

Dear [...]

As promised, here is the outline for the publication :)

The publication is a research on independent art spaces and initiatives. It will host a meandering text by myself which follows my travels to (Amsterdam), Berlin, London, Madrid, Paris and Rome this summer, and contributions from spaces and initiatives who I came into contact with throughout this research.

The invitation to contribute is completely open to interpret in which ever form you choose. So far, the contributions span anywhere from outlining the context from which they operate, to interviews, to presenting themselves and what they do, or using it as a space to exhibit. Together, the contributions slowly start to address the topic of independent initiatives through a variety of angles and approaches.

The publication is due to be released later this year. As it is a little uncertain as to when we will release it, the deadline is flexible—but if it is possible to receive it around the end of February, that would be great!

If you have any questions let me know :)

All my best,
Dieuwertje

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Salticidae

Icius



a Research on Independent
Art Spaces and Initiatives

Salticidae

Icius

As of 2019, [Salticidae] contained over 600 described genera and over 6000 described species, making it the largest family of spiders at 13% of all species. [Salticidae] have some of the best vision among arthropods and use it in courtship, hunting, and navigation. Although they normally move unobtrusively and fairly slowly, most are capable of very agile jumps, notably when hunting, but sometimes in response to sudden threats or crossing long gaps.¹

This publication brings together a meandering research on independent art spaces and initiatives that took place in Amsterdam, Berlin, London, Madrid, Paris and Rome. Salticidae is a large family, made of many members who are unobtrusive, yet pervasive across almost every piece of land in the world. Icius is a cosmopolitan genus of the Salticidae family, widely found in Europe.

Index

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Madrid

Alternative Thoughts On The Alternative Art Space

Tomás Ruiz-Rivas

In the 90's Madrid experienced an incredible blooming of alternative art. Starting with Estrujenbank¹ (1990) and ending with The Art Palace (2003), over thirty independent, grass-root art projects were carried out by this generation, mostly born in the 60's. The alternative scene was the actual experimentation field for Madrid art, the space where we could look into and try out performance, installation, site specific, public space or participatory art. And all these projects were interconnected amongst themselves, making up a live and vibrant cultural network that changed Spanish art forever.

This is an historical phenomenon, not a contingency related to creation, nor an anecdotal story that runs subordinated to official history. To understand its importance and meaning, we must know the political and cultural context in which it emerged. Spain became a democracy in 1978, after forty years of military dictatorship. In 1982, after a failed putsch, the leftist PSOE won the elections and started, amongst other things, an ambitious programme of cultural policies. As many other countries, we had our first art market bubble and a "return" to painting, with a neoexpressionist style like the one of Transavantgarde in Italy or Neue Wilde in Germany. Miquel Barceló was the best known Spanish artist of this period.

In Madrid this cultural moment was known as (La) Movida, a term that encompassed pop music, underground comics, Almodovar films and some figurative painting. Political art, which was very important in the 70's, disappeared, and experimental languages like performance, new technologies or interdisciplinary art survived only in catacombs, or more accurately, in an alternative art space located in a basement: Espacio P (1981–97).

At the beginning of the 90's, Madrid had a washed-out painting style, looking as old as the shoulder pads, quiffs, and other characteristic icons of the 80's. The Movida had become an entertainment industry and thousands of young people were dying because of heroin. The Socialist Party was no longer a leftist one, accumulating corruption scandals and becoming involved in the dirty war against terrorism (GAL). And finally, it was the end of the euphoria: a hard crisis started in 1992, the year of the Fifth Centenary of Colon's arrival to America and the Barcelona Olympic Games.

On the other side, young artists like my friends and I were interested in the kind of art that had not been visible the previous decade. But we had no institutional interlocutors. The 80's left behind two huge "apparatuses"—ARCO art fair and Reina Sofia Museum—but nothing focused on local creation.

This was a context of political disenchantment, not far from the general feeling after the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989; of institutional neglect and loss of historical references. So, we started to organise ourselves and to invent the institutions we needed.

A short list of Madrid alternative art projects in the 90's would include Estrujenbank (1990–92); Valgamedios (1990–91); Legado Social (1991–93); Almazén (1993–95); La Más Bella (1993–); Ojo Atómico² / Antimuseo (1993–);

Public Art (1993–2003); Cruce (1994–); Establecimiento (1993); Fast Food (1994–2004); Revista Caminada (1996–); Zona de Acción Temporal (1997–98); Garaje Pemasa (1998–2000); Espacio F (1998–2013); Window 99 (1999); Circo Interior Bruto (1999–2005); Doméstico (2000–08); La Hostia Fine Art (2001–08); and The Art Palace (2003–), and so on.

Twenty-five years after the beginning of this movement (I like to think of it as an art movement, as Roberto Bedoya³ once said), I started a research because of a personal need to understand my place in Spanish art history and the cultural and political meaning of these kind of practices.

The alternative art spaces movement in the 90's had similar grounds and motivations to those of the 70's. And not only in Spain. We were facing an institutionalisation process, with the emergence of the curator as a central role for the production of meaning and knowledge. The public administration of culture was growing very quick—although in Madrid there was a lack of art centres—and the art market, after a short but deep crisis, restarted in the second half of the decade, stronger and more global than it was in the 80's.

In both historical moments, artists chose to organise themselves to face the challenges they were experiencing: alternative art spaces, festivals, fanzines, and other kinds of independent, free institutions focused on art mediation and production were the answer. Perhaps in the 70's the artists still believed that they could stay outside the art institution, and perhaps they were more involved in social or political issues. But the alternative scene is characterised by its diversity, and it's not easy to generalise.

This answer—self-organisation—caused a breakup between art practice and the discourse about art.

An unwanted breakup, but maybe a necessary one. The history of contemporary art is based in a matrix of marxists concepts about work, commodity, value, etc. And about revolution, of course. A revolution that should be carried out by industrial proletariat lead by intellectuals. The goal of the revolution is to take the power and establish a new order, a better one. Modernism in art is always understood as part of this political wave. The term Avant-Garde itself was taken from political argot, coming from military. Then, the failure of revolution is projected into art as the failure of the Avant-Garde.

But in the 90's it was difficult to think about this idea of revolution as something other than an anachronism. And it was very difficult too to think about an “outside” of the institution. Moreover, as M. Borgen pointed out, “The main claim was the need to create a new political subject, not unified in a collective subjectivity, but a collection of singularities.”⁴ In this new context, when post-Fordist Capitalism and so called globalisation were completely developed, and thirty years after the burst of the identity issues onto the political struggles, I think that antagonism, at least in art, was no longer about defeating what it opposes, but about finding the way to support diversity and productive disagreement.

It's not about an outside. Not about to go out and go in the institution. As Wallenstein says, “The alternative cannot be between being caught up and being free, but has to [do] with different ways of inhabiting the institutions.”⁵

In this sense, we can say that alternative art spaces are responsive, at least in the time we are talking about. The alternative art space exists as a dialectical stance to the institution, but never becoming a synthesis or any kind of dialectical surpassing. If they are an answer, it is

an answer that doesn't solve the question, that remains constantly open and changing. Bürger, in his well-known book *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, differentiates between two kinds of criticism: dogmatic and dialectical:

“Dogmatic criticism sets its own theory against the one it criticizes from the claim to truth of the former the untruth of the latter. Such criticism remains external to its object. (...) Dialectical criticism, by contrast, proceeds immanently. It enters into the substance of the theory to be criticized and derives decisive stimuli from its gaps and contradictions. (...) For dialectical criticism, the contradictions in the criticized theory are not indications of insufficient intellectual rigor on the part of the author, but an indication of an unsolved problem or one that had remained hidden. Dialectical criticism thus stands in a relation of dependency to the criticized theory.”⁶

This is a nice way to describe the relation of alternative art spaces, or projects, with the art world, with the Art Institution in the terms explained by Bürger.

But at this point, we must realise that art institutionality, the actual, concrete museums, had reacted and had also given their answer. Around 2000 we witnessed an impulse of renovation in several museums or art centres across Europe: Rooseum with Charles Esche (2000–04) or Münchener Kunstverein with Maria Lind (2002–04), among others, introduced many characteristics of alternative spaces into their programs and procedures: focusing on process, rather than on the exhibition of finished artworks; opening to non-art activities, like social or political ones; inclusion of discursive and

pedagogical programs, like workshops, seminars, etc. Jonas Ekeberg called this New Institutionalism.⁷ The museum stopped being the endpoint of the interpretative chain: it also became productive.

For Kolb & Flückiger “the term ‘New Institutionalism’ describes a series of curatorial, art educational as well as administrative practices that from the mid 1990’s to the early 2000’s endeavored to reorganize the structures of mostly medium-sized, publicly funded contemporary art institutions, and to define alternative forms of institutional activity.”⁸

New Institutionalism did not resist the financial crisis of 2008, and many projects were cancelled or returned to the conventional way. In Madrid New Institutionalism was introduced by the neoliberal city mayor Alberto Ruiz Gallardón, with emblematic centres like Intermediae (2007, part of Matadero) and Medialab (2013), which are not just focused on contemporary art. That can seem paradoxical: a neoliberal, ultra-catholic mayor driving the modernisation of cultural institutions. But it isn’t. The “new institution” occupies the place of independent critical collectives. It usurps the cultural, social and political space produced by the people, like alternative art projects, and shows itself as auto-critical and anti-institutional.⁹ Creative energy is co-opted and actual critical thinking is vanished. Young artists have to interiorise the limits and conditions of the institution to develop their critical work. These limits become the limits for thinking, dreaming and wishing. And everything is done in the right way, because these centres work on issues like feminism, queer identity, post-colonialism, anti-racism, etc. But the outcome is always a reinforcement of the State’s power. It’s the culmination of the pastoral power described by Foucault in the 70’s.

Only Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt highlighted the inherent contradiction of New Institutionalism: that these centres “take the existing institutional framework (...) as the starting point (...) One of the main pitfalls with this way of working is that artists and their activities are forced into a construct defined by the institutions that generally serves to flatter the institution and disempower the artists.”¹⁰

I think that the alternative art space movement didn't fail, as some authors outline. Maybe New Institutionalism did. Alternative spaces changed the art institution and the institutionality of art. They supported art practices that otherwise would be frustrated. And supported careers of artists that could not have worked in an institutional or market environment. And it's still alive—very different from the 70's and the 90's, due to the problems artists are facing today being different, but it is possibly still the only driving force for art innovation.

When I look back to the 90's, what I see is an unique exercise of collective intelligence. My generation in Madrid worked together, not being a single group or an organised structure, but as the sum of very different sensibilities, aspirations and concerns, to find out a way to make new art; new relations between creation and everyday life; new organisational forms outside the rules of the institutions.

What I see, as Jacqueline Cooke says, is “the use of available methods of critique, or the creation of new tactics to enable a restless movement or instability, to carry on argument, or to produce friction in circumstances that are not usually seen as changeable. Opportunistic rather than contingent, the aim is not to be a vanguard of opposition, not to change society, but to make space for individual voices, for contrary thoughts, sometimes called an ‘alternative consciousness’. What I have found

in the research is productive disagreement, is restlessness, an ‘alternative’ space for thought, of a rejection or questioning of assumptions. It is not oppositional in the sense that it can defeat what it opposes, it accepts failure, or complicity. The mass of diverse and contradictory ideas and actions are themselves the complex ‘alternative’, this alternative is contentious.”¹¹

1
The name was taken from a comic strip by Ibáñez, a famous humour cartoonist in Spain.

2
Ojo Atómico (Atomic Eye) was one of my projects. It was crucial to define the idea of “alternative” in Madrid and to set up its social space.

3
“The fact that artist-run spaces serve an activist purpose, that they are in themselves an action, situates them as a seminal grass-roots art movement. When history of art making in the latter half of the twenty century is written, artist-run spaces will be accorded equal importance with other art movements of this period.” Bedoya, Roberto. Quoted in Julie Ault, Alternative Art New York 1965-1985 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; New York: The Drawing Center New York, 2002) p. 3

4
Maibritt Borge, “The Inner and Outer Form of Self-organization,” in Self-Organized, ed. Stine Hebert & Szefer Karsen Anne (London: Open Editions; Bergen: Hordaland Art Centre, 2013) p. 40

5
Sven-Olov Wallenstein, “Institutional Desires,” in Art and Its Institutions ed. Nina Möntmann (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006) p. 120

6
Peter Bürger, Theory of Avant-Garde trans. Michael Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)

7
Jonas Ekeberg, “Introduction” in Verksted #1: New Institutionalism (Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2003)

8
Lucie Kolb & Gabriel Flückiger, “New Institutionalism Revisited,” in Oncurating: (New) Institution(alism), no. 21 (December, 2013) p. 6

9
Wallenstein points out that “[for some people] they [the critical ideas from the sixties and seventies] have become the backbone of a new type of official discourse, where self-reflexivity and self-criticism are what provides the art institution with its very source of legitimacy”. Sven-Olov Wallenstein, “Institutional Desires,” in Art and Its Institutions ed. Nina Möntmann (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006) p. 114.

10
Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt, “Harnessing the Means of Production,” in Verksted #1: New Institutionalism (Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2003) p. 84

11
Jacqueline Cooke, Ephemeral Traces of ‘Alternative Space’: the Documentation of Art Events in London 1995-2005, in an Art Library. (Unpublished doctoral thesis: Goldsmiths University of London): <http://research.gold.ac.uk/3475/>

Interview with Doméstico, May 2012

We would like to sketch a brief overview of the collective’s curatorial practice and discuss their philosophy of collective work. We’ll also explore their ideas regarding the function of curatorship, the peculiarities and contributions of collective management and collective authorship. Is it a critique of the concept of an “author”? And what impact has the project had on its immediate context, in Madrid?

How did Doméstico come to be? How was an alliance formed among its five members, Teodora Diamantopoulou, Joaquín García, Andrés Mengs, Giulietta Speranza, Virginia Torrente? At what moment and via what route did each of them join the project.

Doméstico is born from the cultural vacuum that Madrid starts experiencing in the mid-nineties. A group of friends who were dissatisfied with the cultural landscape in their city consider setting up a new independent art initiative.

The idea crystallises through a proposal by Giulietta Speranza, who has put a flat on sale. Until she finds a buyer, she floats the idea of setting up an art show there. Very early on, it becomes clear that the spatial distribution of the rooms should be respected. This leads to the first Doméstico: Doméstico’00. A house with seven rooms, a kitchen and two bathrooms. Artists will be asked to use the varying features of the rooms to create a site-specific piece for each one. We agree on a list of invited artists, and then, as an additional project, we also decide to organise two or three weekly artistic events with a more open

character: dance, music, performances, video screenings, fashion and design shows, etc. These events would not just bring the public in on the day of the opening, but generate a constant flux of visitors during the three-month span of the first Doméstico.

The original core of the group was composed of Giulietta Speranza, Andrés Mengs and Virginia Torrente. Joaquín García was hired to take care of the day-to-day tasks, and of coordinating the first Doméstico. For the second edition, in 2001, he and Teodora Diamantopoulos become members with the same status as the original four. They are curators and coordinators, without salary or any other financial benefits derived from the organisation. We'd like to point out that Doméstico has always operated with public and private funding, with production budgets and fees for the artists, and without any financial remuneration for its members.

How is the individual practice of each of the artists integrated with their collaborative work? The five members come from different contexts: public institutions, private businesses, curatorial, designer, or management positions... How do their varying roles as cultural agents intervene in the relations of production that emerge in each edition of Doméstico?

Doméstico's collective curatorial practice is its most interesting feature. The meetings are not even scheduled at regular intervals, the ideas that are brought in by all members are often anarchic and spontaneous. Discussions are never prepared beforehand, and debates are off the cuff. We might be searching for a space where we can hold the next Doméstico episode, or suggesting artists who could participate in it, or throwing out ideas that can accompany

the pieces on display. It all comes about with enthusiasm and without any problems. Curatorial and coordination tasks are evenly shared among the five members. If we have to pinpoint one task that is more specific, it would be the design of the image for every Doméstico and its promotional material. This role became very central while designing the book Doméstico, a compilation of all that has happened since 2004, which we presented during a week-long Doméstico-express. In a nutshell, each of us contributed to the aspects we knew more about: management skills, experience running art galleries, graphic design and installation skills, experience with curatorial and coordination activities.

What are the fundamental changes and lessons-learned within the collective's work? How do they affect its production formats and curatorial philosophy from the year 2000 to Doméstico '08: El papel del artista?¹ Is there another more recent or upcoming project? Is Doméstico still active as a concept and a dialogical relation among its members? What features would distinguish Doméstico as a curatorial initiative?

Let's try to respond to each of those questions one by one. The production format was repeated several times until we decided to try other physical approaches to the art show. The original idea arose from the circumstances sketched earlier on—one of the members owned a vacant apartment. But this was just temporary, we never had that opportunity again. Neither was the original idea to ensure the continuity of Doméstico. It was rather its success with the public, its impact, and the personal enjoyment experienced throughout the first edition

that made us immediately want the project to endure. It was at that point that we started searching for funds that could support a yearly Doméstico. We also started looking for a space to rent that had specific features, its own personality. Because the idea was to hold on to the premises of the first Doméstico. On the one hand, we wanted a combination of site-specific works created for the space that the artist is being invited to, under the general concept of place. On the other, a programme of parallel activities that will breathe new life into the pieces every week during the approximately three months that a show would last.

All projects reach a natural end, and as we explained, in Doméstico we had a very important driver that was external to art: the simple enjoyment of doing something that is fun. As soon as boredom or repetition start to creep in, other ideas for parallel domestic projects emerge. Therefore the book² represented the closure of one phase and its presentation was a Doméstico in and of itself. This was just the first Doméstico of a different kind, but others followed: a live radio show where artists sat in the studio and discussed, not specifically artistic, but general topics. The last one so far has been Doméstico'08: El papel del artista, where drawing occupies centre stage and the space takes a secondary, more neutral position, with a smaller role than usual.

Some ideas have been going around lately, but there isn't an upcoming Doméstico at the time of writing (May 2012). So yes, Doméstico is constantly present in the minds of its five members, even now that for quite some years, one of them has been living abroad and working on issues that are not art-related. We're actually more a group of like-minded friends than a curatorial institution with a well-defined concept and a mission to carry out.

Doméstico distinguishes itself from other curatorial collectives in several ways. One is that we do not make a living from it, which provides our work with a great deal of freedom. Secondly, like I mentioned earlier, we are friends, and we are evading the pressure to meet deadlines, even though the city of Madrid has been clamouring for a yearly Doméstico since the first edition in 1999.

Critics have sometimes mentioned Strujenbank, in fact a very different project, as a point of reference for Doméstico. Indeed, in 2008 your project served as a context for the compilation titled Tot Strujenbank (El Garaje Ediciones, Madrid, 2008). Also, some of your members, like Virginia and Andrés in Doblespacio, had done group work previously, in the late nineties. What are the antecedents or reference points that you have chosen or that have somehow influenced the collective's practice?

None, really. Both the group experience you mentioned and the individual trajectory of each member contribute a great deal to the collective. We have a close friendship with Juan Ugalde, and there's a fact that is often overlooked: the third Doméstico (Doméstico'02, siete estudios en una nave)³ took place in a location that had originally been Ugalde's studio. The place was then occupied by other artists, until its last artistic use in this Doméstico. These references have never been spotted. There were probably so many original ideas that we never saw the need to hark back to any reference points, whether good or bad.

In your endeavour to curate shows as a collective, what has been more decisive: engaging with reality, i.e. responding to the specific state of Spain's art

scene, addressing the issues brought up by precarious curatorial activities in the art world? Or is your collaborative philosophy essential to Doméstico as a project, and not just an adaptive response to the context?

The driving force might be an adaptive response to the Madrid context. There's also a desire to work with certain artists, it's a pretext to engage with them. Every Doméstico is a precarious affair, that's the norm, and we derived a great deal of joy from it.

To what extent do you see your practice as something distant from the more conventional "auteur curator"? How is the work process negotiated or managed within a project like Doméstico?

Following from the previous question, the urge to involve certain artists who we found intriguing or interesting was one of the great drivers to put the next Doméstico together. Our rapport with all of them has been spontaneous and immediate, because of the short time-frame we had between the initial idea and the opening day. This immediacy, our direct contact and the short-term nature of the project has always yielded good results. Spending time with the artists while they are throwing together their pieces in situ, seeing them at work in real time, the mix of theory and practice. All of that turned out to be a very good education, and a good way to see how an artist responds to a curator's call when there are no institutions or middlemen or galleries involved. It was all very interesting!

Do you know of other more recent projects in collective curatorship that you think you might have influenced, directly or indirectly?

After ten years of Doméstico in Madrid, we want to think we've made some kind of mark on the scene. But that is a question for others to answer. We've never been sure what the legacy of Doméstico is for other collectives. I guess the same is true of whatever is brooding in Madrid at this moment. All we can say is that there is a greater number of independent events and art-shows in the city these days. Projects that are artist-run, without any curators involved.

Other collaborative projects also take an expanded approach for their practice, bringing together curatorial tasks with mediation, management and publishing activities. But Doméstico stands out because none of their projects have been commissioned by institutions, and whenever a commission came your way, the collective identity took a step back in favour of the individual professional. How have these situations been negotiated in terms of where the collective identity ends and the individual members begin?

I don't quite understand the question. Do you want to know why Doméstico has never become part of an institution?

You have often restated certain aspects that are inherent to your practice: unpaid work, the transient nature of the project expressed through yearly editions, its nomadic nature, and the way you explore different formats... Is enthusiasm an essential

requirement for the development of a collective curatorial project such as Doméstico? How do you manage the project's sustainability?

Yes, enthusiasm is a driving force that might count for ninety percent of Doméstico's origins. The project's sustainability depends directly on whether our enthusiasm is maintained or dies away. As for the real output, it's determined by the budget raised for each edition.

In 2004, after a number of editions of Doméstico, a book is published that traces the history of the project. This book seems to have been a turning point in the work of the collective. Later, in 2007, the radio show Doméstico en las Ondas⁴ is set up, followed by the drawing edition of 2008 Doméstico '08: El papel del artista. From day one, the focus seems to have been on fostering a space for creative possibilities, situating artists in contexts where their interventions would be facilitated, mediated, encouraged by curators, be it by occupying a house, broadcasting a radio show, or setting up a pretext for epistolary writing. In any case, the different editions of Doméstico came up with questions about representation, but also about the art world itself. What was the role of the curatorial collective in the working system that was established between them and the artist? How is that rapport negotiated through a collective curatorial identity, what kinds of complicity emerge from it?

Besides enthusiasm, another ninety percent of the domestic driving force comes from keeping a close rapport with the artists while they are working for Doméstico, as we described earlier. Roles were assigned on the fly, and

obviously we don't have five curators breathing down an artist's neck. Each curator instead was in a way in charge of the artists they had proposed: they explained the concept, managed their work and helped the artist to achieve the final piece.

Despite the extended idea of a negational concept in curatorial theory in Doméstico—we have been lovingly called illiterate because our refusal to put curatorial ideas into writing—we would like to emphasise that every piece we ever presented generated intense internal debates, every event was evaluated negative or positively. And it is from these conversations about past experiences that the following project emerged, with a baggage of lessons learned and preconceptions unlearned.

translated by Cecilia, 2019.

1

Translator's note: the title of the show is a pun that can be translated either as The role of the artist, or The artist's paper.

3

Seven studies in an industrial warehouse.

4

Doméstico on the airwaves

2

Doméstico '04 was a book published in 2004 documenting the first four Doméstico exhibitions.

Berlin

Interview with Paul McDevitt of Farbvision

We came in contact with you through your space Farbvision, but we would like to start by taking one step back. You have a broad practice that includes making artworks, organising exhibitions, releasing records and making publications and editions. How does Farbvision take part in this multifaceted practice?

Running a space was something I'd been interested in doing for a while, but it only became a reality when I took on a new studio, and while renovating uncovered the century-old decorative tiles that were hidden beneath a layer of dry wall. It was immediately clear that this room deserved to be used in a different way, and that other people needed to see it. Time and money are always the limiting factors in running any space, but I have another two rooms to work in, plus I'm always in the studio, so I reasoned that I didn't need to commit a set number of hours to running Farbvision—visitors could make an appointment or just ring the doorbell. It still takes up time, but it brings different people through the studio and it's hugely rewarding to work with other artists that one admires. I really like having a practice that is built from different disciplines and I like to mix them up, for instance, when Farbvision houses concerts for the records and launches for the books. I spend solitary hours painting and drawing, then intense periods where hundreds

of people come to see a show. The balance is good, and I'm never bored.

As you have experience working independently and in commercial and institutional spaces, what opportunities does Farbvision create that differ from these other spaces?

Showing at Farbvision has nothing to do with money and everything to do with ideas and community. I'm completely independent. I decided that I only want to host solo exhibitions, mainly because group shows all look pretty much the same. I wanted to make a clear statement with each project and to encourage exhibiting artists to treat the space however they like, to experiment and try things out. There's no pressure and no fear of failure in showing at Farbvision. The tiled walls give each artist something to play with, or against, and also alleviate any compulsion to fill the room with work. You could hang one thing and it would still be a conversation with the space. Exhibitions at Farbvision don't look like exhibitions anywhere else.

You began your career in London, later moving to Berlin. What is your experience of working in Berlin, and how does Farbvision position itself in relation to this city?

Berlin is more much expensive than when I first came, but there remains a civility about the city which London never had, and there is still a lot of space—both on the street and in the average apartment. It's been a great place to work, albeit sometimes a hard place to earn money. But most importantly, Germany is serious about the arts

whereas Britain doesn't really trust or value culture unless it's of the popular kind. And Berlin is a lot more fun than London.

Farbvision operates in the spirit of the city in that it has a vision other than financial gain. It acknowledges the significance of spaces that existed in Prenzlauer Berg in the 80's and 90's, and I hope it plays a small part in defiance of the intense gentrification that threatens to homogenise this neighbourhood.

Does Farbvision also respond to the global contemporary art context? Does Farbvision only exist in Berlin or if you moved, could it move with you?

It has an international programme and outlook, but I couldn't see Farbvision being anywhere else other than here. If I moved I'd just end this project and start something different.

How do you feel your own subjectivity shapes Farbvision? Does your practice cross-pollinate between its different components?

Certainly the programme reflects my taste in contemporary art, and some artists have worked with me before in a different context. That said I'm really very open about what invited artists do with the space. In terms of cross-pollination, yes I think of the space as one part of my practice. Alongside what I do in the studio I'm also interested in publishing and showing the work of other artists. To me it feels like a complete practice, and I'm always engaged. Above all I feel a sense of urgency. You only get so many good years to work where you have energy and ideas. You might as well do something rather

than just talk about it, even if it breaks the bank and ends in failure. So many people talk and do nothing.

Why do you think it is important that independent spaces such as Farbvision exist, not only for young artists but also for mid-career or established artists? What is the different approach you feel you can offer to the artists working with you that galleries or institutions could not/do not offer?

Farbvision is all about the work, and that's important to artists no matter what stage they might be at in their career. It's not about money, it's not about prestige, and it's not about building an ongoing business relationship—it's just about the work. So that's what it's about and that's what it has to offer.

What have you learnt from running Farbvision so far?

I've learnt that hosting exhibitions is easy and making art is hard.

Stadium

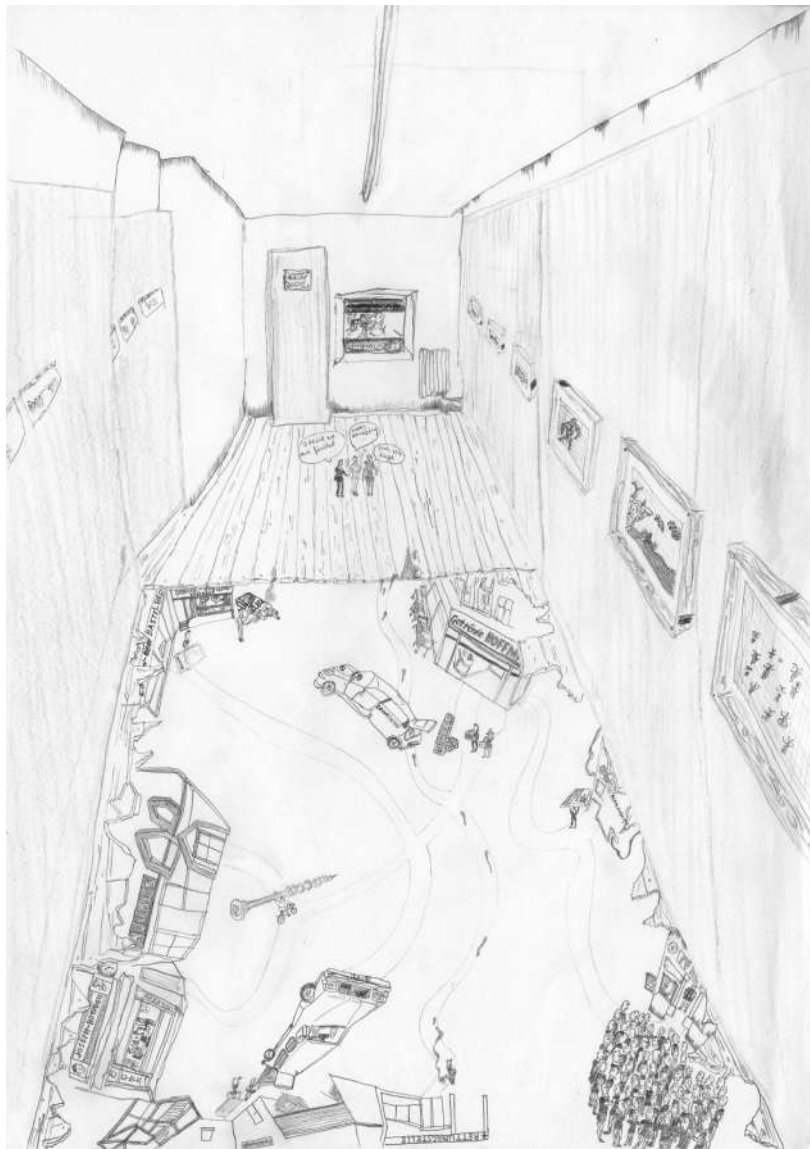


In front of Potsdamer Str. 98, in Berlin, there is a sign that reads: »Eine Malkschule für Künstlerinnen«
It lets pedestrians passing by know that in the backyard of the building, in a beautiful brick house, there used to be a painting school for young women. It was founded in 1868 by the oldest women artists association in Germany, which still exists.

At a time where women were not allowed to study at Art Academies, these artists built a strong network and provided each other serious education. Mathe Kollwitz was a teacher there, for example, and Paula Modersohn-Becker one of the students.

you will probably see it on your way to Stadium if you are walking from the U-Bahn station Kurfürstendamm.

Stadium is located in a mezzanine, in the courtyard of Potsdamer Str. 70, Berlin.



I think we are finished

Looks amazing ...

Yeah, it's huge



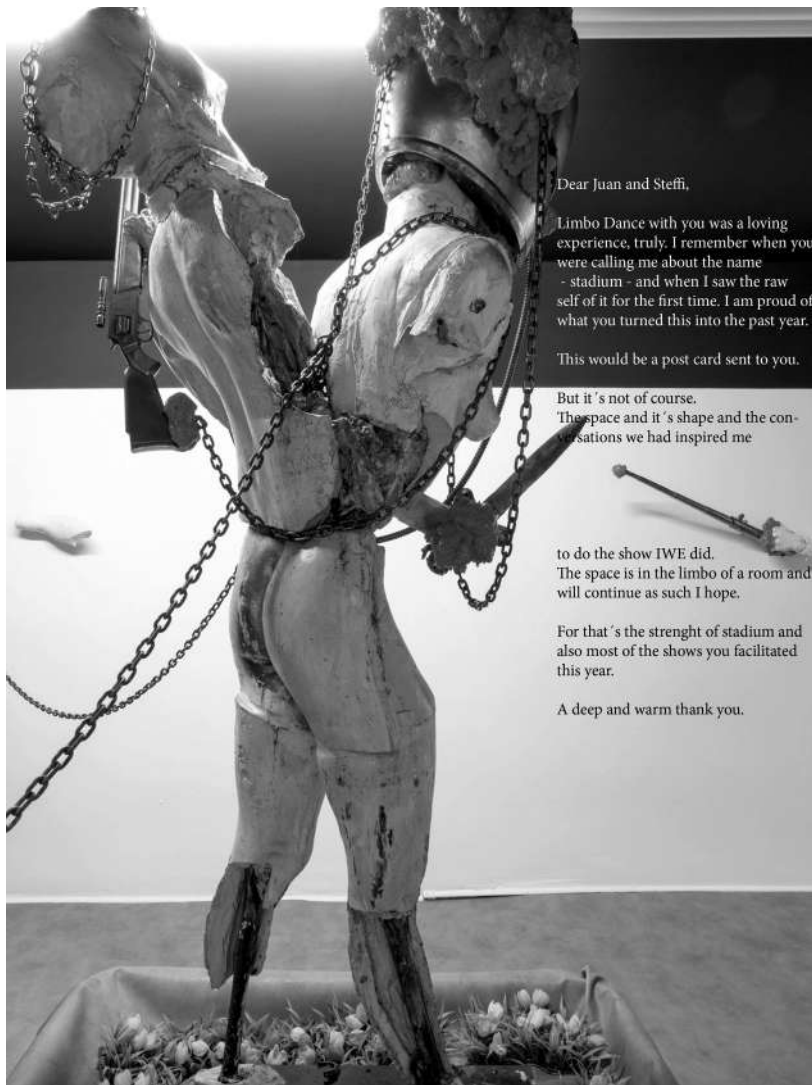
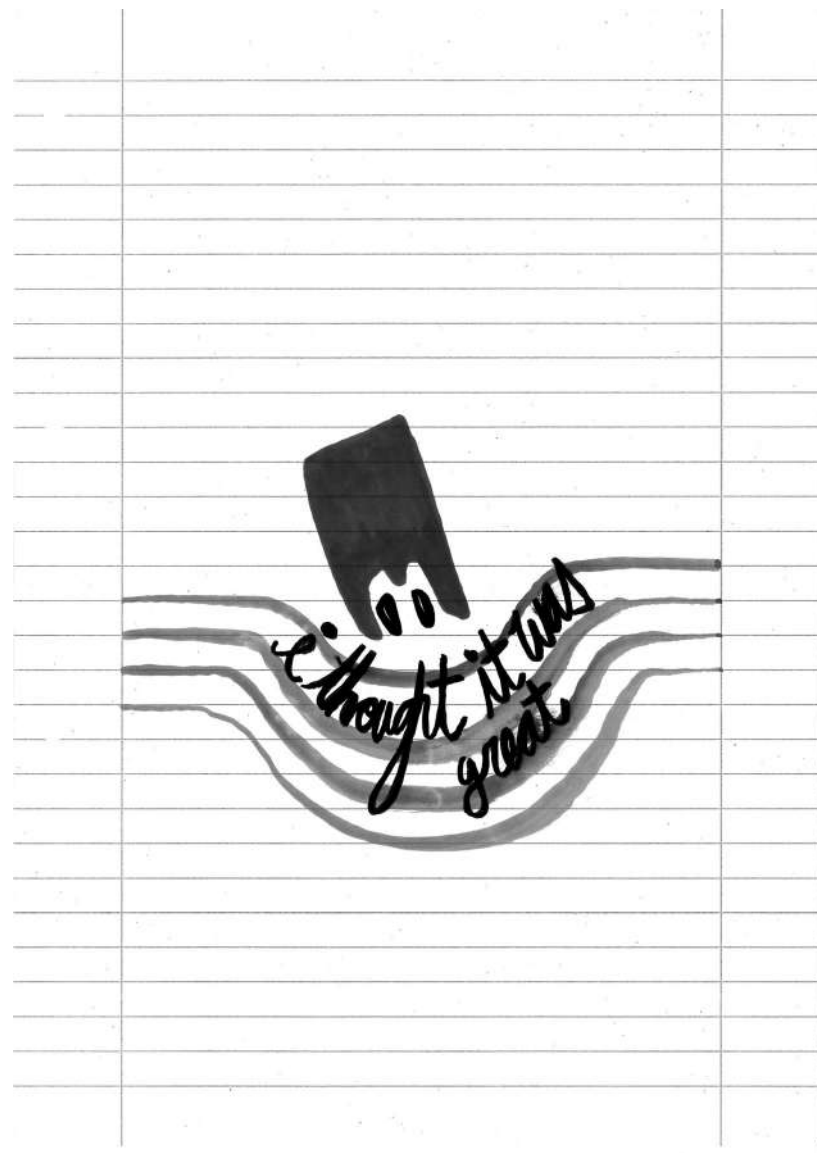


Photo by graysc.de





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Tropez

Summer Parasite

Nele Heinevetter

“I fear that harmony is only a heavy fol-de-rol for minds that crave only repetition. The world around us, in us, victoriously defends itself against this stupidity with the miraculous torrent of the unexpected.”

—Michel Serres

The Sommerbad in Volkspark Humboldthain feels like home to me. Rain or shine, I’ve spent hours in this public pool. It’s not a light-hearted summer fling. It’s true love to a point where I run past during off-season—which is the majority of the year—to peek through the fence and check on the pallid basins, the withering slide and the leafless trees waiting for the visitors to return. By summer the facility will be as neat as always—a true working class idyll with bright blue water, lush green trees and quaint flat-roofed structures. If it wasn’t for the ridiculously strict regulations, intimidating security guards and screaming attendants who govern the up to 50,000 people that visit the pool from June to September, Sommerbad Humboldthain would be a paradisiacal refuge in the middle of the city for visitors of all ages and from various cultural contexts who interact more or less peacefully.

It’s a very physical place. The playing kids, the flirting or fighting youngsters, the bored parents, the

voracious family clans, the lazy freelancers, and the ruthless sporty types—I love watching all of them, how they (inter-)act. I observe myself observing them and think of one of my favourite lectures “Techniques of the Body” (1934) by French sociologist Marcel Mauss. Inspired by an article on swimming and his own observation that more and more swimmers transitioned from breast-stroke to crawl in the early twentieth century, his proposition was as simple as it was groundbreaking for ethnology: we learn to use our body (eat, swim, sleep etc.) through imitation and education within our society and according to our role in this society. Such techniques of the body vary between different foreign cultures, generations or even communities. Especially on hot days, when a lot of very different people with very few clothes on co-exist in a very tight space, the study of body techniques can become crucial to classify one another and adjust the respective behaviour to avoid stressful misunderstandings. Yet, if even presumably genuine actions such as eating or the according to Mauss “gymnic art” of swimming can express cultural differences within the context of a public pool, to consider also the idea of addressing a public with culture becomes an even greater challenge. Because I’m not just content with feeding the visitors: I want to inspire them, too.

TROPEZ in Sommerbad Humboldthain is a dream come true. The kiosk serves fries, sodas and icecream to all swimmers and non-swimmers. Meanwhile the invited artists, performers, musicians and authors realise installations, plays, screenings, talks and concerts in and around TROPEZ. They perform during the pool’s opening times. The cultural program is an offer to each and every visitor of the Sommerbad Humboldthain.

Especially such unexpected encounters can change someone’s day, summer, and thus entire future. It starts

with the kids that run their hands through the slippery pearls between runs on the slide or surprise everyone with their spontaneous improvisation on stage—as done by super talented Adam and Yasan last year. And it ends with adults that question the artworks on display or the presented performances—and thereby also challenge the perception of all contributors to the program of POOL. Neither groups expected such encounters when they queued at the pool entrance on a sunny morning. Our offer is about surprise and dialogue. That does not mean that we are content with approachable art works, but the setting invites the beholder to ask for explanations. We simply want to create potential for contingencies—on both sides.

I’m aware that TROPEZ was not missed before. But as French philosopher Michel Serres writes in his fabulous book The Parasite (1982): “There is only something new by the injection of chance in the rule, by the introduction of the law at the heart of disorder. An organisation is born from circumstances, like Aphrodite rising from the sea.”¹ The accusation from within the administration of Berliner Bäderbetriebe that I was profiting from an existing public and that culture didn’t belong in such a place is peculiar. Nobody is forced to come inside and have a look at the works on display, borrow a book or discuss. Nobody is forced to sit out a reading, watch a screening or attend a performance. TROPEZ is a parasite in the best possible sense, i.e. that sense coined by Serres, according to whom it literally means “to eat next to”. Only that the thing next to eating would be speaking he explains, and the “next to” refers to the actual difference between expansion (speaking) and reception (eating). The notion of the parasite stands for the idea that any minor disruptor can change the power play of a system by introducing complexity and

the unforeseen so vital for any sort of evolution. Yet he highlights specificity as the attribute of the parasite: “It is not just anything that troubles a passing message. It is not just anyone who is invited to someone’s table”.² In the case of TROPEZ it is visionary artists, musicians, writers, curators as well as curious swimmers and non-swimmers that are invited to share a table by TROPEZ to spice up their respective routines. In this sense TROPEZ provides the food to be eaten next to the pool—only to claim space for the art to take place next to the food to be eaten next to the pool—to a public that came for the pool—not for the food and not for the arts, yet won’t be able remember it otherwise.

I hope for TROPEZ to become a home to many people that will look back at their summers and remember a feeling of belonging and optimism, inclusion and progression. To my understanding, culture confers an identity. Culture operates with segregation. It differentiates itself against other cultures. But the creation of shared experiences, memories and stories guarantees the cohesion and resistance of a community.

Without the courageous and generous support of Capital Cultural Fund for our summer project POOL at TROPEZ I would have never been able to invite such great artists like Søren Aagard, Sofia Duchovny, John Matthew Heard, Hervé Humbert, Michael Kleine, Kris Lemsalu, Zoë Claire Miller, Alejandro Almanza Pereda, Michael Schiefel, Mary Audrey Ramirez, Jen Rosenblit, Markus Wirthmann, and Samson Young as well as the musicians, performers and authors invited by John Holten (Broken Dimanche Press), Nikola Dietrich and Martin Ebner (Starship), Daniela Seitz and Anja Weigl (Creamcake) as well as Nico Anklam: AGF, Ink Agop, Shane Anderson, Yuko Asanuma, Riccardo Benassi, Lisa Blanning, Jay Boogie, Ricardo Domeneck,

Perera Elsewhere, Jemek Jemowit, Prof. Dr. Jasmin Joshi, Sungeun Grace Kim, Göksu Kunak, Bill Kouligas, Melissa Lacoste, Larry, Sophia Le Fraga, Linda Lee, Roman Lemberg, Alizee Lenox, Inger Wold Lund, Jeshi, Josep Maynou, Mobilegirl, PAM BAM, Theresa Patzschke, Neda Sanai, Mary Scherpe, Jessica Lauren Elizabeth Taylor, Mundi Vondi, Steven Warwick, Juha van’t Zelfde, and Ziúr. And I also thank Leonie Pfennig, Alexander Nussbaumer, Silke Neumann, Franz Schütte, Karsten Stein, Lavinia Steiner and Valerie Chartrain for their amazing contribution to TROPEZ—not to forget my friends and family headed by Katharina Beckmann, Oliver Bischoff, Maurin Dietrich, Stefanie Gerke, Ersan Gomüsbuga, Mary Scherpe, Nadine Sanchez, and Henrik Siemers who were always there to fry with me.

¹
Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) p. 127

²
Ibid. p. 230

Paris

Atelier W

BIOGRAPHY of W

Since 2010, W has been plural: it is a place rooted in the city of Pantin, a suburb of Paris, and is an organisation which provides studios for artists, offers a monthly exhibition programme and is also a collective of artists working in France and abroad.

In 2014, the Collective W started Les Entrées Extraordinaires exhibition cycle, a project of collective gestures and productions whose goal is to put in place a collective thought, not turned to the valorisation of personal practices, but instead advocating the construction of a practice and a collective gesture. For the first opus, they worked with an industrial archive (Motobécane) of the Pantin City Hall. During the second and third opus, they produced a scenographic situation (evoking the micro-architectural constructions of Motobécane moulds of the first edition of 2014) to show over 150 art pieces related to archive and memory. Next autumn,¹ the fourth issue will take place in Prague at the invitation of Pragovka Art District, this time with the purpose of producing special collective research and an exhibition related to the theme of displacement.

During Vouveuvé project which spread over the year 2016, one to three times a month the W collective welcomed children with pervasive developmental disorders from L'Etincelle, a day hospital for the Red Cross. Together they made images, installations, videos... An exhibition and a cycle of seminars showed the numerous traces resulting from these meetings, while re-interrogating them. W has been working for two years with many artists and theoreticians to publish a magazine in continuity of this project.

W in dates

(Selection, complete list of the programme at www.w-pantin.xyz/w-archive)

W is the collective of artists and the art studio dedicated to working, meeting, research, experimentation and diffusion of contemporary art.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 2003 | Draft of the collective born from the meeting of its founding members at Villa Arson |
| 2010 | February: Creation of the W Association regrouping the W Collective and the W Art studio |
| October 2011 | W's first exhibition <u>Ampersand, &</u> ; exhibition of the W collective accompanied by Madeleine Aktypi |
| 2012/13 | Development of:
—The exhibition area
—The programming of invited artists
—The reception of external proposals |
| 2014 | Beginning of the exhibition cycle <u>Les entrées extraordinaires</u> |
| 2016 | <u>Extraordinary Entrances II</u> .
<u>Vouveuvé</u> project |
| 2017 | <u>Extraordinary Entrances III</u> .
<u>Vouveuvé</u> exhibition at “Les Sheds”, Pantin. |
| 2019 | Exhibition of Collective W in Uneven Casablanca Biennale, Morocco.
<u>Extraordinary Entrances IV</u> (research residency and exhibition), Prague, Czech republic. |

Clément

—W is a safe haven, a welcoming land!

—W is a way of showing experimental projects rather than classical exhibitions.

—W is an artist-run space based in Pantin since 2010, made for both production and exhibitions. But W is also a crew of people making artistic projects beyond W in Pantin, and beyond France.

—W is a way of supporting artistic creation.

—As a sort of label, W can create different situations inside a working context. It produces meetings between people.

—W is a constellation of artistic projects: It's a physical place to present artistic projects, based in Pantin, in France (in the suburbs of Paris). But W is also a place without space, a group of different personalities; a kind of mental space, which invents artistic situations or contexts, wherever these projects take place.

—W is a platform. W is a physical project space. W is an outer space.

—W is a non-profit organisation that promotes contemporary art and developing projects outside the walls of the Atelier W in Pantin.

—As a way of creating synergies, W has a great capacity to adapt its projects depending on different contexts.

—W is a little world, a place to live, a place to work, a place to meet people, a place to experiment in space.

Judith

The story of W has begun and will continue, as we all do, in an organic way.

W is an artist-run space, an association, an artist collective, a love story. Based on a friend's common desire:

how to work together with the individuality of each one to construct a common place.

Finding a name was, in the early beginnings of our story, a huge issue, but in a positive way—or how the French say: a “dispute”. We finally agreed on “W” which is simultaneously a reference to our address “Avenue Weber”, the drawing in the night sky of the “Cassiopee” (Cassiopeia) constellation and a reference to a Georges Perec book that we all like: W ou le souvenir d'enfance (W, or the Memory of Childhood). But in contrast to Perec's book, the W that we wanted to create was a place related to the world, a place of freedom, of sharing, discussion, research, experimentation, with no losers and no winners.

W is a letter to write, but a word to pronounce.

Ana

W for me.

I link the collective to an image, which moves me in a singular way. It's about Connected Underground, a painting by René Daniëls. In the centre, a white spot flattens and spreads the red paint; diaphanous light from a lighthouse or searchlight scans the soil, as a place still to explore or a trajectory that would not have been completed. Here, what is not directly visible appears as an emanation of interiority transmitted by the atmosphere, in which form and content are subject to our gaze, allowing the access to another world or space.

At W, the idea is to employ underground pathways. Under the earth at a certain depth, by a succession of undetectable motions, we ignore how it achieved the formation of different connections, how they became related, and the seeds of this evolution. Buried, hidden by a superposition of layers, these movements are im-

perceptible, undisclosed or at least difficult to translate into words.

When I look at Daniël's painting I find the same perspective created by the wavy lines, which interweave the waves and bridges in certain prints of the series Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji by Katsushika Hokusai. They cross the painting uniting the sea and the earth, attracting our attention and our curiosity and inviting us to perceive and scrutinise the space mentally. The fluid, immersive effect—and perpetual motion eminent to water—corresponds to a creation/dissolution of associations where it becomes difficult to grasp the beginning or the end.

A constant movement, emblematic of the genesis of an oeuvre, of its foundation, of its growth and its diffusion. A natural border as a passage, without limit, without reduction. A stimulation.

Céline

W is the centre of something; a community who is ignoring itself.

W is an eight year long, ongoing project evolving, especially nowadays, its budget dimension. At the beginning of the project, we were young artists from the same circle and after a few years we became a working and artistic team; with, of course, sometimes arguments and misunderstandings, as life is not a summery mountain lake's shiny surface. If W still exists it is because some continue to battle to make it new and better every year by including new artists in the project when others stop or change their commitments. In this way W continues to grow and has become more ambitious as, first of all, W is a real place with exhibitions and studios, and it is the

community's headquarters, composed by Staff members, Satellite members, Resident members, Inviting members, Donating members, Old members, Friend members and Future members!

Catherine

^^

double roof that shelters an artistic working place and a living exhibition space

w

container for dishes whose recipes are free, open, diversified, benevolent, spicy, sweet, bitter and always well savoured and shared

><<>

formula that is neither superior nor inferior, but still offbeat enough

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Fanny

W is a puzzle made of a myriad of little pieces.

For nine years, those pieces have fitted together.
The whole image is slowly taking shape because it's still moving.

This puzzle is being built thanks to the gestures of those who make pieces in the studio: the residents, the

guests ... Thanks to the movements of the visitors. Thanks to the thorough work of the ants of the W association members who volunteer, who keep mentally moving, who respond in the present moment, who are physically here, who assemble, who bind.

DAY 1

Catherine Radosa

W

Fanny Châlot

W workshops? W artistic programme / W events? W personal investment? W political positioning?

W the time-consuming or W the party?

Clément Roche

W is almost a physical person, an autonomous entity, who lives his life as a free space dedicated to artistic creation in its most diverse forms ... W is a letter W is a word W is a world W is a vision W is a view W is complex.

W has the particularity of being two spaces: one upstairs for production and one downstairs for exhibition.

Judith Espinas

W is simultaneously a concrete place and an abstract space. I spend two hours minimum to get there but W is otherwise here in my everyday life.

Ana Braga



Clément Roche

W as double you, is a palindrome, a mirror of ourselves.

J.E

Not exactly a mirror, but a window where as a group, our very singular “I” becomes “we”. Nobody disappears but something else happens. I often think about this sentence of Patrick Leboutte about being together, $1 + 1 = 3$.

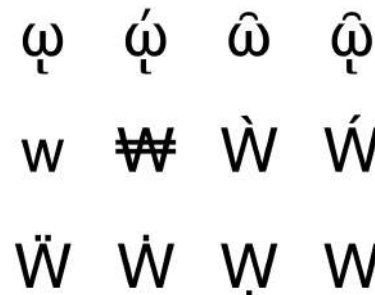
Cl.R

$1 + 1 = 3!$ And it can work for the work itself also: two people can do the work of three people. I think this is the particularity of the mirror, always deforming reality. Reflections are never exactly the same. An augmented reality. W is really here, somewhere between our different points of view. W is a place to debate, a space of freedom. W opens your mind. Like the title of the article by “Art Insider” magazine/revue: W WIDE OPEN!

J.E

I wasn’t thinking about three people, but more in the meaning: someone + someone can’t be a mathematical equation (= more or = less), but can be seen as creator of another person.

CR



Céline Notheaux

W is the beginning of a secret word?

W as a double “you” but just different (--> the mirror). It is the place where you can meet other artists and exchange ideas, crash test art pieces. (On the mirror: not the looking glass where you can admire yourself and maybe enter in a kind of introspection. The mirror as Alice’s magic frame, the art door, to catch a new point a view you can’t usually see, as a clear view mirror).

The collection of W letters as the passage of the initial W through a horror show’s curved mirror.

Cl.R



Cl.R

“Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear”

Céline Notheaux

How many eyes? How many are we? Sometimes mirrors magnify.

F.C

1 + 1 = 🐞

Cl.R

W is a living form! Mouvante, mobile (moving, mobile)

DAY 2

F.C

I live with the weight of W on my shoulders but at the same time that weighs on me.

W is a puzzle made of myriad little pieces.

No clear definition but a good resolution/purpose: to support, to host, to experiment, to try.

Is W the beginning of a secret world? Is W the beginning of a secret war?

DAY 3

C.N

Who would be the belligerents? A war for what? W like we. We repeat the letter/word W as if it were a mantra. Maybe we think repeating it over and over will finally give us the right definition. Pronouncing the sound, every part of that W will reconnect all aspects, including your

best projects, failures, expectations, your worst clashes, departures and new arrivals.



Puzzle/Jigsaw.

Again Georges Perec arises

Maybe W is a constrained creation exercise.

F.C

A secret political war.

J.E

A war without losers or winners?

F.C

A war that has no enemies, but convictions not adapted to the proposed systems. Positive-war like an oxymoron. Fight for values that are unique to us. With our weapons: W and our motivation.

Catherine Radosa

W is also a field of experimentation and practice of a micro-society devoid of hierarchy, putting into reality a political project a priori “utopian”, where there is no question of power/authority but strength, nor of the personal careers but of individual AND collective accomplishment and fulfilment, where the individual remains unclassifiable, unique, mobile, uncontrolled and uncontrollable. It changes its role for the benefit of the collective as well as for the benefit of the construction and evolution of oneself. Time is not money or profit, is not to be done, is not to be spent, but it IS.

Energy, strength and investment circulates there; they are shared and projected.

It is not a monotonous, stable, predictable and balanced body, but a moving living body, which demands variations and differences.

This anti-monotony, this biodiversity is the vital wealth and not an anomaly as we would have tendency to target in an established society—based on visions that could be formerly designated as male.

Management does not exist for the benefit of dialogue and creation.

F.C

I'm at W.

J.E

There is no program; there are no instructions or manuals. At each discussion, each project, we make the bet of laying a stone and seeing where the second will land, at the risk that it will add days to the construction of each one. The shape gradually appears, reinventing its assembly without a predefined building system. Go into shifting sands, alive. Shifting bodies, living sands.

A.B



F.C

linguistique. Une fois que sont dessinées la forme de l'expression et la forme du contenu, la matière ou continuum, en tant que possibilité amorphe précédente, est désormais formée, et les substances ne sont pas encore produites. C'est pourquoi, en termes de système, quand

(Once the form of the expression has shaped the continuum, which, prior to that moment was an amorphous possibility, the continuum is formed, and it is that form that interests linguists.)

F.C

Eco makes echoes to us

J.E

Chacun a vu des triangles d'oies dans le ciel, et voici la saison des changements, qui va nous ramener cette géométrie volante. Le beau est que ces triangles ondulent comme des banderoles, ce qui rend sensible la lutte des forces. D'un côté le vent coule comme l'eau, mêlant et démêlant ses filets et tourbillons; de l'autre la foule des formes invariables s'ordonne dans le mouvement même, chacun des individus se glissant dans le sillage du voisin et y trouvant avec bonheur sa forme encore dessinée. Quant au détail de cette méca-

La primauté de l'individu 321

nique volante, nous aurions grand besoin de quelque mémoire écrite par une oie géomètre; mais ces puissants voiliers n'en pensent pas si long.

L'homme chante à peu près comme les oies volent; car chanter, c'est lancer un son dans le sillage d'un autre de façon à profiter d'un pli d'air favorable; et chanter faux, au contraire, c'est se heurter à ce qui devrait porter. Encore bien plus évidemment, si une foule d'hommes chante, chaque voix s'appuie sur les autres et s'en trouve fortifiée. C'est ainsi que le puissant signal s'envole, et revient à l'oreille comme un témoin de force. Aussi le bonheur de chanter en chœur n'a point de limites; il ouvre absolument le ciel.

Ce genre de perfection immobile concerne nos

(Everyone has seen triangles of geese in the sky, and here is the season of changes, which will bring us back this flying geometry. The beauty is that these triangles undulate like bannerols, which makes the battle of the forces sensible. On one side the wind flows like water, mixing and untangling its nets and eddies; on the other the crowd of invariable forms is ordered in the movement itself, each of the individuals slipping in the wake of its neighbour and finding with happiness its form still drawn. As to the details of this flying mechanics, we stand in dire need of some memory written by a geometric goose; but these powerful sailboats did not think that far.

The man sings roughly about as geese fly, for to sing is to throw a sound in the wake of another so as to take advantage of a fold of favourable air; and to sing in falsetto, on the contrary, is to collide with what should be done. Even more obviously, if a crowd of men sings, each voice finds support on the others and is strengthened. This is how the powerful signal takes off, and returns to the ear as a witness of strength. So the happiness of singing in chorus knows no limits; it absolutely opens the sky.)²

As well as Alain

I come back from W

F.C

I'm leaving W. I'm just coming to W. Everything makes sense if we take the diverse meanings.

J.E

Passing ahead W Tchamini the magician (our neighbour physiotherapist) tells me “immobility is the enemy of the body.” W is corps (body). In French the word corps has no singular or plural form.

F.C

Hydra of Lerna without the poison.

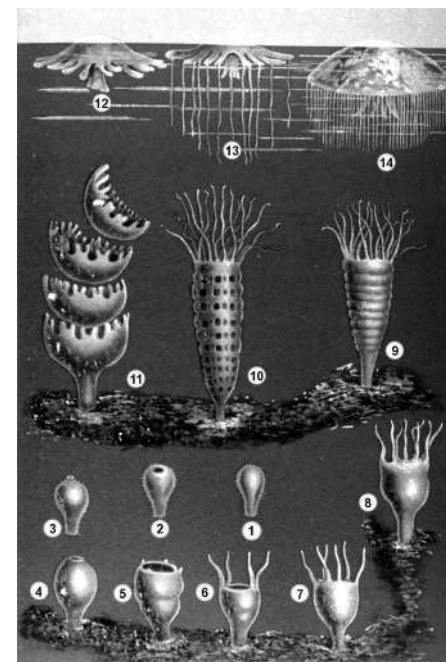
Cette créature est décrite comme un monstre possédant plusieurs têtes qui se régénèrent doublement lorsqu'elles sont tranchées, ~~et l'haleine soufflée par les multiples gueules exhale un dangereux poison~~

(This creature is described as a monster with several heads that regenerate doubly when sliced, and the breath blown by multiple mouths exhales a dangerous poison.)

Rewrite mythology

J.E

Or the jellyfish's tree.



F.C

Cette créature est décrite comme un mon. t. possédant plusieurs têtes qui se régénèrent doublement lorsqu'elles sont tranchées, ~~et l'haleine soufflée par les multiples gueules exhale un dangereux poison~~

(This creature is described as a mountain with several heads that regenerate doubly when sliced, ~~and the breath blown by multiple mouths exhales a dangerous poison.~~)

Rewrite our history

C.N



Cl.R

I am W. I'm here from elsewhere. Here, there, at W:



The local chimera

F.C



Body in motion, stone of life.

J.E

This creature is a mount with many heads that regenerate when they are hit.

F.C

*regenerate twice/regenerate doubling

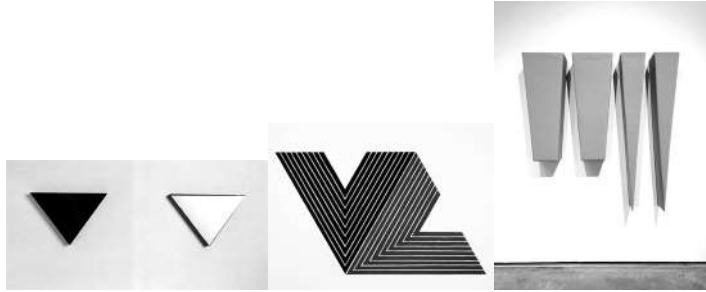
C.N

A mount like a mountain. A being of earth. A golem. The art of making alive.

Cl.R

The pachamama. Terraforma. Mount Analogue from René Daumal.

A.B



DAY 4

Cl.R

The ability to do the things well, such as breaking the mouth/face. The freedom to invent situations or to do nothing. To preserve W is also to allow ourselves the possibility of the possible, of an infinity of possibilities.

F.C

It is a unique feeling this relationship that we have to W. Everyone has his/her own experience. W is a multitude of paradoxes, opposites and complexities.

Each one has a different connection with it. After nine years, it is in my life. I grow with it, I see it transform and mature. It is certainly beautiful and extremely rewarding as an experience but it is also very difficult not to get caught in the energy it asks from us.

Cl.R

No, seriously no, leaving W open means leaving something possible. Just for that we must try to keep this shapeless form alive, which is deformed and reformed.

F.C

We're not trying to maintain it, it's alive.

Cl.R

W must reinvent itself, as it has always done.

F.C

We make it evolve. It doesn't owe anything. It is us who guide it. In return, we are hyper spoiled by what emanates from it.

Cl.R

Right!

J.E

"Keep this shapeless form alive, which is deformed and reformed", "we do not try to maintain it, it is alive", your words resonate loudly with questions that have always been asked about W, as in our personal practices and ourselves to the world more widely. In this sense I have just understood your idea of the mirror, Clément, but I come back to this idea of the window, because indeed with each new awareness, or each step back, we open new tracks without redoing the same choices twice. Forms arise more than they anticipate, they do not repeat themselves but are replayed, they bring enriched new eyes, new breaths and new realities to which we adapt.

F.C

The forms but also the looks and the breaths were not anticipated. They appeared as we progressively experimented. W was firstly our studio, we were freshly graduated, and secondly our place for exhibitions. Afterwards, we invited external people to work with us, then we hosted

outside artists, then lecturers/speakers. Afterwards we accepted proposals of artisans needing a temporary place of work, then schools for workshops, then residents and children with mental disorders. Then, then, then. None of this was anticipated. Many combinations yet there are no inconsistencies or contradictions.

J.E

The form being mobile, it accepts awkwardness and clumsiness, side steps and false roads. The flexibility of the reed. And the solidity of alternating breaths. An echo to the skeleton identical of W. It has always been said the particularity of the space cut in two: the studios set upstairs and a mobile space on the ground floor.

F.C

And the background? It is also mobile.

Cl.R

Liquid form, yes. The “then and then and then” are not anticipated and they mingle with time, they merge. No clear or programmed steps; only liquid and mobile advances.

F.C

At the bottom, I will be a little less flexible. We managed without financial help, by choice and conviction. We did not want to be indebted to anyone. We wanted to be consistent with our values.

Cl.R

And even up there in the studios, finally it’s flexible: they are ten or eleven, sometimes twelve ...

This is the time and the oil spot, W is absorbed in time. W diffuses.

J.E

I thought shape, in the sense of life, shapes and not as surface in opposition to the background. But in the end, I believe that flexible is not opposite to precise choices.

Flexibility in the diversity of the viewing angles, rigor in the choices to maintain and keep this freedom.

A.B

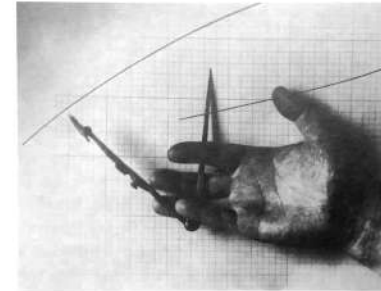


Fig. 9 El Lissitzky Untitled (*Hand with a Compass*), 1924. Gelatin silver print, 5 3/4 x 8 1/2" (14.6 x 20.5 cm), Collection Ann and Jürgen Wilde, Zúrich



Barrister on the wall

F.C

Yes, of course, but it launched me onto this idea of values that guided our choices for all these years.

Cl.R

New questions and a constant reassessment that knows no limits. It’s rather interesting, right?

J.E

We’ve built ourselves organically; it’s an exercise to try to verbalise this experience, here.

F.C

Because indeed, it may seem to grow all alone, whereas W is anchored in a peculiar breeding ground.

Cl.R

It was important in the history of W that you made these choices all these years and at each “stage” of the evolution of the place, of the collective, or the office, you have planted beautiful seeds. The roots reach back. The reed is flexible because of the strength and depth of the roots.

F.C

It's funny to see these words written: “these choices (...) at each stage.”

I do not think I see it that way. I think that there are private choices, personal convictions that have been strengthened, affirmed over the time, experienced, and it is precisely this breeding ground that has proven to be fertile to the emergence of W. We have been attentive to each step without making perfectly conscious decisions.

C.R

Experience: experimentation and adjustment in function.

J.E

As in our practices: the form and the background are built in parallel, we make, we become aware, we step back, we move ourselves, we manufacture ...

F.C

Sorry if I come back to this concept. Definitely, we have built a certain background in parallel with the forms, however I feel, sensing that this substance, which I call our personal convictions, was there from the beginning.

C.R

What do you mean?

F.C

When I talk about responsibility, I also talk about political responsibility. I often say it: W is a form of resistance; it is a political action. And that's in the genes of W, it was not built over time, it was there from the beginning, even if we were not aware of it.

C.R

Oh yes, of course, I think you're right, yes.

F.C

It was always to arrive, but there were moments when I missed my breath.

J.E

We trusted the new breaths, continue the shift that has always kept W floating and indeed makes it a collective space without hierarchy, this relay of which I spoke above. The moments of hindsight have allowed us to reshape this form that has no author.

J.E

Entrées Extraordinaires. (Extraordinary Entries)

This cycle of exhibitions since the beginning of W resonates with your words as a summary of its history.

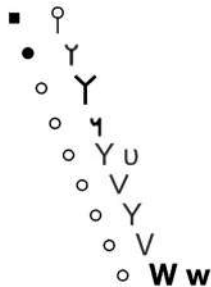
F.C

Decentring: the objects (moulds), then our eyes asking others to come bring their eyes (their works of art).

From us to the others: start from intuition, gut feelings (these wooden objects in the archives of the town hall) and to develop concepts.

To trust the forms, to allow the impulse of doing: to act,
to gather and assemble, to watch them appear.

Without fear, without judgment, without expectations.



~600 to present

We come back to this letter image, a floating open suitcase that can accommodate Entrées Extraordinaires, at the bottom, basically a future we will never know!

W a parallel with this bird turning into I Greek to become a double V. Archaeological excavations that go through the image, opening other horizons to the words.

Things assert themselves and are drawn more precisely by modelling themselves according to intuitions that are materialised.



It's like the intuition of coming to Pantin.

The metamorphosis, yes.

The jumping jacks, the puppets (in a literal translation, the suburb Pantin means “puppet”) made of wood and bits of string. And objects that come alive again.

DAY 5

This image is magnificent: the W would be the spread wings of the initial bird. The bird finally sets in motion. This will join the text of Alain, about the flight of wild geese.

It reminds me of Jean Richepin's poem, "The passing birds" (Original Title: "Les oiseaux de passage", 1876).

(...)

Oh the perfectly happy people.
Suddenly in space
So high that they seem to go
Slowly in great flight

In the shape of a triangle
Arrive glide and pass
Where are they going? ... who are they?
How far away from the ground they are

Look at them pass, them
those are the savages
They go where their desire
Wants above mountains

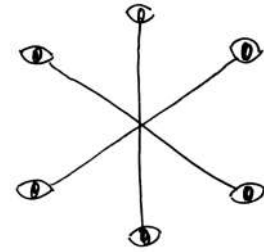
And woods, and seas, and winds
And far from slaveries
The air they drink
Would make your lungs burst

(...)

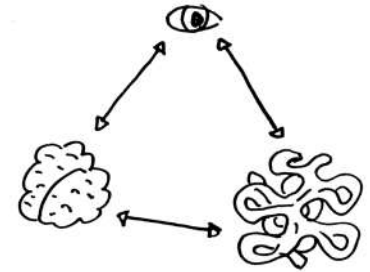
But they are first of all
Sons of the chimera
Azure thirsty ones
Poets and crazies.

(...)

Thinking of a symbol to describe what is W, the star appeared to me, several branches diversify the directions connected to the same centre:

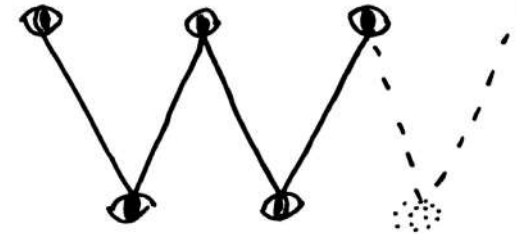


Each eye also enters in the triangle of creation; visceral / eye / spirit:



l'œil - le cerveau - les tripes

This sign/symbol W, which refers to the image of a frieze, a temporality that unfolds, a path to draw:

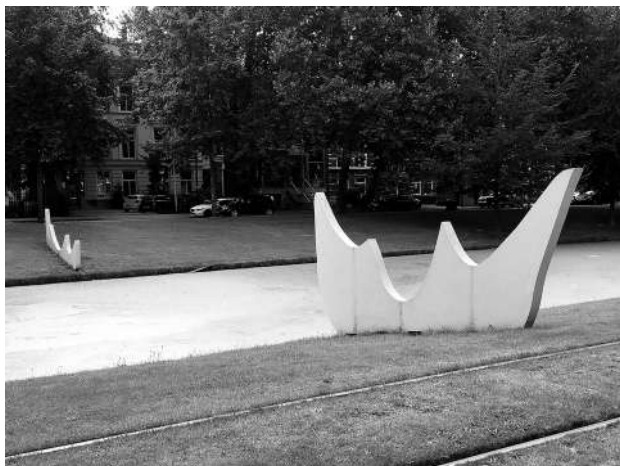


“The archaeological excavations” / the question of the “soil/breeding ground” in W. There is a soil/breeding ground because “W diffuses/disseminates”, which gives it its generous perfume, its resistant and political aromas, its subtle notes of naivety.

W has sound AOC (Artist Origin Confirmed).

Catherine gives us a beautiful definition of the rich elements that make up the fertiliser of the soil, breeding ground W.

A.B



Cl.R

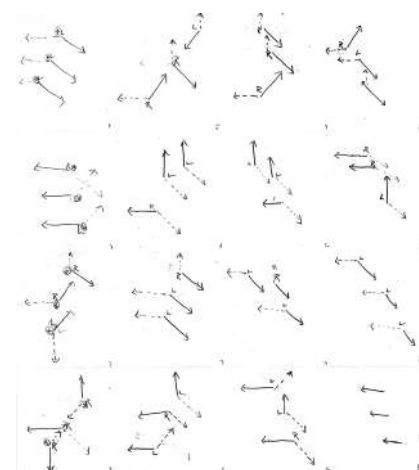
W is a path. A road in zigzags. A curve that draws the truffle for a dog to look for. W searches, feels, sniffs and hesitates always, but advances constantly.

C.N

Yes! And it's also a choreographic motif, W like a dance.

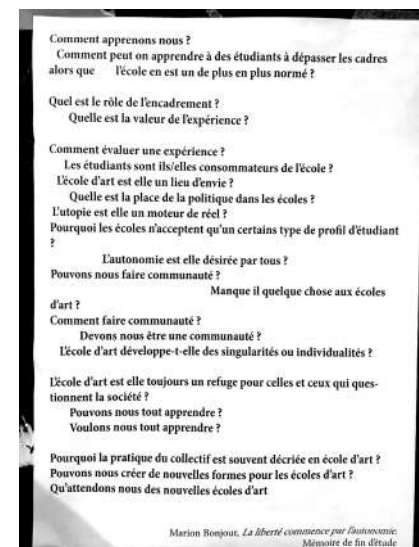
Because “W is a party” too.

A.B



DAY 6

Ca.R



How do we learn?
 How can we teach students to go beyond the frame when the school is one of the more and more standardised?
 What is the role of management?
 What is the value of the experience?
 How to evaluate an experience?
 Are students the school's consumers?
 Is the art school a place of envy?
 What is the place of politics in schools?
 Is utopia a motor of reality?
 Why do schools only accept a certain type of student profile?
 Is autonomy desired by all?
 Can we make community?
 Is there something missing at art schools?
 How to make community?
 Should we be a community?
 Does the art school develop singularities or individualities?
 Is the art school still a refuge for those who question society?
 Can we learn everything?
 Do we want to learn everything?
 Why is the practice of the collective often decried in art school?
 Can we create new forms for art schools?
 What do we expect from new art schools?

Ca.R

It was photographed today at school, about questioning the art education, the creation and the individualism and the collective notion in the artistic scene. Indeed it's a real question, which poses other fairly complex questions about what is being made as an artistic position and as an

artistic world, and to whom this individualism is served; the one that has been cultivated, apparently since the beginning of education.

The collective aspect (which is multiple and can lead to a long discussion) has been set aside in the art world, and this represents certain realities and desires of its different actors (not especially artists themselves), which seems to me to be clearly marked by prevailing post-capitalism. It is also here that the spirit of the W shows its importance and actual questionings, which could inspire the education of art today.

A.B



1

Text written February 2019

2

In the absence of an English translation, this version was made by W members.

The Community

Intro

Zeitgeist Obituary AD/HD by The Community (2019)

The Community captured the essence of their generation by dematerialising the concept of Exquisite Corpse and opening it to new disciplines. They established a new dialog between various artforms allowing a new meaning to take shape where words, visions, materials and minds collide, breathe and play with each other.

Part 1

Automated Curation / Double Check

Moana Maile was thinking about Mirek Kasprzak again. Mirek was a stable monk with short hair and powerful knees.

Moana walked over to the window and reflected on her silent surroundings. She had always loved beautiful Mizumi with its large lake full of seaweed. It was a place that encouraged her tendency to feel joyful.

Then she saw something in the distance, or rather someone. It was the stable figure of Mirek Kasprzak.

Moana gulped. She glanced at her own reflection. She was a giving, intelligent, Chai drinker with fragile hair and sharp knees. Her friends saw her as a magnificent, mighty master. Once, she had even jumped into a river and saved a barbecued, stressed person.

But not even a giving person who had once jumped into a river and saved a barbecued stressed person, was prepared for what Mirek had in store today.

The sun shone like meditating gnus, making Moana open-minded. Moana grabbed a reliable filet-o-fish that had been strewn nearby; she massaged it with her fingers.

As Moana stepped outside and Mirek came closer, she could see the inquisitive glint in his eye.

Mirek gazed with the affection of 4632 gentle lobsters. He said, in hushed tones, "I want to discover a particular

thought or feeling behind my resistance that I don't want to acknowledge."

Moana looked back, even more open-minded and still fingering the reliable filet-o-fish. "Mirek, through meditation that discovery alone can give you greater confidence in yourself," she replied.

They looked at each other with happy feelings, like two diced, dizzy dogs going to a sauna at a very arrogant holiday, which had jazz music playing in the background and two brave uncles making fire to the beat.

Moana regarded Mirek's short hair and powerful. "Or you may simply find that you can actually rest your mind longer than you thought you could!" revealed Moana with a delighted grin.

Mirek looked thoughtful, his emotions blushing like a yellowish, yarbelicious Yonex t-shirt.

Then Mirek came inside for a nice drink of chai.

Part 3
It's all around you

Part 2
Wisdom + Adderall

"Don't respect the internet." (Kanye West, 2018)

"Art is the lie that enables us to realise the truth and truth is fyre." (Billy McFarland, 2017)

"There are two kinds of games. You know what I am saying? One's finite, the other infinite and if you played for the finite game, you played yourself." (DJ Khaled, 2015)

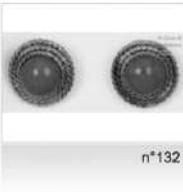
"I want to continue modelling and do the best that I can with that." (Donald Trump, 2015)

"When the world wants you to turn right, turn 'left'. It's called being 'different'." (Virgil Abloh, 2018)



Part 4

Digital solutions to real-world conundrums



Paire de boucles d'oreilles en or jaune torsadé ornées chacune d'un cabochon de corail. P. 15,4g.
Bijoux




n°132

AJOUTER À MA SÉLECTION


ESTIMATION
200 - 300 €

Déposer un ordre d'achat

Demande de renseignements

Partager :   

Imprimer



Collier de trois rangs de boules de corail en chute, le fermoir en or jaune orné d'un cabochon de corail. (Accident).
Bijoux




n°133

AJOUTER À MA SÉLECTION

ESTIMATION
1 500 - 2 000 €

Déposer un ordre d'achat

Demande de renseignements

Partager :   

Imprimer

33

7

↑

↓



Should I wear a plain white tee or a pink two button shirt for my McDonalds interview? (self.malefashionadvice)

submitted 1 day ago by DrizzyVert

24 comments share save hide report crosspost



Part 5

The wonder of it all



Glassbox

Clémence Agnez

The current Glassbox team consists of curators, critics, artists or graphic designers. Coming from varied and often plural backgrounds, we bring together our skills and desires around the artists we receive in production residencies. These are followed by an exhibition, and constitute the basic format of our program. Design and implementation are carried out in dialogue with the team. Each resident is welcomed at 4 rue Moret to carry out his project directly on the site of the exhibition, a space itself shared with our office. Thus, transfers and shifts occur between the different uses of the space.

This ambiguity has an impact on the forms created, by effects of transfers and shift between the different uses of the space. In addition to the residency-exhibition format that forms the basis of our schedule, we wanted to propose programs with strong constraints—a playful way to see what an artwork that is embedded in our structure could formally mean. Between the Polder program, which colonises the exhibitions in progress, Grande Forme (Great Shape), which surreptitiously creeps in between two working hours, or Équipe de Nuit (“Night Team”), which operates after closing, the purpose is to suggest interstitial works that interfere with a program. Those artworks unfold semi-clandestinely, like a subversive and joyful version of the neo-liberal tendency to optimise living and working places. The name “Polder” is deliberately chosen because it designates an artificial gain of exploitable land on the sea, “Grande Forme” tells

us about this teenage energy that opens closed doors, “Équipe de Nuit” discreetly operates as a secret society or a cleaning staff. These initiatives are an opportunity for us to question the centripetal annexation of vacant time and space and appear to be a virtuous and mischievous reflection of practices such as the massification of Airbnb rentals, night cleaning in all institutions and workplaces or the generalisation of summer schools.

Where these examples aim to obtain maximum profit through a spatial occupation without any time-out, it is an opportunity for us to use a somewhat mocking counterpoint to our own program. And of course, behind or rather beyond this idea, all that matters to us in the end is the singular craftiness of each project and the jubilant pleasure of conducting it.

GLASSBOX TEAM

Clémence Agnez, Clémence Bigel, Ugo Decorse Ballara, Margaux Estivill, Benjamin Fraboulet, Alisson Haguenier, Marion Lisch.

INTERSTICES

Grande forme
Polder
L’Estive
Groupe de lecture
Causes mineures



↑
a. Jagna Ciuchta, view of «Spin Off», Estive, 2014.

↓
b. Data Rhei, Laura Buttons' piece in «A Glimpse of future homes, then get to work», Grande Forme, 2017.

Artists and curators featured:
Alexandre Bavard, Antoine Boudin, Jagna Ciuchta, Camille Dumond & Lou Masduraud, Data Rhei (Cyriaque Blanchet & Jules Brière), Louis Gary, Adrien Goubet, Laurent Le Deunff, Benoît Ménard, Aapo Nikkanen, Laura O'Rorke, Delphine Renault, Céleste Richard-Zimmermann.



↑
Data Rhei, view of Hadrien Gérenton & Sophie Varin's piece in «A Glimpse of future homes, then get to work», Grande Forme, 2017.

↓
b. Jagna Ciuchta, view of «Spin Off», Estive, 2014.



↑
c. Polder n°2, view of Antoine
Boudin's piece, 2015.

GRANDE FORME

As a furtive installation inserted by force into the program schedule, Grande Forme is to the exhibition what drinking Monday evening is to the family dinner: a space of pure pleasure that disrupts the rational mechanics of planning, a delicious and furtive aberration in the order of time. Each year, one of the Grandes Formes's program specialises in independent publishing and gathers works that concern both graphic design and the artist's book.



↙ ←
a + b. Camille Dumond & Lou
Masduraud, view of «Firewalk»,
2017.



↓
c. Data Rei, view of «A Glimpse of
future homes, then get to work»,
2017.





↑
a. View of Polder n°2, 2016.

↗ →
b + c. View of Polder n°3, 2018.

POLDER

The polder is an object that occupies an ambiguous place in the various exhibitions it parasitises. It fulfils a function other than that of a work of art: whether it is a desk or a bookcase, a chair or a display, it secretly infiltrates another program. At the end of a cycle of five polders produced, a retrospective exhibition is held to highlight their presence.

L'ESTIVE

Estive ("summer grazing") is the Glassbox summer residency program. Longer than the production periods of the rest of the year, it is set to the rhythm of the district: between the summer torpor of an empty Paris and the generalised indolence of a neighbourhood that has not yet left, the artist designs and realises a long-term project, punctuated by meetings in the form of parties, picnics or barbecues.

→ ↘
a+b. Jagna Ciuchta, view of
«Spin Off», 2014.

↓
c. Benoît Ménard, view of «Erosion
Power», 2016.





GROUPE DE LECTURE

During an annual cycle, Glassbox organises fortnightly working meetings with a contemporary scholar—currently philosopher Mark Fisher. Bringing together researchers, artists, critics or anyone interested in the designated corpus, these meetings are an opportunity to go deeper into the author's texts and put them in perspective with other sources.

CAUSES MINEURES

Les Causes Mineures is a long-term research and creation project. Its aim is to gather artists and researchers to work on the idea of the author's exit into certain contemporary forms of creation, when he plays at projecting himself into the machine and more precisely in digital image production techniques. It is a time stretched over several years, apart from the frenetic rhythm of events in the art space.

Conversation between Maria Ibanez Lago and Constanza Piaggio, artists and directors of Julio Artist-run Space in Paris.

Constanza Piaggio

I think before talking about Julio, we should explain how we began in 2014 with Thé Work in Progress (Thé WIP) where it all started, even our relationship. People in general think we were friends from Buenos Aires but the truth is that we met in Paris and immediately started working together. Our friendship grew along with the project. Both of us had experiences of working collectively with other artists, either in the form of intensive workshops or in collaborative projects. We both felt that this practice, outside institutional spaces, was lacking in our scene, and we decided to open a working group to present portfolios and ongoing projects that we call Thé WIP. (with the accent on the 'e' it becomes tea in French, because it was at tea time, one Sunday per month). The meetings were held in a borrowed place, an open space of designers and scenographers, and we are still using that space. It is cosier than a gallery.

Maria Ibanez Lago

Yes, you are right, it all started when we decided to create this platform for artists, without excluding other actors in contemporary art and researchers from other disciplines. We organise exchanges in the form of monthly meetings where everyone can present their personal work. It is about opening a conversation around a specific project, a question, research or an event of the recent past: exhibition, performance, residence, curatorial project, etc.

CP

With this format, each encounter is different. It works very well because talking about our own work among peers and actors in the same field allows us to share in a way where doubts can find a place for expression and we create a space for listening. The dialogue and discourse in an intimate space opens up possibilities for the clarifying of process. And also, there is time that we create for people to do some networking.

MIL

After two years of doing this, we decided to open Julio, an independent structure dedicated to the production and distribution of contemporary art. It is a space to link Argentinean or Latin American artists with artists of the local scene around Belleville-Ménilmontant. It is a neighborhood in Paris where it is still possible to find reasonable rent, and there is also a circuit of relatively new contemporary art galleries and other artist-run spaces. It seemed interesting to be able to be associated with this network.

CP

And today we are starting our third year ... time has passed so quickly. We have already done fifteen exhibitions and

we are planning the agenda of 2019. We need to plan a year in advance to do what we do. I think it's going to be a very interesting year. I'm looking forward to it.

MIL

Me too, each year is a huge bet. It's not easy to have an independent space in Paris, or in any big city in this global context. But our freedom is what gives us our strength, and our Argentinian side, I think, helps us manage the challenges.

CP

Of course, and that's why our project aims to build bridges, to create connections between different realities through a look at contemporary art that, from the periphery, is built in interstitial spaces. We are interested in working between the edges: between different disciplines, generations, or groups of populations. What matters is not only the objects that are connected to each other, but the links that are made in this space through the « Assemblage # »

CP

Each exhibition is a completely different proposition. We name them "Assemblages" (each exhibit is always a group show of two to three artists) because the word refers to the process in a computer program when different data become part of the same file. It is also a stage of wine making, bringing together different aromas and components. And, it refers to historical stages of modern and contemporary art.

MIL

What questions do you think people ask the most?

CP

In general they ask why Argentinians or Latin Americans ... I feel it was completely natural for us. We are in touch with both scenes. We have lived and worked here for a long time, but we travel twice a year to Buenos Aires and this allows us to be in contact with our colleagues there. It also allows us to see and bring their work and sometimes show our own work there. But we should be clear that we do not have any official help for what we do, neither from France nor from Argentina.

MIL

The truth is that we didn't find institutional spaces in France that represent what we knew about contemporary art in our region. Some galleries do it but not exclusively. We wanted to have a place that served as a reference for that sector of contemporary creation. But we don't want to be a representation in France of contemporary Argentine art. What interests us is the bond, the link, the bridges and what happens when they cross. For that reason, if we show Argentine or Latin American artists, it is between artists of the local scene and around a common denominator of their works, but each one from different optics.

CP

Do you think that the nationality of artists is a relevant fact?

MIL

It is a question that is always valid. Some artists refer to their place of origin; others bring with them an aesthetic that comes from the way of producing art in the context in which they live. Others have a militant critical position in front of problems that especially affect Latin

America. The possibilities are multiple and diverse, but it is a subject that we are interested in investigating and experimenting with.

CP

Latin American art is sometimes defined as a peripheral scene. The periphery refers to a centre and a hierarchical relationship. I prefer to talk about joining edges, working in the void of the interstices.

MIL

Exactly, and that works with our curatorial idea, which can be ours or a guest curator/artist/gallery. Based on this idea, we think of artists from here and there whose works can dialogue and enrich each other. We like the presence of a recognised artist along with some emerging ones. We work together with the invited curator and we suggest Latin American artists who work within the sense of their proposal.

CP

Now it's like this, but in the first year it was only us doing all the propositions.

MIL

Yes, and since the second year, we have been trying to expand our public, inviting third parties. It is the only way we found to reach more people.

CP

It's important also to meet artists we don't know. We are very curious, it's something we share. Talking about our similarities, the key of our successful partnership, I think, is our differences. Don't you agree?

MIL

Indeed. For example, the distribution of the work is very important because each one of us likes, and is good in, different areas. You do the communication management and the photography of the exhibitions and I take care of the maintenance of the space and the texts.

CP

And we both work in the mediation and of course all the main subjects like the curatorial axes, artists, strategies, etc.

MIL

What would you say about the commercial side of things, the business ...

CP

Mmm, we do not think about what we are doing commercially, but the works are for sale and we have a wide range of prices because we have all kind of artists. We aspire for the project to be self-financing but we haven't reached that point yet. That's why, for the moment, we don't participate in fairs, due to the lack of a budget for this. However, we try to include ourselves in other events such as biennials or off-circuits that involve other spaces and other communities. We try to keep open all kinds of possibilities.

MIL

To finish, let's talk about our plans for the future.

CP

I just want to say: we hope to expand our field of action towards other activities that allow us to expand beyond our physical location. Follow our account on Facebook,

Instagram, or our site and you will see what we have planned for next year.

Paris

December, 2018

London

Interview with Nimrod Vardi and Rebecca Edwards from arebyte Gallery

arebyte Gallery has been active in London since 2013. What motivated you to start? And has running the gallery satisfied that motivation?

At its genesis, arebyte aimed at rethinking and defining what a space for art is or what it should be or could be and this is still at the core of our agenda. We are a place to exhibit digital art and emerging media, but we're also a place to meet, to converse, to work and to think, which is something we hope brings about an openness, or inclusiveness, to our programme of exhibitions, workshops and events.

Satisfaction is there, but the surrounding context is always changing, especially when working within such a dynamic field as digital technology—one blink and you've missed it—but it's this fast pace of working that is rewarding as much as it is demanding. We commission work within the field of technology and the digital realm that question and challenge the world and societies we live in. Supporting and collaborating with artists who are on the brink of creating something new and relevant is incredible and makes us feel that what we do is worthwhile.

Is there a particular meaning/intention behind the name?

We started in 2010 as Arbeit (meaning work in German) as our motivation back then was to provide work spaces to artists and broader creative initiatives. We then decided to dedicate one of our spaces to a gallery. At this point this art space was also named Arbeit, but soon it felt right to separate the gallery project from the studios, give the gallery its own identity in 2013 under the name of arebyte, and narrow down its focus to works within the field of digital and emerging media. There were other spaces in London working within this field—Furtherfield for example—and we wanted to increase opportunities for artists to experiment in art through new technologies. The name arebyte simply came about through this new focus on the digital: byte is a unit of data synonymous with its use in computer systems so it felt fitting.

Since separating arebyte Gallery from arebyte Studios, do the two still relate to each other and intertwine?

They do at some points. The studio model allows us to operate much more self-sufficiently, as the majority of our artistic funding comes from there. For the last few years we have also been funded by Arts Council England and a few other organisations, but this is not guaranteed—especially as fundraising is becoming increasingly competitive. It's reassuring to have something to fall back on, a safety net if you like, in these uncertain times.

In our studios we have amazing artists and practitioners from different fields and interests and some have exhibited and worked with us in the past. We hold crits

and get-togethers to encourage the sense of community between our studio sites and have subsequently forged collaborations between our studio holders which perhaps wouldn't have happened otherwise. In the near future we plan on setting up affordable studio spaces solely for digital and tech focused artists which is really exciting and really needed in London!

The artists who exhibit at arebyte Gallery are often international artists, or British artists who are not based in London. Are these details essential to your programming? What motivations lie behind these decisions?

We are looking for individuals who do exciting things that we feel are in line with our vision and interests: to bring innovative perspectives to art through an interdisciplinary approach at the intersection of new technologies and social sciences.

Each year the art programme features a mix of UK and international artists and guest curators, which enable us to contextualise our work internationally and create a dialogue between London and other art scenes. Since 2017, we also run hotel generation, a young graduate development scheme for digital artists from UK regional cities. With a first hand experience of exhibiting in a solo show, the skills-focused programme allows them a sense of place in the London art scene which can be notoriously difficult to infiltrate, and we hope to equip them with the skills to manage sustainable careers ...

Working with new media gives us the opportunity to do things regardless of physical space, which opens up more opportunities to experiment curatorially. This has recently manifested in a new online programme that we

have launched in early 2019, arebyte on screen (AOS - aos.arebyte.com). It is some sort of an online channel, open to the public 24/7, and viewable on aos.arebyte.com and via a dedicated screen in our gallery's window in London. The channel showcases artists, but also curators, either independent, or working in galleries worldwide that we invite to experiment with the platform. AOS is a space to show and exhibit new forms of art and projects, experiment with curatorial work and processes and show digital and media art related content.

In 2017, arebyte Gallery moved from its original location in Hackney Wick to its new location in London City Island. What drove the decision to move? And how does the new location affect the gallery?

Our lease in Hackney Wick came to an end with all the redevelopment of the area but we also felt we'd outgrown the space we had. Our new gallery is four times as big as our old space, with much more visibility and options to create more experimental and ambitious exhibitions.

Moving to a new location affected us less than we thought in terms of our audience following; our audience has actually grown dramatically in size since moving which we didn't expect to happen so fast. Art audiences in London are always looking for something new and many are willing to travel outside of the typical art areas to engage with cultural offerings, which is reassuring given the rising rents of more central areas. We feel there's a shift within the London art scene where new galleries are appearing in relatively unknown parts of town; there's a spirit of spontaneity and assertiveness which appears to be thriving even in uncertainty.

How does arebyte Gallery relate or respond to the London [art] context?

Although we are located in London our curatorial programme tries to look broader to address current issues on a larger scale. We do keep close relations with many other London organisations and these friendships are invaluable; it's vital for any organisation to keep track of what's going on elsewhere in order to keep abreast of relevancy. Having said that, we also pride ourselves on doing things our own way and going against the grain of what other institutions might be doing.

What milestones have you reached in running arebyte Gallery? And how do you envision its [near] future?

For us the milestone was moving to a larger space and being able to grow our team. It proved to us that we are moving in the right direction and we feel lucky that we've been able to do it successfully. We've got ambitious ideas for the near future and want to solidify our programme structure to maintain a good spread of content through our different channels: our annual commissions, our web-based exhibitions and special projects arebyte on screen, our young artist development programme hotel generation and our exhibition-specific series of events and workshops.

What is the most unexpected lesson you have taken away from running arebyte Gallery? And what would you recommend to others aspiring to start their own art space?

Every artist requires a different approach and so it's not one-size-fits-all when it comes to collaborating on or developing a project together. In these instances you have to be prepared for ideas to change at any time, but also embrace that technology changes too—what might've been impossible to do a year ago is now more within reach. We thrive in stressful times and therefore embrace change and unexpected difficulties which keeps us motivated and driven.

The best piece of advice we've been given is to take chances, experiment, don't be afraid to make a mistake, challenge yourself and everyone around you.

Being on top of things is also key to so many things and learning how to plan properly takes time but it's a lesson worth learning!

Chalton Gallery

Javier Calderon

What is the purpose or purposes of Art and the Space where it Exists?

I established Chalton Gallery in July 2015 on 96 Chalton Street, Somers Town in central London. Somers Town is a historic neighbourhood located between Euston and St Pancras Stations. Somers Town is really multicultural and densely populated. It's also a temporary home of a great number of homeless. I knew nothing about the history of this neighbourhood but I have always talked to most people and invite them to visit the gallery. I want to engage with diverse audiences and not just with connoisseurs of Art. I want local people to understand what we do and I also want to understand the neighbourhood. On the other hand I also think about Aesthetics.

Neighbouring businesses have been really friendly to Chalton Gallery; in particular the shop next door and the Cock Tavern. Next door, the shop is run by Mr Saad who always invites us for lunch, so very often I have lunch there along with people from the Arabic Bookshop from number 88. Most of these people are from Iraq and they always have time to share a good cup of tea. Sheila and Robert from the Cock Tavern have supported the gallery in incredible ways. So very often we run our programme in the pub as well as in many other shops and public spaces around the gallery.

I started selling coffee outside the gallery in September 2017. After one year, the coffee shop is becoming more

and more popular as the gallery brings a lot of customers and the coffee shop brings new audiences to the gallery. My intention is to attract as many people as possible to the gallery and I do this by greeting people as they pass by. This simple gesture of saying hello opens new levels of interaction as people start asking more about the gallery, the exhibition and other things. Many of these people come often to see the exhibitions, or for a coffee, or both. They might talk about the shows or about themselves; they also meet other people, so in a way the gallery has become a meeting point where new levels of networking arise.



I create a scenario where everyone feels welcome, so the majority of our neighbours are always the first ones to know about our plans and whenever there is an opportunity for collaboration they are always keen to take it. Some artists have invited neighbours to take part in performances, exhibitions and other activities. We have also hosted a few exhibitions by and for locals, including an Art exhibition by neighbours last summer.

Most of our programme is dedicated to showing current experimental practices, so my aim is to engage with the wider context of contemporary art. The space is here to show, think and talk about Contemporary Art. I make a big effort to look after the gallery and the exhibition displays because I think that the unique aesthetic of the gallery space is what draws people's attention.

I always remind myself of the purpose of Chalton Gallery as an Art Gallery and the responsibility I have in society as an individual representing Art.



Diaspore DIASPORE

When it comes to running a space I like to think about gardening.

Composting,
Seed Saving ~~~~~~ propagation~~~~
Diaspore,
Health.....Nutrition,
Companion plants,
Waste Management,
Communities of species ~~~~~~ Diaspora.

~SYMPOIESIS ~

Observe the environment,
Build your ecosystem,
Don't mix onions and beans,
Grow zucchinis with Nasturtiums, they like each other,
Expand your mycelium and build a community.

Favour favours,
Don't worry about the bank,
Focus on people,
They're the one you need to nurture.

The rest will sort itself out,
You might have a radish on your plate tomorrow.

Diaspore is a research platform founded
by artist Lou-Atessa Marcellin.

It focuses its research around ideas of ecosophy
in the ecological framework interconnecting
social and environmental spheres.

Diaspore is currently based in London,
running as a nomadic space,

spreading where the wind takes it.



The Living Room

THERE IT IS!

A site!

C

“As the map substitutes for the picture, the city replaces the museum” wrote Johanne Lamoureux¹ when noticing how site-specific exhibitions turn viewers into flâneurs or tourists, leading them to look for directions in order to arrive in some parking site or bizarre space. “There it is!” One of the organising principles of The Living Room (TLR) is based precisely on selecting sites in which art has never been shown before, creating a certain encounter between work, site and audience. The working process starts from the very personal as the exhibition venues have been experienced before by us—a place where we eat, we sleep, where we shop and so on. Curating then moves into the local, scrutinising the site’s context and its “raison d’être”, gathering a series of thoughts that are sent to the participating artists, transforming curatorial practice into a responsive process that adapts to the space and not the other way around.

S

One of TLR’s most important considerations is indeed how to bring art outside of the white cube and have it speak directly to the world it reflects upon. Following this line of thought, it made sense to take a step back for our first exhibition and look at the space we inhabit the most: our home. The idea was not only to take the living room per se, but all the spaces of the house that are indeed lived: the bedroom, kitchen and garden alike. The house

is a place where we carry out our basic needs, our daily tasks like sleeping, resting, cooking and eating, but also and inevitably where our first and last daily thoughts and internal considerations take place, ideally a safe space.



C

In the exhibition's leaflet we wrote: "The home creates the necessary intimacy and direct interaction in which to experience the work... 'A Way Home' thinks about living with art, art within living, taking structures off their hinges, going beyond the limits of the frame, voiding the separation of art and life". Looking back at it, it seems quite a bold and direct statement, perhaps a bit naïve but relevant nonetheless as it helped us to set out a project that develops like a living organism, taking roots from sites and making new ones.

S

Working with the notion of projects for spaces, we took the family house as a starting point in order to delve into spaces of various natures that nevertheless constitute the

way we relate to our surroundings: as an extension of the home, the second hand furniture shop allows us to revisit items that we interact with everyday; the canned food shop considers how we nourish ourselves for a prolonged period of time; the allotment proposes a renewed connection not only to what we eat but how we engage with our environment; and finally the church brings us to a truly existential state of questioning.



C

So there have been five sites, five exhibitions that are thought of as a cycle or a constellation of affects, each taken as a container of experiences and layers of meaning. I think of responsive curating as a matter of increasing sensitivity, increasing responsiveness to the needs of a larger and larger variety of people and "things". The notion of "sympoiesis" seems very relevant to understand a way of literally "making together", where humans, organisms alike and objects are inextricably linked. For us, TLR is a room for collecting up what is important for ongoing, for staying with the trouble, as Donna Haraway might say.²



S

Yes, all five sites have been truly embodied ones, embedded with numerous types of life and non-life, each carrying multi-layered specificities and mutually shaping each other and the space they occupy. We invite artists that come in from multiple perspectives, but who remain attentive and sensitive to the context and its intricacies: to the mesh. The artworks, in this way, form a poignant bond with whatever they come into proximity with, learning from their environment as well as presenting a new perspective on it. For us this is exciting from multiple stand points, as we attempt to bring new ways of seeing and knowledges to both artists and hosts alike, as well as their respective audiences.

An audience!

C

When an exhibition is “site-specific”, it leaves the warm, sheltered space of the gallery or the institution. It becomes

a complex system that composes a living event of its own. The reception of the work and the audience’s engagement with it is completely different and I can say that I have received the most surprising, honest feedback when working with sites throughout TLR. A memorable experience was when we were installing the work of Pietro Librizzi in a discount store in Deptford, South London. A youngster came in and said that a certain product was “cheap”, being openly offensive towards the shop. Pietro—whose piece was a schizophrenic video that commented on capital, food and poo—felt the urge to defend the site and make a joke to lessen the situation; at the same time asking him not to be so judgemental. In response, the youngster confronted him, threatening him during the installation days and making us all feel very tense. Without being completely aware, we put into question the very existence of art and its role within society (such a common phrase in so many “about” sections), provoking a series of dynamic responses that undo the usual thinking about the reception of art and engagement with artists.

S

That was definitely one of the tensest moments we experienced, and touching also. The shop nevertheless offered us an entry point to a really deep sense of community that we were not aware of until then. People from the neighbourhood sometimes spent entire days inside this cave-like space, surrounded by canned items of all sorts and conversing upon both the most banal and profound aspects of life. We were indeed very fortunate to have a glimpse of this reality that started to become part of ours as well. John, the shop owner, became a dear friend and collaborator by the end. One the most moving moments for me was when Raj, the shop assistant, told us that “this

was the first concert I've witnessed in twenty-five years," talking about Alex Nikiporenko's piece for melodica and percussion—cans alike—and how he had really appreciated it coming to the shop.



C

Canning Time was a very energetic exhibition. We picked this venue first by the lure of its aesthetics. The store was full with discounted food: cans of beans, hundreds of packets of pasta, peanuts and whatnot. There was no fresh food, everything was wrapped and occupied every single inch of the space. Then the charm of the shop-owner, John, trapped us when we learned that he started taking pictures of customers and passer-bys around the 80's and so the shop was also filled with pictures of people—some of them already effaced by light exposure. The artists displayed their works in the ceilings, inside boxes of stuff and in the forms of transactions in the case of Himali Singh Soin, from whom every customer would get a short poem on a receipt every time they bought something.

S

I remember that when we first started speaking about creating the TLR, one of our most important considerations was to make art come into contact not only with spaces but also with people that may not have come to witness it otherwise. In this sense I feel like it succeeded on multiple occasions, serving as a new encounter to observe, ask, wonder, enjoy or question what had just landed there. On the other hand, it made art audiences come to spaces they may also not have encountered before, and realise how rich and truly creative these are once one opens to them as we open to art. Of course clashes and conflicts are a part of life, and we knew we were in for some potential trouble when we decided to bring together such a variety of practices, cultures and ways of being in the same space and time. Our exhibitions, or events, happen for one day only, as the coming together of people is of utter importance for us. We want create a moment where we can meet each other, exchange experiences, views on life and indeed art and its potentialities and pitfalls. Can this coming together serve a larger purpose?

C

The exhibitions are a way of curating that reflects upon the evolution of a practice that is both striving for inclusive social engagement and at the same time pursues an ideal and suitable space. Art and its presentation should allow the spectator to become an active interpreter, a very difficult task that TLR embraces when organising an exhibition: the creation of a space where the audience is not rendered stultified, rather their perception is activated, allowing them to interact with the work on a communitarian level. How could an audience possibly learn on their own terms, instead of being alienated?

I see it almost as a catalyst, one that you don't quite know how it's going to react but, in one way or another, produces a new compound. Also as a resistance, to an era that tells us that everything is replaceable and exchangeable and that we don't need to come into contact with other realities that we touch upon, as they are just there as commodities, not real entities with histories and lives. A resistance that does not let us dismiss or forget. The allotment project Companion Planting was our very last exhibition so far, and in that sense it has also experienced the development of TLR throughout time, and it's willingness to leave a more lasting contribution. The Mycological Twist's logs, inserted with medicinal mushrooms and Michal Plata's car structure turned into a herbal garden container, can still be found there today, continuing their processes and contributing towards an exchange that is indeed only made possible through companionship.

1

Johanne Lamoureux, "The Museum Flat," in Thinking about Exhibitions ed. Bruce Gerguson and Reesa Greenber (London: Routledge, 1996)

2

Donna Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016)

Subsidiary Projects

Subsidiary Projects is an alternative to the conventional gallery mode. Based in a domicile in Bonnington Square, the space was born with the aim to provide a physical and digital platform for emerging artists and curators to test new ideas. It is explicitly not funded by any institution or external association: our aim is to remain independent and self-sufficient.

I did not have a stable job—goes without saying an income—I was drowning amongst cover letters, CVs, updating my website and a huge inability to go to the studio and face the blank canvas.

I did, however, spend a considerable amount of time at home. I would end up creating and curating "temporary" exhibitions in between having to go through hundreds of job descriptions.

My whole house became A Room of One's Own and I was able to expand inside of it. Some plants do need smaller pots to flourish and too much space can overwhelm them. This happened to me after university: I had everything I needed within the walls of my house and from there I started reaching out.

The first exhibition took place in December 2017. It was going to be a one-time thing, however, it became addictive. The feedback was wonderful, the artists were happy and the work stood out. I had to give up my living space in order to give enough space for every piece, but the result was worth it.



It was (IS) a learning process. At the beginning, it was all research.

I contacted several artists who I thought were a good fit for the space. Most of them had not had a solo exhibition beforehand, which turned out to be wonderful, as the artists and I understood that we were in this together. I am most grateful for all the artists who allowed me to fail at the beginning, for giving me the opportunity and the trust to try new things.

Openings always had a great reception. We are looking for different paths in art and my house offered visitors a comfortable and more approachable attitude towards it. Most conversations took place on the sofa, surrounded by the artwork with a cup of tea.

Some of the biggest achievements include participating in Art Night—curator Georgia Stephenson approached us with an exhibition idea, and while developing it we were selected to participate in Art Night 2018. Having the recognition of a bigger institution established us as a valid space.

Afterwards, Billy Fraser and Nelle Geveres asked Subsidiary Projects to host Extended Call Pt. 3. The small living room was filled with thirty-three artists, and the huge amount of artists, compared to the limited space, demanded a different way of approaching the curation: the walls, ceiling and floor had the same importance; creating a heteronomous space where every corner had the same importance as the next.

We are constantly contacting new artists and approaching curators. We want this project to develop into an ever-evolving practice, where different art practitioners can meet and share ideas.



Amsterdam

Dear D&D

The library in the suburb I grew up in has a sign that points to shelves, designated for holding the “FOR DUMMIES” series. On my mother’s desk I glimpse a copy of “LIVING WHEAT-FREE FOR DUMMIES” that she had loaned. Identification with being a dummy or in relation to dummies as an other; presumably referring to subject loaded with dumb-ness—speechless, considered un-intelligent within societal codes. I say I’m uncritical of crib sheets, cheat notes, basic guides, but the stigma of easy joining confronts my own values, repelled by the aching visibility of these books. The bound knowledge is a cavalcade of locating gestures, and paths or shortcuts between this. Or at least I think it might be.

In the early hours of December 31st, 2018, I decided to create an instagram account for the space I initiate—@bologna.cc. Still uncertain of how to behave in this space, and still deciding what type of content will surface there, or how to cultivate an audience in that place. Still uncommitted. bologna has been operational since November 2017, continuing a series of events and gestures in a canal loft I lived in for the fifteen months preceding, with a constantly shifting name which primarily made invitations via email. “bcc” is supposed to refer to the blind copy, an audience who is not aware of the others who are watching or reading. It was also named with an awareness and nonchalance to the political and educational histories of the city, and the slang/Italian meanings of sbologna. Alex at oioioi.io was asked to create the website for the space, which was a conversation anchored by desire for a negotiated relationship to online opacity, a series of interlocking loops.

Do you know what I mean when I invoke the moment of receiving an email in blind copy with facts you already know? Absence, and unknown presence. The dummy is maybe also a figure like a mannequin—shaped volume to occupy space. Loaded with use value, and different to the other figure that I’m so interested in identifications with—the baby, which in my work I keep invoking as a name, position, and relation. Futurity worn lightly and projected by others.

bcc does not constitute my studio practice; it’s a negotiation of community and audience. Other practitioners are invited or request access to the shifting context of a mostly empty room, with windows the size of sliding doors that look out onto train tracks. With no desire to carry crates of beer up four flights of stairs and then recycle the empties and stuck with the stench of hops, a long drink is prepared and served.

Marwan

Dear Salticidae,
Thank you for inviting us to contribute to your vast and interesting project.

Being local comrades, neighbors if you will, Marwan thinks that what you are doing is awesome. We too have an interest in making-public (our) private places, through artistic production and programming.

For those that do not know us, let us quickly introduce:

We are Tirza Kater and Tim Mathijssen and in 2015 we founded Marwan, artist-run project space for contemporary art, in our then-studio, an attic in the east of Amsterdam, NL.

Tim is a sculptor while Tirza regards her artistic practice to be on the instigating and researching end. Together they organise improvisation and improvise organisation.

As Marwan, this means programming and commissioning mainly solo exhibitions of and with artists that have a tie to Amsterdam but do not necessarily live or work there.

We believe that by caring for, growing, and activating a network in a physical place (Marwan), we can impact the pace in which the city of Amsterdam is becoming increasingly less livable and workable. By utilising whatever (private) space we can, for exhibitions and gatherings. Or by inviting artists back to the city they have (for now) left.

call Marwan

for advice to
SELF-ORGANISED / ARTIST RUN
arrangers of art in space and time

+31 6 13680162
mailmarwanamsterdam@gmail.com

Fokke Simonszstraat 12,
1017 TG, Amsterdam, NL

www.marwanmarwan.com

Marwan's 2018-19's programme is a reflective montage with a focus on the conditions, sites and support of and for (artistic) labour. Always with a strong emphasis on the potential of (art) objects.

In August of 2018, we moved Marwan from our attic to a small storefront in the center of Amsterdam. For more information and our programme, please visit www.marwanmarwan.com.

Our contribution to your publication is an announcement to contact us for advice and support in starting, maintaining or otherwise arranging self-organised (public) space for art.

Until soon dear Salticidae! Warm wishes,

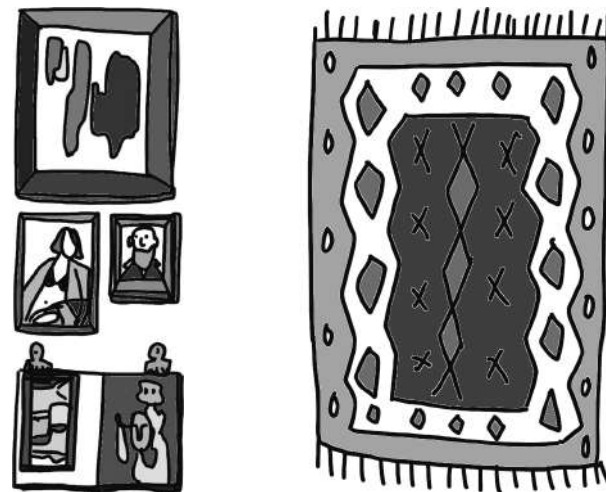
Marwan

Residency24

0# definition

Residency24 is a platform that reframes my 24m2 apartment, located in the Jordaan, Amsterdam, into a 24hour residency. The resident is invited to stay over for the night in the resident room. There is space for one, maximum two, resident(s) at a time.

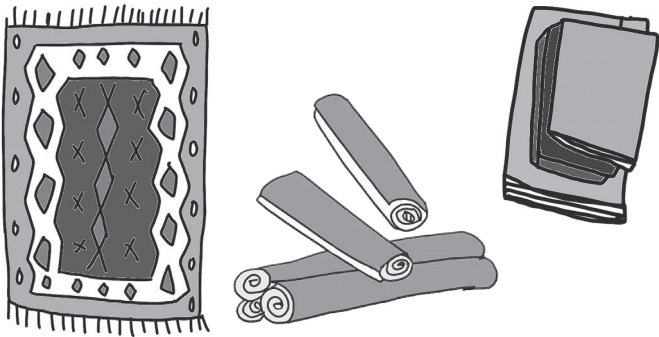
It focuses on creating an intimate and collaborative site of living, cooking and working: starting with the encounter of host and resident, the residency can conclude with an opening to the public, a moment of further sharing with an audience that becomes part of the process. Residency24 believes that "those who know something engage with those who know something else"¹ an ongoing process of sharing and learning that leaves residues in both the house and the persons. It aims to generate encounters between personal, social, theoretical, and practical knowledge.



#1

Start of residency	18th November 2017, 7PM
Invited resident	Laurence Wagner (programming, writing and research in the performing arts)
Title	Creating Context
Opening	19th November 2017, 7PM
Guests present	(1) Sonia
Food served	Cheese, Wine

Drinking inspiration coming out of her mouth. Her words. Our encounter. The time spent in the house. Her knowledge. My wishes. It seemed clear: home, a place of retreat, where one lies down and finds comfort. In a hard and disoriented time, home is a base where you can protect yourself, rebuild your strength, remember your desires. Home, a place of resistance in city centres, where speculation devours everything. Home to protest against economical tyranny. Home, a place for sharing companionship and knowledge, a remedy against melancholy and individualism: to make life more interesting, to listen to the ones who are inspiring to us, to create an intimate site of sharing, learning and creating. To have intimacy and proximity forced upon us as a tool to open up, to be rebel and fight against individualism.



#2

Start of residency	12th January 2018, 1PM
Invited resident	Irene Brok (visual artist and psychologist)
Title	Shame
Subtitle	A reading about domestication of domestic objects / shame
Opening	13th January 2018, 1PM
Guests present	(4) Ceel, Sonia, Ilona, Emilia
Food served	Apple cake, tea and coffee

Description

Objects of shame. Earplugs, condoms, vaginal crème, dust, hairs, dirt, dirty underwear, diary, etc: domestic objects of shame are well present in our houses, but due to their taboo-character, we carefully hide or make them inaccessible to the gaze of (un)attended guests. Behind books, in boxes, far behind the visible. Irene asked if she could go through all my stuff in order to see where the backstage was, and what it was containing. Once she selected what she thought were objects of shame, she changed their context: removing them from their hidden spots, displaying them in the house, taking them outside, or to a gallery space. Asking me about them, explaining them to other people, asking me to explain them to other people. They became the centre of the attention, and by that, lost their high value of shame through time. I was present. I was witnessing the change of status. I was ashamed. Now I am less.

During the opening, the objects were laying on the table, next to cake, cups and tea. The right environment to listen to the reading of Irene. And we all went home being a bit less ashamed.

Irenes Text

“There it happened. Something of me was exposed just because I said ‘oef’. It was heard, seen, and a part of my intimate feelings went public. I shrug, I smile. Everybody smiles. Everybody is okay.

I have gone through all of Giulia’s stuff. I have looked in her cabinets. Opened all her secret boxes and read parts of her diaries. I put her vaginal cream out on the kitchen table. I looked at her pay slip. And I asked her if she actually uses the condoms I found. I photographed her used earplugs...

The earplugs are pink. Sticky and dirty. Before she moved to the Claes Claesz Hofje, Giulia lived in a house in the West together with three men. She needed the earplugs in order to sleep. I used to visit her a lot in the West. I slept with one of the men she lived with. We would not use condoms. We would massage each other. Get slippery with oil and have sex. Giulia would put her pink, sticky earplugs deep inside her ears.

Giulia’s hand is bent in a strange position. Her index and middle finger are almost stretched, while the rest of the fingers are bent. Her legs are drawn wide open. The lines on the paper forming the legs are light. As if the pencil was only touching the paper softly. The panties have been put there more firmly. Thicker lines, more pressure. It covers only a part of the vulva. The stretched fingers reach into the panties. The drawing is beautiful. The story is nice. I feel her shame. It passes by. We are both laughing. We are okay.”



#3

Start of residency	19th January 2018, 1PM
Invited resident	Jeanne Magnenat (sculptor)
Title	The Silence of the Snake
Subtitle	A multimedia installation
Opening	20th January 2018 1PM
Guests present	(2) Nadja, Aurore
Food served	Apple crumble and cappuccino

Description

(...)

And I asked her: “If you could be an animal, what would you like to be?”

She didn’t answer. She almost never did. But she wrote back, in her black notebook. Instead of talking to me.

“A snake.”

“Because it can curl around itself.”

Jeanne is a sculptor. She has big eyes, delicate hands, but she barely speaks. She makes sculptures in clay that materialise inexpressible, introverted bodies. She works very physically and intuitively. She also writes a lot, but for now in a private context. She arrived at the residency with a sculpture she made one year ago. Another speechless body.

Jeanne. Her sculptures. The snake.

Tree entities that have a form. A strong presence and personality. But are speechless.

The Silence of the Snake was a multimedia installation.

Quotes Jeanne

I will remember our two bodies observing each other without looking at each other.

I will remember the black notebook passing from hand to hand.

I will remember the intimacy forced upon us.

I will remember the image of the snake.

I will remember silence as a companion.

I will remember your face turned towards the window as you were sitting on the stool.

I will remember the uncomfortable feeling of our presence at your place.

I will remember the wish to still be together.



#4

Start of residency

20th January 2018, 1PM

Invited resident

Aurore Buffat (cook and DJ)

Title

No Feast without Yeast

Subtitle

Sourdough bread

Opening

No public opening.

Guests present

(0)

Description

“No feast without yeast.

Don't be sad.

It begins with you.

You can start alone.

You are a single microorganism.

Combine yourself with water and air.

Bubbles will start to form.

And you will multiply.

You are eating and reproducing and developing a stable population of microorganisms.

And you now will have formed the nicest community.”

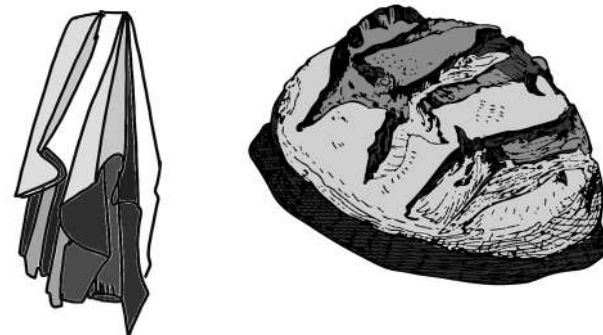
Recipe for bread

400gr of sourdough

600 / 700gr of flour

450gr of water

15gr of salt

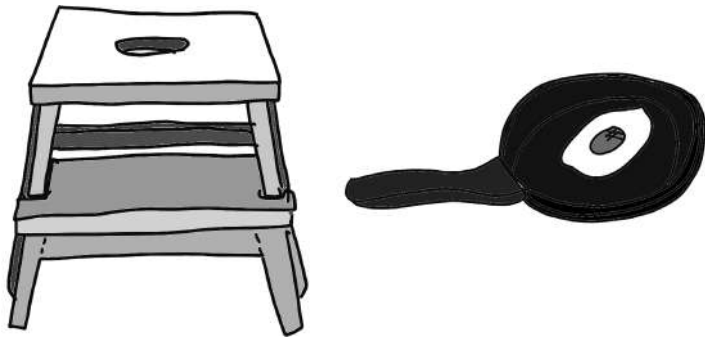


#5

Start of residency	27th January 2018, 1PM
Invited resident	Nadja Henss (visual artist)
Title	Furious Fiesta
Opening	28th January 2018, 1PM
Guests present	(1) Elfie
Food served	Fruit cocktail

Dear Giulia,

What I remember is the warmth and safety of the house (and you). Being back in my white house I notice that I felt taken care of like a kid by you and your many things around the house. I remember the good food and the time taken, having enough time for everything, being in the moment and not in the future. I remember that the guest was talking more to you and asking you about the residency and the house, than asking me about the residency and the work. I remember the intimate and honest moment between you and me, you gaining my trust and making me talk more and more by taking time and questioning in detail. I remember the peaceful sleep, the freshness in the night and in the morning.



#6

Start of residency	1st of March 2018, 6PM
Invited resident	Adriaan de Jongh (game designer)
Title	Big is to Care
Subtitle	An augmented reality app about emotional representation of space
Opening	2nd of March 2018, 6PM
Guests present	(13) Irene, Diego, Jagoda, Rogier, Marguerite, Twan, Sonia, Roland, Nina, Myrte, Ilse, Bill
Food served	Pasta dell'orto, wine

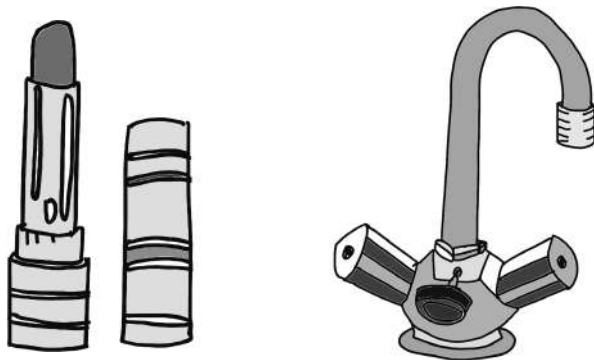
“The more you look, touch or care, the bigger it becomes”

Perception is a perennial question for artists who strive to represent reality as they subjectively see it, translating their emotional and personal perception of the world onto their canvas. Perception of objects change in relation to other objects.

Game designer Adriaan de Jongh and artist Giulia Bierens de Haan were interested in this notion and decided to make this the theme of a 24-hour art jam taking place at Giulia's house. The result is interactive augmented reality art that gives you the opportunity to navigate a space and to play with the sizes of things.

The floors and objects you look at (by keeping them centred on the screen) become bigger, and what you neglect gets smaller. Spend a few minutes in the app and you'll create an emotional representation, a map of sorts, of Giulia's house and the objects in it.

<https://itunes.apple.com/kr/app/my-big-lamp/id1364333177?l=en&mt=8>



#7

Start of residency	13 April, 5PM
Invited resident	Dieuwertje Hehewerth (writer and artist)
Title	_Form
Subtitle	Conceptual work about framing and naming.
Opening Time	Saturday 14th of April 5PM
Guests present	(15) Diego, Davide, Timna, Antonin, Zsofia, Effy, Jorge, Jeroen, Abel, Rachael, Miriam, Jo-Lene, Arkadiusz
Food served	Tiramisù, Aperol Spritz

__FORM is the public event concluding the 24-hours residency with Dee and our collaboration on understanding why, and to what aim, we can use private spaces to create and display art to the public. Dee and I both use our private homes for art-related public events. Dieuwertje is one of the founders of Plæt-, a platform exhibiting contemporary painting in a home setting (www.plat.life), and I have my mini residency at my place (24hours, 24m2).

“Work doesn’t necessarily turn into a work, doesn’t necessarily feel like work, doesn’t necessarily do anything except skip over small talk and straight into medium talk—not encapsulating the high brow academic talk ...

... recollecting thoughts of the conversation and all I hear are the movements of the face that I was talking to. The warmth of her spreading into the objects around and softening the edges of every word...

... The residency aims to create a concentrated, collaborative environment/time frame/work frame/social frame as a ‘solution’ to make life interesting: to open space and to share.

Duration: 24 hours—1 day—one everyday cycle of everyday life—one of each hour.”



#8

Start of residency
Invited resident

2 June 2018, 5PM
Irene Brok (visual artist
and psychologist)

Title
Subtitle

L'escalier
Painting installation about a
stair, that became as cosy as a
home

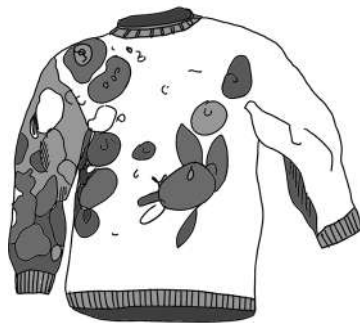
Opening
Time

Sunday 3 June
5PM

Guests present
Food served

(4) Abel, Twan, Emilia, Martijn
Red wine and peanuts

We used to cycle home together. She would stop at my house to have a tea, before cycling further to her house. But since a few weeks ago, this didn't happen anymore. We would briefly sit on the stairs in front of my house, outside, the time of a cigarette. The door was closed. Were closed.



1

Anthony Huberman "Take Care," in *Circular Facts* ed. Mai Abu ElDahab, Binna Choi and Emily Pethick (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011) p. 12

Veronica

"It's not that we think so much alike, but rather that we do this thinking-business for and with each other."

—a description of the friendship between Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy.¹

Veronica is an institution and exhibition program, operated out of a West Amsterdam living room since 2018. Veronica presents works rooted in various disciplines but with a time-based viewing structure, similar to theatre. The artist, the host, the audience and the artwork become the inputs to create dramaturgies of attendance where the conditions of the theatre, the gallery and the home interweave. The host almost always opens the door for you, and almost always says goodbye as you leave.

Veronica is an ecosystem for ideas, works, experimentations and ideals. Beginning as a figurative gym, somewhere to develop skills, test flexibility, tone individually and ideally to become collectively strong.

I'm Isobel, I run the space and curate the program, working with artists to bring their work to an audience as well as being the caretaker of the institutional identity. I founded Veronica as a place to learn, not how to do things as they are but to learn how to work in ways that suit me and the community of artists that I connect with.

I'm investigating the co-dependence between Veronica and myself: two independent entities but bound together. The name itself comes from my closest friend since I was three, a committed friendship, and while we haven't lived in the same country for years we maintain almost daily communication. Mentally inhabiting and

co-conspiratively experiencing each other's lives. Like a ghost, she acts in me and I act in her. Veronica is founded on the potential for friendship to be a structure to negate old, and produce new, meaning together, empowering co-dependence.

Veronica provides structure and reason for accountability, a middle force through which all of us working beneath its umbrella are responsible for and accountable to. It can act as a fictional architecture of reason, an external logic with legitimacy beyond that of a human. The institution appears as rumour, as experience of the audience, in the logbooks of the artists, in the history of the artworks.

Since starting Veronica people like to tell me of the significance of the name to them, often misnaming it Victoria simultaneously. The parahistory surrounding the name is similarly symptomatic of how all names seem to engage our memory, but female names seem to particularly stimulate the imagination. My Mailchimp account was frozen for months until Mailchimp could verify that I wasn't running an escort service.

Veronica seeks to implicate audiences into new relationships with cultural practitioners, and to investigate itself as an entity.

An Impossible View

Dieuwertje
Hehewerth

1

Celine Condorelli, The Company She Keeps (Book Works, Chisenhale Gallery and Van Abbemuseum, 2014) p.15

Madrid

The very first thing I am confronted with on my trip to Madrid is that spending two weeks talking to people (even if I talk to as many people as possible) will not put me in a position from which I can speak intimately of, or present, what is happening (and what has been happening) in relation to independently run spaces and initiatives in Madrid. The unavoidable position that I have is one of an outsider—someone who briefly dips in to see what is up—and in doing so speaks not so much out of experience but through reportage: gaining a perspective through the words of others. While the people I speak to can summon memories from events, exhibitions, moments in time in which they have actively engaged, my perspective comes from a collection of sentences that string together into a narrative line. My perspective becomes much closer to fiction than a report, as I use the abstracted words of others to find a story. But perhaps the value of my position can be found precisely in that inevitable distance—the perspective that I hold gaining potential through its inescapable position of being rudimentary and blunt.

Over the course of this trip, my research accidentally turned away from independently run initiatives and towards the people who take initiative instead. Starting with the intention to visit spaces similar to Pløt- (an exhibition space I co-run in my living room in Amsterdam) this trip has, despite my very best intentions, almost entirely evaded physical encounters with such spaces. Funnily enough, I have had many discussions about the spaces I aimed to identify. But these talks—mostly conducted at bars, at institutes, parties, private houses, offices, bakeries—seem to occur at such places because the spaces we speak

of no longer exist, or because independent organisations of Madrid are not based in space.

The spaces I do manage to visit during these two weeks are mostly between shows, or are momentarily inactive due to their founders focusing on other projects (and practices) instead. Predominantly built through personal relationships and subjective taste, they are mostly motored by opportunity and the energy of those who run them, rather than by following predetermined structures. This often leaves them “inactive”, or closed, for periods of time and it is because of this characteristic that I only manage to visit three exhibitions in independently run spaces in my two-week trip, while the total number of initiatives that I engage with is fourteen (with eleven of those currently identifying as “active”).

The result of this way of structuring activity means that, as a whole, the circuit of independently run initiatives has an undulating presence that is unable to be experienced in a condensed moment in time. Unlike the commercial galleries, who group together in contained areas of the city, synchronise their openings and have constant programs, each independent initiative operates in its own rhythm, space (location) and form. It is only collectively that independent initiatives have constant visibility within the city, with only one or two of them being open or active at any given point in time. But this mode of activity makes a lot of sense, reflecting the reality of how they work: during their individual periods of being “closed”, each space tends to its other functions—transforming back into living rooms and studios; nomadic initiatives disappearing completely until they re-emerge in another space or form. Far from signifying inactivity, these publically dormant moments of independent initiatives are merely times in which these spaces host different (private) modes of activity.

But the intermittent publicity does create doubt, and many of the people with whom I spoke voiced a disappointment in the scarcity of spaces; locating the economic crisis of 2007/08 and the subsequent budget cuts of 2013 as the unquestionable cause. 2013 brought a twenty-five percent budget cut to cultural funds, leaving a large amount of initiatives completely unsupported. And while this new economical landscape had a severely negative effect on the cultural scene, understanding the activity in the city does not seem to be entirely reducible to such a singular term. Perhaps this is an optimism only possible from this distant position (note the first paragraph) but I would propose that it is not necessarily the lack of spaces in Madrid—but rather the undulating program between spaces that makes them less visible than the commercial and institutional circuits. Secondly, it appears that the money (and time) that is available for independent initiatives is not necessarily being invested in space, but rather on things such as residencies, publications and workshops instead. Following the paths of previous projects such as Doméstico, or the metamorphosis of Ojo Atómico into Antimuseo—in which space has been abandoned and become an element to constantly (re)source instead—the nomadic format poses itself as a preferable, and viable, form. When asking further about changes the budget cuts of 2013 brought, it seems that those who survived the sudden withdrawal of support were those who were not tied to space—the absence of rent being the crucial factor that allowed them to live on. So while lack of public support became the dominant antagonist in the recent history of Madrid, I would propose these two points—nomadic initiatives and undulating programs—as being the protagonists that continue to cultivate Madrid's cultural landscape.

Thinking of Madrid's independent initiatives in relation to the commercial and institutional circuits provoked me to think of art, or cultural scenes, as ecosystems whose health relies on a diverse range of institutes, organisations and individuals. Each acting in different scales, structures and forms, together they create a sustainable and supportive environment in which art and culture can form. When thinking of an art scene from this perspective, the acknowledgment of large and mid scale institutes becomes just as important as supporting the small, independent ones that are so easy to (ideologically, personally) support. And this is a point in which Madrid feels strong. Often (self) proclaimed as an institutionalised society by those with whom I spoke, the institutional infrastructure of Madrid—and the contentment with what these infrastructures bring—is relatively strong. Mid and large scale institutes offer consistent international and locally focused programs which take care of the immediate need (or desire) for smaller organisations to create opportunity in exhibition form: La Casa Encendida offers opportunity to young artists and cultural agents via consistent open calls; CA2M, activating Madrid's periphery, engages with both local and international contemporary art; Reina Sofia (though mostly characterised by its Modern collection) also offers space to active artists. Albeit catering to those already established in art, the space Reina Sofia offers does close the gap between active and collected artists. Not to forget Matadero, Tabacalera, Centro Centro, (etc.) who also offer space to both local and international artists and cultural agents in varying forms. Though institutions can (and perhaps should) always be encouraged to reach out and engage more, to close the gap between “established” and “emerging” artists, the general attitude I have encountered in Madrid is that due to this amiable relationship

with the institutions, creating more opportunity to exhibit through independent initiatives has—for some time at least—not been the community's greatest concern.

The support infrastructures, however—such as residencies, discussions, workshops—have; and this is reflected in the independent initiatives. Rampa, Hablar en Arte, Nadie Nunca Nada, No all have (or had) strong focuses on programs around the exhibition and production of art. And while they all vary in what they do, what they have in common is the re-use space: Rampa hosted a variety of events and organisations within their studio as a lab-like study of what a studio practice could be; Hablar en Arte, in their Sweet Home residency program, reactivates domestic space; Nadie Nunca Nada, No uses the studio as an “exhibition” space by introducing artists’ practices through workshops. But rather than this use of space being a point of focus—it seems rather to be a required form—(economic and spatial) circumstance pushing these initiatives into the form they take. And again we come back to the economic crisis—with doubled space, or no space, becoming the only form in which low (or no) budget initiatives can operate.

Reading an interview with curators Manuela Pedrón Nicolau and Jaime González Cela about the Spanish cultural scene, they say that it cannot be thought of as a whole unit. And I completely agree. Perhaps like any other scene of art, as soon as one tries to pin down a generality, an unignorable detail makes the conclusion slip. Just as I come to the conclusion that everyone doing workshops runs from a re-used space, La Colmena comes back to mind and pulls the conclusion into a premature stop; and just as I’m about to conclude that the majority of Madrid’s independent initiatives run without spaces, a number of studio-based spaces suddenly appear. And thank goodness

for it. If everyone was, for example, making living room exhibition programs, what would be the interest in that? Or if everyone was, for example, a nomadic entity, we would most probably become blind to its vigilance and lose all enamour for it as a form.

Perhaps it is precisely this slippery nature of independent initiatives that makes them so attractive—their dispersed organisation a required characteristic for them to continue to act in the way that they do; their ephemeral nature a necessary condition for the need they fulfil—creating the almost invisible moments that feel so necessary, so important, that our natural instinct is to ask, “Why can this not be more visible? Why does this not get the attention it deserves?”

Momentary plans of building networks conspire, and conversations led to musings of how (and how great it would be!) if we could become more collected. But for a moment I would like to counter this desire. I identify the impulse to share, to connect and expand as essential, and as necessarily human: it ensures physical and psychological survival; and it is precisely this inclination to socialise that enriches our lives. But I would argue that the quality of collectivity is not held through exponential growth or increasing visibility.

Projecting myself back into the conversation I had with Flavia from Hablar en Arte about organising and overseeing the Sweet Home residency, she spoke the impossibility of keeping track: even as one of the people most intimately involved, for Flavia the residency ebbed in and out of focus. With the location of the residency in six private homes, the program dispersed into the folds of the city—emerging momentarily in grouped, organised events—only to fade back into the fabric of Madrid. Although she was actively involved, the full scale of the

project was never in her reach, its existence only apparent in her knowledge of its construction, and through details the participants would (choose to) reveal.

Perhaps this impossibility of having an overview could also be said for independently organised scenes. Yet gaining an overview is exactly what I aimed to do in my trip to Madrid; and in a way that's exactly what I knew I would fail to do because seeing and experiencing these spaces and initiatives in two weeks is an impossible feat. Even if it was a possibility, the history of each of these initiatives stretches far beyond the scope that any one individual could hope to see. But while it dawned on me that experiencing these initiatives was impossible, encountering them was not. And as I filled my days with meetings and discussions—trekking from café to rooftop to peripheral studio space—hearing about countless exhibitions, workshops, residencies, moments in time recounted by questions and memories and looking back—I realised that the closest way to see the invisible, was to speak.

First published on Curator's Network, August 2018. <http://www.curators-network.eu/blog-entry/an-impossible-view-madrid>

Berlin

On my train trip to Berlin, John Berger inadvertently warns me, via his essay The Moment of Cubism, to stay free of determinism.¹ Unbeknownst to him, I am reading his essay on the way to research independently run art spaces and initiatives, with my main question being, “What motivated you to begin?” Which of course begs for answers starting with “Because...”

Luckily for me, the answers to this question either confess personal desire as the starting point, which steers it past being a result of external factors, or—and this was the most common—the question is entirely deflected: the reason for starting an independent space not seeming to be important at all.

Which brings me to one of the few common threads I found between the spaces I spoke to. While independently run spaces as a group are characterised by their diversity, those who I contacted over the last two weeks did have a few things in common. The first of these being attitude.

My request to meet was consistently responded to generously—even offering to show me around when the space was inactive, as in the case of Farbvision and HORSEANDPONY Fine Arts; or to meet even when there was no space even to be seen, as in the case of nomadic spaces Super and Sonntag. But the conversations themselves felt to be almost absurd, as if asking about running these spaces was a superfluous question: running a space appearing to be an almost default activity here in Berlin.

Berlin (too) has seen rent crawling steadily upwards in recent years, but pockets of unused space with relatively low rent can still be found and secured—and is done so—as in the case of Oracle and Stadium. In other cases, private

homes are still expansive enough to dedicate a part of the house to exhibiting art, as with Farbvision and Open Forum. While Amsterdam's double-focus spaces (studio turned exhibition spaces/apartment turned exhibition spaces) mostly facilitate both uses within the same room, here spaces still are big enough to exist adjacently—each activity having a room for themselves.

This availability of space leads to shop front spaces, living room spaces, storage spaces. Even temporarily-secured unused spaces, such as CNTRM's location in the DDR guardhouse (for Berlin's Project Space Festival—I'll get back to this later). The spaces are not necessarily easy to get, but can be done—either through self-initiative (Stadium and Oracle) or through organisations (Gr_und and TIER.space).

Over time there have been several associations, such as Coopolis and Netzwerk Freier Berliner Projekträume und –Initiativen, who have acted as intermediaries between landowners and those looking to start cultural spaces. The Berlin Senate also states one of its responsibilities is to “protect and promote cultural life,”² with specific mention made that it “does not in itself necessitate the preservation or establishment of any particular cultural institutions,”³ but rather mandates cultural policy worked out between the senate, the twelve Burroughs of Berlin, sponsors and stakeholders in civil society. This, along with the aforementioned organisations, paints a picture that the city of Berlin actively acknowledges the importance of art within the city—not just of the arts, but the spaces in which art can be made and shown. I find acknowledging this on a structural level to be refreshing—it presents itself as a supportive and generous system. But I have to remind myself that I am learning of this by speaking to those who have succeeded in acquiring space through these

organisations—which perhaps does not accurately reflect the difficulty in attaining space through these structures may be. Perhaps the fact that Netzwerk Freier Berliner Projekträume und –Initiativen has only been able to find space for two initiatives in the last one and a half years gives a bit of an indication to how difficult this might be. Nonetheless, the fact that they are actively finding spaces gives me the feeling that Netzwerk Freier Berliner Projekträume und –Initiativen is working towards giving grounded and long(er)term support—a sense of stability which seems crucial in these cities and times where artists and other cultural workers feel to be constantly pushed towards being flexible and mobile.

But stability need not necessarily be grounded spatially. Sonntag, run by artists April Gertler and Adrian Schiesser, have managed to maintain a monthly exhibition program for seven years, jumping from living room to living room across Berlin (and occasional other cities), using the German tradition of (Sunday) afternoon coffee and cake as the skeleton of their project. Occurring every third Sunday of the month, always from two till six, always serving coffee and cake, the regularity of their program has become a dependable fixture of Berlin. A simple but multifaceted event, it draws audiences from several angles—offering itself as an art exhibition, an (slow) architectural tour, or a pleasant Sunday activity one can bring their friends, children, and even grandparents, to. And you don't even need to make an appointment, which brings me to my second point in things I found spaces in Berlin have in common.

“Open by appointment” is a common sentence found at the bottom of websites of independent spaces, but here for the first time I encounter it as the only way of engagement. Other than at openings and finissages, Open

Forum, Oracle and Super, for example, can only be visited by contacting them personally. While various factors determine the use of this form, what I really enjoyed was what Bärbel Trautwein of Oracle said about the change of interaction caused by this framework. She said that one aspect she enjoyed of being open by appointment was that it led to much more engagement between her and those who visit. Arriving with the knowledge that the space has been opened especially for them provoked real conversations. The notion of the general public is gone, replaced by the specific public, and the mode of visiting changes accordingly.

Which finally brings me back to the Project Space Festival. Coinciding with my trip to Berlin, the fourth Project Space Festival Berlin opened days after my arrival. Spanning across the month of August and including twenty-seven project spaces, the festival proceeded to present one event each evening at a different space across the city.

The premise is great and I am genuinely excited to have an event each day to attend while investigating spaces in Berlin. But as I begin to attend these shows, I am confronted—time and time again—with disappointing experiences. So consistent is this experience that at some point I realise it cannot be the quality of the art or the spaces. And I realise that, of course, the most uniting element these events have is how I get there. Unlike the rest of the spaces I visit, these events invite me as a faceless spectator and because of this, I invest little energy beforehand into my experience. While with other spaces I actively search, find their websites, read about their programs and their mission statements before personally contacting the people behind it, these spaces I turn up just by knowing when and where to be. Of course no one is stopping me going through the same process as the other

spaces, but I don't. Perhaps the crucial difference being that I don't have to.

Perhaps this is personal laziness, or perhaps this is fear of running out of time. Perhaps it is a perspective that knows that all the infrastructures that surround an exhibition affect it, but still forgets it. Including the affect of reading John Berger.

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¹ John Berger, "The Moment of Cubism," in *Landscapes* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2016) p. 157

² "Cultural Policy: Actors," Berlin.de, accessed September 1, 2018, <https://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/kulturpolitik/akteure/>

³ *ibid.*

Paris

This research is on “independently run spaces and initiatives”, but when questioned what I mean by this, I halt: what do I actually mean with this phrase?

I realise the requirements for my research are constantly expanding and therefore the description I introduce it with is becoming more and more general. Starting as a research on spaces that relate to my own space Pløt-, the criteria of “running from an apartment” soon expanded when I realised there were many similarities between exhibition spaces in apartments and exhibition spaces in studios—both using spaces originally intended for another use. And it expanded once again at the realisation that a reused active space has similar qualities to a reused abandoned space: that the space is often characterised by the space’s former activity just as the present use of a space characterises the way an exhibition is held in an active studio or lived-in apartment. And so on, until the exact outline of the research seems to have entirely frayed, the research now orbiting around a core—a feeling—rather than existing within the boundaries of a certain framework or definition.

The places I visit define themselves as project spaces, independent spaces, artist-run spaces, off spaces, non-profit spaces, non-profit organisations, collectives, and I soon realise that the relation to space is no longer the determining filter. What I also realise is that the criteria of the research is no longer determined by myself—that the way these organisations refer to themselves—through this plethora of derivatives orbiting around a non-pinpoint able core—becomes the filter through which I search. Which means my definition of “independently

run spaces and initiatives” is largely determined by those with whom I speak and, since each space has a slightly different definition and uses a slightly different term, my definition and field of research continue to expand.

But there continue to be common threads. Other than art being the constant subject throughout these spaces and initiatives, another constant topic that is discussed is money. The general rule is that these organisations run despite it, and that the acquisition of money does not affect the program. But here is where the line between independent, institutional, and commercial spaces begins to blur: one independently run space determines itself as different to an institute, but does receive government funding. Another independent space defines itself from a commercial gallery, but does use sales to fund the space. And it seems despite the fact that the name seems to negate the idea of money, defining a space or organisation as “independently run” frames it first and foremost in relation to it, even though the emphasis is on avoiding that relation as such. So what exactly is it that makes them “independent”?

I guess it’s time to go back to the dictionary. Independent means free from outside control: not subject to another’s authority. It also means not depending on another for livelihood or subsistence. I don’t think independent spaces and initiatives can be defined purely as such, but they do perhaps negate it through their (inadvertent) fractioning. By refusing to have one definitive source of funds, independent spaces are most often scrambling for whatever support they can find—be that grant based, sales based or being privately funded. When I say privately funded, it can again split into two forms: privately funded by the founders themselves, or privately funded by some form of patron. In terms of money then, most spaces are far from

“independent”, but through the dispersed sourcing of their funds they remain in control—meaning their programs remain free from an externally exhorted authority. Or are they?

This constant battle against stagnation due to funds brings about its own boundaries: lack of funds leads to predominantly European based programs, because reaching further out is more than what an independently run initiative can generally afford. Lack of funds also leads to a lot of free-working artists and free-working coordinators, whose time and effort is given for experience and exposure—leading these spaces to be run part time; turning independent art infrastructures into something that could come uncomfortably close to being defined as a hobby.

As “for fun” “side projects” the first things to be left undone are organisational tasks such as administration—leading to less organisation, less funding, less time, leading to running out of energy and usually to the spaces’ demise. Because of the small scale of these endeavours, they often stay close to the founders’ wants and ideas—making them specific, subjective and personal projects that are then hard (or senseless) to pass on. These factors begin to play a big part in life span of an independently run space or initiative—their average running time in this form generally ending after about four or five years. Which is then again a form that is externally exhorted.

But Paris did show me something different. Talking to independently run spaces and initiatives here, the very first thing I noticed was that Paris hosts more than a handful of independent organisations that have lived for eight, ten, twenty years. And structural organisation seemed to be at the core of their longevity. Rather than remaining personal initiatives, these older organisations and spaces are run by collectives (or a collection of people) and all

of them have at least one dedicated staff member at any given time. It is also interesting to note that many younger organisations are adopting a similar organisational format.

When asking how full-time staff were paid, the answer came in a variety of forms, but one that reoccurred several times was the use of state-subsidised contracts. These contracts were actually intended to facilitate integration of individuals into the professional world, but were also a way that non-profit organisations found to hire staff. I say “were” because the funds for these contracts has been significantly cut in 2018, with cultural organisations (and schools) being the first to be affected; and while this could easily now lead into a rant against budget cuts, I would prefer to bring focus back to the structure these contracts helped support—that is, full-time staff member(s) for non-profit, independently run (art) spaces—and how this in turn helped with their longevity.

The cut of these subsidised contracts does not mean these spaces in Paris will disappear. While it is posing substantial problems for some, those who I talked to are determined on finding new ways to survive, and others—as I said earlier—already have similar organisational structures without ever having had, or used, the governmental support. Which means that while some spaces are currently in a moment of precarity, others find themselves relatively unaffected. What I find interesting is how the existence, and use, of these contracts may have lead other independent spaces to organise themselves in a similar form without the intention of using the subsidy—tending to a way of organising that then becomes specific to Paris (or France), which is formed by—but no longer reliant on—a particular funding possibility.

Perhaps this is how these spaces and initiatives are independent. As a group, characterised as much by their

differences as their similarities, they take on forms made possible by particular situations and reform them in the context of another. It could almost be seen as taking the aesthetic of one “solution” and recreating it in another context. In this way independent spaces and initiatives constantly evolve by learning from what works for others and perpetuating this by different means into new environments.

So yes, budget cuts, the rise of rent, the retraction of a space does often mean the loss of a particular initiative that relied on that subsidy, that space, that set up. But perhaps the silver lining is that other spaces will have already sampled parts of their organisation and perpetuated it by other means. Which means that when the initiative that is dependent on one particular resource falls, its presence continues as an echo in the initiatives it inspired. I guess this is what I mean by “independently run spaces and initiatives”. As individual entities they are often quick-footed—able to manoeuvre around difficult situations—but in the end they will rely on a variety of external elements that determine their existence, making them dependent. And as a group, or a scene, they are also definitely dependent on each other. But perhaps it is through their interdependence that together they are independent: where one space falls, the next picks up and together as a movement they continue to go on, no matter what struggles they encounter, and no matter how much ground is pulled out from underneath their feet.

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Rome

Perhaps it is not the best idea to launch a research with the closed question of “Does context shape the way an independent space or initiative forms?” If this had remained the only question of this research, then I could have quite easily concluded it here with a strong and confident, “Yes.”

In the last text I wrote, based on my time in Paris, I noted how funding appears as a constant backbone within the conversations I have had with spaces in Amsterdam, Madrid, Berlin and Paris. And upon arriving in Rome, it of course came back again, this time with very deep (old) structural roots.

The first thing I notice about Rome is the scarcity of spaces that identify as independent, with those that I do find having complicated personal relationships with the term—either wary of its current popularity, or not relating to its (assumed) aesthetic. The second thing I notice is the strong presence of other forms of institutes—mostly in the form of foundations and international academies—that I have not encountered yet in other cities. But because I only manage to meet with a few independent spaces and one foundation, I find it difficult to draw any conclusions about their relationships.

Perhaps it initially reads as a trivial detail, but my visit to Rome is quickly dispersed to include Milan, Naples and Palermo also, with a momentary postulation to visit Polignano a Mare, where nomadic space Like A Little Disaster is currently based. This development was quickly explained during my talk with Current, in Milan, who mentioned that because contemporary art is such a small niche within Italy, the network of spaces spans across Italy, rather than staying bound to each city. I’m also

informed that despite the number of independent spaces in Italy is small, they do concentrate in certain cities, and that Rome definitely is not one of them.

And perhaps this is where even the incredibly loose structure of this research got in the way. Besides being a research on “independent spaces and initiatives”, it also has a focus on location, particularly focusing on cities that, at some point in their past, have boasted reputations of being cultural capitals. What these cities have in common is that they live in the shadow of an image they no longer embody; continuing to identify with their past while really becoming more and more commercially focused. This makes for an intriguing situation where artists continue to migrate to these centres, while their contemporary realities are actually quite hostile to them being there: these cities are increasingly expensive and crowded, with booming tourism and shrinking space and support for artists. So that is why I am visiting Rome.

But in Italy, living in the shadow of the past is something that is definitely is not specific to Rome—with contemporary art generally affected by this tremendously present past that overshadows it. Speaking with Lorenzo in Milan, he mused at how sweet it must be to come from New Zealand, where one's actions are not constantly shadowed by an expansive history jumping on every idea demanding, “Are you sure it has not been done before?” and where large parts of cultural funding aren't dedicated to the upkeep of cultural heritage—such as the opera, for example. While in Naples I even discover that the art of Neapolitan ‘Pizziauolo’ is officially registered as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. But I'm going off topic.

But off topic is exactly the topic of this trip—with the distractions in Italy being so immense, with so much

to see, from so many different eras, documenting so many moments in history, that as soon as any momentum drops away, the country is immediately ready to catch you with surprise visits to small churches filled with torture-depicting frescoes, or propels you into an hour-long queue for the most divine food—recommended by absolutely everybody as a kind of city-wide agreement—or a mid-sized museum with a handful of Caravaggios, or I don't know—Palatine hill, the Colosseum, the Pantheon. The list, of course, goes on and on.

But Chiara, of Leporello, “a small bookshop focused on many activities” sharpens my attention to a few things I haven't found the words for until now. When asking her about why she started Leporello, she said it simply came from the fact that there was no place to buy good books in Rome. As gentrification starts to nibble on neighbourhoods such as Pigneto, “the Brooklyn of Rome”, where Leporello is located, Chiara notes that there is suddenly a plethora of places to eat and drink, places to stay, but no nice shops; and with her bookstore she wants to contribute positively to the neighbourhood that, ten years previously, helped her establish herself here in Rome.

Chiara's description of the city's transformation echoes an experience I have repeatedly had while trekking through these cities this summer. When visiting cities I walk everywhere I go and, because independent spaces often seek low rent, and the lowest rent is mostly found on the edges of cities, this generally leads to repeated walks directly across the city centres. And each city has a similar experience: while the outskirts are all built up in their own compositions—Berlin in chunks; Milan in a gradient; Paris with a razor sharp edge—what they all have in common are dead centres. Not dead in terms of no people, but dead in that there is nothing in these areas

but cheap food sold at high prices and a succession of overcrowded landmarks.

The first sign of these zones is the transformation of supermarkets to “express marts” with food sold at twice the price—and the disappearance of all other stores needed for day-to-day life. These centres are almost completely excavated of everything other than pit stops for hungry (tired or injured) tourists bustling from one attraction to the other. And it's not as though it's a smack in the face—a clear line that says, “Here ends the part of the city where people still live”, but rather an awareness of it creeps in through a strange, inescapable dread that, after repeatedly traversing particular parts of the city, starts to automatically steer my body around them—trying to find alternative routes around these areas that feel like deserts—with only the promise of my destination helping me traverse these stretches. Which brings me to AlbumArte.

AlbumArte is an independent and non-profit exhibition space in Rome whose focus is mainly on video and performative language. But what strikes me most about the space's activities is its consistent effort towards collaboration. Just as these cities have gaping spaces between areas that support culture, so too can these gaps be found within cultural ecosystems. The art scene as an ecosystem is an idea I touched upon when in Madrid, postulating that a diverse range of institutes and organisations is what creates a sustainable and supportive environment in which art and culture can form.

In Rome a variety of organisations and institutions do exist, yet the interaction between them is minimal—with many being international institutions (e.g. the French, British, Spanish Academies formed due to the Grand Tours of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) that act as isolated bubbles that exist in, but do not interact

with, the city of Rome. These academies are some of the most established institutions for contemporary art in the city, offering residencies to artists from their respective countries. This results, however, in a strange landscape in which Rome becomes easier for international artists to live and work in than for Italian artists: because these academies are established by their respective countries, they exclude Roman artists from their programs. On top of this, their establishment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries means they occupy prime locations in the city—meaning that while French, Spanish and Swiss contemporary art can easily be found in the centre of Rome, Italian contemporary art cannot. Commercial galleries in Rome also prefer to represent international artists, once again cutting Roman artists out of their own city.

AlbumArte's response to this situation is not to make (the tempting move to) solely host Italian programs. Rather they focus on collaborating with international institutions—within and without Rome. Hosting exhibitions from both Italian and international artists and curators, almost every exhibition is made in collaboration with another institute, space or organisation. AlbumArte is relatively small, and yet they act with disregard for size or hierarchy—their collaborations spanning anywhere from emerging curators to embassies to established art institutes—all with the focus on making (good) exhibitions. And when I ask about Italian artists in Rome, looking for confirmation of the common narrative I have been hearing, they (again) skirt the tempting move to wallow. “It's not terrible for Italian artists,” Valentina tells me, and then goes on to describe the few new grants that are becoming available to them.

I am repeatedly struck by, how when faced with a difficult environment to work in, AlbumArte's response

is not to be defensive or focused on self-preservation, but rather to be proactive and to continue looking outwards. Broadening the conversation to Italy's increasing political hostility and closure, Valentina confirms that "right now is the most important moment to be open."

Another space that is notable for their collaborative approach is Current of Milan. Throughout their two-year history of exhibitions and events, their program is made, with increasing regularity, through collaboration with other spaces. While I do not have many examples to go by, I start to wonder if these collaborative approaches are in response to the Italian (contemporary) art landscape that I'm being introduced to?

AlbumArte assure me that it is. And while Current does not explicitly state it, they do bring attention to this mode of working as one of their strengths—though also as a quality that sets them apart. Unfortunately the time (end of summer) and place (Rome) in which I visit Italy restrict me from further exploring this question. But the few independent spaces I do make contact with all exude these qualities: openness, awareness and proactive connections with other organisations. And it is these connections that pull me through this trip to Rome—just strong enough to pull me across Rome's centre—and across the country—with each space motivating me with their enthusiasm: offering another reference, another contact, that helps me navigate this landscape—the one they traverse daily—without losing all direction.

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London

It feels that the entire research so far has been preparing me for London; and yet everything I learnt—from Madrid to Berlin to Paris to Rome—was completely blown out of bounds by the sheer magnitude of this city. If I felt I had some kind of overview in other cities, then in London I found none of this self-assuredness. Even on a simple physical level, London no longer functions on a human scale: walking as a form of transport could technically be possible, but verges on ludicrous when arriving for a ten o'clock meeting means starting to walk at six.

I'm coming back to the walking briefly mentioned in the last text: a method to measure a city with one's body, to see sites in passing, to punctuate my meetings with independent art spaces and initiatives with the streets of the city they inhabit. As mentioned in the previous text, these spaces tend to occupy the peripheries of cities, and "the periphery" takes on a whole new meaning when physically walking out to meet it. But much as I wanted to continue this mode of mapping, in London it started to become senseless. The distances I needed to travel began to encroach rather than enrich; taking more energy than it eventually could give. Without the aid of public transport, it would have at times been impossible to fit even two meetings into a single day.

The term "periphery" connotes an edge, a slow fading out of a centre—the last wisps of concentration—but London's periphery (perhaps due to the mode of getting there) does not feel like this at all: the edge of the city feels much closer to a sea—one that plays host to several islands.

One of these islands is Black Tower. Located in Sydenham at the south edge of the city, Black Tower is a

not-for-profit project space and artists' studio provider, who focus on collaborative practices as a way to work in, and invite artists to, their outer-city location. Occupying an industrial building, Black Tower has neighbours who span anywhere from car to set producers—making a comradely environment for their largely self-sufficient ecosystem focused on (art) production. This, alongside the collaborative effort of hosting, is reflected in the structure of their exhibitions, which offers one-month working periods for guest artists on site, followed by an exhibition that intends to continue developing the project. The idea is to create a working structure that encourages deepening relationships between the artists and hosts, while also opening up the exhibition format to include moments of incompleteness and process. Which is a theme that may connect Black Tower back into the archipelago of spaces existing in London.

In each city I have visited for this research I have caught onto some kind of thread that, perhaps in my own search for logic, has become a lead to follow. In Rome it was collaboration; in Paris collectivity; in Berlin perhaps (in)accessibility? And in London the word I heard again and again (and then began actively searching for) was “production”.

I can probably trace the focus on this term back to an arbitrary series of events that led me to it. And yet the arbitrary no longer feels like something I should reject or shy away from. Time and time again I have encountered spaces that use subjectivity, and personal whim, precisely as a way to structure their programs. And rather than resulting in un-relatable, hermetic niches, I found that this embrace of subjectivity consistently presented programs that genuinely caught my attention—perhaps precisely because of the impossibility of pinpointing their centres;

or due to the lack of “missions” through which action is intended to exceed the limits of a space's walls.

But back to production.

Many of the spaces I contacted in London are connected to studio complexes in some form—either organisationally, such as arebyte Gallery and Black Tower, or circumstantially, such as artist-run organisation Auto Italia. Even artist-run space Piper Keys, who is momentarily borrowing space from non-profit exhibition centre Raven Row, is inadvertently sharing the building with spaces currently dedicated to art production. And I don't think its because there are so many studio spaces around. In fact, it feels much closer to the opposite—with studio space being so hard to find that the only way to attain one is to organise collectively.

But the permeation of production as a focal point in London does not stop there. Other spaces—quite detached from places of production—also have strong focus on it, with many programs in London built on the premise of commissioning works. To help artists produce, as well as exhibit, feels as strongly ingrained into the attitudes of spaces here as the act of running a space “full-stop” seemed to be in Berlin. It's almost presented as a given: production is virtually impossible in London and therefore to give aid in any form is almost an assumed responsibility: I hardly come across a space that doesn't give artist fees; I hardly come across a space that doesn't contribute to production costs.

But I only manage to speak to approximately ten spaces—a tiny fraction of the overall spaces in London. My initial research leaves me with thirty organisations to contact and each meeting leaves me with five new organisations to approach—it's abundant for a city that is so extraordinarily expensive to live in, for a city with

a fairly single-channelled funding system. Which brings me back to a particular conversation.

I visit Piper Keys on Friday afternoon and begin my “interview” in my way that is becoming increasingly close to a casual conversation: I let an initial confusion lead to questions about space acquisition, leading to previous spaces and team composition, to role distribution and overall focus. The answers to which are all—as I may have expected—arbitrary: a personal connection, a lucky encounter, a natural array of focuses and interests. Which leads to mention of a previous interview in which the interviewer persistently asked about the space’s “model”, in a survey attempting to grasp that illusive way in which independent spaces work. However Piper Keys is, once more, a space which has no model, in a series of initiatives that also have no model—with the only thing connecting them being that lack as such—but, once again, not as a form, but as a circumstantial quality.

Which leads me to one of my only somewhat-conclusive thoughts in regards to this research: if there is anything tying these independent initiatives together it is precisely this term “initiative”. As outlined in previous texts, the term “independent” is fraught with contradictions. But “initiative”, the broadest term I have found to describe this loosely connected group, feels to be the most consistently accurate description of how they work: taking the opportunities that arise and embodying them to their full potential. It is an attitude, not a model: a motivation, not a need. And it is this eye for opportunity that leads to the composition of some of my favourite places:

There is no need for a hair salon where mirrors are swapped out for art beyond Daniel Kelly’s personal initiative to intertwine these activities and spaces.¹ There is no need for contemporary art exhibitions at city sum-

mer pools besides Nele Heinevetter’s personal attraction to them, and her will to imbue and feed each with the others’ qualities.² There is no need for a group studio to invite artists to exhibit, other than an interest to do so;³ no need to inhabit other peoples’ living rooms each Sunday other than for the love of cake and art.⁴

My examples here, of course, extend beyond London across my overall research. I feel these spaces, initiatives, organisations that I have met through this research work beyond need: they exist through a want. A want to do something more, or less, or forwards, sideward, or pulling back. To see, or find, opportunity to move—and then to do so. Independent initiatives have a tendency to live for four to five years and if I have learnt anything that is close to definitive, then it would be that this tendency comes from a general, personal ability for one (or a few) people to attend to, and care for, a particular activity and idea, with no consistent support other than the desire to do so, for this amount of time. If these movements take greater hold, live for longer periods of time, they do so by finding ways to reform into a more sustainable, stable form—often sacrificing some of that initial symbiosis between motivation and actualisation that to me feels so characteristic for an independent initiative. Of course there are anomalies. And of course none of these initiatives follow the same paths or find the same forms. And none of it can ever be wholly replicated; because each one is so specific to the place in which it lives, to the people who create it, to time, events, energy, motivation, whim. Every little detail down to a movie or a road name as a title; to a pairing between Argentina/Paris—or London/Mexico—to opening art school conversations into public form. Everything. Which, if I think back to before starting this research I suppose I already knew. But perhaps took

a search, from city to city to city to city, from warehouse to kiosk to cafe to living room, to see it.

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<http://www.curators-network.eu/blog-entry/an-impossible-view-london>

1
DKUK (London)

2
Tropéz (Berlin)

3
Atelier W, Pauline Perplexe (Paris)

4
Sonntag (Berlin)

Amsterdam

It's one o'clock in the morning. I am sitting in a dim room looking at an installation made by Jade Fourès-Varnier and Vincent de Hoym. The exhibition lights are out, casting shadows onto the works hanging on the walls: not at all an ideal mode for looking. And yet it's precisely because I feel that I am not seeing well that I start to look more closely. I leave my seat to decipher just where the figure in the painting is looking. I notice the way his hand is wrapped around a chair's arm. I notice the way another figure's hands rest upon the blank-pages of a painted book.

There is no one else attending the exhibition. I have just arrived after seeing a movie, projected in the basement of a bar across town. This after spending an afternoon at Marwan, who kindly opened for me by appointment, even though the exhibition was officially closed. And as I sit here, contemplating this exhibition for the tenth day in a row, I realise that my entire day has been spent in and out of independent art spaces and cultural initiatives. But perhaps what is most note-worthy about this is that it is not an anomaly: my daily routine in this city is completely shaped by them.

But waking up, stumbling across an exhibition on the way from bedroom to kitchen — contemporary paintings blurred in early morning vision— or taking a last minute look at some works before dropping off to sleep, is not exactly representative of life in Amsterdam. It's a situation particular to my life right now, after I decided, along with Diego Diez, that my living room could double as an exhibition space. Since then, seven months a year, I've been eating, sleeping, working in an independently run art space.

If my research trips to Madrid, Berlin, Paris, Rome and London were characterised by a certain level of inaccessibility, then my experience of Amsterdam, through living and working in it, is the other way round. Starting with the base of my own space, contributing to Amsterdam's landscape of independent spaces has consequently led me into a deeper engagement with spaces in Amsterdam in general. Curious about what others are up to, I'm drawn around the city to see what's taking place on a regular basis. This, paired with friends and acquaintances practicing and exhibiting here, paired with a growing relationship with a number of the initiators of these spaces, means that a thickening mesh of reasons has drawn me to a variety of spaces over a prolonged period of time. While the short duration of my stays in other cities led me to narrow my engagement to only include spaces focusing on art, in Amsterdam the trend of my engagement goes the other way round: as well as attending exhibitions and events at art-focused spaces, I regularly visit independent and homerun cinemas, contribute to activities in communal living rooms, make use of food-saving markets, visit squats and community run kitchens. In doing so, independent initiatives permeate through many aspects of my everyday life and I suppose that this, project space in one's living room or not, could be representative of living in Amsterdam. But then I wouldn't imagine this to be specific to just this city: perhaps it's more representative of the relationship one has with the city in which they live.

I always knew the research I have been conducting, recorded in this publication, would be from a very specific point of view: one determined by two week time periods, the summer of 2018, and the perspective of a recently graduated art student. Even the fact that I grew up in New Zealand, thinking about "Europe" as a singular place,

became apparent as a contributing factor to the shape of this research. Therefore, due to living in Amsterdam for the last six years, writing about Amsterdam could not slot itself seamlessly into the rest of this research's mould.

While Madrid, Berlin, Paris, Rome and London opened up to me predominantly through internet researches, my first encounter with independent initiatives here in Amsterdam came through a friend telling me to see a movie; and this spiralling, over years, into the level of engagement I have now. While visiting other cities meant contacting spaces and setting up specific appointments, in Amsterdam coming into contact with spaces has been by attending their programs; becoming familiar with them through repeated visits. Because of this, the key difference between my knowledge of Amsterdam and other cities is that while abroad I have learnt about spaces through the words of others, and in Amsterdam I have learnt of them through empirical experience. Trying to write about Amsterdam, therefore, in the way that I have written about Madrid, Berlin, Paris, Rome and London would make little sense. My perception of this city is so tangled with personal experience, so lopsided by circumstances contrary to the conditions set for the rest of this research, that it would do nothing but sever the slight spine that I built in the rest of the research by embracing its unavoidable restrictions.

So it is for this reason that I'm not going to write about Amsterdam, and instead use this space to acknowledge, once more, the artificial parameters of the rest. To come back to John Berger one last time, it seems logical to conclude with the reminder that, though this text has been written with all intentions and efforts to speak honestly, it is a set of images and meanings that have been arranged.¹ It is not the outlining of a singular truth, just a text out-

lining one way of seeing. However, by acknowledging the limits set by the research, I lay my best hope with the notion that, just as with the dimly lit exhibition within my living room, perhaps it is that which hinders our view that provokes us to look more carefully.

1

Ways of Seeing. "Episode 1," Written by John Berger. aired January 8, 1972, on BBC, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpDE4VX_9Kk

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