in life—as how else could I have ended up looking like a cleaning lady?

Actually I was going to the Berga Bazārs: one of the historical—and nowadays high-end—districts in Riga, to set up an exhibition where around ten artists would present unique works in the framework of Latvian Contemporary Art Centre's—one of the most important institutions for contemporary art in Latvia—annual festival "Survival Kit". In addition I hold a Masters degree in art history from the Art Academy of Latvia, and am a PhD student of the same discipline; in my short career I had already worked for and in collaboration with a number of major local art institutions and figures, translated art historical texts, published reviews, interviews, essays and other materials for more than five years in local newspapers and visual arts, art history and theory magazines, not to mention delivering lectures, being in charge of diploma works, participating in conferences and research projects. But there I am, looking like a janitor, people looking at me with pity. How come?

Have you ever heard of a 'cargo cult'? You can

easily google this phenomenon. I like this example as it shows a particular way of reasoning, which sees the coherence of actions but doesn't see their causality; therefore it can mimic the appearance of the action, but cannot reproduce the action itself and its consequences. A similar picture can be seen in Latvian culture, and especially the art sphere's institutions and policies. Every civilized country has an Art Museum; if Latvia wants to be civilized it must have one, too. Every developed country has Contemporary Art, participates in Biennale X, Y, Z, plays in an Art Market, therefore Latvia also has to tick off those must-haves in order to become Developed. It is not a problem in itself. Of course one should be aware of rules and conditions in the art-world on a global scale. The real problem here is the content of those actions and the procedures employed to make it work. Philosopher Bernard Williams—in regard to Mediterranean cultures of Ancient Greece—made a nice distinction between a 'culture of honour' and 'functional' culture. Although this division in Williams' philosophy has a different aim and purpose, I think the formulation is handy for illustrating the apparent dichotomy between 'living the life' and 'keeping up appearances'. To keep those two in balance seems to be a great problem for countries with turbulent pasts and fractured identities, especially when resources come into play. Distribution of resources—the most valuable of all being Money, cash—usually happens according to some priorities, goals, and objectives that cultural and artistic projects are expected to meet. And if the bottom line of those priorities, goals and set objectives is 'to keep up appearances' (and in the local context—to keep up *national* appearances), then the question arises: is this all there is? Is this all there could or should be?

It is at this point where I start to feel discomfort and, using Mick Jagger's words, "can't get no satisfaction". If I just look around; as an active art-event-consumer if I just for a second reflect on my own experiences, I see so many things—tiny and not so tiny—that could be done differently, in a better, more precise way, giving art more forceful character, allowing it to leave a more profound impact. Why not make these changes?

First, art can be site-specific. Then also curatorial practices should be place-specific, not in the sense of *venue*, but rather in the particular conditions—moulded by aspects such as historical background, traditions, social and psychological factors—of which a curator should be aware in order to best

articulate what he or she is curating. Further: what are the priorities of funding bodies (are they good? Should they be changed?) In what manner and according to what principles can an artist work and in what context can he see his work made public (should it be taken into consideration and to what extent?) What are the expectations and preconceptions of the (local) viewer, how could these be transformed, should they be transformed, for what ends should they be transformed? It is possible to gloss over all those conditions and to work with theoretical or philosophical ideas on a meta-level, making all those questions just a matter of management, but I personally take pleasure in engaging with all the relevant parties on a level rewarding to us. In my practice it is me, addressing particular people in a particular manner: inviting them to experience a particular work or event or idea, designing this meeting for it to be meaningful, in the best cases — to be meaningful in an unpremeditated and stimulating way. I take all the responsibility and am very direct and personal. And if in the end it works, if all the pieces stick together — that is my greatest satisfaction.

It sounds good and almost every curator could say such things about their own practice. But you should try doing it here, in Latvia. In a country with traditional, formal, even stiff ways of doing things, with beliefs that are 'always true' and therefore seldom reflected upon, and where an invitation to reflect is in many cases regarded as a threat to the existing status quo. And above all - the condition of economic crisis when there are 'more important things to care about than art' and 'no money whatsoever' to be spent or given — especially for culture — adding an extra pressure. Refuse to submit to the established way of doing things and the predictable, established results it will produce and you get even less money for your project. But, hey, you don't dilute the basic idea and you still have at least some money and you can scratch together some other resources, not only cash! And you can always get from sources where you don't have to report how it's spent, so, you can put it where it really matters. Then there is your idea of what you want to do and to achieve and there appear to be artists who head in the same direction; together you develop the idea, shaping it, but still allowing a lot of free space for each other to roam. The ideas always get more radical, the signification more clear when working in a group rather than alone, and I love it!

'Museum' — a critique of collection development in national museums — for the Lcca contemporary art festival 'Survival Kit II' (September 2010) was the first project I made, being in charge of everything, starting from the idea and its proposal to the institution right up to the implementation

when all the artists came and put up the exhibition for hundreds to see. All the work I had previously done in the art field was either initiating ideas for others to carry out, or carrying out ideas which others had conceived, doing the managerial stuff, all the technical details, or assisting the coordinator. Mostly in order to 'get the experience'. But this time it was me completely in charge of what was going on and why and how and therefore I saw it as my first *real* curatorial work as, firstly, I really could push through my interests, beliefs and make my statements as a full scale member of the *art-world*, albeit the local one. Secondly, I could do it in a manner which I considered to be right and worthy, especially in the context of local habits and traditions... and it worked!

The main theme of 'Survival Kit II' was the survival strategies (with the emphasis on DIY) that would benefit society in the long term, and via practical implementation would tie a positive bond between artists and 'society'. Our group used SKII as a platform for our own survival as artists and curators and the idea we presented was based on an obvious but very little acknowledged feature of Latvian people: the ability to be creative and come up with various DIY survival strategies on a daily basis for the last 20 tumultuous years! For example artists — they have hundreds of magnificent ideas stemming from mundane observations but somehow these are seldom developed into a public result, going public instead with something that is 'appropriate' and comprehensible. I was fascinated with this dichotomy between 'public' practice and the one carried out in 'private', in studios, debated in kitchens and reduced to a joke or improbability; if carried out then seen only by friends, etc. I wanted to expose this hibernating accumulation of creative energy and ideas as a stock, a kit with which to survive the crisis, to turn hard times into good ones.

Coincidentally in the first meetings, while looking for the theme under which to bring the diverse artists together, some pivotal artists pointed out that they had been thinking about institutions (gallery, print workshop and museum) and what would they be like and work like if they ran one according to their own artistic discretion. So in the end there were seven artists, most of them well known, doing things they had never done (for the public) before, in way that was also unique for them in a daily changing 'permanent exhibition' and three 'collections'. We also experimented with the format of contextual information for the exhibition, not explaining anything to anyone but instead writing an extended essay — which was fully read only by two visitors, indicating an overall inability to concentrate on texts longer than three paragraphs of a press release. In *'Museum' or the essay about disobedience to the symbolic order of things*, we

critically played upon the strategies of the Latvian National Art Museums' collection and exhibition making practice. In the end the actual exhibition looked like a good, average contemporary art exhibition with a slight difference: that the known artists were seen in a different light and that our crew had a really great and gratifying time together. Most of the everyday viewers didn't get the point and didn't see the point in making an exhibition such as ours but on another hand, there were a lot of artists and people from creative fields who came to see the exhibition several times, advised their friends and acquaintances to come and see it, too, before it closed and asked if it was possible to bring the exhibition to other cities as well, saying "we have long been needing something like this".

At the very same time I was curating the final part of the two year biotech-art/literature theory project 'In the Penal Colony. Corporeal writing' where biologists in laboratories meddled with DNA in order for philosophers to be able to present and interpret Franz Kafka's story "In the Penal Colony" in a completely new (or rather *updated*) light and for artists (animation, sound, installation) to find a sensory way to present the finesse of this endeavour. The teams of both projects had the vision of where, how, and why things should be arranged. Curating two independent projects almost simultaneously put me under great pressure. But since then I have discovered that I like working in stressful conditions, responding to changing situations and dealing with all those unexpected twists and turns twenty-four hours a day. I think the most important thing is to maintain the revolutionary potential of art, its ability to create a locus where different rules apply, to undermine master-narratives and therefore I believe one should not compromise with time and other limits. As Rudolf Nureyev said when working with some ballet troupe: "You will never have a good ballet here, 'cause you have unions and dance according to the timetables." I tend to agree that the creative process has its own specific timing and framing and it should be taken into account rather than merged with 09:00-17:00 routines of other working people.

Where do humiliation and disgrace come in this picture? Well, it seems to be impossible to carry out any project in its originally intended form: all aspects become so transformed on the way that the result in the end is not 'a result, but the closest one could get to the original idea in the given conditions. And it should be evaluated as such (this one goes out to the many fierce critics of art's quality in Latvia!) And, oh boy, you wouldn't believe how many and what kind of 'conditions' there can pop up!!! Murphy would run out of laws! Apart

from issues with resources, that appear in many forms, another problem is that people involved in the art world are just human beings with their ups and downs, their education and understanding or lack of it, ambitions, rights and so on. Which is nothing to be ashamed of; the problem is that one would like to look super-professional and not like someone who makes human mistakes. And if you do not care about your status, you either fall out of the circle of famous and powerful people of the local art world or constantly have to fight the feeling of shame, guilt and inadequacy. In the end the curator is riding in a trolley bus with a vacuum cleaner in a sack. And the curator calms down artists whose activities are not mentioned in the publicity information as the PR lady can't get the data right even after the second, third, fourth and fifth time. Media coverage is erroneous. Someone does things late and someone does them too early, someone mixes up everything entirely. Dates, times and venues are changed on the hoof, requests to upsize or downsize events come in at the last minute. Someone praises the exhibition as unique and long-needed, someone else threatens to close it before it's even open.

In the end all this chaos should stay behind the scenes as the viewer should get only the beautiful and neat 'product'.

Should it really? Why not make something out of it? The groups of 'Museum' and 'In the Penal colony. Corporeal writing' projects perceived the state of things as inevitable and therefore a bit absurd in a Kafkaesque manner — with lots of humour. Being a 'loser' became a source of pride, some kind of identity, a very rich one as it allowed us to move freely in the zone where others had to stay formal, keeping up appearances. *Zeig mir deine Wunde* as Joseph Beuys once put it in order for the German people to come to terms with their own traumatic past. *Ich zeige dir mein Fett*. And I/it will help you to heal. I believe this is what is needed in the Latvian art-world. To be true to oneself, admit things one would rather keep secret. Not because of some global art market, or some authority, 'civilization' or whatever sounds appealing, but for one's own wellbeing. Yes, it can be linked to social or political activism, yes, it can be a question of civic society or development of infrastructure and competence rather than creating art and curating art exhibitions. It is possible that in some other countries all of this has ceased to be an issue or is delegated to other spheres of human activity but, hey, we are talking here about the specific conditions of curating in Latvia, aren't we?

Occupy the Walls: The International Guerrilla Video Festival

by Jason Waite

As the ideal modernist city — characterized by the efficient and continuous flow of capital and people — becomes ubiquitous, urban space has shifted towards an increasingly smooth and singular space, leaving deviation and difference under threat from the flattening forces of modernity. The trans-formation, taking place in a variety of spheres, extends beyond the material architecture to effect how space itself is articulated. As Henri Lefebvre notes, “we are confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global. Not to mention nature’s (physical) space, the space of (energy) flows, and so on.”¹ Within this expanded concept of space, comprised of multiple dimensions with a constantly shifting set of layers, there is an urgency for strategies of visibility which are able to transect and provide a means of seeing through. A form of “drilling rather than excavating” in the words of Walter Benjamin, in order to keep the various layer intact while being able to provide a path to view them in their setting with their relationships intact.²

The International Guerrilla Video Festival (IGVFest) was initiated in 2006 as a means to combat the monopoly of the billboards, advertisements and screens that have come to dominate the urban landscape. It works with artists and communities in sites of contention to articulate the diversity of perspectives, share stories and provide a public platform to intervene directly on the city itself through mobile exhibitions. These interactions open up the visual environment, moving beyond the concerns of the market to engage with the discourses of the social arena. The videos, comprised of works originating inside the community as well as from artists working in different locations, are projected onto monuments, buildings and temporary structures, providing a site for communal gathering where a multiplicity of voices can emerge to create new informal networks of knowledge.

The festival moves through the city to sites of contention involving: the confluence of visible and unperceived boundaries, the effect of past and present migrations, and idiosyncratic architecture

in the landscape. The site itself becomes an integral part of the exhibition. It enters into a process of exchange, whereby its particular characteristics form and alter the artwork as the videos themselves simultaneously inscribe another identity on the space.

IGVFest draws on the Situationist idea of the *dérive*, described by Debord as a mode of interacting with space through a type of wandering that reconfigures the subjective encounter with the area.³ Research is undertaken through different forms of engagement with the communities and each distinct territory which is then configured by the subject into a map of sorts that encompasses a reflection of the experience rather than its physical representation. Mapping and elaboration on the space itself is a mode of transversing the many layers present in any site. The IGVFest embodies this spirit of the *dérive* and aims to facilitate individual journeys through urban space for the spectators and participants.

The portable festival uses a GPU (Guerrilla Projector Unit) to project the videos onto the surfaces of the city. Composed of a multi-channel sound system, digital projector and self-contained power source, the GPU is a completely autonomous cinema-on-wheels. The design enables rapid incursions into the public arena to show a number of different artists’ videos at different locations during an evening. This fluidity allows the festival to utilize hit and run tactics to open up new strategies of spontaneity and potential in an urban context fortified by advertisements. Billboards can be transformed from outlets of commercial messages into sites of exchange that encourage discussion instead of consumption, interaction instead of isolation, and landmarks for the community instead of the market.

As an extension of the IGVFest platform and to further distribute agency, the accompanying diagram outlines the design of the GPU and its components. Rather than a readymade curatorial solution, the model should be considered an open source toolbox that can be utilized, modified and elaborated on to create a variety of aesthetic strategies that also have the ability to extend beyond the yard of art.

¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) p. 8.

² Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (Pimlico: London, 1999) p. 47.

³ Guy Debord, *Theory of the Dérive*, in *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981).

International Guerrilla Video Festival Mobile Projection Platform

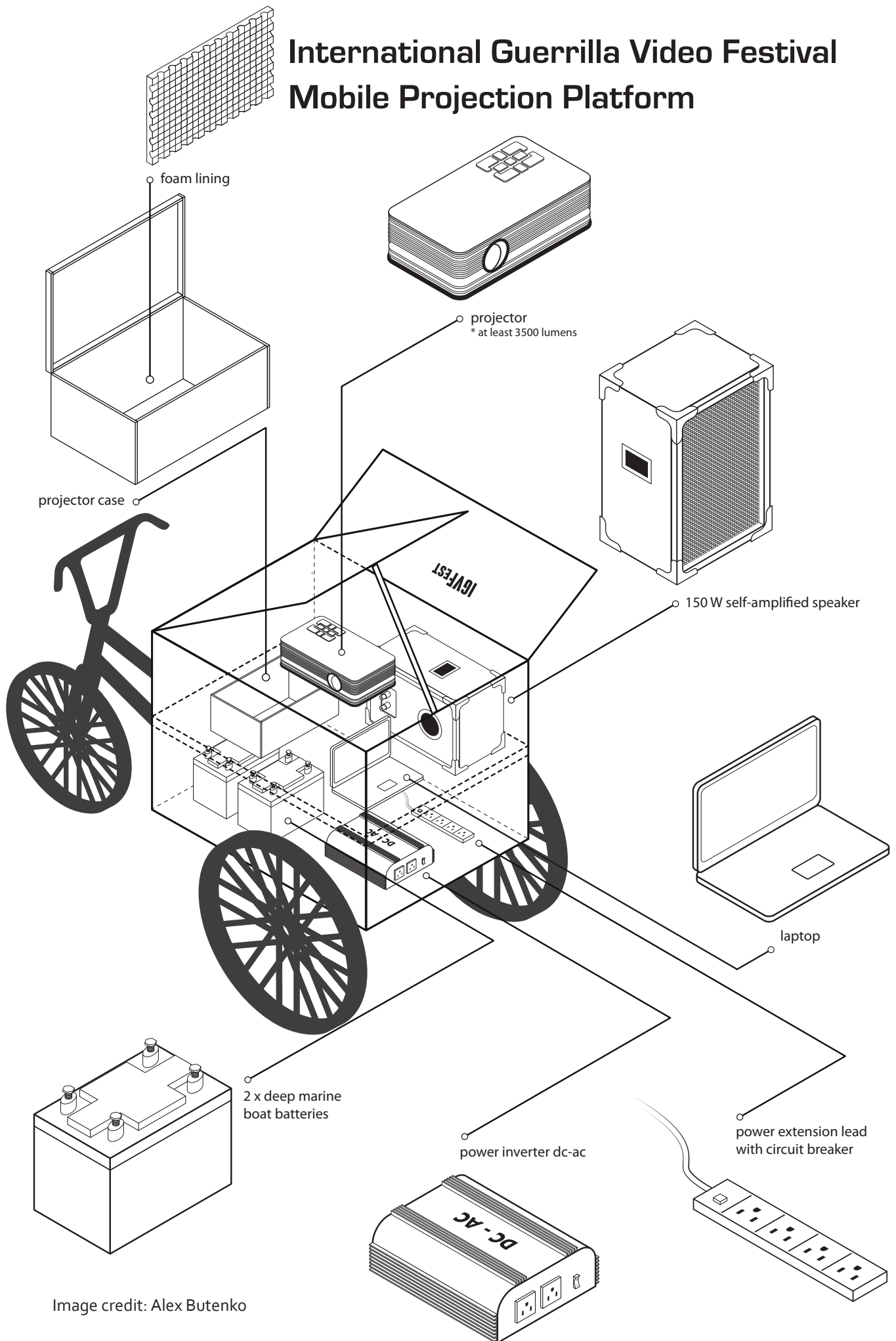


Image credit: Alex Butenko

Individual Utopia

by Josip Zanki

My family informed me that I'd received an award for the experimental film *Arzak* at a festival in Pula, named MAFAP. That day, I was in the office of Captain Milan Nedić, in 'Milan Popović' Army Barracks, Peć, The Autonomous Province of Kosovo, Yugoslavia. President of the Serbian Communist Party, Slobodan Milošević, had already made his famous speech in Kosovo¹ which the surprised army troops, mainly from the north-eastern parts of Yugoslavia, who were watching on a black and white television in the barrack hall while I leaned against the dormitory door, softly singing Gang of Four's epic: *Man in a Uniform*.

That day, Captain Milan Nedić went to visit his horny wife in Kosovska Mitrovica, while I was counting down my last army days. The town mostly smelled of lime and acacia trees intensified with heavy oriental cuisine and animal corpses rotting on the road. At the end of one such road there was monastery, Pećka Patrijaršija, which I used to visit regularly to study the fresco of Christ in the central dome. The letter was brought to me by a friend from the Slovenian town of Piran who was always being accused of taking part in demonstrations against the Relay of Youth. Relay was a strong Yugoslavian symbol dedicated to the memory of President Josip Broz Tito. We used to dress up together in old officers' uniforms with very Russian style hats. In Captain Milan Nedić's room we used to watch old 16 mm films about the trials of quislings and domestic traitors. They were all tried in front of the People's Court, supported by hysterical outbursts of the same *People* in front of the Courthouse. During those silent agitprop works Laibach's *Sila*² served as a tonal accompaniment.

We were often joined by an eccentric from Ljubljana, Marko Drpić, and it was with him that I realised some militaristic-artistic projects of a slightly gay aesthetic. I could not understand why I got the award at the Pula festival. I knew that some members of the jury must have thought *Arzak* was an anagram of Zrak.³ But I was referring to Moebius' comic book, and I wasn't even sure the author of the script was Jodorowski. A year before, together with my dear cousin Darinko Mustač, I had made the film *Mea Culpa*. Like *Arzak*, this film was in (now ancient) Super-8 format. The film tape could only be processed in the Federal Republic of Germany, and processing was included in the price.

Very German, the whole process took precisely 15 days. Darinko's brother Zdravko Mustač was part of our 'Ledeno doba' Art Group. The group mainly dealt with the publishing of conceptual artworks, reproduced by Xerox photocopying and then distributed through Zadar's streets. The group temporarily ceased to operate after I had, together with a group of collaborators, stuck posters saying 'Dolazi ledeno doba'⁴ all over Zadar. The next day the police authorities (Sekretarijat unutarnjih poslova) stepped into action, took the posters down from the walls and started searching for the authors of these posters bearing 'an unclear political message among students who are inclined towards such ideas'.



"Josip and Marko" action, photographic documentation. Peć, Kosovo, 1988.

At the end of August 1988, I left the Yugoslavian army wearing green surgical pants, an ank around my neck and a black leather glove on my left hand. Soon after returning from the army we formed 'Ledeno doba' Art Group all over again, this time focusing on film and performance art. We used to start all film screenings with performances

¹ Slobodan Milošević, 1988 speech in Kosovo Polje which prefigured the start of unrest in Kosovo and ultimately the fall of Yugoslavia.

² Force

³ Croatian for 'air'

⁴ The Ice Age is coming

consisting of Socio-Realist speeches or sound installations. Especially famous was the projection in the then Youth Centre (today the Croatian Youth Centre) in Zadar where Šenol Selimović, who was then Official President of the League of Socialist Youth, Zadar City Committee, held reconstructions of his political speeches.

After that came a screening in the cult Split Kino Club, and in June a performance at the Festival of Amateur Film at the Multimedia Centre in Zagreb. What was significant for the last two years of Yugoslav self-managed Socialism was the fact that one didn't think about money in the same terms as nowadays, or individual prosperity. Rents were not paid, travel expenses were not paid, sleepovers were not paid, and no one even posed questions like that. There was a rumour within alternative film circles that Ladislav Galeta, MM Centre Manager (pioneer of video art in Yugoslavia), was paying fees to authors, but that raised eyebrows, caused disgust and utter consternation. Art was absolutely sacred to us, it was larger than life and it was by no means part of an everyday context. The desire for money, and not the one for existence or nonexistence, we saw as the cause of all suffering. If we needed somewhere to spend the night, we'd sleep at friends' places or at colleagues', and we used to travel by cheap, slow buses. A Marxist ideological matrix imprinted itself completely on every part of society, so the same went for us. By current Postmodernist standards, where 'art is equal to real and everyday life', we would be stupid idealists or simply old fashioned. The fact was that during Communism, on television in the evening we could watch Tarkovski or Bergman movies, newspapers were completely serious, and consumer culture was beyond the Iron Curtain (as it was named by Anglosaxon cynic Winston Churchill). At the beginning of 1990, when Yugoslavia split and we suddenly became 'free' and members of the *free world*, the newly established Croatian middle and upper classes dreamed of organising society as in Austro-Hungarian times. For us, Austria was a symbol of camp aesthetic and kitsch culture a long time before Bruno was created.

The group started to fall apart for multiple reasons; some of the artists moved away from Yugoslavia to countries of prosperity and well-being, and others dedicated themselves to their primary artistic preoccupations. In Zagreb I was trying, together with Tomislav Polić (protagonist of Zadar's subculture scene, founder of Društvo graditelja bolje budućnosti⁵ Club), to form a new group that continued the ideas of Ledeno doba, named 'Novo ledeno doba'.⁶ Together, we performed two pieces titled *Tribina-Naučno*

Popularni Film, at the Academy of Fine Arts and SKUC, Zagreb. I remember that, during our first performance at the Academy, there was an artist, a declared right-winger, in the front row writing down all the Serbian words and Marxists ideas we uttered, announcing that he would hand the material over to the *Croatian Secret Services*. That was very funny to us, but the upcoming war and quiet mobilisation soon ended all of our activities.

Tomislav moved to Frankfurt, Germany where he, together with two Turks, two Kurds and one Jew, tried to re-shape the Fourth International and raise the World Revolution, the same one Trocki and Milovan Đilas dreamt of, and on preparations for which Comintern worked a long time. His attempts were unsuccessful and he has borne the noble karma of an *auslander* (emigrant) and German Post Office officer to date. For me, personally, during the nineties came a hibernation phase when I realised the conditions significant for framing my further actions. As Hakim Bey wrote 'art has become a product': it undergoes the laws of the real and black market, its only measure of value has become money and its circulation. In the Postmodern, every trace of idealism and romanticism has disappeared; those terms have been replaced by curatorial ones of 'collective and individual utopia'. In that alone art lost its higher meaning for me, no matter how pathetic it might sound today. Maybe the same as when Slavoj Žižek says that 'the way to new Socialism is through Christianity'. In accordance with the time I was living in, I wrapped my activity in the cloak of 'individual utopia'. After the experiences of socialism, liberal socialism, war, capitalism, corruption, and neo liberal capitalism I realised that the only possibility to create free art and art of freedom was to develop my personal individual utopia. To paraphrase Karl Marx' thesis about Feuerbach: 'Artists interpret the world differently, but the fact is to change it'.

I decided to start this plan in an Arcadian mountain landscape. According to Hakim Bey's ideas I realised that in past history, utopian society was possible only in isolated areas or during times of complete chaos like the end of war or revolution. If we observe such examples we can say that the Jesuit state in Argentina, Da Anuzzio Free Republic of Fiume, and the Paris commune were *realised utopias*. Also, I was sure that I did not want to organise utopia for everybody, and that I am dealing with small groups of people like artists. Dealing with Postmodern multiple identities, I decided to curate an art project. From 1999 to 2002 I managed Planine Art Workshop which took place at the *mythological* Velebit Mountain on the Adriatic coast most of the time. The idea of this project was to preserve the parts of heritage in

⁵ Society of the Builders of a Better Future

⁶ New Ice Age



Workshop "Mountains" art in residence project. Velebit, 2000.

the mountains which are irreversibly dying, either through documentation or through interpretation. Conditions in the mountains are very difficult for societies organised in the valleys, on the seacoasts, or near the river banks. Higher altitudes automatically mean the depletion of the plant, animal and human world. The whole landscape in Velebit is organised through the rhythmic exchange of valleys, sinkholes, rocky fields, glades and hills. In all of us who have worked on this project, created and experienced, the mountains have left an indelible mark.

Legends and traditions of Velebit and all other Balkan mountains have influenced many contemporary art practices. The very same heritage of that primordial world was crucial for Marina Abramović's video work *Balkan Epic*, in which she plays with sexual bewitchment and the magical power of women. In most of the sequences Marina establishes direct bonds between earth, water, fire and air, either with man's phallus or his active energy or woman's vulva and her energy of potential and giving birth to a physical world. The stronghold of this work she finds in ancient Slavic religions as well as in the well known European tradition of Valpurga's night which Goethe refers to in *Faust* and Mihail Bulgakov in the novel *The Master and Marguerite*.

In 2007, together with Bojana Brkić, I started a residential program 'Dolazak u baštinu'.⁷ The theme of the project changes every year. Our first workshop dealt with the heritage of the first Croatian novel *Planine* by Petar Zoranić (written in the 16th century) in the context of contemporary art practice. The idea of the project was an artistic activity in archetypal landscapes, historical environments and buildings, which authors would refer to in their site-specific works. In the Zadar

area Slavic tradition interweaves with Germanic, Roman, Ottoman and Jewish tradition in a very unique way. In many Christian rituals we can trace the remains of ancient Slavic religion and rituals, starting with green George (Juraj), burning the yule-log, Koledars and many other customs. Most of them are connected to the cult of the sun, and by that connected also to a summer and winter solstice. The orbit Earth makes around the sun is identical to the cycle of birth and death, in nature as well as in the life of man. Spring and the holiday of St. George, Djurdjevdan (St. George's Day) in Serbian tradition, are connected with a renewed erotic energy. The nature which in the holy period of green George experiences its newly powerful birth is equal to the sexual energy of Osiris. The very same that, according to Plutarch, by the means of a wooden phallus impregnates Isida with a child Horus. I was inspired by German and English Romanticism, but also conscious about cruel reality. Mark Gisbourne says: 'as any true countryman knows there is no romance in farming, and any form of mastery of the rural environment has always come at a very high and physically arduous cost to those who laboured on the land'.

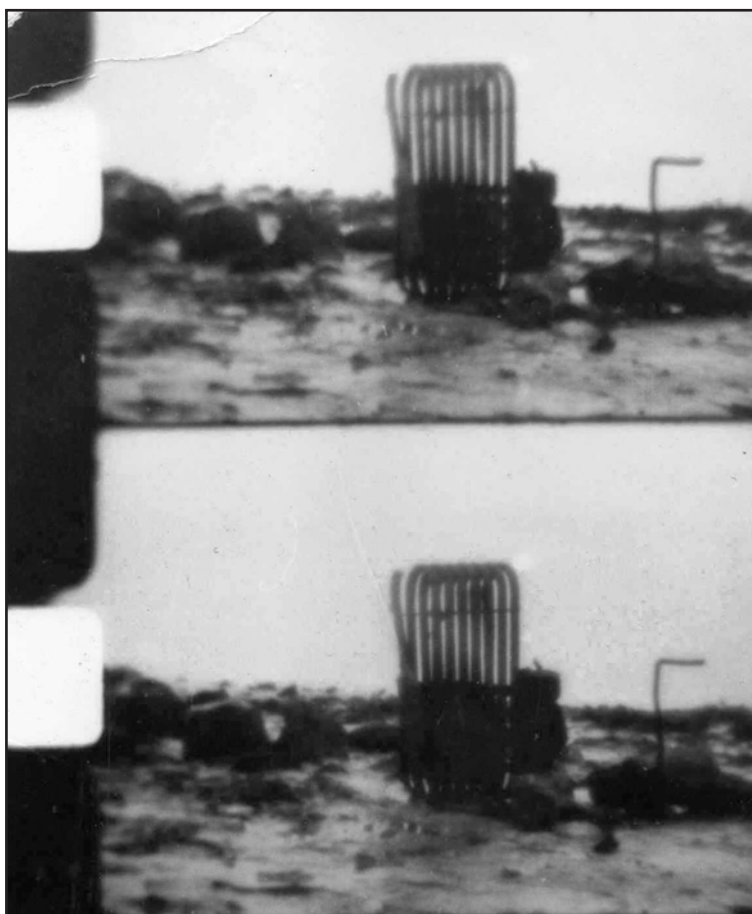
The project *Back to Heritage* elaborated (re-worked) two levels of Zoranić's inheritance — her relationship to heritage, her modern aspect, and relationships between the utopic and the real in art and society. In 2008, this project transferred to the University of Zadar, where it has found its haven. The theme of the second project, titled 'Otok kao utopija'⁸ was questioning the real or imaginary utopian space in contemporary art. This premise of the novel makes us think about two things: which utopian ideas are present in modern art, and which modern artists realise their everyday life as a utopia. After the twilight of the great ideologies of the 20th century and the entrance of world history into neoliberalism, the questions of democracy and tyranny became insignificant. The aim of this workshop was to promote the realisation of freedom of space and stop the commercialisation of art.

The third project dealt with the meaning of the notion of image, partly as a hermetic object or 'Mandalyon' (Vera Icona, first image of Messiah), partly as an aesthetic phenomenon. Our relation to the Image has changed through history: from occult and magic in cave paintings, to immaterial in the Russian avant-garde. Kazimir Maljević was first to make an archetypal form of image. White square on white background and black square on black background are the first icons of the hermetic image. The project was titled *Slika kao hermetična ikona novog doba*.⁹

⁷Coming to Heritage

⁸ Island as a Utopia

⁹ Image as a Hermetic Icon of the New Era



"Arzak" 8 mm movie. Production: "Ice age", 1987.

This years' project is *Jacopo Tintoretto* and it deals with a well-known Venetian canvas with the scene of the battle for the domination over Zadar between Venetians and Hungarians. The project thematised historical conquests of Zadar, the most famous of which is the one undertaken by the Crusaders, which in a blessed way paid the Venetian navy service to the 'liberation' of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The workshop focused on interlacing the heritage and legacy of the cultures the artists come from with the heritage and legacy of Zadar.

Over the years, more and more University of Zadar students have joined the project, so in the future this way of working could lead to the establishment of an International Art Department, which would normally operate under strictly *utopian and highly idealistic postulates*. I still believe that art is, as Joseph Beuys says, 'social sculpture'. In a time of anonymous heroes, virtual freedom, Huxley pleasure manipulated reality, and corporate power we can create *real knowledge* only in the human mind. We can do it step by step, always searching to find more questions. Let us go back to the award for the experimental film work *Arzak* at the beginning of our story. It is true that the first time I visited Pula was in 2003, fifteen years after the MAFAP Award, on the way back from *Visura Aperta* Curatorial Project in the Istrian town, Momjan. At that time an artist from Split, sea captain Zlatan Dumanić, was rolling down an abandoned, moss-covered street on *balinjera*.¹⁰ In Pula, I boarded an old motorboat 'Marina' that sailed toward Zadar passing the mysterious island of Silba. The whole story with the award and the context I was in at the time now sounds like a Postmodern Jean Baudrillard analogy. The motif of the *Arzak* movie was a shattered marine engine like a famous Montenegrin 'Obodin' refrigerator, and industrialisation and post-industrial landscape were very romantic things in the eighties. Like you've set Mary Shelley's mortal body on fire in small Elan's plastic boat next to one of the factories in the area of Maghera, and not on a dramatic rocky Mediterranean beach. Because landscapes become virtual anyway, they remain with us as long as there is a glimmer of consciousness and light on a movie screen.

¹⁰ Old Dalmatian expression for a piece of wood on which ball bearings would be fixed, used for rolling down the hill or street.

About the Contributors

Haizea Barcenilla, (Spain) is a curator and art critic. She has independently curated *Calypso* (Sala Rekalde, Bilbao, 2008) and *From the Signs* (Instituto Cervantes, Stockholm, 2009). She holds a MFA Curating from Goldsmiths College and was a resident in the Pavillon of the Palais de Tokyo in 2009-2010.

Peter Bonnell, (United Kingdom) since 2004 has been Exhibitions and Education Officer and Curator (2007) at ArtSway. He has managed ArtSway's residency program for a number of years, working with a range of artists including Nathaniel Mellors, Jordan Baseman, Christopher Orr and Hew Locke.

Magdalena Holdar (Sweden) received her Ph.D. at Stockholm University in 2005 with the dissertation *Scenography in Action: Space, Time and Movement in Theatre Productions by Ingmar Bergman*. She is head of Curating Art: International Master Programme in Curating Art at Stockholm University. Magdalena Holdar has been teaching and tutoring on all levels since 2005 at universities in Stockholm and Södertörn.

Marianna Hovhannisyan (Armenia) has taken part in the organization and coordination of contemporary art projects and exhibitions, such as *Changes through Exchanges*, an educational project realized at the Armenian Open University, Department of Fine Arts (2006-2010). Currently she is working as a co-curator with Elodie Dufour of *Not Valid From* as well as *Archive-Practice* a curatorial research project on Armenian contemporary art.

Toby Huddleston (United Kingdom) is a contemporary artist currently based in London. Recent projects and exhibitions include a show at R O O M, London; *I'm so Bored of Viewing...* at The Engine Room (Wellington, New Zealand, 2010); *ON ON/Protest Apathy at Outlet* (Manchester, 2009). Huddleston is currently working on a solo project at ZDB in Lisbon, Portugal (early 2011) and VCA, Melbourne, Australia.

Hilary Jack and Paul Harfleet (United Kingdom) are the co-founders of "Apartment", an artist-run event space established within the frameworks of Harfleet's own personal living space. They went on to curate *artranspennineo8* and an exhibition in Interludes (Axel Lapp, Berlin) amongst other projects.

Helen Kaplinsky (United Kingdom) is a curator based in London and currently studying an MFA in Curating at Goldsmiths. Recent projects include *Reading for Reading Sake* with the multi-lateral performance collective PAVES and Islington Mill Art Academy. Helen's practice is centered on performance and discussion, with a particular interest in dissemination and sharing of knowledge.

Ruba Katrib (United States) is the Associate Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami. She holds an MA in Curatorial Studies from the Center for Curatorial Studies (CCS) at Bard College, New York. She has curated a number of exhibitions with international emerging and mid-career artists. In addition, she has been a visiting critic at the Bethanien Residency Program in Berlin, Germany, IASPIS in Stockholm, Sweden and the International Studio and Curatorial Program in New York.

Anne Klontz (United States) is an independent curator based in Stockholm. She graduated from the International Curating Management Education at Stockholm University in 2009 and received an MA in Culture and Media Production from Linköping University. Recent projects include *The Quantum Police* (Stockholm, Wuhan, Brussels, London; 2010-2011) and the group exhibition *Line by Line* (Stockholm, 2011).

Yulia Kostereva and Yuriy Kruchak (Ukraine) live and work in Kiev, Ukraine. In 1999, they united their creative experiences and founded the art platform "Open Place" which is directed toward expanding communication between art and today's Ukrainian society. As artists and curators, they are seeking an art which provides a system of equality; offering the same extent of freedom both to artist and to spectator.

Ben Lewis (United Kingdom) is an award-winning documentary film-maker, author and art critic, whose films are commissioned by the BBC, Arte and a long list of broadcasters from Europe, North America and Australia. Ben's latest film *The Great Contemporary Art Bubble* was shown on BBC4, Arte, ABC-Australia and many other TV channels across the world in 2009.

Karen MacDonald (United Kingdom) is a curator and arts coordinator based in London. A recent graduate of the MFA Curating course at Goldsmiths, she is currently working at Salisbury Arts Centre and at filmpro limited, as well as on her own projects. Her previous projects have included exhibitions for Fringe Arts Bath and co-directorship of South Central Projects.

Kateryna Radchenko (Ukraine) combines the diverse practices of curator, artist and scientist to organize international public art festivals, theatrical performances and visual art projects in Ukraine and abroad. She is also the founder of the NGO Art Travel, Odessa.

Maija Rudovska (Latvia) is an independent curator and art historian from Latvia and based in Riga. She previously co-curated *Regard: Subversive Actions in Normative Space* (Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 2010), *Hardijs Ledins* (1955-2004), *Zeitgeist and the Atmosphere of a Place* (Riga Art Space, Riga, 2009) and *Candy Bomber - Young Latvian Painting* (Latvian National Art Museum, Riga, 2007/2008). She completed the Curatorlab course at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm in 2010 and has begun her Ph.D., thesis at the Art Academy of Latvia.

Username: Sarah Kim (United States, Stockholm-based) and Josefin Wikstrom (Sweden, London-based) are the founders of the curatorial collective "Username" which works with organizational structures in art production and distribution, with the focus on discussing how art practitioners can engage together effectively and more differently. They work as a vehicle for the production of exhibitions, publications and activism.

Yulia Usova (Ukraine) is based in Stockholm where she founded the non-profit Perfect Art Institution (PAI) which fosters international collaboration and serves as a platform for developing dialogues about democracy in Eastern Europe through art. Usova graduated from the International Curating Management Education at Stockholm University in March 2008. She has also studied at the University of Ideas, Cittadellarte (City of Arts) at the Pistoletto Foundation, Italy.

Iljana Veinberga (Latvia) is currently a Ph.D. student at Art Academy of Latvia. Previously, she has been working on projects in collaboration with Contemporary Art Centre and the National Museum of Arts in Latvia. Veinberga is currently working on Riga city council's project, *Riga—Capital of Culture 2014*.

Jason Waite (United States) is an independent curator currently based in London and New York. He is the co-curator of the 4th Biennial of Young Artists in Bucharest and the founder of the nomadic exhibition, the International Guerrilla Video Festival. He has previously worked with the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, Italy and Independent Curators International, New York.

Josip Zanki (Croatia) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb in 1994. Since 1986 he has been working on installations, performances, experimental film and has received numerous prizes for his work. Zanki has realized numerous individual and collective exhibitions with other artists in Croatia and abroad. He is president of Croatian Artist Association and teaches at the University of Zadar.

