

UNCERTAIN PATTERNS

Teaching and Learning
Socially Engaged Art

MOTIFS INCERTAINS

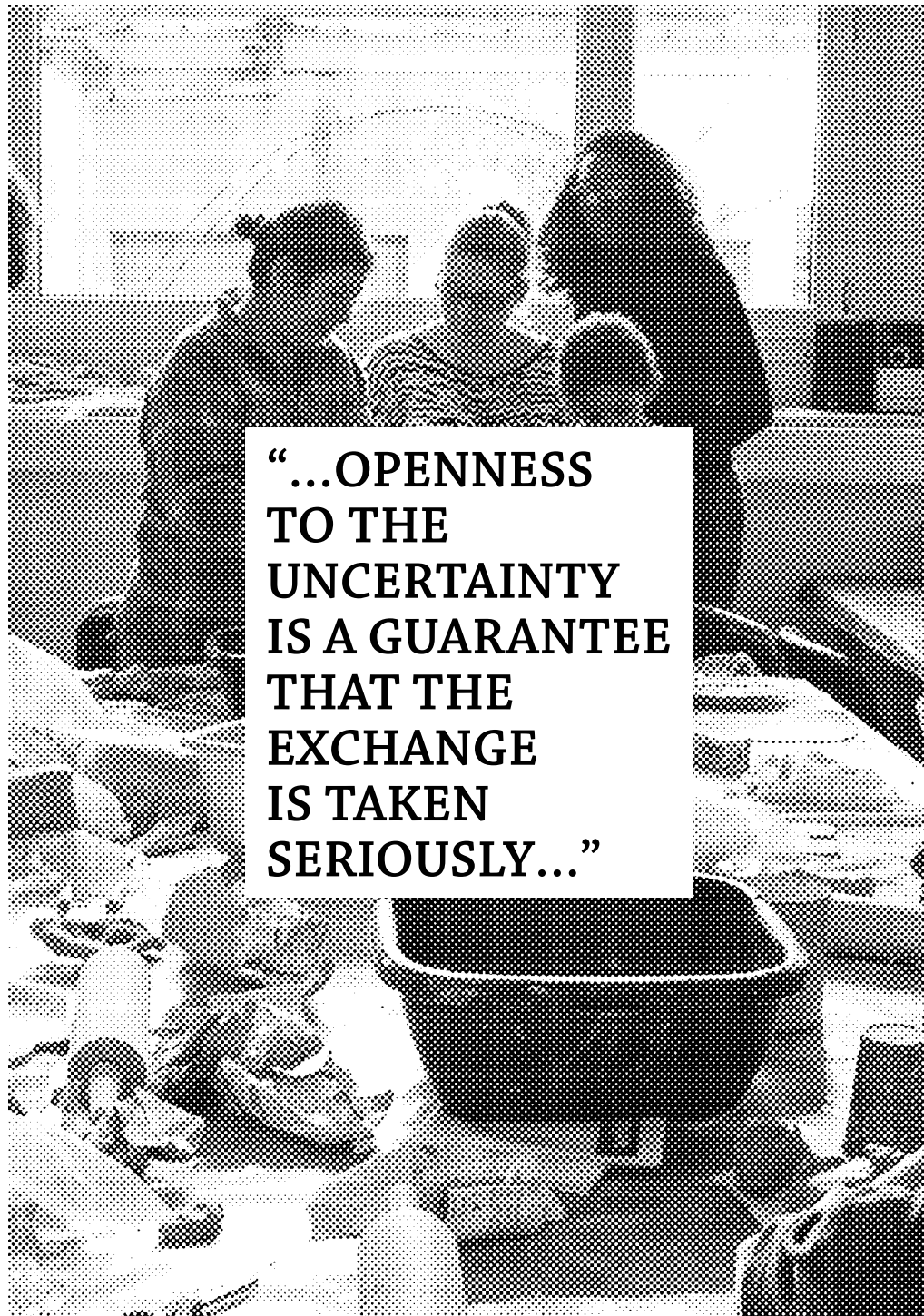
Enseigner et apprendre
les pratiques artistiques
socialement engagées

microsillons (éd.)

Master TRANS-, HEAD – Genève



Preface



**“...OPENNESS
TO THE
UNCERTAINTY
IS A GUARANTEE
THAT THE
EXCHANGE
IS TAKEN
SERIOUSLY...”**

UNCERTAIN PATTERNS PREFACE

microsilions (head of the TRANS– master, HEAD – Genève)

*Uncertainty [...] is our best goad, both for acting, and
for imagining a future.*

Ann Snitow¹

We live in an age of manifold uncertainties and, as Edgar Morin observed when considering the knowledge required for future education,² if before the 20th century we believed in a future of either repetition or progress, we have now “discovered the loss of the future, i.e. its unpredictability”. For Derrida, we are in a time of “perhaps” and we must let the event that is worthy of the name come to pass: something which seemed impossible (“the event is possible only coming from the impossible”³) and is unrepeatable.

This situation carries great potential for social, political, institutional and cultural transformation. In the introduction to her collection of essays *The Feminism of Uncertainty*, feminist activist Ann Snitow sees uncertainty about the future of the human race – about our very will to survive or not – as the best reason to invent and try out possibilities.

Since the early 1990s, participatory and collaborative artistic approaches (often involving people who do not define themselves as producing artists) have spread. These practices now constitute a specific field variously referred to as “socially engaged art practice”, “community-based art” or “dialogic art”. Art historian Claire Bishop uses the term “social turn” to describe this development. As Gregory Sholette notes,⁴ these “socially engaged art practices” are currently moving from the fringes of the art world towards its center and acquiring institutional legitimacy, sometimes in a form that runs counter to their activist roots. In the wake of this institutionalization, curricula are now being developed around the world to teach how art can be engaged in the social sphere.

The concept of uncertainty is fundamental to socially engaged art

¹ Snitow A. (2015). *The Feminism of Uncertainty: A Gender Diary*. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 5.

² Morin, E. (2000). *Les sept savoirs nécessaires à l'éducation du futur*. Paris: Le Seuil, p. 43.

³ Derrida, J. (2005). *Paper Machine*. translated by Rachel Bowlby, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 74.

⁴ Sholette, G. (2015). “Delirium and Resistance after the Social Turn”. In: *Field, A Journal of Socially-Engaged Art Criticism*, issue 1, Spring 2015, pp. 95-138, p. 128.

practice and its teaching at two levels. First of all, as these practices frequently involve a dialogic dimension, openness to the uncertainty of the results is a guarantee that the exchange is taken seriously, that the consultation is not merely a means of giving a semblance of social engagement to a project actually preconceived by the artist alone, that the artist is not merely taking advantage of the participants' vital spark or animating force to realize the project.⁵ A truly dialogic art should be a form of what Edouard Glissant calls *creolization*, giving rise to "a new situation that is wholly unpredictable on the basis of the sum or mere synthesis [of its] elements".⁶ This specific aspect needs to be taken into account and practiced with students, who will then develop similar practices.

Secondly, uncertainty is a necessary element of any approach to teaching socially engaged art practices that is to reflect the pedagogy to which these practices refer. Given the specific nature of these practices, many of the artists developing them and intellectuals interested in them have developed an interest in what are called "critical pedagogies". Art historian Grant Kester⁷ draws a parallel between the very nature of socially engaged art practice and Paulo Freire's pedagogical approach, which laid the foundations for this particular way of viewing the pedagogical process as a form of political action:

Here I simply want to note the interactive character of the projects I have described [...]. They replace the conventional, "banking" style of art (to borrow a phrase from the educational theorist Paulo Freire) – in which the artist deposits an expressive content into a physical object, to be withdrawn later by the viewer – with a process of dialogue and collaboration.

Getting beyond a "banking" approach to art that involves the mere transmission of content requires a pedagogy without certainty (whether as to essential content or learning results), a pedagogy aimed at yielding shared content and projects – which would make *untested feasibility* (i.e., for Freire, previously unimaginable actions) imaginable.⁸

The patterns, in their forms as in their repetition, thus become uncertain. This dialogic approach to pedagogy and art requires that teachers and

artists develop a certain "I-don't-know" state of mind,⁹ that they put themselves in a vulnerable position.¹⁰ In this position, they are no longer the sole repositories of a fixed and certain knowledge, it becomes harder for them to exercise *authority* (which is often perceived as a quality) and they must face the possibility of failure, which is hardly compatible with the visibility and results generally required of them. They must help students break free from a logic of measurable success and transmission in order, as Gayatri Spivak puts it, to "complete [their] acquisition of skills with the perilous unpredictability of the study of the humanities".¹¹

Implementing a pedagogy of uncertainty is less about applying a series of pre-determined actions than about developing a *strategy* which Edgar Morin describes as "examining the certainties and uncertainties of the situation, the probabilities and improbabilities," and "envisaging a certain number of scenarios of action that can be modified according to information arriving in the action and according to chance occurrences disrupting the action".¹²

This publication presents the positions of five programs that teach socially engaged art practices as well as various examples of these *action scenarios* as developed in projects initiated by these programs. The object is to network practices rooted in different local contexts, varied approaches that nonetheless share a desire to invent or adapt tools for the teaching of these specific art forms as well as a willingness to accept a form of *uncertainty*.

The Art and Social Practice MFA program at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon, seeks to nurture an exchange between students and teachers that will give rise to projects involving various organizations and institutions (such as the artist-in-residence program at a Portland prison, the Columbia River Correctional Institution). In order to bring about new experiences, the program does not provide students with their own studio space: they have to share a common working room.

The Kunst im Kontext program at Berlin's Universität der Künste is a pio-

⁹ The curator and teacher Mary Jane Jacob, an early defender of socially engaged art practices talks, in an interview, about "the mind of don't know" that is necessary to tackle those practices and their teaching. "Mary Jane Jacob", *Bad At Sports* [podcast], Episode 209, 2009. Available from: <<http://badatsports.com/2009/episode-209-mary-jane-jacob/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

¹⁰ The teacher and author bell hooks underlines, in *Teaching To Transgress*, that for a pedagogical action to emancipate, the teacher should, in a dialogical approach, accept to put herself or himself in the same position of vulnerability the students are in. hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress. Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, p. 21.

¹¹ Spivak, G. C. (talking with Anne Verjus et Juliette Cerf) (2014). "Enseigner les humanités". In: *Philosophie magazine*, 2014. Available from: <https://www.philomag.com/les-idees/enseigner-les-humanites-10643#_ftn14> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

¹² Morin, E. (2000). *op. cit.*, p. 43, pp. 49-50.

⁵ As often seen in schools where artists work with children to create murals or other decorative forms that the artists actually designed before engaging in an exchange of any kind with the pupils.

⁶ Glissant, E. (1997). *Traité du Tout-Monde (Poétique IV)*. Paris: Gallimard, p. 37.

⁷ Kester, G. (1999). "The Art of Listening (and of Being Heard): Jay Koh's Discursive Networks". In: *The Third Text*, 13:47 (1999), 19-26, p. 19.

⁸ Freire, P. (2001). *Pédagogie des opprimés, suivi de Conscientisation et Révolution*. Paris: La Découverte, pp. 102-106.

neer in the teaching of art practices with a social dimension. Its approach involves designing projects according to context and the random aspects thereof (e.g. *Kontext Labor Bernau 2014–2015–2016*, an annual initiative that involves local residents in implementing art projects to enliven the socio-cultural environment in Bernau, a town near Berlin, as part of Greater Berlin's *Kunst im Stadtraum* ("Art in the City") project). Consequently, the program has retained the spirit of a "pilot project" for over forty years now.

The PEI (Independent Studies Program) at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona bases its pedagogical action on a conception of knowledge as arising out of the "potential of collective study and the activation of theory" rather than out of the accumulation of information. Learning is understood to be an ongoing process.

For several years the TRANS- program, i.e. TRANS- Master's program at HEAD-Geneva, has been developing a similar approach based on the observation that no pre-established content or prediction can allow for the complexity of socially engaged artistic action (one case in point was the action developed by Master's students from 2015 to 2018 in Les Libellules, a district on the outskirts of Geneva – see the corresponding case study on page 354). In 2015–16, the TRANS- program along with the TU theater (Théâtre de l'Usine de Genève)¹³ invited artists, cultural workers, theorists of artistic outreach work and educational practices (Janna Graham, Pablo Helguera, Carmen Mörsch, Nora Sternfeld and Wochenklausur) to a series of discussions about the importance of unpredictability in artistic and pedagogical processes, asking: What are the political and ethical issues involved in implementing this type of process? How can practices with indeterminate outcomes be compatible with the demands of cultural institutions? What part can unpredictability play in a society that is preoccupied with risk control?

Lastly, the MA program in Socially Engaged Art and Further Education at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin also focuses on uncertainty. Given the disordered and complex nature of socially engaged art practice, students in the program are expected to learn to be "comfortable" with "not knowing where things are going", or not even knowing whether something tangible will emerge from a process once it has got started.

The following essays about these five study programs exhibit a wide range of different approaches and positions, even while asking similar questions and exhibiting various parallels and convergences. In addition to these contributions, this publication includes two contemporary essays


(in the original English) crucial to understanding the underlying conditions and issues involved in teaching socially engaged art practice.

The first of these essays is Gregory Sholette's "Dewey, Beuys, Cage, and the Vulnerable yet Utterly Unremarkable Heresy of Socially Engaged Art Education (SEAE)". This article was published in the 2018 anthology *Art as Social Action: An Introduction to the Principles and Practices of Teaching Social Art*, edited by Sholette and Chloë Bass. The editors remind us that, while "the coming struggle" against "unprecedented levels of social injustice that have become a new normal" may be a burden on their students, it also holds "all of our hope for both another art world and a more egalitarian society."

The second essay comprises excerpts from "Education for Socially Engaged Art" by Pablo Helguera, who proposes using the term "transpedagogy" to describe practices combining art and pedagogy and considers the transformations necessary for art schools to respond to the specific challenges of socially engaged art education.

By pooling these positions, inquiries and experiences, the present publication offers a panoramic view of the teaching of socially engaged art practices, which are still just emerging in the French-speaking world. It is also intended to trigger a networking process that may give rise – as uncertainties are shared and exchanged – to new thoughts, ideas and actions.

¹³ A series of meetings under the heading "De l'imprévisibilité dans les pratiques artistiques socialement engagées et la médiation", organized by the TRANS- Master (HEAD – Genève) and TU – Théâtre de l'Usine, 2015–16.



Five study programs



**“...FINDING
WAYS
TO SUPPORT
THEMSELVES
AS SOCIALLY
ENGAGED
ARTISTS...”**

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO GRADUATE SCHOOL ART EDUCATION

**The Portland State University MFA in “Art
and Social Practice”**

Harrell Fletcher (coordinator of the Portland State
University MFA in “Art and Social Practice”)

I started the Portland State University (PSU) Art and Social Practice MFA Program in 2007 to offer an alternative to more traditional US studio/gallery MFA programs. The idea was to explore various precedents from within and outside of the art world to examine ways that people had created participatory, public projects that valued collaboration, site-specificity, and interdisciplinary activity, and to match that with experiential education opportunities. The program is three years long and relatively small, just five students in each year. The students don't get studio space, and instead have a shared group work room and are encouraged to create partnerships out in the world with non-profit organizations, schools, businesses, government agencies, etc. The program is a “flexible residency” meaning that the students don't have to be in Portland because we always have an online video conference going in all of the classes so that, if someone has a remote project, job, family, etc., they can participate in class from wherever they are located. Most students are in Portland, but some do the entire three years from somewhere else with just periodic visits to connect more directly with the program. The students come from a variety of different art related backgrounds and other fields as well including social work, conflict resolution, education, etc. Portland State is a large public university and the students have many opportunities to take classes and connect with people from other departments on campus. One unusual but essential part of the program is that the current students select the next year's incoming students. I see that activity and other systemic engagement opportunities as part of the educational experience being provided to the students.

Another major component of the program has always been working on group projects of various sorts. Over the years the students have produced

participatory exhibitions and public events at arts venues in Portland, San Francisco, NYC, Paris, etc. We also organize an annual co-authored conference that has taken place at a variety of locations in Portland including City Hall, the Main Public Library, a city park, a public school, and on a river. The students in the program have also been involved with two long term ongoing partnerships, one which involves creating a contemporary art museum inside of Martin Luther King Jr School (MLK Jr School), a public elementary school, and the other at Columbia River Correctional Institute (CRCI), which is a minimum security prison located on the outskirts of the city.

King School Museum of Contemporary Art (KSMoCA) has been in operation for four years and includes the production of exhibitions, lectures, workshops, and public art projects created in collaboration between established artists, PSU students, faculty, and students who attend MLK Jr School. It functions both as an actual museum and as a training center for students from 5-14 years old to learn about and perform arts related job activities.

At CRCI we are involved in a set of projects with various people incarcerated there. We have been volunteering at CRCI for about two years. One of the projects that we have set up is the concept of an "artist residency" for people on the inside. Many of the prisoners at CRCI are already working on their own art—drawing, painting, making music, writing, etc., so the residency is a way to reframe the years they are spending incarcerated to also think of it as a time to develop their art work. We have a weekly meeting to help formalize this process. The participating prisoners get to wear ID cards that state that they are artists-in-residents. We give them time to discuss and get feedback on their work and bring in visiting artists to do lectures and workshops. We also help them with professional development through workshops on creating CV's, artists statements, and learning how to write for grants and residencies on the outside.

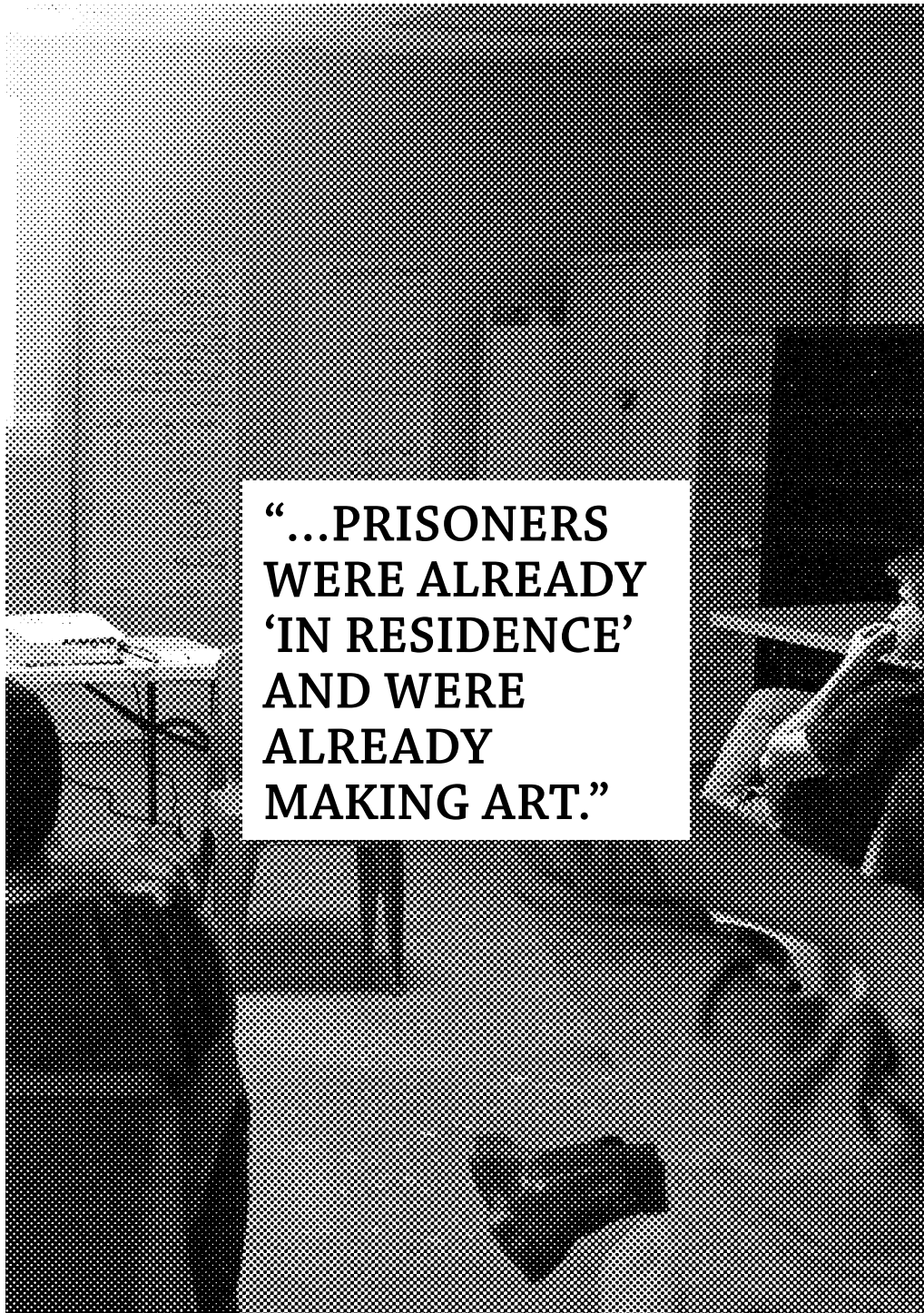
From the interest of one of the prisoners we have also created a "comedy school" inside CRCI. Each week we work with a self-selected group of about fifteen prisoners on their stand up routines, skits, and improve skills. We often bring in comedians to perform and do workshops and critiques. About every three months we organize a comedy show in the prison's mess hall so that the comedy school participants can show off the material that they have developed to a mixed audience of other folks on the inside as well as approved people from the outside.

Beyond these two ongoing projects at CRCI graduate students have created shorter term projects including a video production, the development of a board game based on prison life, and a photography based exchange program that connects prisoners on the inside with international photographers around the world.

The PSU Art and Social Practice MFA program has now existed long enough to begin to start to see what alumni from the program have gone on to do over time. Since the students are not encouraged to develop work for the commercial art system it is not surprising that there have been no great successes in that area. Instead students who have graduated from the program, in a high number, have gone on to develop unique practices that often combine teaching, commissions from both art and non-art organizations, artists in residencies with public schools, city agencies, and non-profit organizations, etc. lecturing, publishing, and web based work.

From my own anecdotal observations there seems to be more students from the social practice program finding ways to support themselves as socially engaged artists than there are artists sustaining careers coming out of studio/gallery MFA programs. I can partly explain this by pointing to the limited agency status quo artists are taught to believe they have, largely just making objects in isolated studios and hoping a gallery person will take notice of them and bring attention to their work by showing it. If this doesn't happen or if the work fails to be sold for inflated prices the artist has no other options and recedes into obscurity. On the other hand students coming out of the PSU Art and Social Practice MFA program are taught that they have the agency to develop and construct their own systems for creating and presenting their work, so there is no time spent making objects that may never be shown or sold, and no waiting for some dealer or curator to show up to determine if the work is valid enough to be taken from the studio to be presented in a gallery. Socially engaged artists can work with arts institutions if those possibilities present themselves but can also find opportunities working with non-arts organizations as we do in the PSU Art and Social Practice MFA program with MLK Jr School and CRCI, both of which have generated funding from a variety of different sources.

There have been many precedents for the work that we do in the PSU Art and Social Practice MFA program including Mierle Laderman Ukeles's work with the NYC Sanitation Dept, Rick Lowe's *Project Row Houses*, Group Material's *People's Choice* exhibition, John Malpede's Los Angeles *Poverty Dept theater company*, and Wendy Ewald's work with Appalachian children on their project *Portraits and Dreams*, but few other programs concentrate primarily on these kinds of participatory projects. It is our hope that by developing this specific course of study and practice within an academic structure (not unlike other alternative programs that have developed in the past like Women's Studies, Queer Studies, Black Studies, etc.) we can accelerate appreciation for the socially engaged work that has come before while also assisting with the development of new artists who are interested in more involved ways of within the public.



COLUMBIA RIVER CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM

Michael Brown, Spencer Byrne-Seres, Anke Schüttler, Roshani Thakore, Xi Jie Ng (Salty) (students in Portland State University MFA in Art and Social Practice), in dialogue with **J Barclay, Justin Fincannon, Ben Hall, Larry Loftin, Joey Lucero, Philip Odom, Guy Snook, Ben Turanksi** (artists-in-residence at the CRCI Artist Residency) and **Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr.** (guest artist)

The Administrative Perspective by Spencer Byrne-Seres

Starting in the fall of 2016, the Art and Social Practice Program initiated a series of projects at the Columbia River Correctional Institution (CRCI), a minimum security men's prison located within the city limits of Portland, Oregon. Our relationship with the prison began when Harrell Fletcher, along with students from the Social Practice Program, were invited to attend a class called *Arts In Prisons* in the fall of 2016. *Arts in Prisons* is a creatively focused class that has been led by actor, director and educator Johnny Stallings for the past ten years at various prisons around Oregon. After attending Johnny's class for about 6 months, we worked with the programs coordinator for CRCI, Elizabeth LaCarney, to create a class of our own that focused on social practice, conceptual art, and collaboration.

We were given three hours a week to program or organize as we saw fit, and decided to shape the project as an artist in residence program. We were impressed by all of the art and creative practices already happening at CRCI, and thought that the most effective way to support this would be through creating a new context for the work that they were making. Prisoners at CRCI were already "in residence," so to speak, and were already making art. Therefore, we structured the residency to look like a classic artist residency, and sought to offer programming and support that wasn't currently available at the prison: a website, art library, visiting artist lecture series, group critiques, resident-led workshops, a small gallery space and collaborative projects. In the past six months we have also started a comedy class at the prison, focusing on stand-up, improv, and sketch comedy. Visiting comedians help critique jokes, as well as offer different exercises

for participants to explore different forms of humor.

Outside of our actual class time at CRCI, much of the doing of the project revolves around administrative tasks, and I like to think of this work as a type of artistic medium. As artists, we can gain access and insert ourselves into institutions by speaking institutional languages, and using institutional structures. If we can talk in bureaucratic terms, or administrative terms, or corporate terms, we carve out space for art in places where you would not normally find it, and make it visible to new audiences. That has been one of the big efforts at CRCI: so much art is already happening in the prison, but the challenge for us was thinking up new ways to help make that work seen and understood. In a sense, we are advocates for the creation of spaces with the prison that are outside of the status quo for a Department of Corrections (particularly in the United States). Our agenda is not about reform, or rehabilitation, or social justice, but can touch on all of these things because each participant in the program brings their own motivations for attending. At the end of the day, at the heart of the program, is a room full of people that want to talk about art. Out of this spins community, collaboration, creative production, laughter, sadness, critique, reflection and many wide ranging conversations.

In the past, when the graduate program has been asked to contribute to books or publications, we have chosen to create a form in which multiple people can contribute. What we might call a sort of delegated model. The goal with this is to include as many perspectives as possible, and disrupt the sort of grand narratives such as the one I have constructed above. Each additional contribution adds a new layer to the work we have been doing at CRCI, be it a group conversation, a personal reflection, an essay, or series of photographs. Each author brings a different tone and texture to the project, and the sum of these does not create a whole so much as it offers snapshot of how the work we are doing might be understood at a given time and place.

A Conversation With Participants of the CRCI Artist in Residence Program

July 2nd, 2018 | Columbia River Correctional Institution, Portland, Oregon

Spencer Byrne-Seres: Today we will have a conversation both about what all of the artists in residence at CRCI are doing, what their projects are, what their interests are, and then also talk more generally about how they perceive and understand the artists in residence program and more about how it functions here at CRCI. Does that make sense to folks? Any questions so far?

Michael Brown: Is the rest of the world seeing this, and if so, how do you know?

Spencer Byrne-Seres: Yes, that's a good question. We don't know. We have this website (www.crci.art) that anyone in the world could potentially go to. That website is designed to look just like any other Artist in Residence Program website.

Philip Odom: What's the facilitators view on it then, of the artist in residence program? What do you guys want it to look like?

Ben Turanksi: Good question.

Anke Schüttler: What's interesting about the work that we're doing, is that we're bringing an idea to you all, but then it's also up to you all to transform it and use it the way you all want to use it. Right? Sort of like creating some type of empty container and you're invited to fill it with content. A lot of the work that we do in general is going along with both our own ideas and desires and the ideas and desires of the people that we're working with and how to combine those together.

Spencer Byrne-Seres: At the end of the day, I always come back to that notion with this project: is that beyond all the levels of prison and mass incarceration and politics, there's this room with a bunch of people in it that want to talk about art. I think that is really powerful. One of the things that is distinct about this program is that we don't have any other agenda than that. Then people can bring to it what they want as far as content and shape and structure. I'm interested in facilitating that space. To do so in a productive way has meant to create this container that's an Artist in Residence Program.

Philip Odom: What's cool is that you guys extend it out to the community. Like Anke said you guys are going to get a gallery for *Answers without Words* and different things. You guys get questions from different countries that we answer and we obviously can't do that by ourselves. So that's

really cool for you to bring that. The idea is kind of up to everybody. But you guys do spread that out to the outside and get exposure for everything.

Michael Brown: You also do this as a class at PSU.

Spencer Byrne-Seres: We don't actually receive credit for this. So anyone who wants to participate is welcome to participate from our program, as well as from the community. Sophie is here just because she wants to be. People come in and out at times as well. This isn't a class you register for or anything like that.

Ben Hall: What's most exclusive to me about this program, for us in here, is that it gives you a sense that you're doing something joined to a community that's not behind a wall. It's completely opposite of what the practice of the Department of Corrections is, the unofficial practice, which is that people know that their voice and their contribution are of lesser value. Whereas this particular program, unlike any other I've seen in the DOC, makes me feel as an equal with someone in the community who is working on a project.

J Barclay: My question is when Harrell first conceived of this idea of re-framing, was it instantly thought of for prison or was it a question of "where can we take an artist residency?"

Spencer Byrne-Seres: It was based off of spending almost six months attending Johnny Stalling's Arts in Prison class. We were so struck by all of the amazing work that was happening here.

J Barclay: So this idea came out of that?

Spencer Byrne-Seres: That was kind of the way that we approached it. I think Harrell's method is often to lead with a sort of structure that inverts something within the status quo of how things are understood. In this case, it was the idea that there's all these artists "in residence" at CRCI, through being incarcerated and in prison.

There's a lot of funny nuances there in how artists like to spend lots of money to go lock themselves away in these cabins to work on their art. And you could take that and basically flip it and say you're in this Artist in Residence Program. And talk about both the situation here being in prison and trying to re-contextualize that in a way for people to create a context around the work they're already doing here. Instead of just saying, "Yes, I draw," it's like, "I draw and I participate in this residency program."

Justin Fincannon: That fits in pretty well. When I got my time, what I had planned on doing with it was to fill up some sketch books and do some work. It really goes along with what I was planning on doing anyways, and it makes it more official, which is pretty cool.

Anke Schüttler: Yes, I think there's a lot about having this art mindset.

You just think about how something is set up and what it reminds you of and then you push it a little further and do something that makes it more official. It's really interesting how you can, just by putting the words on it, make it exist.

Spencer Byrne-Seres: We wanted to invite people to talk about their projects and their work, too. Does anyone want to share some of their work or art practices that they've been doing through this program or outside of this program in general?

Larry Loftin: Before I even started this class, I was an artist. I do mural work. I participated in the mural across the hall, which got me into really thinking about using the skills and talents that I have. I'm in a culture, or subculture, as a former gang member, so the culture that I'm into is Chicano art, lowrider art, prison art, whatnot.

I'm an Oregonian on top of it. I'm all about my city and my culture, and I see there's not much of that here. A lot of what I see is imported from California or from the East Coast. When I go to tee shirt shops, I see these shirts that are all from California and they have this cool ass artwork. It's always labeled "California." Then I go to these shops and I see something from Oregon and it's really cheesy. It's like a green shirt, with an outline of Oregon, with a heart.

I'm in a culture, too, and I see that. My little nephews, my cousins, my younger homeboys, they're into that California artwork. So I want to incorporate these talented artists here that can make the same type of clothing, and cool designs, and recognize Oregon as a whole. I have a home girl on the streets, she's like, "Well, look. Come up with five concepts and we'll get them online and we'll silk screen them and we'll sell them on Facebook." I just completed six concepts. I shared a couple of them in class. Those went out to the streets, so I'm hoping to get my shirts made and then hopefully sold online.

I'm really pro-Oregon and Portland. I spent these last 19 months coming up with all of my artwork and putting it together and getting it photographed and getting it set up so when I get out or before I get out, to have a business or a model so I can really promote Oregon and show that we're as cool as California and the East Coast. My goal is that when I get out, I can start silk screening, making tee shirts, hoodies. Take them to the weed shops and sell them there.

I have a concept, too, of having my artwork support organizations fundraising for causes, such as breast cancer awareness, autism, domestic violence. Each of those foundations have a color usually set, so I will take a tee shirt and I'll let that person pick a design and the color, and then if they pick a certain color, a certain proceed would go to that foundation as

a donation to help propel my business but I'm also helping a foundation.

It's hard from in here, but coming to these classes gives you a dynamic and networking. That's why I've taken this class. I try to take all the art classes I can.

J Barclay: Ben, you just seem like a natural next choice.

Ben Hall: I never really considered myself much of an artist. I was writing until I recently started doing some other things. Meeting the students from this class has actually expanded my whole vision of what art is and my understanding of what it can be. Since I've been in here, as far as actual artwork outside of writing, I've done a ton of collage cards. I just started learning Native American beading and South American style beading. Every day I'm getting better at it. But my project that I'm doing, my artist residency project is pretty much approved, I'm just waiting to get permission to grab a camera and do it.

I've got a ton of pictures already of just different people's art. There's a little bit of my own in there, but it's mostly art that a lot of people wouldn't consider even making something out of if they weren't in prison. Whether it's toilet paper, potato chip bags, wood, people do a lot of different art in here. I'm going to write a book, I'm going to write the foreword for it, and I'm going to ask questions to the people that do the art that I take pictures of and put their words in there. Just a few questions or paragraphs about them and why they do the art that they do.

My main thing is writing, so I think that works for me to mix the pictures with the writing. (I just want to promote a book if I can. It's called *Men Still in Exile*, and it's on Amazon right now. Anybody who buys it, their money goes to adult education in the penitentiary. There's some good poets in there.)

But yes, the class for me is super cool. It gets me out of the space of prison. Since I've been at CRCL, I'm working really hard to divorce myself from the identity that I've carried for 25 years, which is a prisoner or a convict. It's a long process. Being in a space where people are doing art and doing creative things definitely gets me out of this mindset that's hard to break after so long.

Anke Schüttler: I feel like Ben pointed out to something, and I would like to hear from other people if this residency program, that we proposed to you all, has changed anything in the way you perceive art or the way you do art or the projects that you're doing?

Michael Brown: Absolutely. When I first came in here, I wanted to draw with pencils. Then to add color into my gray and white drawings was like, "oh my gosh, I don't want to do that." Then adding the color made me open my eyes. Working with everybody else in here and seeing everybody

else's ideas and just knowing that really if you think about it, anything can be looked at as art.

It really opens my eyes to see that a lot more. No matter what I'm doing, I think to myself: that'd be a really cool picture to hang on the wall or just to take and to make a collaborative piece or a collage of all these different things that I see because it doesn't matter what it is. I was outside this morning, and there were deer in the back here, and there's a little baby buck. I was just sitting there thinking wow, that'd be a really cool picture because it was right on the other side of the fence. It really opened my eyes to seeing all the different kinds of art out there.

When that one artist came in, that did the slideshow, she was kind of all over the place. But it was awesome. It's intriguing to me to hear people's ideas and to explore why they think things and to hear their ideas. It's like, "I never thought that would be art, but the way that you put it and the way you make it now opens my eyes to see things like that as art." If I'm walking by the trash can and I see the way that the spoons or the garbage are rearranged, it's like "oh wow, if I looked at it this angle, it would be kind of a cool picture."

Guy Snook: Yes, I think what's cool is that I thought art was just drawing in general. Some people think, "Well, this is kind of weird." Well, this is kind of cool. This is art work. Just in general, music, too. I've noticed if I play different types of music, different people get different types of ways they act. If we're in that little small area right there and I play death metal, people start acting different.

Justin Fincannon: The class hasn't made me personally look at art any differently. But what it has done is maybe given me more of a sense of community within prison, which is something I never thought I would experience because I'm not into gangs or the whole prison thing. Yes, I'm in prison and I'm technically a prisoner, but I hate it. I don't identify with it and I don't like talking about it or what I did to get in here. I'm trying to better myself now and not stay stuck in it.

It's cool because it's like being in an artist collective in prison. I never thought I would get to experience something like that. Which is weird to say in prison.

Roshani Thakore: When I think about artist residencies, there's a studio practice where you have your own individual practice that you're bringing with you, and that's yours. But our program is about collaboration. Justin, you've collaborated with other artists in your street art. But having artists and writers and musicians in one place together is different. Have you thought about collaborating in different projects that we've brought up together here in different ways? How's that been for you when you're

thinking about art and creativity?

Larry Loftin: Coming to some classes and doing other classes in here, I definitely think about things differently. Photography, I'm like wow. I wish I had a camera because I have some great ideas. I guess part of collaboration is crossing different genres, or different types of art and asking somebody's specialties. Like Ben saying, "Hey, will you write a story or something for my piece of art here, or just come up with a word to add to my stuff?" I think that strengthens a person's artistry, doing collaboration.

J Barclay: I thought that was really bold the other day when we did the block print in class and you brought one of your pieces of artwork and printed right onto that.

Larry Loftin: A lot of people were like, "No, don't do that." I was just like, "I'm feeling it."

Ben Turanski: Hey, and the way the ink just set on it perfectly. It was nice.

Larry Loftin: I don't think I would have done that coming in this class, you know what I'm saying?

Ben Hall: I think it builds community, too, in a unique kind of way. It really recognizes a person's uniqueness when they come up with something in their creativity as a human being. But it also connects universally to things that you don't think about. Connections that you might have with someone that you never would have made before. And I've certainly experienced that in here.

Spencer Byrne-Seres: I think it's really cool that you have those connections, too, because a big part of the idea of artist residencies is to connect artists to other artists. It's very rare that it happens surprisingly. Artists are often in their own world, but it seems like a lot of that's happening here. People are working together, collaborating on things or making connections.

Philip Odom: I have also done the same thing with a couple of different people. Me and Ben have worked on small projects. Just different types of artwork or something.

Ben Turanski: Everyone around there, I know that we all just kind of help each other if we have projects that need to be done. This class is cool, I like it. I don't verbally participate a lot because I don't like talking in front of people.

Joey Lucero: I just wanted to thank you guys for coming here and making me feel welcome and accepting me and my idea of what art is, because I'm a musician. It has definitely inspired me to do a bunch of stuff that I would never normally do. You've been a big inspiration for me, I must say. It's given me a whole new outlet and a different part of my artistic ability that I didn't really know that I was going to go that direction.

Spencer Byrne-Seres: I had a couple of things. I wanted to loop it

back to the original premise of the conversation. We're here trying to invent this class as we go, so we're learning how to interface with the prison and administrators, and how to run this project that some people haven't necessarily done before and also how to create a space together that's collaborative and inviting and is actually useful and interesting for people to be in. That's one of the challenges that we're figuring out through this. I'm wondering if people who have been here for any length of time want to reflect on how the experience has been of coming into this space and getting clued into what it's about.

Joey Lucero: I haven't been able to put my finger on exactly what we're doing.

Spencer Byrne-Seres: With that, too, what are some of the things that aren't working or don't make sense about this class? Similarly, I'm curious how do you explain or how do you try to explain this class to a family member or another person? Obviously people are inviting other people into this class. I'm wondering how you might pitch it or talk about it to other people.

Joey Lucero: You start out with it's a really cool class. I told my sister about it and she burst out into tears. She was so happy. She was like, "I'm so proud of you." I don't know. I tried to explain it to her. I explained to them about this class and stuff, and believe it or not, this takes up a lot of my time. When you guys are gone, I'm constantly thinking of what I can bring here. I'm basically working on it whether it looks like it or not. It takes a long time for me to think of these things and to map these things out.

Ben Turanski: Dude, you wrote a song in 20 minutes the other day.

Joey Lucero: I did. But still... To critique it. I'm just having fun because I don't have anything else to do. This gives me a reason to do something that's creative. That's basically what it is. It gives me a place that I can say oh, I need to come up with this because I have the Artist Residency. I want to come up with this piece for this. It's sort of like when you have a deadline, okay Monday is my deadline every week, it seems like you come up with something. You know you have a deadline, you know you have to come up with whatever. You have to come up with something.

Guy Snook: I think if you're going to tell someone about this program or this class, or something like that, it'd be cool if you had a poster, like a mini poster, of different projects of other people. Like he does one project that he can take a scan, put it on his paper. He has one, he has one. Different styles of art that might grasp other people. Because everyone has a different style.

If you were trying to explain this class... The way I heard about this class was, "Hey, come down. It's a really cool class." But we're in prison.

Anything cool we're going to go to. Two things you can get people to come: food and cool. But you can't really explain to somebody what the art class is, because it's a one-sided thing when there are also different points of view. Does that make sense?

Philip Odom: We've all got our different art styles, but you guys put a structure to it, such as *Answers Without Words*. We all have our different ways of doing it. Some people act out a certain scene and do it that way, but you guys put the parameters on different situations. It all turns out way different. There's something that you guys bring, some structure that we all have something to look forward to doing even if we haven't done anything. When y'all come in, y'all have some sort of idea of what we're working towards that day. It's awesome because you guys do bring it outside of here, too, so it gives us something to look forward to.

They're still talented persons, but where does that talent go when they get out? There's no outlet for it. I think that's really cool that you guys have got an outlet for that through the things you are setting up. You guys are still meeting with people when they get out. That's what's really cool, it's not just being wasted or something when people get out. Or they have to do something on their own. Well, they don't know what to do with it. They don't really tell them. They don't know where to go with it. That's really awesome that that happens.

Xi Jie Ng: Not to put you on the spot, J, but you've been here since the very early days and you were the librarian when we had that book drive. How has your experience been?

J Barclay: Great question. My take on this class has been it's very illuminating as to what exactly art is and the different ways that we can practice it. Whether we're discussing tomato soup cans or toilets as the merits of being art or not. We've had some really feisty discussions a time or two. Sometimes new people come in and we hash them out all over again. Even then, it's a lot of fun.

It's also fun when we have a slideshow presentation and then later on we do that same thing, like when we did conceptualizing one minute sculptures. Especially when we do them collaboratively, one person comes up with the idea and maybe one person draws it and some other people actually act it out. We look at art through a certain lens, and this is what we see. For me, it's photography, drawing. I would even stretch it to writing and music.

But there's all these other things. It's not just sculpture. There's also performance. I've really expanded what I consider art. One day you guys asked us to come up with some questions for people outside. My question to them was are you aware there's people in prison that go years without

getting a visitor? The person that responded to it told me a story about how he visited someone in prison once. It's on a sheet of paper now that lives as a work of art to me in this question/answer response where basically we're just looking at the framework in which we perceive things and which things are acknowledged by us.

This class is a lot of fun engaging in the different projects that even beyond the presentations, what the master of fine art students have come in and had on their minds for a collaborative project for us to do. Whether it's a story that we all act out and collaboratively write and then maybe turn into a film. Or the *Answers Without Words* project where we get to reach out to people all across the world and then in return, we have to go through the process within the constraints of what we've got here, and coming up with a way to return the favor. It's really just a continually mind-expanding experience of ways that we can practice engaging with the world.

If there's one thing that I would ask for more of in this class is the return to some of the older stuff where you would give us presentations. I remember one of my favorite artists, Anke and I we have this in common, is Miranda July, who did some different things that we got a slideshow of. It's just like that's not what I think of when I think of art, and yet that's really cool.

Anke Schüttler: Yes, that's good feedback. Thank you. I really want to give you some credit, J. I remember that you were one of the first people I think in this class where when we were asking y'all to come up with ideas for a project, that you would come up with a project where we'd think, this really sounds like an art and social practice project. He really got it here.

Reflection by Artist Michael Bernard Stevenson Jr.

My first time visiting CRCI was for a talent show the Social Practice program helped put on. When I first heard about the work the program was doing in the prison I couldn't tell if it was something I wanted to be a part of. My trepidation being that I felt as if working in a prison was to appeal to a spectrum of societal ills at a point in their happening that was too late to have the impact I was looking for in my practice. My thinking was poised towards working with youth, including program affiliated project, KSMoCA.

Youth work presents an opportunity to inspire ideas and motivations that could produce a range of social benefits. Preempting ideas and motivations that might land someone in prison in the first place. While contemplating this, third year cohort member, Emma Colburn alerted me to the fact that there's an invisible pipeline between King Elementary School and CRCI. While digesting this information the room quieted for the start of the show.

During the show I was moved. Readings, jokes, and songs were performed by prisoners who have been participating in various education programs offered by independent organizations. Wholesome moments of genuine intention, appreciation, and talent peppered with confusion and disorganization. The menagerie provided a glimpse at the humanity present in the host and each of the performers. Evidence that the dehumanizing nature of the American judicial and punitive systems can be resisted and endured with some determination and a hearty spirit.

As part of the talent show participants are encouraged to invite friends and family to come see the performance. There was a large gentleman who was sitting beside a woman of slightly more petite stature. She had her arm over the back of her chair, hand flat on the man's back. The touch, intimate but not sexual, appeared to be mindful of prison regulations involving contact with a loved one. The chairs they sat in had the words "chapel" and "religious services" written on the back in black sharpie. As the woman's hand moved over the man's back I noticed the Oregon Department of Corrections seal peeking out from between her fingers. Below the seal in large capital letters was the word "INMATE."

Beyond the couple was the stage, large bubble letters spelling Columbia River Correctional Institution above it. The prison fence could be seen through a window behind the stage. I thought the moment would make an amazingly rich and telling photograph, when I realized I didn't have my phone in my pocket, since no recording or communication devices are allowed inside the prison. I asked my friend Shawn Creeden if I could borrow a pen and began to draw the scene on a napkin. Having captured the image and all the corresponding details to remember the experience and its meaning I found myself experiencing my first deeply impactful take away from my time working in CRCI. That everything enlivening the show is inexplicably linked to the horrible truth that these men are being held against their will by the American prison-industrial complex.

After spending some time reflecting on what working in a prison might mean for my practice our program began developing the comedy class. As a socially engaged artist with a short tenure as a comedian, I realized this may be the perfect context for me to get involved with the programs we had going at CRCI. For the past seven months I've been co-teaching the class with Roshani Thakore and program affiliates et al. without having gone through the DOC Volunteer Training. Recently I embarked on getting a volunteer badge for myself. The process consists of a brief online training leaning mostly on basic common sense and a live training consisting of a video feed of a training taking place at another location. Prior to this training there's been no assessment of my skills or abilities as an artist or

a comedian, which gives me the feeling that the only qualifier for teaching in a prison is being affiliated with a reputable institution and not having a criminal record.

Those in the class are gleaned a fair amount from the flexible curriculum we've arranged. The class consists of opportunities to try out stand up material in front of a room of their peers. The format is modeled after open mic culture on "the outside," which is usually a night of comedy with other comedians as the primary audience. We've also been able to invite in half a dozen comedians to do sets of their own, including Fred Armisen of *Saturday Night Live* and *Portlandia*. After the prisoners do their sets we have rounds of class discussion, sometimes with guest comedians, to reflect on their performance. In the current format, I offer reflections related to my time doing sets at open mics, conceptual reflections on how their content is being received, and how it might be improved to make impactful comments on society.

After our first comedy show for prisoners from the general population, guards, and visitors from the outside we began the following class in a circle interested in hearing their perspective on having put on their first show. They mentioned a general feeling of nervousness beforehand which may've been expected but not seen by the audience. Anthony commented about a feeling of remorse that he hadn't prepared anything for the show, and has since been participating more in class. Soon into the reflection, the conversation transitioned away from comedy entirely shifting directly into the collective feeling of boosted self-esteem.

Daniel from the class commented that he was feeling valued as a whole person by the guards for the first time since having been in and out of prison all his life. Adam commented that between the comedy class and the Artist in Residence class he really felt he was doing something with his life. Adam has since been released and joined our *CRCI Outside group*. He said that what he valued most from the group was a sense of community. Outside he had no friends or family that could help support his transition out of prison. He is counting on his affiliation with the Social Practice program to be a community that he can rely on for support.

Blue wasn't part of the post show debrief because he was released the next day. However, I've seen Blue often since he's gotten out of prison. He's come to support the cohort, attending multiple days of Assembly (an annual event we put on) where he was waiting with a nearly new pair of bell bottom pants for me. I also attended Blue's birthday party where he gave me even more articles of clothing. Blue had commented in the prison that he had some clothes for me when he got out because I had holes in mine. I thought he was joking.

The personal connections are the most meaningful aspects of my work with the men inside and outside of CRCI. I believe the relationships that have been developed between the prisoners and myself have nothing to do with my skills or abilities as an artist or comedian. Instead, I think our relationships are predicated on the fact that we have chosen to invest in their success, happiness, and futures despite the stigma their positionality carries in society.

I can't claim the confidence and respect the class is feeling is directly affiliated with anything we've taught them. However, I would often find myself sewing holes in my pants in class before rushing off to CRCI from the PSU campus, just to be in compliance with the rules for getting into the prison. Now I'm writing about the prison while wearing clothes belonging to a former prisoner of twelve years. This dynamic is a clear indicator that I've developed genuine relationships while teaching at CRCI. The participants have become invested in the class because we're invested in them as individuals who are more than just a rap sheet.

I believe these are ideal conditions for creating a comprehensive learning environment for teaching comedy, or otherwise. Teaching at CRCI has taught me that building generative relationships has the potential to ripple beyond the individuals that have them. They can take root, and reach distantly through and beyond the communities in which they occur. This is exactly the dynamic I'm looking for in my creative practice, and I'm happy to have found it through collaborating with the talented men in prison at the Columbia River Correctional Institution.

"Answers Without Words" by Anke Schüttler

I've been going into Columbia River Correctional Institution for almost two years now and reflecting back on all this time, so much has come out of this collaboration. It feels like it has been the deepest learning experience for me so far, going through the PSU Art and Social Practice program. And it feels like it has been a mutual learning experience with other people, in this case fellow students from the program and students from the incarcerated community.

Many projects have come out of this collaboration, some of which have felt extremely effective.

Coming from a background in photography, I have focused on a collaborative photography project called *Answers Without Words*, creating a visual dialogue between the incarcerated artists and photographers from all over the world.

Something that I enjoy about Art and Social Practice projects is that

they can really emerge and develop out of a place of deep listening. Being present in a community and taking inspiration from what comes up, jumping onto the little hints of interest that emerge and fully go with them.

Answers Without Words feels like that type of project to me. It was born out of the deep desire for contact with the outside world and the interest in the fact that I come from a different country (Germany) that I noticed within the men I encountered at Columbia River Correctional Institution. Many adjustments, experimentations and changes have happened along the course of the project through conversations with the participants. *Answers Without Words* is my first long term project embedded in a community and after two years of going to the prison almost every Monday, I can really see how fruitful this type of investment is.

The project started off by one prisoner asking me about France and an agreement with him to write the questions on a piece of paper. Holding the piece of paper in my hands the next week, it felt extremely precious and sparked my photographic mind. What if those questions were answered with images instead of words? One year later about twenty prisoners have written questionnaires to countries they are interested in and about as many photographers from those specific countries have answered the prisoner's questions with photographs. Receiving the photographs has always come with a lot of joy and excitement and led to good discussions about visual representation, personal interpretation and specificities to a country.

Reflecting on how the prisoners could become more involved in the project from their side and how the project could become more interesting for everyone in general, we decided that the photographers should also send questions back to the prison thinking of it as a foreign country. I have since given a series of lectures in the prison, focusing on photo technique basics, photographers who use very little to no materials for their photographic work and what is possible through using paper as material for props. It has been a long process to figure out how a class of 15 prisoners can work together efficiently with only two cameras, some pens, paper and scissors at hand and cramped together in a prison classroom, answering challenging, philosophical or very specific but often visually out of reach seeming questions.

It has been a marvel to see people become more and more invested and inventive, collaborating on thinking about their potential answers, drawing or fabricating props for each other, acting for each other, taking the camera and learning how to engage with it and sometimes even asking for the prison camera and going to other places within the prison in order to fully realize their ideas on their own time or thinking about the project

during the week while we are gone and being fully ready and prepared in the beginning of our class session. The project really has become meaningful to me when I have noticed the community that it was designed for takes ownership over it. Some of the prisoners talk about the project as something that opened their mind to a different way of seeing and making art.

Esthetically speaking the photographs are obviously reflecting the prison environment, a visually very specific setting that speaks for itself. The messages coming across are revealing of the prison experience, some of them carrying a lot of emotion, or bringing across powerful statements. "What would be a good alternative for prison?" had within seconds everyone agree on creating a picture of a therapy session. While doing this work I learned a lot about prison circumstances in heavy and sometimes also humoristic ways. One of the guys answered the question "What do you see when you wake up in the morning?" by picturing his bunk mate's feet hanging over him. It is an important element to the project for me that the guys represent themselves in contrast to the more traditional photographic approach of an outsider coming in and representing others.

Working on a project that is intended to become public poses a lot of politically related questions too. While the starting point for this project was meeting people who happen to be imprisoned, connecting to individuals in a specific context still is putting a message out into the world that represents some of my values I hope to be accountable for in any part of my life. I believe in honesty, respect and care as the foundation of all human interactions. I also believe that people are made out of multiple facets that define them and having a criminal background may only be a very small part of those. The system of punishment that is propelled by the prison system seems outdated to me and I hope there will be new solutions to diminishing crime by helping people in their struggles in the near future. In the meantime I believe in working with people currently suffering from societies malfunctions as a way of showing up the way I can, in this case offering art as an idea to use the time at hand in a meaningful way.

"Making Meaning Doing Time" by Xi Jie Ng (Salty)

The first few months of visiting CRCI usually left me reeling. The space shared for a few hours always felt full of things unspoken and unknown. Never before had I been in a group experience that depended so heavily on everyone in the space contributing in a positive way and being present during a precious few hours weekly. We were advised not to be friends with the inmates, and at the Oregon Department of Corrections volunteer

training, we were warned about emotional manipulation and stalking. For a time I repeatedly pondered what it means to be friends with someone. I thought, if we are meeting so regularly and getting to know each other, we must be friends. Ultimately more useful questions turned out to be what kinds of relationships are coming out of this collaboration and what boundaries are healthy and nurturing in this context – as with any project or situation. After some months passed, I was better able to navigate this relational space and am still learning. I still wonder what it means to check people's crimes online. Am I being complicit with the criminal justice system that incriminates these people for the rest of their lives? Is checking a form of betrayal towards someone I am getting to know? Is it alienating and debasing of a blossoming working relationship? Am I just informing myself? What good does checking do, when my personal belief is that a lot of crime is a result of mental imbalance shaped by circumstances, and so resolve not to let knowledge of alleged crimes affect my relationship with a person (is this even possible) beyond measures taken for personal safety? I still cannot answer any of these questions.

A whole range of stances to this highly personal, charged discussion emerge when our program talks about it. For me not knowing is not acknowledging the context through which we have all come to share space. I want to be open that I chose to find out, and then maybe we can have a discussion about what it means that the information is made available online, and talk about fear and judgment in relation to crimes, and look each other in the eye as we talk about this. The CRCI Artist in Residence Program is about developing creative experiences for and with inmates and ex-inmates regardless of alleged crimes within a dehumanizing criminal justice system. With that, can I say I am simply witnessing what each of these people have been accused of, that which brought them to CRCI in their lifetime? Within our group you will find no two people with the exact same position within a possibly polarizing, necessarily complex and emotionally charged ethical landscape. Differently gendered and cultured people also necessarily navigate the space differently. Now, I think it is not about having an answer, or even that a morally correct answer exists, but embracing the context's infinite complexity and holding space for everyone to have meaningful experiences together. In a way, putting meaning at the forefront. Because prison is about time. And we, literally, have limited time every week to be together. But we also all exist for a short moment, and so our being together like this must be a special thing. So far as I can gather, it has been for those involved. It is for me, coming all the way from a highly regulated city-island-country that has the death penalty for drugs, whose unfortunate claim to fame is that chewing gum is illegal.

My role in the residency so far has largely been that of an observer, sporadic organizer and occasional supporter. I enjoy coming weekly and being part of projects my classmates have organized. I enjoy conversations with the inmates who choose to come and get to know each of them better with time. I am sad when someone gets into a fight and has to be in “the hole” or gets transferred out. I am excited and worried for someone when they are getting out soon. I organized a screening of *Singapore Minstrel*, a feature film about buskers in Singapore that I made. It took place in the cafeteria. The film’s subject, Roy Payamal, was in Portland and together we did a Q&A after the screening. It was the first time the residency program used our newly acquired projector, screen and sound system, bought as a result of donations to our program. I tried to start a film review club from that but it did not happen – I am still considering a larger film-based project to propose. I also conducted a workshop for designing a new Portland city seal, after presenting research I had conducted on its history. This was part of my project in City Hall to propose a new city seal to the government. One of the most special moments for me has been the talent shows – a much cherished, anticipated and remembered event where people enjoy, entertain and celebrate themselves. When Elizabeth LaCarney, the activist program manager without whom all this would not have been possible, allowed pizza in for the fall 2017 talent show, I helped get contributions from a few Portland pizza stalwarts. Recently, while excitedly observing a group of men in our class set up a pseudo hospice room with fake IV drip for a photoshoot (and the inventiveness that comes out of prison is endlessly inspiring) I chatted with one of the inmates about a poop club that I’d formed. We serendipitously connected over it - when he gets out soon he has plans to invent and sell a pedal that lifts toilet seats. We might collaborate.

It is nice to meet every week. The regularity afforded from our sessions comes with a sense of familiar, convivial cheer in Classroom 4. No two sessions are alike. No two similar sets of people attend any session. People join and fizzle out, people get released or come back in, a few have stayed from day one. I am curious about what each of the people who are or have been part of the CRCI Artist in Residence Program feel about it. Are they enjoying the residency? What would they change? What are the dynamics at play? What are differing levels of power in the space? What are differing levels of intimacy in the space? Yes – intimacy exists everywhere, even in a clean, sterile prison classroom where overhead lights shine bright, with a security camera and big windows. Intimacy exists anywhere humans are together.

Recently, I facilitated a session that involved visualizing nature and call-

ing on the senses within Classroom 4. It was, in a way, an experiment in internal intimacy. We talked about the relationship between nature and the prison. Some expressed appreciation for the little nature they might get, from observing an animal while out in the yard or being on outside duty like cleaning a park. Someone said he disliked having contact with nature while in prison and would rather be chained in a dungeon, because it was painful. I think he implied that it was almost a form of mockery that nature was out of reach. It surprised and humbled me because I had never considered that viewpoint. It makes me wonder what people think causes crime, and about more human, affirming, joy-bringing ways to help a person get to a space where they do not want to harm others. I am not sure what evil or punishment or “turned over a new leaf” really mean, but I do know that we have a special time together every Monday afternoon. Time that seems to bring meaning for those together. Maybe that is enough.



TEST MODEL AND MASTER'S PROGRAM –

An Extended History of Art in Context
at the Institute for Art in Context at the
University of the Arts, Berlin

Claudia Hummel (teacher at the Institute for Art in Context)

Background

The history of the master's program we tell today began in 1970. In his book, *The End of Courtesy: Towards a Revision of Behavioural Education*, the Art Educator and Historian of Culture and Photography, Diethart Kerbs, predicted "the disappearance of the traditional figure of the artist." He demanded "that the artist not perceive himself primarily as a producer of masterfully painted images that hang in museums, but rather as a spoilsport, a trickster, as a producer of ideas and director of social interactions, as an aesthetic engineer and futurologist and, last but not least, as a political individual of the public sphere."¹

A short time later, artists were actively questioning their role in society and, above all, the working conditions associated with it. In 1971, the first "Federal Congress of Visual Artists" was held in the Paul's Church (Paulskirche) in Frankfurt. In his opening speech at the Congress, artist Gernot Bubenik criticized the "freedom" paradigm: "The professional group of freelance artists, trained in the free departments of art schools, allegedly free of supervisors, markets and social ties, has, above all, the freedom to sell their freedom – in the worst case, as an employee of the Federal Post. Because many artists can no longer live and create within this so-called freedom, we hold this congress." Later in his speech, he formulates: "The vast majority of people in our society are, due to systems of bourgeois educational privilege, largely denied the use and enjoyment of art. In the abolition of this privilege, lie the great future perspectives of the artistic professions."² Bubenik's proposal, to use art as a liberating activity for all,

¹ Kerbs, D. (Ed.) (1971). *Das Ende der Höflichkeit. Für eine Revision der Anstandserziehung*. Munich. Cited in: Mörsch, C. (2005). *Eine kurze Geschichte von KünstlerInnen in Schulen*. (A Short History of Artists in Schools.). In: Lüth Nanna et Mörsch, C. (Hg.) (2005). *Kinder machen Kunst mit Medien München*. Ein/e Arbeits-BDuVchD, München : kopaed.

² Cited in H.K. Bast (1981), p. 8.

began to be implemented in 1972 when the Federal Association of Visual Artists (Bundesverband Bildender Künstler, or BBK) established a working group, "which, with the support of the Federal Ministry of Education and Science, carried out a series of five conferences on the topic of Art and Adult Education."³

Artists had come to assume positions, not only in mediatory activities in adult art education such as course guidance, but also in the development of critical frameworks and curricula for adult education in general, for example, in trade unions or community colleges. Questions of cultural policy, the aesthetics of everyday life, or of media literacy and criticism, etc. formed a thematic framework for these activities. The work groups formed during the conferences produced a written document, which, amongst other things, demanded a program of further education for artists within adult education.

Test Model for Artists' Further Education

In December 1976, the time had finally come: a Test Model for Artists' Further Education, carried out by the Federal Association of Visual Artists [BBK e.V.] and the College of Arts in Berlin [Hochschule der Künste or HdK] was to emerge. The project was financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Science [Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft or BMBW]. A curriculum was developed, rooms were sought out, and a scholarship program for future students from West Berlin and West Germany was negotiated with the employment office. The first group of artists began studying in 1978. The course for further study lasted one year and was free of charge. Artists from the West German federal states even received living quarters in the same building where the courses and seminars took place. An artistic boarding school was created, even if this term was certainly rather strange for those dorm residents on the 3rd and 4th floors of the building.

The Test Model for Artists' Further Education was located in the Berlin district of Kreuzberg in the Köthener Street, in an old building, which stood as one of the last remaining houses near Potsdamer Platz. The building was almost empty then and just beyond it stood the Berlin Wall and the "Tempodrom" - a kind of alternative revue circus.

Today, the former Test Model for Artists' Further Education is called the Postgraduate master's Program Art in Context. The Institute for Art in Context, within which it takes place, is one of three Fine Arts Institutes of the University of the Arts, Berlin. The Institute for Art in Context itself exists

since 1998. Between 1982, the year in which the Test Model passed its test phase and was firmly established as an academic program at the HdK, and 2001, the year in which the modularization of the study content made this a master's program, the program bore the name: "Cultural Education Institute for Further Education" [Kulturpädagogische Arbeitsstelle für Weiterbildung]. As such, it moved from Köthener Street 44 to Bülow Street 66, and continued on to its present location on Einsteinufer 43-53.

Revisiting the historical materials from the early days of the Test Model, two things became clear: firstly, it was only through years of persistence in the face of often tough funding applications and advocacy work to state agencies that the project was able to take form and endured, and secondly, that the program emerged from a particular leftist history of ideas in West Berlin, which spanned from the student revolts at Berlin's Free University in 1967 to the Tunix-Congress in 1978, which was an assembly of nearly 15 000 people at Berlin's Technical University, who gathered in work groups, theater workshops and lectures - mostly around questions that emerged from 1968 - regarding alternative spaces for action in society.

The adults with whom the Test Model sought to work were above all working class people. Cooperation with trade unions was, for example, regarded very highly at the time. In response to this desire, the term "cultural work" was formed, as a description of an artistic activity with educational intentions, in collaboration with members of the working class. The interpretation of the concept of culture in the term "cultural work" [Kulturarbeit] was oriented towards a broader concept of culture, which had been developed at the Center for Cultural Studies in Birmingham and articulated for the first time in the German language in the 1976 in issue # 24, "Leisure in the Workers' Quarter", of the magazine *Aesthetics and Communication*, which had been founded in the course of the student revolts of 1969 in Frankfurt.

The first curriculum for the Test Model also included work with children and adolescents, with a focus on young people from trade unions - such as apprentices, or pupils at the secondary and trade middle schools [Haupt- and Realschule]. With time, a third course of public cultural work developed, namely in public space, and usually in connection with the so-called cultural festivals that were often organized in West German cities in the 1970s. In contrast to today, cultural festivals were not exclusively consumer-oriented; they also involved the public in artistic and craft-based actions in public space.

Cultural work was related not only to the field of work but also to the so-called leisure society. Through trade union struggles, a 40-hour work-

³ Mörsch, C. (2005). *op. cit.*

week was achieved in almost all areas of industry. Only in the agricultural field did workers have to wait until 1983. Compared to the time directly following the Second World War and the so-called “Economic Miracle” in West Germany, people had more free time, which they could use for leisure or for further education.

At that time, Germany already had the tripartite school system, divided into secondary school [Hauptschule], trade middle school [Realschule] and high school [Gymnasium]. Segregation in society was high. Those who went to secondary school did not have any particular opportunities for social advancement. Community colleges and evening schools therefore developed numerous offers for further education. At that time, the right to “lifelong learning” was a societal demand in order to enable people to break out of the narrow life path prescribed by industrial work. This idea contrasts greatly with today’s perception of “lifelong learning” as a tool of the education economy for the continuous optimization of allegedly deficient subjects.

The curriculum for students from 1978 initially included three required core courses, which were:

- I Cultural Education with Adults
- II Cultural Education with Young People
- III Art and Society

These were supplemented by the following elective courses:

- 1. Cultural Education in Further Education
- 2. Cultural Policy and the State
- 3. Foreign Cultural Policy and Democracy
- 4. Municipal Development and Visual Arts
- 5. Administration and Cultural Institutions
- 6. Legal Foundations of Artistic Fields of Work
- 7. Visual Arts and the Development of the Labor Movement
- 8. History of Adult Education and Art
- 9. Art and Cultural Work in the Workplace
- 10. Cultural Work and Leisure
- 11. History of Artists’ Organizations
- 12. Creativity and Society
- 13. Design and Critique of Commercial Aesthetics
- 14. Art and the Environment
- 15. Structure of the Mass Media
- 16. Cultural Work at Secondary and Comprehensive Schools
- 17. Cultural Work in Adult Education, Empirical Social Research

- 18. Museum Education
- 19. Cultural Work with Foreign Workers
- 20. Working Techniques

We would now like to go into more detail in the areas of «Art and Cultural Work in the Workplace» and «Cultural Work and Leisure», on the basis of projects that were developed between 1979 and 1981 by students and teachers of the Test Model. The first project involves cooperation with the Works Council of the AEG Group, a then very large company in the production of electrical appliances. The second project, entitled *Mitmachstadt* or *Hands-on City*, describes a form of public cultural work in the leisure sector. In 2015, we re-performed this project with students in the context of the large-scale, site-specific project *KONTEXT LABOR BERNAU* [CONTEXT LAB BERNAU] in order to investigate local history (see case study on page 302).

Intervention in the AEG Works Council Meeting

In a text about cultural work within trade unions in the documentary volume about the Test Model, H.K. Bast describes a discussion in the elective course Art in the Workplace: “[The] art collection in the boss’s office, art in the bank, art between bodies (after the title of a report about art in automobile shows) – these things seemed familiar. Art is being used in service of representing a company.” This perspective, however, did not interest the participants in the course so much. They were more interested in trade union work and also in the concrete place of work, the company itself. And so H.K. Bast wrote on: “The prevailing working conditions, relationships of dependency, workloads and their effects on the private and emotional lives of workers and employees, it was these things we wanted to get to know more about.” A desire emerged “to work as an artist in a business, or to supervise lay artists, workers and employees who were making amateur art work in their free time.” AEG, a global corporation that manufactures electrical appliances, came to the fore because it became known that there were a few workers and employees at the Berlin locations, who were also artistically active. And so, the local works council was contacted.

A concrete occasion for cooperation came about in the company’s quarterly meeting, which was carried out by the works council. For this event, a large hall was rented in the International Congress Center in Berlin.

In this hall, there were two big projection screens (4x4m). This gave the then works council chairman the idea of using them. But what should

be projected onto the screens? "He and his colleagues had the idea to cite some well-meaning or pointed statements of the executive committee and to thereby preempt the reality of the workers and employees from their own point of view."

Within a theory-practice seminar in the Test Model, students carried out an intensive study and analysis of newspapers, including the media statements from AEG as well as reports about AEG. At the open house, photos were taken of the workplaces. A series of slides according to the proposal of the works council chairman had been prepared. On the left side of the slide projection were statements by the executive committee, on the right, the culmination of these statements in relation to the perspective of the workers.

On the left, for example, stood: "... performance with less effort," while on the right stood, "performance with fewer workers?" to show that in the actual discussion "workers" only meant "cost." The slideshows had to be accepted by the entire AEG works council prior to their presentation at the company meeting. This partly led to heated discussions. Nevertheless, the slideshow at the staff meeting was positively received. The only problem was, when the projected image and discussion of the congregation were so superimposed upon one another, "that one was distracted from listening by looking or vice versa."

From today's perspective, it is clear that working methods in the Test Model had elements of both the artistic practice of the group APG [Artist Placement Group], founded in 1966 in the United Kingdom, as well as of artists of the so called Bitterfelder Way [Bitterfelder Weg]. "Reach for the Pen, Friends" was the slogan of a GDR cultural congress, which took place in Bitterfeld in 1953 and invited artists to go to the state-owned companies to develop writing circles for and with the workers.

Construction Project "Hands-on City" 1979-81

The second project from the early years of the study program relates to the topic of the elective course number 10, "Culture and Leisure":

The construction project *Hands-on City* is a project that took place in the years 1979-81 in various West German cities. This urban, artistically participatory experimental project was developed by the group "Leut'Werk": Eckhart Haisch, Konstanze Schmidbauer (née Hedrich), Ingolf Kirsch and Gabriele Ramdohr, at that time all students in the Test Model in Berlin, and accompanied by H.K. Bast. The experimental design of *Hands-on City* consisted in pouring between six and nine tons of clay into a public space and building a city over the course of several days,

and together with the public at a cultural festival. The group, Leut'Werk [People's Work], was invited to at least five different West German cities in order to host the building of *Hands-on cities* there.

In the first few days after the soft clay had been delivered, the Hands-on citizens first built a kind of landscape. Water was used to soften and distribute the clay. Children used the surrounding clay piles as slides. Over time, the artists tried to engage the audience in throwing clumps of clay into the city's construction. Slowly, an agglomeration of clay houses in the clay landscape arose. The houses built were usually houses with gable roofs, sometimes decorated with traditional half-timbered structures. The idyllic houses quickly demonstrated what image of architecture prevailed at that time.

The rural idyll was then interrupted by skyscrapers, which the artists brought into the developing cityscape. Not only skyscrapers, but also a freeway was built, as well as a wholesale urban redevelopment project. Through a local radio broadcast such measures were announced each evening. The following day a hearing took place. Citizens' initiatives were formed to stop the urban redevelopment. Through role-playing games they negotiated the design of the city.

The *Hands-on Cities* that took place between 1979 and 1981 reconstructed the urban planning issues of that time. In the working-class district of Berlin-Kreuzberg, the threat of so-called urban redevelopment was very real at that time. Many old buildings around Kottbusser Tor, a central square, had already been demolished. The *Hands-on Cities* sought not only to address real issues of the time but also attempted to make city development and urban planning a tangible public experience.

The *Hands-on City* and the AEG Works Council Intervention are exemplary of the working parameters at the base of the Test Model:

Artistic work should be based on spontaneous or long-term cooperation and have an emancipatory educational claim. The techniques and materials used in the artistic projects were usually easy to handle. The choice of materials could be compared to today's Do-It-Yourself culture. At that time, the medium of video also became, for the first time, affordable and accessible to amateurs and thus also economically unprivileged artists. Counter-reporting was a central artistic tool. Political ambitions were conspicuous, as was the desire for solidarity with socially less privileged people. From today's perspective, the projects in the early years of the Test Model were characterized by flat hierarchies between teachers and students. H.K. Bast, for example, can be seen on many old photographs - often in workers' overalls - right in the middle of the project work. Authorship for the work was, at least between teachers and students, formulated,

for the most part, in terms of equal representation.

Art in Context

In 2001, the further education program was modularized and converted into a master's program. Since then, Art in Context has been a two-year postgraduate master's program, which in the case of part-time study, can also be carried out in three years. Meanwhile, the program has been re-accredited twice (2006 and 2013) and since 2012 is part of the Department of Fine Arts.

The current four occupational fields are:

- Artistic Work with Social Groups
- Artistic Work in/with Cultural Institutions
- Artistic Work in Public Space
- Artistic Work in the Context of Scientific and Media Image Production

These are supplemented by additional modules in the subject areas:

- Art, the Public and Mediation
- Economics of the Cultural Field
- Art and Science
- Media Theory and Practice

The development of artistic projects is still the main focus of study, which is why the Institute continues to work together with various collaborators. However, the implementation of large cooperative projects within the ongoing study program is becoming increasingly difficult due to the study regulations, the introduction of grades for the coursework (2014) and the resulting administrative workload for the teachers. In collective productions, the work done by the individual artists involved must be made transparent and proportionally accredited. Spatially, the work at the Institute is not getting any easier either: since the university administration rededicated a large workspace of the Institute to another department in February 2018, the Institute for Art in Context has been relegated almost exclusively to seminar rooms, designed for seated discussions. Other forms of cooperation (performative, using materials, together with external groups of people) are hardly possible if they do not take place outside of the university.

As regards the structure of the student body, the study course has also changed considerably since its foundation. Whereas in 1978 students were exclusively artists from West Berlin and West Germany – who brought with them for the most part local issues underlying artistic production and cultural work, today's students are, in some years, between

50% and 70% from European and non-European foreign countries. The questions and problems are correspondingly diverse today.

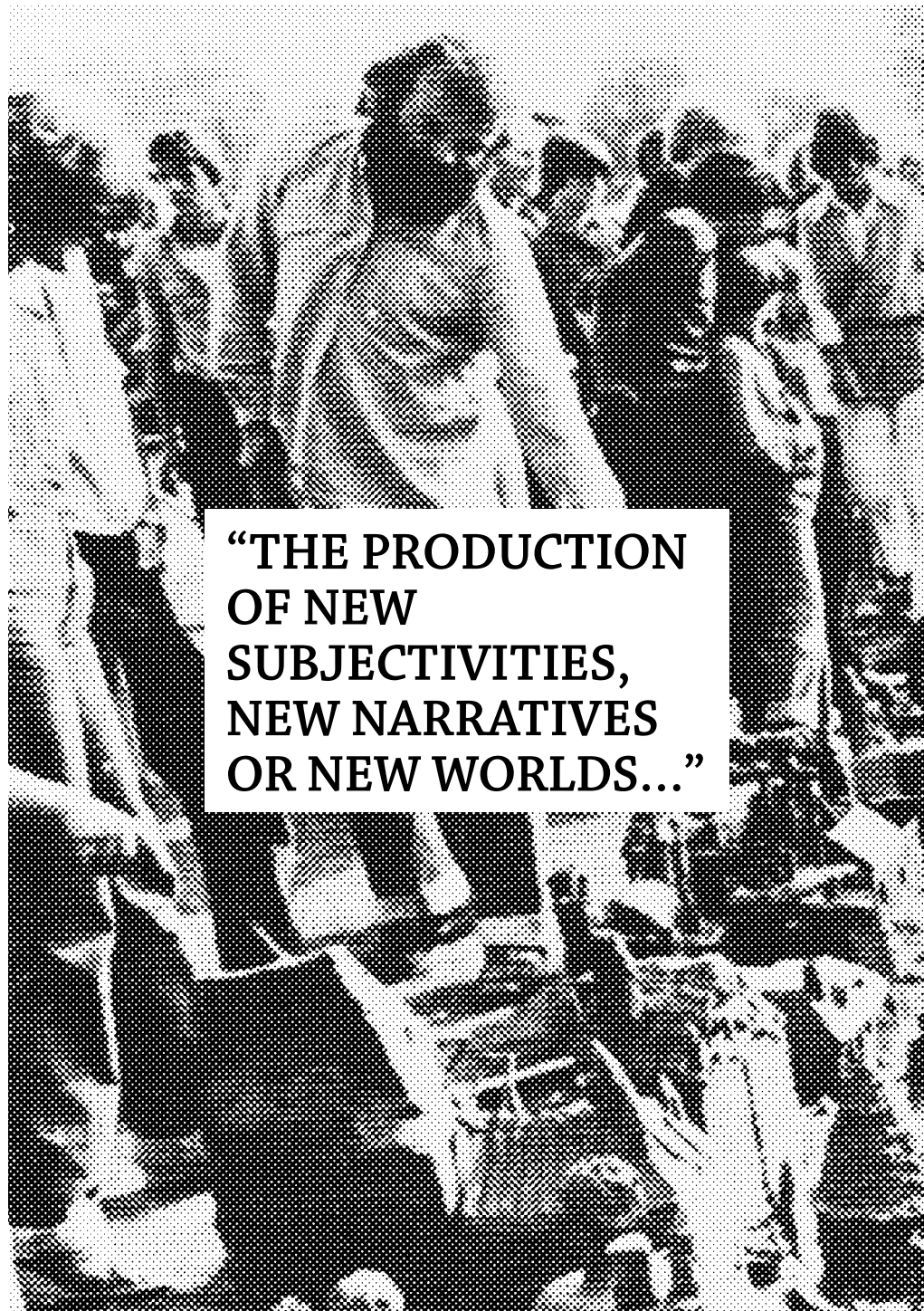
Even if the study conditions (no studios, no rooms for collaborative work, complicated study regulations, and furthermore scarce affordable housing in Berlin, as well as ever stricter visa requirements, especially for non-European students) are not the easiest, the degree program has, without much advertising on social media or in specialist magazines, continuously high numbers of applicants. The attractiveness of the program is certainly also due to its location in Berlin and the fact that apart from regular semester fees no further tuition is required.

There is no binding canon of literature or of art and educational terminology. Teachers rely on supplementing themes and theories, and appreciate the diversity of teachers' doctrines that make it possible to discuss a diversity of concepts of art and education.

On November 30, 2018, an exhibition about the past 40 years from the Test Model to the master's Program Art in Context was opened. The work that is currently taking place in a project group, however, shows that despite, and at the same time due to, the institutional amnesia in the Institute for Art in Context some things have been repeated. Sociopolitical issues of years past are again present in a translated form (e.g. the housing question and the capitalization of the city). But also structural problems of the study program within the university have been reoccurring (lack of space, reduction of resources at the level of the staff, repeatedly trying to find out how the degree program is situated in the university or the department).

The positioning of Art in Context within art discourses continues to be in negotiation, also considering that the then leftist study program, with its associated terms of criticism, finds itself now in the mainstream of artistic production methods.

However, the current social issues and problems also give cause to read the founding history of the study program again. It may be possible to learn something from it today.



**“THE PRODUCTION
OF NEW
SUBJECTIVITIES,
NEW NARRATIVES
OR NEW WORLDS...”**

KONTEXT LABOR BERNAU (CONTEXT LAB BERNAU) 2014-2015-2016. ART IN URBAN SPACE

Kristina Leko (University of the Arts, Berlin), **Julia Herfurth** and
Natalie Obert (students at the Institute for Art in Context)

*KONTEXT LABOR BERNAU (KLB)*¹ was conceived as a space for exchange between the inhabitants of the city of Bernau bei Berlin and young international artists, and as an extension of the teaching and research activities within the master's program Art in Context at the University of the Arts Berlin. With this project, we wanted to explore the potential of participatory and temporary art practices in urban social space.

1. From the perspective of the teaching artist

My central question for the *KLB* project is: What have we – about 30 art students, myself as supervising teacher and artist, the municipal cultural bureau of a small town on the outskirts of Berlin in former East Germany, and last but not least, the townspeople – achieved, working together for more than three years, as part of this participatory art project in urban space?

The question is important to me because it can help me to optimize my teaching. Besides, working through this question is the prerequisite for understanding the potential meaning of this artistic approach, which has been my daily practice as an artist for years. And ultimately, being able to give sense to a work of art is the deciding factor for teaching art.

Before I begin to answer the question, I would like to explain what I mean by artistic activity in social public urban space, and also what is being done, learned and taught, and communicated in this particular case. We are looking at a dynamic mix of different intellectual-practical-creative activities. In simple terms, these are: intellectual activities (fieldwork and literary research, development of ideas, project planning, reading, writing, discussion), political action (encounters and communication of ideas on-site, fieldwork/urban research, public discussion, organization and com-

¹ The abbreviation *KLB* will be used in this text for *KONTEXT LABOR BERNAU* [CONTEXT LAB BERNAU].

munication, implementation of participatory processes or project work) and the production of artifacts/works of art. According to Chantal Mouffe, the goal of artistic practices is to support the expression of new social relationships that emerge in today's post-Fordist society.² Does this mean that the work should be about *other* or *alternative* social relationships? Accordingly, I should reformulate the question "What have we done?" to, "Have we persuaded residents to enter into new social relationships, to occupy any different positions in the social space, if only temporarily? How did this actually happen? And how can this best be done?" (ill. 19-20)

1.1 Project parameters and introduction

Designed to span three years, the *KLB* project set out to encourage and manifest the cultural participation of Bernau's townspeople. A special wish was to involve those who generally did not participate in existing art-related offerings. Not only a *new* public, but also an *active, primary*,³ as well as *other* audience should be promoted. One of the objectives of the project was certainly to promote more widespread acceptance of so-called contemporary or community-oriented art practices that encourage and reflect various ways of thinking, exploring and interacting. At the same time, this desired acceptance should also serve as a means of improving the quality of life of those involved; that was our main goal. With this intention, the students/artists developed 24 artistic positions over the course of three years, each project taking several months to complete. On average, about 30 people were involved in processes of artistic creation per project. In 2017, students carried out extensive documentation, reflection and evaluation of the project within several of my courses at the Institute for Art in Context.⁴

The first *KLB* Open Call within the Institute for Art in Context in February 2014 was developed under my supervision by a five-member student body over three months. The basis for this was on-site research (site visits, participant observation, exchange with potential actors), as well as the written survey "Art in Bernau," which had been commissioned by

Bernau's Municipal Cultural Bureau in 2007 and carried out by the Berlin architect Bernhard Schneider. The survey repeatedly articulated the need for urban renewal, a demand discussed in depth by the working group, and which became linked with the question "For whom and why?" In the end, as already indicated, we defined for ourselves the "upgrading" or "renewal" of the city as an increase in the quality of life of certain social groups. In addition to participation, we also focused on discursivity⁵, as well as the references to history, working through the past and story-telling, and articulated these in the guidelines and objectives of the Open Call.⁶

1.2 KLB 2014 - In public and social space

In 2014, the focus of the project was on public space and the artists deliberately examined the boundary between the private and the public in public and social space in Bernau (ill. 22-23). Building on preliminary research, we anchored our investigations, reflections and discussions in the social space (through participatory practice), and tried to conduct research and discussion as artistic formats. Within this framework, works of art were produced and mediated. Local history, particularly as told through individual narratives of the townspeople, served as the main interface between them and the artistic production. In retrospect, we found that projects with a strong link to history, its preservation and rewriting, generated the greatest interest of the participants.

The opening of the first edition of *KLB* took place on the National Day of Open Monuments. It began in the city's oldest house, the Kantorhaus, and continued through various venues in the public area of the city center, culminating in the prefabricated housing development Bernau-Süd with an extensive outdoor program (readings, performances, guided tours). Symbolically and programmatically, we wanted to dismantle the existing social boundaries and promote art production and presentation not only within the city center, but also in the margins, which are perceived as socially troubled, and where there were otherwise no cultural offerings at the time.

As already mentioned, the most successful projects were those that delved into historical reappraisal and focused on the biographical, as well as identity and community-building processes. In reference to Chantal Mouffe, one could say - with the emergence of new subjectivities. Good examples of this are two works dedicated to the format of the museum. The Kantorhaus,

² The post-Fordist system of highly developed capitalism is characterized by immaterial labor/production. Mouffe, C. (2014). *Agonistics, Thinking the World Politically*. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, p. 135. "The aim of artistic practices should be to support the expression of these new social relationships made possible by the transformation of the work process. Their main task is the production of new subjectivities and the development of new worlds."

³ The concepts of the primary and the secondary audience derive from the field of Media Studies. Within the context of participatory art, these concepts relate to different levels and quality of participation, when referring to different groups within a participatory art project. Suzanne Lacy created a model using concentric circles, which visualizes different levels of participation and responsibility by different agents: LACY, S. (2010). *Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics, and Public, 1974-2007*. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 179.

⁴ The results of the evaluation will be considered later in the text. They are also available from: <www.kontextlaborbernau-auswertung.tumblr.com> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

⁵ By the term discursivity, I understand the narrative, logically conclusive and factually precise processing, analysis, and mediation of topics and contents within the project work.

⁶ The general guidelines of the project and the Open Call are available from: <<http://kontextlabor.tumblr.com/richtlinien>> for the years 2014 and 2015, and from: <<http://kontext-labor-bernau-2016.tumblr.com>> for the year 2016 (Accessed 5 February 2019).

which had been empty for several years, was home to a participatory temporary museum with personal objects and accompanying stories.⁷ In total, 27 people were involved. This museum project made it clear that people had a strong need to work through their experiences from the Nazi or post-Nazi era, as well as the time of the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany). Almost all participants had been socialized in the GDR. Another “museum” was spatially distributed to seven apartments within the settlement of communist block houses known as Bernau-Süd and also displayed biographical artifacts/works of art created in collaboration with residents, which were characterized by stories of escape, immigration and negotiation of identity. The participants were predominantly Russian-German women or their families. Once a week, the Museum Bernau-Süd was opened to small groups of visitors.⁸ The weekly tours took place in an exceptionally friendly and warm atmosphere. “Now our lives have a bit more value,” said one of the participants in retrospect. This statement is not exclusively, but primarily due to the already mentioned stigmatization⁹ of the settlement within the local context. Countering this was one of the objectives of the *KLB* project.¹⁰ Similar in its working methods to the two projects mentioned above, was another project stemming from a six-week writing workshop and resulting in a large-format, permanent wall text as an intervention in the outskirts of the city center, which was accompanied by several readings and a publication. This project was a collaboration between a young poet and five middle-aged women who, through writing, went in search of individual self-realization.¹¹ Several works were developed as part of longer processes in public

space. For more than six months, an artistic research took place on the streets of Bernau. Through surveys and interactions with passers-by a map of urban space was created; it showed what opportunities local participants saw for placing art in public space.¹² Eventually, the project settled as a self-built pavilion in the city park. There, the artist worked with interested citizens on their own designs for interventions in public space (25 in total). A small booklet was published, as was the expressed desire of the city administration.¹³

More than 55 women took part in another project over the course of six months. The two-month empowerment workshop focused on the role of women in the GDR as well as their current relationship with the public sphere. The goal was to perform together with women in public space. This goal was only partially achieved because most women refused to perform in public spaces.¹⁴ However, three years later, the evaluation made it clear that this project was one of the most successful and sustainable, taking the enthusiasm and vivid memories of those involved as a measure.

The two other projects aimed at promoting and creating a new and “freer” understanding of public space, with experiences of the GDR playing an important role. The special historical conditions, the feeling and the legacy of the GDR regime in relation to social space and living together, were elaborated in detail in a project that dealt with the transformation of the inner city and living together in a housing block built in communist era. In an exhibition in progress, documents were collected from residents and presented; the end result of the project was a video about the housing block, which was premiered at an outdoor festival we organized.¹⁵ This political-historical context was shared by another project, which could be called an object intervention, a kind of confession booth, which moved through the urban space and called for free speech. Interestingly, this platform was misused for the purposes of an

⁷ *Jenseits der Gegenstände: Ein Museum im Kantorhaus* [Beyond Objects: A Museum in Bernau's Kantorhaus], a project by Alexis Hyman Wolff (USA); in collaboration with Bernau residents: Brigitte Albrecht, Christel Bailleu, Barbara Forwerk, Herr Graupmann, Heidi Heidrich, Hans Joachim Hölfer, Achim Kandulla, Dieter Korczak, Elisabeth Kuban-Fürl, Reinhard Mettner, Beate Modisch und Charlotte Lohoff, Sabine Oswald-Göriz, Alfons Pause, Sigrid Pulfer, Eva Maria Rebs, Manfred Schöpe, Friedemann Seeger, Karsten Semmler, Petra Stolle, Michael Thielsch, Gaby Trettin, Heinz Tünge, Christa Wahren, Wolfgang Werner, Klaus Wilke, Heinz Zinke. Available from: <<http://museum-kantorhaus.tumblr.com>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

⁸ *Museum Bernau-Süd*, a project by Jelena Fuzinato (BIH); in collaboration with Anja Lehman, Brigitte Albrecht, Emma Tagowzew, Irina Gerzew, Irina Melnikov, Jaroslav Melinkov, Katherina Scharapow, Peggy Kretschmar. Available from: <<http://museumbernausued.tumblr.com>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

⁹ Here I am referring to the everyday acts of discrimination that are a prerequisite for this stigmatization.

¹⁰ This objective is clearly stated in the project guidelines, but the stigmatization is deliberately left unmentioned in published texts: “Our points of reference are Bernau's historic city center and Bernau-Süd, the prefabricated housing estate. It is desirable that at least one project settles in Bernau-Süd and involves minorities there.” Available from: <<http://kontextlabor.tumblr.com/rechtlinien>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

¹¹ *Ich habe meine Wunden weiß gezeichnet* [I painted my wounds white], a project by Christoph Szalay (Austria); in collaboration with participants of the FRAKIMA-Werkstatt: Mandy Westphal, Lea Bathelt, Petra Stolle, Kerstin Traskowski, Julia Clara Baeckes; Location: Klementstraße 10/ Angergang, Wandfläche/Giebelseite Feuerwehr; Installation permanently accessible. Available from: <<http://wundenarchiv.tumblr.com>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

¹² *Going public*, a project by Jonathan Ryall (GB); in cooperation with residents of Bernau. Available from: <<http://goingpublicproject.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019)

¹³ The city administration was able to consider the results of the project as a field survey of the future placement of art in public spaces. That is why Bernau's Municipal Cultural Bureau additionally financed the publication of the brochure.

¹⁴ *Frauenbilder Bernau* [Images of Women Bernau] by Valentina Utz (Chile); in cooperation with AWO - Arbeiterwohlfahrt-Ortsverein Bernau e. V. and a group of seniors from Bernau: Elke Koch, Anja Lehmann, Marianne Fincke, Sabine Schmalz, Mariane Siebert, Jana Schlosser, Leonore Bode, Christa Wahren, Regine Priller, Renak Neihd, Roswita Engelhardt, Thea Henkel, Gudrun Maclean. Available from: <<http://frauenbilderbernaublog.tumblr.com>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

¹⁵ *On the City Wall*, Videoportrait eines Plattenbaus, ein Projekt von Alien Oosting (NL); in collaboration with Timo Kuckelkorn, Annika Prauser, Christopher Löser, Roberta Busechian, und Thomas Kentzler; and participation of inhabitants. Available from: <<http://videoportraithausbernau.tumblr.com>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

election campaign and fell victim several times to vandalism by unknown perpetrators. After the artist replaced the red curtain with a white one, the abuses stopped.¹⁶ (ill. 22-24)

Regarding my teaching 2014

KLB 2014 took place during my first year as a teacher at the Institute for Art in Context.¹⁷ My teaching methods were synonymous with accompaniment of the individual students and close group work during each project phase. In particular, I personally demonstrated in small groups methods for response to real project situations on-site, in order to show how one might enter into and carry out various work and communication processes. I was enthusiastic and spent a lot of overtime on the project and even worked during vacation. I perceived my role as a teacher more as the role of an experienced colleague. As a result, I was able to inspire most, if not all, of the student artists involved, in the *KLB* project, as well as in the participatory art approach. I was very impressed to see the many different processes and events we led. Because this was not a teaching situation within the university, but rather an intervention in a real situation, my role as a teacher resembled that of a curator. This view from “above” and the resulting responsibility towards the public or public funds caused conflicts in the final phase between me and some students: to ensure the punctual and satisfactory realization of some final results, I had to exert pressure. Thus, the hitherto latent hierarchy between teacher and students was in some cases really used. In doing so, I have learned that most student artists distinguish between the art they produce as part of their studies and that which they bring to the “real” art context.¹⁸

1.3 KLB 2015 – Interim use of a historic site

In the spring and summer of 2015, the *KLB* took place in the former military garment office [Heeresbekleidungsamt], which was the main site of the project that year, as well as in the formerly mentioned and in 2014 established venue, the Kantorhaus. Some actions and events also extended into public space. The temporary use of the military garment office was proposed and expressly desired by Bernau's Cultural Bureau (ill. 27-30). Since this was a compound built by the National Socialists in 1939 and

used by the Russian military until 1994, and because we had already realized in 2014 that there was a collective need in Bernau to discuss these historical contexts, we agreed to the proposal and focused on the site of the military garment office. The summer of 2015 was also the last opportunity to make the site accessible to the public in its historical form; it was about to be converted into a housing development. Moreover, an interim use of a historic building in Bernau does not pose the same gentrification-triggering danger as in Berlin: cultural policy, local politics, investors, citizens' initiatives and the interim users form a peaceful alliance in the small town.

The Nazi era, the GDR regime, the complex relations to Russia with its ambiguities, as well as the perception of the two epochs were the focus of several artistic works. On the one hand, works were created that dealt with historiography and memory, such as an audiowalk, which featured the voices of several living witnesses (Russian soldiers, pacifists, WWII seamstresses, etc.), which is still present in the virtual public space there.¹⁹ Another example is a work that dismantled the fabric of the building (bricks) of the historically heavily loaded military compound and distributed it throughout public and private living spaces and into the extended urban space. Small-scale construction interventions were carried out with the bricks in order to question memorial culture in private, intersubjective spaces as an individual need, and furthermore, the need to care for and maintain them. This “offer” was perceived as so attractive, that there was a waiting list for participation.²⁰ Another art project, in cooperation with the local senior citizens' association, addressed a group of seniors and penetrated deeply into experiences of traumatization during an extensive workshop and happening program. It dealt with individual perspectives regarding one's fear of communism, and/or of capitalism. The South Korean artist focused on ideological oppression and was met with great gratitude by those involved.²¹

A collaborative project with the local Russian-Jewish community acted as a particularly sensitive example of historical work: an artistic installation and a performative meal, a happening in the military garment office, dealt with

¹⁹ *Kanäle, sie mäandern* [Canals, They Meander], a project by Evi Kruckenhauser (AT/DE); in collaboration with Bernau residents; Interviewees: Anneliese W., Edith R., Helgi B., Dieter W., Werner R., Brigitte A., Viktor, Hr. Junghans, Hr. Kaltenborn, Hr. Ekarius, Hr. Breschke. Online & App: radio aporee. Available from: <aporee.org> and <<http://kanalemaeandern.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

²⁰ *Operation Klinker*, a project by Gregor Kasper (DE); in collaboration with Bernau residents. Available from: <<http://operationklinker.tumblr.com/>> and <<http://operationklinker.gregorkasper.de>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

²¹ *Wasch-Wasch Fest* [Wash-Wash Party], a project by Eunbi Kwon (KR); in collaboration with the FRAKIMA Werkstatt, the AWO Association for the Elderly, Bernau e.V. and Bernau residents. Available from: <<http://waschwaschfest.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

¹⁶ *So spreche ich mich los*, a project by Lisa Schwalb (DE). Available from: <<http://sosprecheichmichlos.tumblr.com>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

¹⁷ I am employed as a full-time art teacher with a focus on art in public space, community art and cultural policy.

¹⁸ The reason why this is so, is another discussion.

the peculiarities of this community. The artist herself being of Russian-Jewish descent thus emphasized the symbolic revitalization of the site.²²

Furthermore, a special project, *Hands-on City* of Bernau,²³ played a central role in this process – the presence of about 1 000 children and adolescents in such a place also laid claim to a certain kind of healing place. The audience as well as the larger public recognized this and the project aroused correspondingly great interest. A second project, which aimed at a symbolic revitalization was the *Freie Parzelle Residenz* [Free Parcel Residence],²⁴ in which the Art-in-Context artists, together with local artists,²⁵ for two-and-a-half months transformed one of the buildings into a space for art production and education: presentations, workshops, meetings and various events, as well as several seminars of the Institute took place there.²⁶

On the other hand, there were also thematically broader positions, which focused on direct contact with citizens in public space and had the essential function of maintaining and developing our primary audience, which might in turn bring a secondary audience. A good example of this, is the project of the city painter: over the course of half a year, the public space and the Kantorhaus were used and a fixed target group of around 70 people was reached.²⁷

Regarding my teaching 2015

In the second year of the *KLB* project I tried to be more economical with my time and personally interfered less with the project work of the stu-

dents on-site. In several cases, the final results were neither completed on time, nor reached the same quality compared to the year before; the students had, however, taken on more responsibility. Instead of personally demonstrating the methods on-site, we did role plays at the university, as well as more collaborative work in large groups; there was also more frontal mediation and peer-teaching. As a freelance, participatory artist, I have held and conducted motivational speeches and talks for potential project participants for years, in order to win them over to participate in my projects. In 2014, I did the same for student projects, talked to citizens, motivated them. In 2015, on the other hand, I started to address my motivational speeches to the students themselves. In 2014, I tried to demonstrate and teach my methods; in 2015, I realized that it is more efficient to communicate the objectives, not the methods. The appropriate methods can be found or developed on your own if you know where you want to go. So I decided to motivate the student artists for participatory art or socially engaged art, or art for social change, to inspire them to work toward these goals and ideas.

In this way, those students who were very motivated and had a passion for communication and a genuine interest in people were able to succeed. On the other hand, several students, especially those who lacked this basic interest failed. There were two to three artistic positions in the context of *KLB 2015*, which were very open and active, but in fact remained on paper, i.e. did not fulfill their promises. In some cases, events or co-operations were even announced and did not take place. This was hard for me to handle. This also created some conflict, but this time more between the city administration and student artists (ill. 28).

1.4 Interim conclusion: visitor numbers

After two years of our presence in the cultural life as well as in the public space of the small town, after the great success of the exhibition in the military garment office, we suddenly, from one day to the next, had to present a report to the town council. There were, as always, complaints from some citizens who thought that taxpayers' money had been wasted because, for example, an announced action had not taken place. The grievances, however, were instrumentalized in the local struggles between political parties and actors in the local cultural scene, which resulted in hostility toward our project. Below are the excerpts from the report, which was prepared by Sabine Oswald-Görizt, project director on behalf of the project-executing agency, the city of Bernau bei Berlin, in consultation with the *KLB* team in October 2015.

²² *Na zdorovje!*, a project by Yulia Kazakova (RU/DE); in collaboration with Bernau residents and members of the Jewish Community in Bernau-Süd. Available from: <<http://nazdorovjebarnau.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

²³ *Mitmachstadt Bernau* [Hands-on City of Bernau], a participatory construction of a city model organized by Claudia Hummel mit Herlambang Bayu Aji (ID), Veronika Albrandt (DE/UZ), Katrina Blach (DE), Ling-yu He (TW), Claudia Hummel (DE), Namia Leigh (KR), Dagmar Lesiak (DE), Alien Oosting (NL), children, youth and further guests. Available from: <<http://mitmachstadtbernau-blog.tumblr.com/info>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

²⁴ A project by Isabella Gerstner (DE); a convergence with artists and Bernau residents with contributions by Veronika Albrandt (DE/UZ), Christian Espig (DE), Gözde Güngör (TR), Ling-yu He (TW), Julia Herfurth (DE), Ana Krstic (RS), Wahshi Kuhi (Kurdistan), Namia Leigh (KR), Rosanna Lovell (AUS), Franziska Probst (DE), Maria Reimann-Rath (DE), Stephan Schmidt (DE), Johanna Zey (DE) u.a. Available from: <<http://freieparzelle.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

²⁵ Here the exchange between the students and local artists took place for the most part at eye level. Some Bernau artists, who are all self-taught, were able to take significant further steps in their artistic career through this collaboration.

²⁶ My colleague Claudia Hummel supported the project by hosting some of her seminars, as I did as well, on-site.

²⁷ *Lass mich dein Spiegel werden Bernau* [Let me be your Mirror, Bernau], a project by Elena Alonso Fernandez (ES); in collaboration with Bernau residents. Available from: <<http://lassmichdeinspiegelwerdenbernau.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

In two years, *KONTEXT LABOR BERNAU* has brought together a total of 33 international, national and local artists in productive, collaborative work. (...) In 2014, the project succeeded in involving 244 citizens in creative processes through eight artistic positions. As this was done within a period of eight months, it was all about quality, not quantity. In 2015, the project involved 321 citizens in the artistic work again within eight subprojects and over an average production period of four months. In 2015, several workshops were held with twelve partner associations and institutions. (...) Another 390 people took part in project events. In addition, there was a special offer in 2015 - the project *Hands-on City of Bernau*, which involved 1 045 children, adolescents and their family members (380 pupils within school classes and 665 workshop participants on the weekends). (...) The focus of *KONTEXT LABOR BERNAU 2014* was on the central public urban space. There, 25 actions and events took place, which were experienced by around 1 400 citizens. The exhibitions included 2 670 visitors at three locations (Kantorhaus, Mühlentor, Bernau-Süd Immigration Advisory Center). In the following year, a local concentration shifted to the military garment office on Schönfelder Weg, a military area used from 1939 to 1994 and closed since 1994. The actions developed in this context were experienced by 640 citizens. The overall project reached an audience of around 5 900 in 2015, compared to 4 065 in 2014.

1.5 "KLB 2016" – Vacancy: in the housing block Settlement 28

As already announced in 2014 through several actions and events, we wanted to deal symbolically and practically with invisible borders within the city. We focused on this goal in the third year by settling in the housing blocks of Bernau-Süd. The basic concept was to rent two vacant shops in Bernau-Süd as project spaces in order to actively produce, present and convey art on-site over the course of three months with the goal of increasing the quality of life in the settlement.

All (or almost all) projects mentioned so far in 2014 and 2015 were based on a complex participatory structure and were built up over several months in several steps. All worked consciously with primary and secondary audiences, thus involving several target groups. In terms of the development of a new or a different audience, we were able to establish a permanent circle of participants and interested parties in Bernau in the first two years. My estimate was that we could count on a core group of about 30 project participants as well as a broader group of about 150 people

as our base audience. I was sure that this audience would be present at the opening of the 2016 project in Bernau-Süd. This was not the case. Only a few were there. The invisible borders were fixed.

In the same way as in the first two years, an open call and selection process was also carried out in 2016. The open call sought "interventions of all kinds":

"We are looking for: LOCAL PARTICIPATORY AND/OR DOCUMENTARY PROJECTS: SERVICES (café, cinema, kitchen, library, garden, workshops, crafts, sports club and the like), SOUND PROJECTS, INSTALLATIONS, PERFORMANCES, LOCAL RESEARCH, TEXTS, LIGHT INTERVENTIONS, STORIES, THEATER, GRAFFITI, PAINTING AND WALL PAINTING, GRAPHIC AND SPATIAL INTERVENTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS OF ALL KINDS, HAPPENINGS, PHOTO PROJECTS, SOCIAL EXPERIMENTS, PHYSICAL EXPLORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS, ENCOUNTERS, EXCURSIONS, AUDIO WALKS, CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS, FILMS, READINGS, PROTESTS, CONCERTS, FILM PROGRAMS ..."²⁹

Within a seminar of mine in the winter semester, students were able to develop their ideas and proposals and to inquire together about the place, though only a few, unlike the first two years, actually did. The jury meeting, again an open-plenum jury, in which all interested parties – including some Bernau residents – could participate, took place in February 2016. The eight projects with the most votes were selected for realization.

Based on the experiences of the first two years of *KLB*, the on-site presence of at least two days a week became obligatory for all participating artists. Later, it turned out that the obligation to attend on fixed days was again a conflict-triggering point between the project management and the artists.

In our previously quoted report for the city council meeting, we had formulated that in 2016, we would like to focus on Bernau-Süd, dealing particularly with social changes after the Fall of the Berlin Wall and German Reunification, as well as to publicly reflect about current concepts for the future of the area. So there was again a project that was directed toward the Russian-German community on-site, which cinematically recorded the memories of migration and arrival in Germany.³⁰ Other projects explored the social situation on the ground, dealt with individual experiences and living situations, or invited residents to participate in artistic-educational work.

The aforementioned film project was effective and productive for the whole

²⁹ Available from: <<http://kontext-labor-bernau-2016.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019)

³⁰ *Gut angekommen im wilden Westen?* [Did You Arrive Well in the Wild West?], a project by Janina Neugebauer (D); in collaboration with residents of Bernau-Süd. Available from: <<http://gutangekommen.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

²⁸ The *KLB 2016* will be presented later in this case study by a text by participating artists Julia Herfurth and Natalie Obert.

KLB as the participants also held several in-store meetings with talks and screenings, as well as a concert, which promoted the integration of our project within the community. The reason for this success, however, was that several of the women involved had worked with us on other projects in previous years. Two further projects served as an interface to initiate communication with the residents and then to involve them in subsequent steps in the project. Here, our Outdoor Living Room played an important role – public editorial meetings of our neighborhood newspaper took place there regularly. Moreover, an artist was usually present on-site, and reached out to residents around Bernau-Süd. Formally classifying this as participatory urban research,³¹ this project was also responsible for our symbolic improvement of the perception of the block housing settlement. The findings of this research were presented as an exhibition in the Kantorhaus in the historic city center. This exhibition was even part of the official event program of the city of Bernau for the National Day of Open Monuments.

Several 2016 projects can be seen as hybrid formats, as they had elements of 'services' as well as cultural education. In addition, some of them also claimed to promote structural change in the settlement. The aforementioned neighborhood newspaper is such an example and was expressly requested as a format by the project management (Bernau's Municipal Cultural Bureau and myself) in the preparatory phase.³² Furthermore, the project *Ver(sch)wende deine Zeit* [Use/Waste your Time],³³ which settled in the youth center on-site as a special offer, sought to empower children and adolescents through the application and adaptation of Augusto Boal's methods and games, as well as by placing a photo booth in public space. A second project for local children and youth failed, at least in my opinion.³⁴ In the end, the artist managed to organize a dance performance with children for the summer festival, but this was not the result of his artistic-educational work. Successful, however, was a mural project involving children from the neighborhood as well as from a nearby school, which

also included a narrative aspect.³⁵ Art as a service was the approach of another project, which contributed a great deal to the visibility of *KLB* on the ground: a rickshaw with a mobile darkroom moved through the area and attracted many children and adults. The 'Camera Obscura' was also regularly presented in the form of workshops in the local day care and the AWO senior center, as well as demonstrated in our temporary gallery.³⁶

Finally, I would like to mention a project which, depending on one's perspective, can either be viewed as extremely failed or successful. It was a very ambitious concept, which aimed to train a network of citizen-art mediators in Bernau-Süd and then allow them to learn, work and perform in the context of the Berlin Biennale.³⁷ Instead of 25 people, only two took part, the Berlin Biennale perceived the project as a kind of threat, and Bernau's administration found the expenses for the project difficult to justify. However, Fabian, age 15, one of the two participants, said one year later in the evaluation:

With the project Art Guides, I was in various exhibitions at the Berlin Biennale, and got to know art. Afterwards I did a guided tour with Moritz [the artist] outdoors in Bernau-Süd, and we talked about works of art from the Berlin Biennale. We acted like we were in the show, but we were not. (...) My perception has improved, I also look around when I walk through Bernau-Süd, and I hope the city administration will make the district more interesting. (...) With Moritz, I learned to interpret art. I also learned the word "interpret." I did not know at all that there was such a thing. Now I ask myself, what do things mean.

The question is, can one justify the claim to public funds, although only two persons participated? Yes and no: in my opinion, the justification can only lie in the future. If the protagonists continue to work in the field of art and culture, participation and inclusion, or find and follow their own interests, the claim to public money is justified.

From the perspective of artists or cultural producers, we are dealing with a work ethic or a cultural policy of small steps that posits the presence of contemporary art in the daily lives of citizens as their main task. It is

³¹ *ORTSAUFNAHMEN: Bernau-Süd* [SITE INVENTORY: Bernau-Süd], a project by Natalie Obert (D); in collaboration with Bernau residents and further experts. Available from: <<http://ortsaufnahmen-bernausued.tumblr.com>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

³² *Was ist los Bernau-Süd?* [What is going on, Bernau-Süd?], a project by Yüksel Hayirli (TRK/D) and Julia Osten (D); in collaboration with residents of Bernau-Süd. Available from: <<http://wasistlos-bernausued.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

³³ A project by Katrina Blach (D); in collaboration with youth groups and young adults from Bernau-Süd. Available from: <<http://verschwendedeinezeit2016.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

³⁴ The reasons for this perceived failure were: the technical incompetence of the artist, unfulfilled compulsory attendance, meager cooperation with colleagues as well as a lack of will to devote time to project development.

³⁵ *Bilder neuer Geschichten* [Picturing New Stories], a project by Juan Camilo Alfonso (COL); in collaboration with residents of Bernau-Süd. Available from: <<http://bilderneuer geschichten.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

³⁶ *EINZIGARTIG DU- Die Welt steht Kopf- Neue Perspektiven im Dunkeln* [Uniquely YOU – The World Upside Down – New Perspectives in the Dark], a project by Jiaying Wu (CHN); in collaboration with residents of Bernau-Süd. Available from: <<http://einzigartig-du.tumblr.com/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

³⁷ *M.G. & C.F. Artguides*, a project by Moritz Gramming (D); in collaboration with residents and public servants of the City of Bernau. Available from: <<http://conrad-fisher-artguide.tumblr.com>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

therefore an attempt to build a sustainable and citizen-friendly concept of art or an understanding of art in-situ. Why should someone do this? (Ill. 31)

To answer this question, we would have to refer to the basic principles of democratic society as described by Chantal Mouffe. According to her, democracy consists of a permanent, never-ending antagonistic agonism. It is a continuum of conflicts/discussions. These only take place when different voices are articulated. Thus, the production of new subjectivities, new narratives or new worlds plays an important role in "society-building."

As I said at the beginning, I have written this text to answer the question: how did we get those involved in the *KLB* to reposition themselves in the social space? I tried to describe the artistic positions in such a way that the reader can follow this process, of how new subjectivities unfold. In my opinion, self-narration³⁸ on the one hand, and discursivity³⁹ on the other, are the prerequisites. The participants redefine themselves (with the help of artists) in the socio-historical context: in doing so, they also reposition themselves in the social field by conveying the narratives of new subjectivities. In order to do this, the artists need discursive knowledge and discursive skills (but above all curiosity) on the one hand, and specialist knowledge on the other hand (methods and strategies for art in the social field). But all this cannot be done without interpretation. For a further specialized analysis and evaluation, I propose to address the following question: Which concrete methods and formats, in which situations, and in regards to which topics and which participants with different perspectives, were particularly effective namely socially, aesthetically and artistically?

Regarding my teaching 2016

Based on experiences in 2014 and 2015, I adapted my teaching approach for 2016: to motivate students more, to demonstrate methods occasionally, to demand that students read and discuss methods and strategies, to encourage them to try new methods themselves, to host a regular project colloquium or exchange between the students, both in my presence as well as independently, to promote peer-teaching even more and to draw in the knowledge of different people (for example through workshops, consultation with specialists and project participants). In 2016, a structural improvement was made to the project, which was meant to benefit the

³⁸ According to Julian Rappaport, the US community psychologist, who revolutionized the field of social work through empowerment, self-narration is one of three main methods of empowerment-led social work. In this regard, narratives are the most important resources for social change. Rappaport, J., *The Art of Social Change, Community Narratives as Resources for Individual and Collective Identity*, in: Arriaga, X.B. & Qskamp, S. (ed.): *Addressing community problems: Psychological research & Interventions*, pp. 225-246, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

³⁹ Discursivity, as defined earlier in footnote 5, is very important to this artistic approach.

exchange amongst the students: one student assumed responsibility for the curatorial tasks and took care of the appraisal and further development of selected project ideas. As far as the local work situation was concerned, it was extremely difficult. Since we struggled for a long time with rejection on the part of the local residents, one cannot always judge the final results as representative. But considering "what has been learned," the 2016 *KLB* was the most successful of the three editions of the *KLB* project. Most of the participating student artists dealt thoroughly with the problems of participatory art in urban space, and after the project, continued to work within the group on evaluation and documentation, and currently remain committed to this area in their interests and work.

2. FROM THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Curatorial perspective

Julia Herfurth

As a curator, or rather a curatorial support⁴⁰ of the *KONTEXT LABOR BERNAU 2016*, I acted as mediator between the project's two managing institutions: the city administration and the university. From this perspective, I tried to answer the following question for myself: what are the most important points in the realization of a project commissioned by a city council? What needs to be considered? What characterizes the cooperation?

The *KLB 2014-2016* was largely funded by the City of Bernau. Bernau is home to a diverse arts and cultural program, with classical formats such as exhibitions, concerts and the annual Hussiten Festival (Medieval Festival), to experimental formats such as the *KLB*. A very close cooperation with Bernau's Municipal Cultural Bureau and its extended network were essential for the implementation of the *KLB* projects. The Cultural Bureau, its staff and local networks acted as mediators between artists and participants and were instrumental in attracting participants.⁴¹

Specialist literature often criticizes those state-run programs that promote

⁴⁰ It is an open question whether, in such a constellation, one can even speak of a curatorial role, since the development and selection of artistic positions came about through supervision within university courses as well as through an in-house open call and a plenary jury session. In the same way, the on-site implementation was supervised by the lecturer. That is why the formulation of "curatorial support" is more precise.

⁴¹ Kwon, M. (2004). *One Place after Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge, MA und London, GB: MIT Press, paperback edition, (1st Edition 2002), p. 136. "When the artist is from out of town, the sponsoring institution serves as a matchmaker and mediator, becoming the primary source of information and guidance for the artist. [...] Even after a good working relationship has been established between the artist and a partner group, the agency continues to function as a conduit between them, helping balance the wishes and needs of the artist and the capacities and desires of the community partner."

and finance art in public space or participatory projects. They are charged with the appropriation of art and the exploitation of the cultural capital created by artistic work as well as with its gradual transformation into economic capital. Institutional critique is thereby promoted and absorbed by the institution itself.⁴² This means that a city administration or institutions, such as a museum, pursue different interests than project participants and artists. The latter should be aware of this from the beginning of a collaboration and, to whatever extent possible, set the scope for action. In the best case, both sides should disclose their respective interests and goals up front. Artistic work in the public space remains, to some extent, unpredictable, as the following example from the *KLB 2014* shows.

A Remark about Public Space as an Artistic Medium

As part of the *KLB 2014* there was a public discussion about the work *So I speak* by Lisa Schwalb. She had set up a kind of confession booth in public space.⁴³ Visitors could choose to go into the booth as a “listener” or as a “speaker” in order to “get something off their chests” or listen to an unknown person. As part of the simultaneous election campaign, the then mayoral candidate of the leftist party, Die Linke, André Stahl, visited the project, accompanied by the local press. This event was subsequently discussed extensively and titled with headlines, such as “Stahl wants to listen: Mayoral candidate uses art project.” And “Listener Stahl attracts onlookers: Art Project Provides Services in the Election Campaign.”⁴⁴ As a result, the artist felt that her work had been instrumentalized.

Mayor Stahl, who is now in office, said in an interview in 2017 during the project evaluation, that he had certainly influenced the outside perception of the project, and emphasized that it was precisely this, the confrontation with his visit, that was interesting. He guessed that his visit had brought a level of attention to the project that otherwise might not have been achieved. However, part of it was not about the project itself, but about the presence of Mr. Stahl. Moreover, he pointed out that the negative reactions were mainly targeted at him and had little to do with the art project itself.

⁴² Foster, H. (1996). “The Artist as Ethnographer?” In: *The Return of the Real*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp.171 – 204, p. 191: “Just as appropriation art became an aesthetic genre, even a media spectacle, so new site-specific work often seems a museum event in which the institution imports critique, whether as a show of tolerance or for the purpose of inoculation (against a critique undertaken by the institution, within the institution). Of course this position within the museum may be necessary to such ethnographic mappings, especially if they purport to be deconstructive: [...], so new site-specific work, in order to remap the museum or to reconfigure its audience, must operate inside it.”

⁴³ See section 1.2. and footnote 16.

⁴⁴ Barnim Echo, MOZ. Wednesday, September 17, 2014 und Barnim Echo, MOZ Friday, September 19, 2014.

This “incident” is a prime example of how unpredictable the development of a participatory project is, as soon as it takes place in public space and everyone can participate in their own interest.

2.2 We artists in bernau-süd 2016

Julia Herfurth and Natalie Obert

The implementation of participatory projects in a largely unknown town was more difficult than expected. The residents were suspicious of us. Where do we come from and what do we want to achieve? What are we doing here anyway and why?

We were nine artists from five countries, between 24 and 35 years old, working nationally and internationally, experts and specialists in various artistic disciplines. All of us had previously had different experiences in the arts and culture sector. For the majority of us, *KLB 2016* was not the first artistic work that we had planned and realized, but for many it was the first participatory project.

As already mentioned, Bernau-Süd is perceived as a troubled area: high unemployment, many retirees and the sick, many immigrants, the so-called “socially weak,” alcoholism, crime, lack of prospects. There is a strong social as well as spatial separation between the neighborhood and the rest of the town.

These boundaries, whether constructed or felt, also exist within Bernau-Süd: in the neighborhood you can read different sections of the construction, which - as we learned over time - also separate the different groups of inhabitants. Mostly pensioners and more recent repatriates reside in the restored and renovated East German housing blocks, while immigrants and welfare recipients occupy the so-called Wende blocks; in the buildings built since the fall of the Wall live mostly young people, and in the single-family houses on the edge of town we find well-off citizens. It must be stated, that it would be false to assume these groups as pre-existing communities or to conclude from these observations a commonality of individuals resulting in a community.^{45,46} In our case, we were dealing with many small groups, families, individuals or clubs.

⁴⁵ Kwon, M. (2004). op. cit., p. 116: “In actual practice, how does a group of people become identified as a community in an exhibition program, as a potential partner in a collaborative art project? Who identifies them as such? And who decides what social issue(s) will be addressed or represented by/through them: the artist? The community group? The curator? The sponsoring institution? The funding organization? Does the partner community pre-exist the art project, or is it produced by it? What is the nature of the collaborative relationship? If the identity of the community is produced through the making of the art work, does the artist’s identity also depend on the same process?”

⁴⁶ See also FRITZ, E. (2014). *Authentizität. Partizipation. Spektakel: Mediale Experimente mit ‘echten Menschen’ in der zeitgenössischen Kunst*. Cologne/Weimar/Vienne, Böhlau Verlag, p. 60.

Our ignorance of the prevailing structures made our start even harder. We were foreign bodies in Bernau-Süd. We were curious and open and wanted to get to know the inhabitants. We wanted to revive the vacant retail space and get something going. In order to do this, we first had to gain the trust of the residents.

Although we had presented ourselves in a kick-off event, despite the fact that we were regularly on-site and repeatedly invited residents to our *Open Café*, the reactions of the residents were reticent. "You do not fit here," commented one resident. "You are nice; the people are not used to it." We were nice, but also inexperienced and accordingly restrained in our approach. It was difficult for us to talk to people and explain what we were up to and why. This was partly due to the lack of vocabulary. This is not to say that some of us were not native speakers, but rather that we lacked the practice of expressing our artistic intentions in everyday language.

It took a few weeks until we had finally gotten in touch with our "neighbors" and each of the participating artists could attract project participants. Nevertheless, we had to deal repeatedly with the resentment and displeasure of certain residents. While many simply did not show interest and ignored us despite our presence, there were some who regularly complained. Reasons enough were found: the music too loud, the wrong music, the wrong guests, too little interest, too much interest in the "other," wasting taxpayers' money, etc. On the other side, there was a group of local people who visited us regularly, greeted us on the street and passed by weekly with new ideas and materials.

Another difficulty in getting started was that the infrastructure of our premises had to be created and we had to organize ourselves as a team. The cohesion in the group was enormously important, so that we could exchange our experiences and information about the neighborhood and support each other. For this, the regular, twice-weekly meetings were essential.

During the three-month period, the individual projects developed differently and the weak points of certain projects came to light. Nobody could realize his/her project strictly according to plan because the cooperation with people, public places, unknown spatial conditions and unforeseeable external factors was simply unpredictable.

Additionally, some of us had started the project-planning on the wrong foot. These projects were planned in Berlin for Bernau-Süd, for a neighborhood of a small East German town on the outskirts of Berlin, which most artists did not know – they knew only the prejudices mentioned above. Others, however, had visited the residential area several times, but initially failed, due to a lack of experience in the prevailing interpersonal structures.

As a result, we learned that a close study and getting to know the place and the people who live there is a prerequisite for being able to act with compassion and understanding.

It also means that work with public funds should be considered carefully and responsibly; the financing was repeatedly discussed in conversations with participants. Especially in an area where people are fighting for their financial security, you have to be aware of the local economic conditions as well as your own.⁴⁷

Once again, with each of us working through the weaknesses of our respective projects, the mutual support of colleagues, both moral and in the development of content, as well as the wealth of experience and the optimistic approach of the supervising lecturer, Kristina Leko, were indispensable.

Most of our projects were realized, but we had to adapt to the place and the circumstances. We needed: perseverance, flexibility in speaking and action, good ideas, craftsmanship, commitment, stringency, concentration, curiosity, confidence, sincerity to ourselves and everyone else and also good time management, because three months go by quickly.

Once the respective participants were found, a basis of trust had to be established. The more intense the tasks at hand and the exchange with the participants, i.e. with their ideas and personal stories, with the topics, problems, worries, hardships, successes, wishes, hopes and goals relevant to them, the closer the project is to the participants, the more it has the chance to represent, strengthen, contribute to self-empowerment, offer problem-solving strategies and design utopias.⁴⁸ This requires reliability, seriousness, empathy, mutual respect and an eye-to-eye encounter. All this leads to the "success" of a project; it goes without saying that all participants are, in the end, recognized for their contributions.

The intensive engagement with those participants who shared their life and their history with us, also led to the feeling of being overburdened and exhausted. We were confronted with the reality of the lives of the residents, which was often at odds with our day-to-day experience. We had to constantly review and renew our way of looking at the neighborhood and its inhabitants. We became aware of our own prejudices and ignorance over and over

⁴⁷ Evaluation KLB. Available from: <www.kontextlaborbernau-auswertung.tumblr.com> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

⁴⁸ Llorens, N., "Hell is Other People". Available from: <www.contemporaryartstavanger.no/hell-people-ethical-re-reading-artificial-hells> (Accessed 5 February 2019), cited on February 7th 2018: "Social practice art is, in its least complacent forms, a genre that opens the viewer onto something subtle, difficult and time-consuming, namely encountering others. To encounter an other is to tolerate the possibility that the other is not you; indeed that she is irreducibly different from you. To encounter an other is to tolerate the experience of some limit to your own understanding. Social practice art – albeit ideally, potentially, and fitfully – stages that kind of encounter."

again. We constantly questioned our role and position. We negotiated how we were perceived. We had to redefine our concept of art. We reevaluated and renewed the concept of art taught at academies to local residents. We conveyed that art does not have to be just an oil painting on the wall. And that not every oil painting on the wall is art, or maybe it is. We had to define our role clearly and set ourselves apart from social workers, as well as from the idea of the unapproachable artist genius.⁴⁹

Again, the mutual support and the constructive words of the group and our lecturer were encouraging.

If in previous years participating artists could build upon established networks, this year we were starting from scratch. Only occasionally did the previously loyal and interested *KLB* participants and guests make the trek to Bernau-Süd. Not because it was so far away from the historic town center, it was rather the social frontier, which kept them at bay. In personal conversations it became clear that the lack of understanding, why art should now exclusively take place there, and also a lack of interest in this neighborhood, were insurmountable. These circumstances had been underestimated by all concerned. Once again, it became clear that structures and prejudices that have formed and solidified over decades are difficult to break; to do this requires a lot of time and sensitivity.

At the end of the three-month work period on-site, we held a party. The festival was well-attended; local residents and neighbors came to celebrate with us. They took part in the guided tours and actions, looked out of the windows and balconies to listen to the music and wanted to know how to proceed. Many strangers, who had apparently been observing us for months, now wanted to join and had suggestions and ideas. Residents also came from other parts of Bernau and from outside. Some had just learned about the *KONTEXT LABOR BERNAU*.

Finally, we had arrived and the festival felt like the beginning of the project, the basis for our work was established.

Looking back, we realized that despite everything, we had mastered and achieved many things: many neighborhood children had been involved in several projects over the course of weeks. Sometimes they also built bridges to the adults. Some neighbors got to know each other for the first time through our *Open Café*, exchanged contact details and continued to meet. We spent many hours in private living rooms, were invited into the garden colonies and served cakes and sparkling wine, without hesitation we were offered access to private documents, books

⁴⁹ Compare with: Kwon, M. (2004). *op. cit.*, p. 30: "In this sense the chance to conceive the site as something more than a place – as repressed ethnic history, a political cause, a disenfranchised social group – is an important conceptual leap in redefining the public role of art and artists."

and photographs, we were allowed to participate in intimate worlds of thoughts and feelings, received unsolicited letters and drawings. Some residents examined their prejudices and came to create a new image of Bernau-Süd. To some extent, the mutual mistrust was reduced, both between neighbors and us.⁵⁰ We had progressed in small steps. We had gotten something moving.

Through the *KONTEXT LABOR BERNAU 2016* we had learned, experienced, felt and understood that interpersonal relationships stand at the core of the work. Not only the result of collaboration, but the work process itself and the exchange with each other were the focus and linchpin of each project.⁵¹

2.2.1 What is to be considered?

During the intensive project production phase, between the realization of our plans and the management of many organizational tasks, it was only partially possible to observe actual processes from a distance. Only in hindsight were we able to address questions regarding the content and theoretical underpinnings contentual and theoretical questions of our experiences. There is no formulaic solution in the implementation of participatory projects, but from our experience we can formulate some more or less precise guidelines:

- 1) Good mediation work between all participants is the basis for the success of a project (this concerns: participating institutions and companies, funders, public institutions, non-material supporters, participants, artists, curators, residents, and fellow colleagues).
- 2) An analysis of the particular situation must be carried out in detail before a project is designed to ensure both the site-specificity and the interest of the residents or potential participants.
- 3) Prior to the start of the project, techniques for attracting participants

⁵⁰ Compare with: "[...] In fact, the uncertainty of identity experienced by the artist is symptomatic of identities of all parties involved in the complex network of activities comprising community-based art, including the community, the curator, and the institution. [...] In fact, this instability of identity and subjectivity can be the most productive source of such explorations." In: Kwon, M. (2004). *op. cit.*, p.137

⁵¹ About the term "Relational Aesthetics," Nicolas Bourriaud writes: "Every artist whose work derives from relational aesthetic has his or her own world of forms, his or her problematic and his or her trajectory: there are no stylistic, thematic or iconographic links between them. What they do have in common is much more determinant, namely the fact that they operate with the same practical and theoretical horizon: the sphere of interhuman relationships. Their work brings into play modes of social exchange, interaction with the viewer inside the aesthetic experience he or she is offered, and processes of communication in their concrete dimensions as tools that can be used to bring together individuals and human groups." Bourriaud, N., in Bishop, C. (Hg.) (2006). *Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art*. London: Whitechapel Gallery und Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p. 164.

should be compiled and then actually applied.

- 4) The coordination of public relations with all stakeholders is crucial.
- 5) The coordination of financing with all stakeholders and the justification of the items to be financed by funders are essential.
- 6) Sufficient time must be calculated for the immense bureaucratic effort before, during and after the realization of the project.
- 7) In addition, the duration of the project must be planned realistically; for *KLB 2016*, three months of work on site for the year was too short; six to nine months would have been better.
- 8) The artists must know and be able to formulate the core question of their own project; this forms the basis for the purposeful development of the project.
- 9) In addition, they should have an awareness of their role (as an artist) and the questions of the project.
- 10) Co-authorship is always to be emphasized, and all parties involved must be named and appreciated.
- 11) The sustainability of the project should be considered in advance and worked towards during the course of the project: what possibilities are there, for participants to be able to continue the project or to create something lasting?
- 12) The regular exchange between the participating artists should be firmly scheduled and carried out; this leads to greater shared knowledge and supports the realization of all projects.

The implementation of participatory art is a challenge; it places demands on all parties, emotionally, intellectually, personally – it demands our very humanity. In a subsequent evaluation of *KLB*, we asked the participating artists whether they would work like this again: 96% answered yes.

Our experiences, the mistakes and the frustrations, the alleged stagnation of the overall project, as well as the subsequent recognition of the successes, led to profound conflicts in the group and triggered a lasting discussion. During our project work we would have wanted an instruction manual, a guide. Although we read and discussed the small book by Pablo Helguera “Education for Socially Engaged Art,” this only partially addressed our problems. This flaw has motivated us to work on a guidebook ourselves. It is intended to support artists in similar work situations, including ourselves, in realizing their projects. This reader - currently in preparation - brings together the 24 projects, analyzes their impact on the ground from the point of view of the participants and the city administration, the content and the sustainability of the resulting works of art, empirically describes the necessary methods and means, but also contains

further specialized texts from our experience on important topics such as historical work, empowerment and urban research as well as communication and public relations, as well as a glossary of technical terms and a timeline with a history of art in public space and participatory art.⁵²

3. INSIGHT INTO THE PROJECT EVALUATION

Julia Herfurth, Natalie Obert⁵³

3.1 “Art” according to the Participants

What is Art? What Can Art Do?

In a qualitative survey, participants as well as supporters of *KONTEXT LABOR BERNAU* were asked about their understanding or concept of art. Based on the survey, we found that the understanding or concept of art of the respondents changed and expanded through their participation in different projects. The following text collage was compiled from the results of the survey.

It's hard to judge what art is; it is subjective.⁵⁴ Art is always different, out of the head.⁵⁵ Art is human interaction⁵⁶ and it is true to life.⁵⁷ art is play, creation, seeking ideas and creativity;⁵⁸ art is ancestral, touching and changing;⁵⁹ art is seeing and life;⁶⁰ a chance encounter;⁶¹ an interesting life experience;⁶² an arrival;⁶³ a multi-layered animation of the lives of those who get involved;⁶⁴ a confrontation with reality⁶⁵ or with a problem;⁶⁶ it is food for thought⁶⁷ and an unbiased way of seeing the world.⁶⁸ Art is there for everyone, for anyone who is interested in art.⁶⁹ Art can be experienced by everyone. Art can make contact, reduce fears, bring other cultures and (new) people further or closer together and able to deal with one another.⁷⁰ Art is indispensable. Art can make people aware of things, create suspense, the ability to enjoy and expand the scale of their own creativity.⁷¹ Art is interesting and instructive.⁷² Art is everything that is beautiful.⁷³ Art can be an exhibition or everyday life.⁷⁴ Art can be all forms⁷⁵ – sculptures, pictures, stories,⁷⁶ painting, writing, making music, composing,⁷⁷ drawing,

⁵² The publication is projected to be released in 2019.

⁵³ The following students also participated in the evaluation: Jiaying Wu, Ling Yu He, Juan Camilo Alfonso Angulo.

⁵⁴ Annette Rahn

⁵⁵ Anon.

⁵⁶ Anon.

⁵⁷ B. Teubler

⁵⁸ Gisela Engelman

⁵⁹ Franziska Probst

⁶⁰ Antje Mittenzwei

⁶¹ Annette Rahn

⁶² Michael Junghans

⁶³ Anja Schreier

⁶⁴ Karl Jürgen Kaltenborn

⁶⁵ Norbert Selig

⁶⁶ Friedemann Seeger

⁶⁷ Friedemann Seeger

⁶⁸ Annette Rahn

⁶⁹ Dieter Krauser

⁷⁰ Anja Schreier

⁷¹ Karl Jürgen Kaltenborn

⁷² Anon.

⁷³ André Görlitz

⁷⁴ André Görlitz

⁷⁵ Franziska Probst

⁷⁶ Beate Modisch

⁷⁷ Norbert Selig

painting, lace-making,⁷⁸ handicraft,⁷⁹ theater and concerts.⁸⁰ Art (creativity) can be a refueling, can give a lot of power and inspire the senses.⁸¹ Art can make you think, create positive emotions, and make you feel relaxed and happy.⁸² Art can stimulate the imagination, arouse understanding.⁸³ Art can bring joy to people, inspire them, draw attention, bring color to life⁸⁴ and make people talk to each other.⁸⁵ Art can touch people, transport them from inside to outside.⁸⁶ Art can create atmosphere, community and newness, between all, a space where everything is possible.⁸⁷ Art can protect, drive out evil. Through art one can overcome or process negative experiences.⁸⁸ Through art you can reduce stress together with others.⁸⁹ Art can express everything. Everything you can do, for example, or explain with a long text, one can also express with a small picture.⁹⁰ Art can enlighten, entertain, connect and create contact.⁹¹ Art can fulfill educational and networking missions, can connect people with their environment.⁹² Art can convey, can stimulate discussion and exchange, incite controversy, the development of one's own opinions and disputes.⁹³ You see art as a beautiful thing. You connect art with old masters⁹⁴. Everyone should be able to participate in art,⁹⁵ all people have the gift of art.⁹⁶ Art is always changing.⁹⁷ Art tends towards infinity.⁹⁸ Art makes our lives so rich.⁹⁹

⁷⁸ B. Teubler
⁷⁹ Sigrid Pulfer
⁸⁰ Friedemann Seeger
⁸¹ Annette Rahn
⁸² André Görlitz
⁸³ Michael Junghans
⁸⁴ Marlies Sellin
⁸⁵ Sylvia Pyrlík

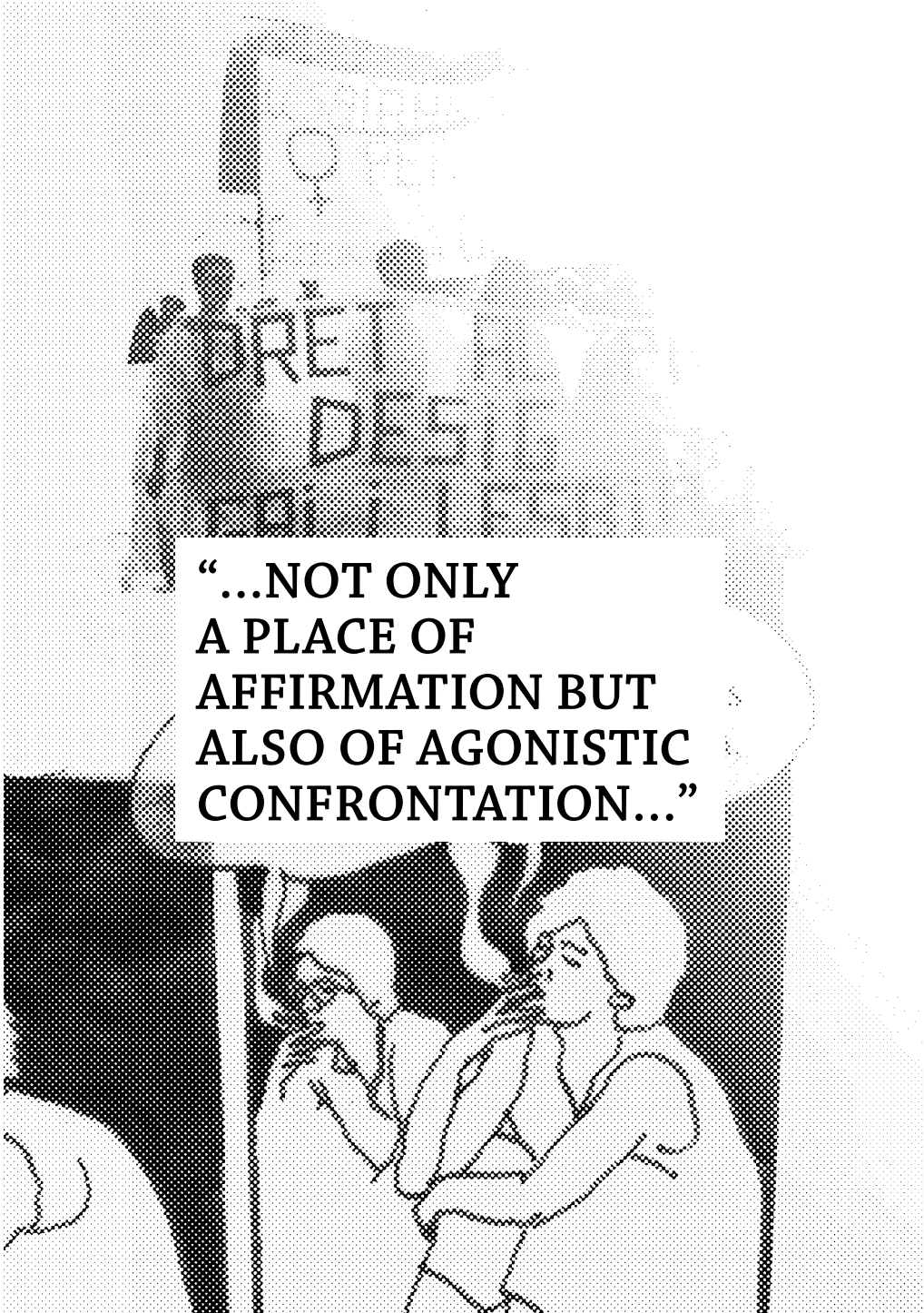
⁸⁶ Diana Kelch
⁸⁷ Franziska Probst
⁸⁸ Heide Müller
⁸⁹ Sigrid Pulfer
⁹⁰ Brigitte Albrecht
⁹¹ Stephan Schmidt
⁹² Anja Lehmann
⁹³ Michael Junghans

⁹⁴ Dieter Krauser
⁹⁵ Giesela Engelman
⁹⁶ Diana Kelch
⁹⁷ Stephan Schmidt
⁹⁸ Karl Jürgen Kaltenborn
⁹⁹ Karl Jürgen Kaltenborn

THE STUDIES YET TO COME.

MACBA's Independent Studies Program

Pablo Martínez (co-academic director of the MACBA's
Independent Studies Program, Barcelona)



**“...NOT ONLY
A PLACE OF
AFFIRMATION BUT
ALSO OF AGONISTIC
CONFRONTATION...”**

Although the question of the purpose of education is always a relevant one, it is all the more urgent in times like these, in which education is being instrumentalized, subjected to a form of innovation at the service of productivity and efficiency. In the case of museums, we must add to this question another one, namely the potentiality of art in the configuration of experience. It is therefore worth recalling Hannah Arendt's statement that “[e]ducation is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it.”¹ For her, teachers hold the responsibility of bringing a love for the world and life into the classroom, and of caring for this world. In our concern for the world we inhabit, we understand that education is the ideal space for thinking, imagining and daring to initiate processes of transformative invention, pursuing a poetic, political and pedagogical imagination that is open to play, to mistakes and to the sort of experimentation that enriches collective life.

If we accept this perspective, then any educational work in the museum constitutes a reflection on how the institution can intervene in the construction of a public sphere, where bodies participate radically and are able to open up new formulas of social intervention. Therefore, it is essential not to think about education as a service that responds to the demands of cultural marketing, but to reflect on the specific experience that can be generated through the museum. Over the next few pages I will share an ongoing attempt to generate a space inside the museum for study, conviviality and radical learning.

¹ Arendt, H. (1972). “La crise de l'éducation”. In: *La Crise de la culture*, essais folio, Gallimard, 1954, traduction française, 1972.

A bit of background

When I was invited to participate in this publication I thought that it was the perfect moment to write my first thoughts around MACBA's PEI (Independent Study Program), since I was nearing the end of my first term on the academic affairs board. However, from the beginning I was aware that it would be difficult for me to find the place from which to speak about the program because of my fragmentary experience of it, and it was a bit odd for me to confront a text without being certain of where I was speaking from. This uncertainty stems from the fact that, apart from my experience as a university professor, the PEI is the first educational program I have had to discuss without having been involved in its original conception and creation. Therefore, many of its basic elements and operating parameters were already given by the framework of the program as well as the institution that promotes it: The Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona. On the other hand, as I already mentioned, the leadership of the program is collective and therefore I am only one part of it. As Head of Programming at MACBA, one of the first decisions that I adopted for the PEI's sixth cycle, which started in March 2018, was to set up a collective academic leadership board composed of a group of thinkers, historians, activists and artists.² One of the most valuable lessons learned from the recent political events in Spain is that any structure that takes the logic of consensus as its point of departure does not generate enough tension for democracy to take place.

The PEI started in 2006 and throughout its history it has had different directors³ and temporal configurations (nine months, two years, four terms). The nature of the program has also evolved over time, from a free program designed in modules (first cycle) to a closed course with registration (second, third and sixth cycles) or a program linked to the university (fourth and fifth cycles), which entailed obligations in relation to the Bologna Process that had an impact on the program. But perhaps what has changed the most from 2006 to the summer of 2018, as I write these lines, is the recognized forms of knowledge, and the ways in which such knowledge is produced. The period following the 2008 financial crisis has seen the Spanish 15M in 2011 and the emergence of new ways of articulating protest, different manners of relating to institutions, new forms

of activism such as the PAH,⁴ and political organization strategies such as municipalism. In this sense, the last decade has witnessed numerous gestures of collective dissidence and dissent in the search for the defense of the public in the face of the threat of the neoliberal state and its repressive violence.⁵ New bodies, different voices and radical attitudes have entered institutions and started to change them from within. In this context, which coexists with the development of cognitive capitalism, the museum, but also the university, as institutions of knowledge production, have been the object of relentless pressure by private corporations and by state austerity policies. At the same time institutions have seen their budgets diminish, they have also been asked to increase the balance in their accounts. Thus, their exhibitions, activities and "services" in general must accumulate their "own revenues," meaning they must search for private capital in the form of sponsorship, patronage, ticket sales or renting out space. However, parallel to this withdrawal of institutions, civil society has organized itself in a number of ways to give rise to countless initiatives for collective learning. These are spaces located on the "inside-outside" of institutions, which civil servants, the precariously employed, students and neighbors have activated as new critical possibilities with alternative economies and temporalities. These new forms of learning and knowledge production are fundamental for programs like the PEI and for any higher education program that wants to have a strong commitment to the world around it.

But what is the PEI?

We could define the PEI as a *learning machine* whose fundamental goal is to mobilize critical thinking and activate the political imagination, at the crossroads between artistic practices, the social sciences and political-institutional interventions. One of the key features of the program involves developing critical capacity, in order to facilitate free movement between thought paradigms. In this regard, far beyond its role as a space for the affirmation of representations and identities, the PEI seeks to interrogate closed categories by activating an antagonistic imagination, one that is able to create fronts of aesthetic and political struggle out of new possible forms.

The para-institutional nature of the program (both inside and outside

² In its sixth cycle (2017-2018), the academic leadership board was composed by the specialist in gender studies Lucía Egaña, the philosopher Marina Garcés, the artist Dora García, the artist and member of Podemos Marcelo Expósito, the anthropologist and environmental activist Emilio Santiago Muño, the art historian Jaime Vindel and myself.

³ In its first cycle it was directed by Manuel Asensi (2006-2007), Xavier Antich in its second and third cycles, Marcelo Expósito and Paul B. Preciado in its fourth cycle, and Paul B. Preciado alone in its 2014-2015 cycle.

⁴ PAH stands for Plataforma de Afectados de la Hipoteca (Mortgage Victims' Platform), the anti-eviction movement in Spain that generated a structure of support, care and solidarity against evictions caused by the unfair Spanish mortgage law.

⁵ Athena Athanasiou developed this idea in her lecture, "Dispossession as an epistemology of criticality," for PEI students at the PEI open seminar, *East Winds: Future Communisms*. Each cycle the PEI holds a series of open events in order to generate debate in the public arena concerning the topics being developed in the program.

the museum, beyond the realm of the university) makes it possible to break with the preconceived idea of what an “institution of higher learning” should be, as well as fully circumvent the logic of acquired competences and professionalization. The PEI believes that the organization of knowledge is a political domain where contents are related to a variety of traditions in pedagogical and discursive experimentation. These traditions are understood not only as subjects of study, but also as a set of living practices able to configure new spaces for knowledge.

The program constitutes an intellectual and experiential challenge, for its students as well as its academic leadership, its professors and MACBA itself. I can affirm that the last two years have drastically changed my way of understanding the program and of the way knowledge is produced and understood in different latitudes. The fissures opened up by students from different origins, and their contributions in the form of differing epistemologies and thought traditions, encourage the program to be constantly on the lookout for a new balance where practice engages through empathy. It is a space for the mobilization of multiple forms of knowledge and the reconfiguration of actions, where students and teachers take on the challenge of putting into practice a conception of education as a space for experimentation and liberation, following the ideas of Paulo Freire. I must insist that this is not an easy endeavor, but is above all a performative way of understanding pedagogy as a fluid practice that must be tested and worked through.

One of the fundamental concerns of the program is to think of the ways that studying might create new forms of political subjectivity from progressive, anti-racist and critical perspectives. The program takes on this difficult challenge—a task which sounds great in papers like this one but is very difficult to achieve in practice—together with its participants, conceiving of research as a space of commitment to the world rather than in terms of a semio-capitalist subject-brand. Responding to this commitment from the stance of life itself, in the new cycle that began in 2017-18 the program is particularly concerned with activating a political imagination linked to the material grounds of survival. Based on eco-feminist positions, it conceives of interdependence as the necessary basis from which to respond to neo-liberal forms of capitalism that represent a total mobilization of life, breaking up each day into a string of differentiated crises: migratory, ecological, institutional and political, to mention just a few.

Apart from featuring lecture-style classes, workshops are included with the aim of initiating specific research projects (collective and individual), along with other events open to the public as international seminars, monothematic courses and lectures (the so-called *PEI Oberts*

[Open PEIs]). Throughout the course of the program, students conduct their own research, whether individually or in groups, accompanied by a tutor connected to the trajectory of the PEI, such as members of the academic leadership, former students, program professors or museum curators. These research projects can be presented in any final form deemed suitable, including performance, film, curatorial projects or academic research, among many other options. This is not only a possibility; rather, the program actively encourages students to generate other forms of essays that diverge from the academic paper. Participants know that the focus of their research should not be the final “result” of the research but the process. Furthermore, during the program different collective research projects are carried out.⁶ The collective research project is an essential feature of the program’s methodological approach, grounded as it is on the idea of cooperation, collaboration and coexistence. These projects generate working methodologies that step beyond the productive logic of the privatized and individualized as the only possible form of knowledge, spilling over the edges of traditional disciplines to settle in an undisciplined space.

Radical pedagogy: Can the civilizing crisis wait?

Throughout the sixth cycle of the PEI, which has taken place over the last two years, we have discussed at length the possible meanings of radical pedagogy. At this point I would not just call upon bell hooks, Pier Paolo Pasolini or the long tradition of anarchist pedagogy in Catalonia begun by Ferrer i Guardia. I would propose something simpler and apply the etymological sense of “radical,” as something that goes to the root of things, and to the need to configure, in the vein of Marie-Josée Mondzain,⁷ a sort of radicalism that moves beyond extremism to take up virulent beauty and political energy, and with them the courage of constructive rupture and the most creative imagination. From this position, what makes pedagogy radical is not just its content, or even its form, but the transformative effects it produces in people’s lives. Rather than the acquisition of competences, radical pedagogy is oriented at affecting life, and by life I also mean life in the biological sense, linking pedagogy to the awareness of the interdependence, vulnerability and limits of the earth, or how life is sustained through a material reality ignored by hetero-patriarchal capitalism. Colonial-

⁶ One from the 2017-2018 cycle, the *Arxiu desengaixat* [Dislocated archive] is the case study included in this volume.

⁷ Mondzain, M.J. (2017). *Confiscation des mots, des images et du temps*. Paris: Les liens qui libèrent. It is also interesting the approach that Marina Garcés gives to illustration in her book *Nueva ilustración radical* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2017).

ism and capitalism are based on a fantasy of independence and autonomy, of imagining and practicing a life detached from its material foundations.⁸ And traditional education has played a fundamental role in building a civilization out of the myths of progress and continual growth. In this sense, in this sort of pedagogical programs it is essential to go to the roots of things in order to displace the modern notion that knowledge should be produced from a distance. In parallel to this shift to the roots, pedagogy should generate new scenarios of good living that are not connected to the idea that well-being equals consumption.

To a certain extent, in the current cycle of the program we have failed in this project for several reasons, perhaps partly because it was the first time we had faced this type of content and this eco-feminist awareness. On the other hand, for participants, the amount of discourse aimed at dismantling the consumerist imagination, erasing our desires and drawing a panorama of material scarcity and permanent economic crisis, was far from pleasant. At the end of the cycle, in an evaluation session, one of the participants spoke to us about the discomfort that this content produced. In her experience, “for the first months of the program I felt very anxious about the content of the program. It was so violent in its diagnosis of environmental collapse. It wasn’t a nice way to get started...the civilizing crisis can wait!” For me this phrase stood for a failure of the program, demonstrating how, as far as environmental collapse was concerned, we were unable to activate our diagnosis beyond generating sad truths, as opposed to building new bridges between practices in order to make this diagnosis itself into a possibility and a means of producing difference.⁹ As such, rethinking the idea of how to creatively imagine coexistence in scarcity without generating distress, disaffection and discouragement it is not just a challenge of this particular program, but a vital issue for the work of the museum as a whole. It is a challenge that Goethe formulated in the following terms: “Why with their griefs be over gloomed / If joy through perished things soar free? / Were not a myriad souls consumed / To stablish Timur’s tyranny?”¹⁰ Undoubtedly one of the crucial tasks facing us at the present juncture is to educate not in order to know more, but to emancipate ourselves from a desire linked to the exploitation of our environment and all forms of life on this planet.

⁸ Herrero, Y. (2018). “Sujetos arraigados en la tierra y en los cuerpos. Hacia una antropología que reconozca los límites y la vulnerabilidad”. *Petróleo*, Barcelona: Arcàdia et MACBA.

⁹ Stengers, I. (2012). “Reclaiming animism”. In: *e-flux journal* #36, July 2012. Available from: <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/36/61245/reclaiming-animism>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

¹⁰ Goethe, J. W. (1861). “À Souleika”. In: *Divan oriental-occidental, en douze livres, 1812-1827*. Traduction par Jacques Porchat, Paris: Hachette et Cie, p. 568.

Study as an agonistic practice

This new cycle, under joint academic leadership, has brought to the program enough abundance and variety (as well as an undeniable degree of complexity) to encourage thought on the edge, with the ability to take on the difficulties that distinguish the antagonisms of the present moment. It represents a drift toward a feminist distribution of power and an attempt to make the structure of the program more horizontal. However, collective decision-making also generates certain complications that undoubtedly connect with the notion of radical democracy or education as an agonistic practice. Collegial leadership brings with it a multiplication of the voices in the conversation, giving rise to varying versions of the program’s content. This can in turn create the impression of a lack of coordination when what we do in the sessions does not match up with what is on the syllabus. It is in the very nature of group work to quite often be full of contradictions. On the other hand, the plural leadership of the program is aimed at calling on different epistemological and theoretical positions, based on the conviction that a study program is not only a place of affirmation but also a place for an agonistic confrontation of positions.¹¹

The concept of study as suggested by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten¹² has been relevant to the program because they understand study as an activity that is not aimed at accumulation or mere training, but as an action done with others in order to affect life. It is a collective practice that recognizes improvisation as part of a methodology, and gives in to the ever-mutating ambitions of what it is incapable of envisioning, leaning on the unimaginable as a potentiality. In this sense, it generates different relationships than modern competition-based methods. The PEI is a non-formal education program, and the way in which people approach knowledge when their end goal is not credits or a degree is (or should be) very different. Perhaps it is a naive way of thinking, but in the absence of grades and credits, one’s approach to knowledge is less prejudiced, with greater interest, with more capacity for work and with a greater appeal to the co-responsibility of those embarking together on a learning process of these characteristics. This point perhaps raises some of the paradoxes of the program, since this lack of certification brings to the program an element of radicalism that, in the market of academic capitalism linked to art or curatorial practices, is in fact an added value that works in favor of the accumulation of symbolic capital. All my experience in the program has

¹¹ Mouffe, C. (2007). *Prácticas artísticas y democracia agonista*. Barcelona: MACBA / UAB (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona).

¹² Moten, F. et Harney, S. (2013). *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. New York: Minor Compositions.

been full of paradoxes, even outright contradictions, but for a long time I decided not to succumb to the contradictions; indeed, bell hooks says that anyone who is subject to a system of domination is full of contradictions. In this sense I find very productive the concept of *criticality* as developed by Irit Rogoff. For Rogoff criticality is:

...at once an ability to see through the structures that we are living in and to analyse them in a theoretically informed way, while at the same time being able to recognise that for all of one's critical apparatus, one is nevertheless living out and imbricated in those very conditions. Of course, criticality has critique enfolded within it, but it is more. It is a conscious duality of both living out something while being able to see through it, and it requires another mode of articulation, one that cannot smugly stand outside the problems and offer a clever and knowing analysis. Instead it requires that the experiential dimension of what we are living out be brought into contact with the analytical. And, of course, one of the reasons I so value a notion of criticality is because it does not allow for either cynicism or sarcasm, which are the ultimate expressions of knowing outsidership. Instead the need to navigate the terrain at levels of analysis, feeling and mutuality emerge in what Arendt has so beautifully termed "we, fellow sufferers."¹³

Undoubtedly, working for institutions that have turned into companies and that continually demand economic, visibility or public figures, this criticality becomes an imperative. While neo-liberal ideology and its influence over institutional governance have transformed education into a marginal or innocuous agent, the PEI attempts to make education a site for politics again. We could define this sort of education as an agonistic practice instead of a practice of control and discipline.

The studies yet to come

And so, to talk about the potency of the PEI I would like to use the figure of the "yet to come" that Cuban theorist José Esteban Muñoz¹⁴ uses when describing the *queer* as something that has yet to arrive, that is not lived, as a negation of the here and the now and as an appeal towards the potentiality of the concrete possibility of a different world. Muñoz offers a *queer futurity*, or a *queer sociability*, as a new form of temporality that

challenges the hetero-patriarchal here and now, and moves it towards the there and then of minorities through the activation of aesthetic strategies to survive and imagine ways of being within utopian worlds. In terms of the PEI, I like to think of the future as a possibility to investigate and mobilize the contents of the program. By the same token, I refuse to think about the success of its contents, in line with Jack Halberstam's¹⁵ ideas regarding the art of failure. Instead, in narrating this story I prefer to avoid and resist the logic of success, productivity, value and property. I would also like to think about the possibilities that an educational space can offer as a place where the stories of domination are reviewed not only through narratives but also through the forms of producing meaning and collective work. Again, this is much easier said than done, but museums are wonderful spaces for experimentation despite the fact that they respond, to a large extent, to a standardizing function: not only the regulation of artistic work, but also the generation of relationships, corporalities and ordering temporalities. Generating in the present temporalities other than those of the spectacle and cultural consumption has become a constant challenge for any institution, and to do this they are essentially forced to pervert the very logic that governs the way they operate. In this sense, it is important to think about the extent to which a museum study program, beyond replicating narratives, can truly project the imaginary. I would also like to think about the extent to which the museum of contemporary art can continue, in spite of all the difficulties it may have, to fulfill a prospective, avant-garde function, establishing itself as a space for criticism and reflection, not only of the world in which we live, but also of the world in which we want to live. In this sense, the challenge is to inhabit institutions of the past while envisioning the future.

¹³ Rogoff, I. (2017). "The Disenchanted". In: *eremuak* #4. Available from: <http://www.eremuak.net/sites/default/files/eremuak4_2017_en.pdf> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

¹⁴ Muñoz, J. E. (2009). *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: NYU Press.

¹⁵ Halberstam, J. (2011). *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press.



“...READING
OUR
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DISLOCATING THE ARCHIVE AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE: "ARXIU DESENCAIXAT", a Situated Experiment in Unstraightening the Archive

Lucía Egaña Rojas and Benzo, Julieta Obiols, Javiera Pizarro and Diego Posada (project coordinator and students of MACBA's Independent Studies Program, Barcelona)

Introduction

Are institutional archives constructed from a heterosexual perspective? Is it possible to unstraighten the archive? What materials does the heteronormative gaze include and exclude? What happens to archives that are housed in organizations, in private homes, in boxes belonging to key figures in struggles of sexual dissidence?

*Arxiu desencaixat*¹ [Dislocated Archive] was an exhibit running from February 15 to July 13, 2018 on the lower floor of the MACBA Study Center.² But it was also an educational process, a collective research project, an excuse to build networks, a place to recover historical memory, and a space for creative experimentation. Taken in the strict sense, the project's multifaceted nature ventured far beyond the “archive” as such. At the same time, part of the aim was just this: to radically appropriate the meaning of the term itself, to blow it up from the inside, in order to destroy and dismantle our traditional understanding of “the archive.” It was

¹ The name of the project has been kept in Catalan because we worked with materials from our most immediate context. By maintaining the original Catalan title, our goal is to take the phenomenon commonly referred to with the English word “queer” and bring it back to the local level. Queerness is thus framed as a series of questions that do not all match up, like a “dislocated” joint.

² This exhibit drew on materials held at a number of archives and documentation centers throughout Barcelona, most of them activist-run. We would especially like to thank Ca La Dona; Centro de Documentación Armand de Fluvià; Àlex Brahim, for opening up his personal archive to us; MACBA Study Center; Fanzinoteca; and all the authors, artists and others who have shared their work with this project on an individual basis.

a flagrant insult hurled at the ways the term is normally defined.³

Arxiu desencanaixat set out to investigate and shed light on a selection of materials that tell the story of sexual dissidence in Barcelona from the second half of the 1970s⁴ up to the present. That these materials have come down to us at all is essentially thanks to the personal initiative of the key figures in these struggles who have safeguarded them over the years. Gaining access to them allowed us to discover, explore and reconstruct a plurality of biographies and histories that, both individually and collectively, suggest connections which run counter to official narratives based on a single cohesive movement.

Where to begin? Project coordinator Lucía Egaña invited us, the students in MACBA's Independent Study Program (PEI), to generate an archive – or space for remembering – of the city's sexual dissidence struggles. Of the thirteen students who accepted the invitation,⁵ most of us hail from Latin America, which helped foster a unique, decentralized perspective. Our eagerness to participate can also be interpreted as stemming from the need to connect with the city through a specific thread of its historical fabric, namely that of sexual dissidence. As the project did not have any definitive or preconceived objectives, we started out by reading our fortune using a queer-feminist tarot deck created by Invasorix,⁶ a gift from one of our godmothers, Kathleen Hanna. Its feminist, zine-style aura accompanied us throughout the entire process, to the extent that the tarot card became our first archival document and even found its way onto the exhibition poster.

Both the *Arxiu desencanaixat* and this paper are the result of collective work that has been contaminated by the views, emotions and desires of the participants. Motivated by a specific strand of activism, politics and aesthetics, the process was open to proposals and new ideas, and was full of curiosity, oversights and mistakes. The project's name arose over drinks at

a bar near the MACBA, after we first decided to rule out the term “queer,” both because it is so tied to the English-speaking world, and because it did not make sense for the time and place covered in the exhibit; in 1970s Barcelona the term *queer* did not have the same currency it enjoys today.

On the “nature” of queer materials

The materials that make up these archives were not made with a mind to the museum-oriented posterity typically envisaged by artists. Many are undated and were created more to be used than to be put on display. They were produced as weapons with the power to transform a present that was exclusively, forcibly *straight*. These materials are tools in the struggle for a “dislocated” future, opening up the possibility of shattering the monolithic “straight time” of the present⁷ and the straight spatial geometries and orientations imposed by heterosexuality.⁸ Although these documents bear witness to the struggles of sexual dissidence, they are not included in the archive for the sole purpose of perpetuating a historical narrative, but rather to preserve the transgressive potential of the micropolitical.⁹

These archives hold the memory of dissident ways of living, feeling and relating that have been permeated by struggle, and therefore are part of what Cvetkovich has called an “archive of feelings” that is “both material and immaterial, at once incorporating objects that might not ordinarily be considered archival, and at the same time, resisting documentation because sex and feelings are too personal or ephemeral to leave records.”¹⁰

As observed by Cvetkovich, queer communities have an “emotional need for history,” hence the urgency of creating archives that question what is worthy of being documented and how to narrate history. For these and other reasons, archives of sexual dissidence are unusual and difficult to organize into a narrative with the sort of coherence found in other types of document collections.

Classifying the materials using labels and categories is one point of conflict

⁷ Muñoz, J. E. (2009). *Cruising utopia: The then and there of queer futurity*. New York: NYU Press.

⁸ Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects, others*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

⁹ It is worth recalling, as noted by Muñoz (2009), *op. cit.*, that evidence of sexual dissidence has historically been used against lesbians, gays, cross-dressers and trans people in order to punish, discipline and medicalize them; as such, attempts to document these people's experiences run the risk of adversely affecting their very lives. Because they are a form of evidence, the materials in these archives are preserved surreptitiously, practically hidden away. They contain not only the story of these struggles, but also, like a diary or family picture album, a record of the everyday life, bonds and relationships of the people they document, alongside their role as activists. As such, the ephemeral evidence, both historical and emotional, in these documents and archives of sexual dissidence are full of past utopias and latent revolutions.

¹⁰ Cvetkovich, A. (2003). *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

³ There are, of course, various “other” terms that have been used to name these kinds of “dislocated” archives, such as the counter-archive (see: Kashmere, B. (2010). “Cache Rules Everything Around Me”. In: *Incite #2 Counter-Archive*.) or the anarchiving (see: “Anarchive – Concise Definition”. n. d. SenseLab. Accessed 24 September 2018. Available from: <<http://senselab.ca/wp2/immediations/anarchiving/anarchive-concise-definition/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019)). However, we have chosen to maintain the term “archive” in order to test its limits, and also because we believe that sexual dissidence can make use of these often normative concepts, however deviant that use may be.

⁴ We set the specific start date of 1977, the year that 4,000 demonstrators congregated along Las Ramblas to demand the repeal of the Franco-era Law on Social Dangers and Rehabilitation. An audiovisual record of this demonstration was shown in the *Arxiu desencanaixat*, courtesy of José Ramón Ahumada.

⁵ The PEI students were Julieta Obiols, Vatiu Nicolás Koralsky, Benzo, Diego Posada, Javiera Pizarro, Héctor Acuña, Juan David Galindo, Lina Sánchez, Lior Zisman Zalis, Itxaso Corral, Isamit Morales and Alexander Arilla, alongside external participant Camila González S. We also wish to thank everyone from MACBA who participated, and especially Aida Roger and Cristina Mercader.

⁶ Invasorix is a Mexico-based queer-feminist collective. A copy of the tarot deck is held at the MACBA archive, available from: <<https://www.macba.cat/es/a12181>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

that emerges when encountering a dislocated archive. Can that which has been dislocated be categorized? Should it be done? What happens when, to avoid labels, we become invisible again? What happens when labels constrain us or force us to relive the stigma attached to crime or illness? Can categories be reappropriated, along the lines of originally derogatory terms like “queer”? As we went about building the *Arxiu desencaixat*, these tensions grew increasingly clear the more we engaged with the rationales and necessities of classification used in institutional archives.¹¹

The first space we visited in order to construct the exhibit was the MACBA. As with other institutional archives, it posed the contradiction of, on the one hand, the need to establish categories in order to make the materials retrievable, and, on the other hand, the difficulty of doing so in the case of materials related to sexual dissidence. Without categories many of these materials cannot be consulted because they are not visible in the catalog. The ability to locate them requires categories that, in turn, entail the risk of reinforcing the labels already imposed upon dissident identities.

The classification systems of dissident archives respond to diverse rationales and necessities related to the lived experiences recorded in the documents. For sociologist and feminist activist María Lugones, “one experiences her life in terms of the impoverished and degrading concepts others have found it convenient to use to describe her. We can’t separate lives from the accounts given of them; the articulation of our experience is part of our experience.”¹² These archives bring together and organize lives of dissent as a form of resistance to the ways in which others have tried to name such experiences.

A dislocated research methodology and the tactile nature of the materials

The Catalan verb *desencaixar*, which we have rendered in English as “dislocate,” is related to *caixa*, or “box.” Thus, *desencaixar* is also to take out of the box, the warehouse, the closet. The participle *desencaixat* therefore refers to that which refuses to be classified, that which falls outside the norms of society, breaking out of recognizable frameworks. In terms of disciplines, this sort of “dislocation” raises the prospect of a blurry zone between areas of specialization. In the case of the *Arxiu desencaixat*, we adopted a hybrid approach at the intersection of archival work, curatorship,

artistic production, gender studies, sociology and detective work.

In methodological terms, “the dislocated” therefore represents a practice that eludes exclusive adhesion to one discipline and that defines its reflections based on actions, and not the other way around, as is often the case in more traditional research methodologies. This collective form of research involves visiting the existing archives in person, reading through the finds together as a group, and coming up with personal criteria for how to navigate them that account for the unexpected.

In this sense we could say that the selection of the materials was guided by erotic criteria. Visual attraction, surprise, curiosity and resonance with one’s personal history were all decisive criteria in selecting and accumulating materials for the *Arxiu desencaixat*. The exhibit thus took shape as a chorus of desires, as the enthusiasm at rediscovering objects that others had safeguarded for years in order to preserve their own memory.

It was impossible to reduce this way of selecting the materials to the paradigm of the keyword search. Erotic criteria of selection demand immersion in the materials at one’s disposal, poring over them. This often involves searching without knowing what one might find along the way. It is a selection process that requires direct contact with the materials and the ability to let oneself be guided along by attraction and desire. However, the relationship that arises between the researchers and the document is not a closed one, but one that is permeated by the desires, bodies, words and memories of the archives’ caretakers. Our motivation in consulting and seeking out the materials was our own erotic criteria, in dialogue with and under the seductive influence of the archives’ guardians (e.g. the people at Ca La Dona, the Centro de Documentación Armand de Fluvià, or Àlex Brahim), in a sense the living catalogues, guides and connoisseurs of a corpus we were only beginning to explore.

The *Arxiu desencaixat* project, as a collective research process, revealed itself to be a transformational event both for the researchers, as we gained a new understanding of history, the city and memory, as well as for the materials themselves, which were reprinted, recreated and grouped together with other documents that forced them to be reinterpreted from a different standpoint. Following this experience, we believe that, more than the fact of coming face to face with an original historical artifact, the most important aspect of gaining access to these materials was discovering the ways of relating to them with the body. Because of this, at the practical level, we digitized all of the materials that were going to be included in the exhibit at high resolution, in order to then print copies that were similar to the originals, or that were modified in ways that would go unnoticed by most of the people who used the *Arxiu desencaixat*. The materials could

¹¹ Rawson, K.J. (2017). ‘El acceso al transgénero // El deseo de lógicas archivísticas (¿más?) queer’. In: Various authors. *Archivar*. Barcelona: Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, Instituto de Cultura, La Virreina Centre de la Imatge.

¹² Lugones, M.-C., and Spelman, E. V. (1983). *Have we got a theory for you! Feminist theory, cultural imperialism and the demand for ‘the woman’s voice*. Oxford: Pergamon Press. pp. 573-574.

be touched, handled and moved around. In a way, this recreated our own experience of searching through the various archives throughout the city. At the same time, it offered visitors a taste of the eroticism of encountering these gems, allowing them to develop “body to body” relationships with the documents and push their own desire to the limit, even opening up the possibility of theft.

Re-making the archive: activations as an unrehearsed exercise

The *Arxiu desencanaixat* occupied and inhabited the exhibition space through a diverse assortment of materials and a wide range of on-site activities.¹³ Practically all of us who participated in the research process also took part in these activations, which reflected the non-static nature of the materials, and suggested ways of embodying them via a situated reinterpretation. We carried out thirteen activations in total, including talks, workshops, performances, on-site interventions and presentations of proposed readings. These activations sometimes gave rise to positions or topics that were not always contained in the original archives, a sign that they had found their way into the time and place of the present.

The activations included two workshops. One took place at the beginning of the show's run, titled, *Imagine your dyke, draw your faggot*. How can we represent something dissident?, which invited participants to rethink our collective imagination through the materials on display. The second workshop, held in the show's final days, was aimed at collectively putting together a fanzine, as a final report on the project that reflected its own production process. Four performances were held. The show's opening event featured the performance *“Pink Guide” Information Service*, in which thirteen performers reproduced an experimental consultation service from the height of the AIDS crisis promoted by the Coordinadora Gai-Lesbiana during the 1990s. Another was the Performative reading of oppressive laws, in particular excerpts from the Law on Social Dangers and Rehabilitation, finally repealed in 1995. During the Day and Night of the Museums we organized a performative guided tour of the exhibit, a somatic experience in which visitors were invited to approach the materials on display with their bodies. That same night images from the archival materials were projected onto the outer walls of the MACBA. This was the only action done outside the confines of the Study Center, with the intent of breaking through the boundaries of the exhibit and its physical spaces.

¹³ The different activations can be reviewed in greater detail at the following link: <<https://www.macba.cat/en/activations-dislocated-archive>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

In the *Arxiu desencanaixat* we exhibited books from the museum's collection that responded to the topics addressed in the show. In two of the activations we presented selected readings articulated around the topics of queer diasporas and colonialism, and around the body and depathologization.¹⁴ There was also a special bulletin board in the museum where we posted these reading lists.¹⁵ Another activation based on the readings was the release of the Spanish translation of Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure*,¹⁶ seven years after its original publication. Part of our aim was to shed light on the slow pace of translations, and the time it takes for many books and ideas to reach beyond the English-speaking context.

Lastly, there were two further activations that directly addressed the importance of the spoken word in constructing archives of sexual dissidence. Some forms of history do not leave behind any material record, such as narratives of sexile, which is why we decided to include them in the activation series to provide them with a space – albeit ephemeral – within the exhibit. Such was the case of the *Living Library* activation, organized in collaboration with the ACATHI organization,¹⁷ which turned the exhibition space into a stage where the audience could hear these experiences first hand. The activity reaffirmed the fact that in the field of sexual dissidence, the greatest repositories of memory are to be found in the bodies of the living.

Finally, we recorded the personal and collective stories of the caretakers of some of the archives from Barcelona. We conducted interviews that were then made public within the exhibit,¹⁸ adding another dimension to the objects on display, and including the narratives of those who had made their conservation physically possible. What stories do the materials of these dissident struggles tell, and what happens to the stories that never get recorded? The spoken word plays a crucial role in the preservation of

¹⁴ We proposed a total of three reading lists, which can be found at the following links: <https://www.macba.cat/uploads/20180216/2018_Arxiu_desencanaixat_Espai_Lectura_publica_eng_1a.pdf> <https://www.macba.cat/uploads/20180423/Bibliography_Queer_diasporas_and_colonialism_eng.pdf> <https://www.macba.cat/uploads/20180605/Bibliography_Living_without_permission_web_eng.pdf> (Accessed 5 February 2019)

¹⁵ We installed a large-scale collage with excerpts from laws, newspaper clippings and medical handbooks, representing the hegemonic discourses surrounding the stigmatizing production of deviancy and pathology. On top of this layer we arranged books containing dissident and activist discourses, deviant theory and “lowlife” literatures. In this way the books took over the visual space of the hegemonic discourses, revealing both their ineffectiveness and their tenacity.

¹⁶ Halberstam, J. (2011). *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. Translated by Egales (2018).

¹⁷ ACATHI is a Barcelona-based organization that has been working since 2002 on issues related to migration, asylum and LGBTBI+ populations.

¹⁸ The people interviewed were Muntsa and Mercé Otero Vidal (Ca La Dona); Jordi Samsó and Pierino (Casal Lambda); Àlex Brahim; and Estel Fabregat and Marta Vega (MACBA). All of the interviews are available from: <<https://archive.org/search.php?query=subject%3A%22arxiudesencanaixat%22>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

these stories,¹⁹ which is why we repeatedly insisted on including it while constructing the *Arxiu desencanaixat*, as a criticism of more hegemonic forms and in order to cultivate an affective and rebellious archive.

As a whole, the activations brought out aspects of the materials that were not necessarily contained in the documents themselves: interconnected histories, biographies, parallel materials, voices and performances.

Dislocated futures

We began this paper by asking whether it was possible to unstraighten the archive, and how the heteronormative gaze manifests in the construction of memory. To a certain extent, all of the work throughout this process has been influenced by this question. We understand straightness as “a hegemonic form of knowledge that models our interpretation of our bodies and precludes the possibility of imagining or living them any other way.”²⁰ In this sense, heteronormativity, which affects all institutions, also determines the ways in which memory is recognized and administered.

Neutrality – as a characteristic of science, of the construction of knowledge, and also of the management of institutional archives – limits the possible readings of sexual dissidence, obscuring the political and epistemological effects of this “distancing of one’s own body and those of others, as well as positing straightness as the supposed locus of neutrality through the silencing and self-imposed invisibility of the body.”²¹ Straightness²² is a catalyst for forms of subjectivization and epistemologies that can be interrupted by experiments and experiences that eschew such neutrality. In this sense, most of us who developed the *Arxiu desencanaixat* identify as members of the community of sexual dissidence, and it is from this standpoint of direct involvement that we have approached the archives and their materials. This gave us the sensitivity to recognize the importance of the guardians of these memories, making a sort of homage to the personal and emotionally involved care given to these materials, a

gesture that stands in tension with the work of the museum conservator.


In educational terms, and as a proposed methodology for collective research, our experience in the *Arxiu desencanaixat* could be further developed in the future, in our context and in others. Whereas this process was situated in and circumscribed to a specific place and time, we believe that our experience provides tools to face the challenge of continuing to unstraighten the many forms of knowing, remembering, and constructing one’s own history.

¹⁹ Boyd, N.-A. and Roque Ramírez N. H. (2012). *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press.

²⁰ Flores, V. (2015). “El reto de des-heterosexualizar la pedagogía.” In: *La escuela como productora de identidad: desafíos de una educación sexual integral no heteronormada*, 1-9. Buenos Aires. p. 4.

²¹ Flores, V. (2015). *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²² For Monique Wittig straightness is a political regime and a social contract. This idea is developed at length in Wittig, M. (1992). *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press. Moreover, we can also approach straightness as a 500-year-old colonial invention, whereby the colonial discourse constructed itself in binary opposition to the “sodomites” of the Indies, as a means of affirming their “otherness” (Egaña, L. (2017). “Hago más traducciones que las malditas naciones unidas, de mierda.” In: Benzidan, K., Egaña, L., and Yos (Erchxs) Piña. *No existe sexo sin racialización*. Edited by Leticia Rojas and Francisco Godoy. Madrid: Self-published, pp. 64-74. pp. 67-68).



**“...NETWORKS OF
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COMPETITIVENESS...”**

TRANS– MASTER, ART – EDUCATION – ENGAGEMENT

Towards an Unconditional Feminist Pedagogy of Planetaryity

microsillons (head of the TRANS– master, HEAD – Genève)

Since 2015, the TRANS– master’s program at HEAD – Geneva, with its programmatic subtitle *art – education – engagement*,¹ has provided students with a framework for thinking about and developing socially engaged art practices.

Collective art projects, a key element in the architecture of the program, are designed and implemented by students in the Polis over a fairly long term (during the two years of their master’s studies) in collaboration with associations, cultural and educational institutions, neighborhood residents and other groups of people who do not define themselves as artists. One significant example of this approach is the TRANS– master’s program’s action in Les Libellules, a district on the outskirts of Geneva, which is presented below in this publication.

The courses in the TRANS– master’s program are organized around these collective projects and contribute to their various phases (research, conceptualization, implementation, critical analysis, publication etc.). These socially engaged art projects, undertaken in a DIWO (Do It With Others)² spirit, raise complex questions whose answers vary according to the context, the people involved and the conditions in which they are implemented. Within the TRANS– program, each participant’s position on reciprocity, community, pluralism, collaboration, and social and political transformation

¹ The *microsillons* collective responsible for the master TRANS– program was previously in charge of a continuing education program at Zurich’s Hochschule der Künste called *Bilden – Künste – Gesellschaft* (Education – Arts – Society) (2009–2014) concerned with the same issues.

² This term appeared in 2006 to define art practices that shifted the Do It Yourself spirit from punk and digital art practices to a more collaborative approach, taking advantage of the new opportunities afforded by the Internet. The “network-aware” artists who espouse a DIWO approach ask political and ethical questions that go far beyond digital issues, asking “how people can best organize themselves now and in the future in the context of contemporary economic and environmental crisis.” Furtherfield, “No Ecology without Social Ecology,” in: Biggs, S. (2012). *Remediating the Social*. Bergen: ELMCIP, 2012. pp. 69–74. Available from: <<https://www.furtherfield.org/diwo-do-it-with-others-no-ecology-without-social-ecology/>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

is constructed through dialogue with their peers – with other students and with teachers. Furthermore, the students develop personal art practices that revolve around social and political issues.

The TRANS– master's program approach is geared towards (and promotes)³ a *feminist, unconditional pedagogy of the planetarity*.

Feminist, first of all, because it fundamentally challenges the binary hierarchies and oppositions between theory and practice, teacher and student, personal and political, and instead embraces a holistic dialogic approach based on the experience of each individual. Knowledge and projects here arise out of an ongoing exchange between a community of learners, starting with the concerns of those who constitute that community, so thinking collectively (which demands attentiveness to one's peers) prevails over an individualistic approach, and knowledge in the making over predetermined content packaged in measurable units.

Inspired by critical, anarchist and feminist thoughts, the pedagogical approach of the TRANS– master's program applies the concept of *transpedagogy*,⁴ combining art and education to create singular forms of knowledge production and exchange. Consequently, the students are involved in the very conception of the program, taking part in group discussions with teachers to that end and developing their own projects using the resources of the master's program. Student-teacher dialogue in the classroom brings up new questions and discursive angles that are then explored in other formats within the master's program. Furthermore, the students themselves organize some of their courses (which are credited), in the tradition of student-run seminars and of self-institutions.⁵

The dialogic pedagogy practiced in the master's program courses is then implemented at another level: in exchanges with groups of people engaged in collective projects who do not define themselves as artists. In either case, the object is to use art to heighten critical awareness by opening up spaces for agonistic exchange⁶ between very different conceptions of society.

The TRANS– master's program historically ties into the concept of gallery education [médiation culturelle], which often comes up in consid-

ering the connections between art and education.⁷ However, the kind of cultural outreach work practiced here is far from conventional efforts to make legitimized cultural content accessible to the greatest number of people. It is closer to Mary Louise Pratt's *art of contact zones*, i.e. a strategy developed in "social spaces where cultures" – or different conceptions of culture – "meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power."⁸

Another aim of the program is to produce knowledge and skills rooted in practice and local experience. Theory and research, which are necessary in developing a reflective, self-critical approach to collective projects, are closely intertwined here with a situated and praxis-oriented approach. Hence the program's emphasis on the tools of action- and art-based research in work done by undergraduate⁹ and doctoral students¹⁰ as well as in research mandates supervised by the master's program.¹¹

The projects developed by the students need to be *unconditional* in the sense of not depending on economic or political forces or on considerations of employability or profitability. For Derrida, the "modern university," as he calls it,

*demands and ought to be granted in principle, besides what is called academic freedom, an unconditional freedom to question and to assert, or even, going still further, the right to say publicly all that is required by research, knowledge and thought concerning the truth.*¹²

Consequently, it should oppose a great many different forces (the state, economy and media as well as ideological, religious and cultural forces) liable to impose shackles on the "democracy to come," as Derrida calls it. To be sure, socially engaged art practices must take into consideration the prevailing conditions and must develop based on the context in which they take place. However, they should also be thought of in unconditional terms, as an experimental artistic action would be, eluding any attempt to control

³ See Carolyn M. Shrewsbury: "Feminist pedagogy ultimately seeks a transformation of the academy and points toward steps, however small, that we can all take in each of our classrooms to facilitate that transformation." Shrewsbury, Carolyn M. (1993). "What is Feminist Pedagogy?". In: *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 8-16, pp. 9-10.

⁴ See Pablo Helguera's contribution to this publication page 386.

⁵ Many formats developed by artists in the 2000s and named after courses, seminars, even universities (such as CFU and WFSU) are positioned as auto-institutionalized learning platforms. See *microsilons*, "Auto-institutions : produire et échanger des savoirs en commun," in: Kihm, C. et Mavrikdorakis, V. (dir.) (2012). *Transmettre l'art. Figures et méthodes quelle histoire ?*. Les presses du réel, Dijon, pp. 241-259.

⁶ In reference to political specialist Chantal Mouffe's thought.

⁷ Before the arrival of *microsilons* in 2015, students could choose between two programs: Teaching (*enseignement*) or Outreach (*médiation*).

⁸ Pratt, M. L. (1991). "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession*, pp. 3-40.

⁹ All the students write a master's thesis closely related to their individual and/or collective work.

¹⁰ In partnership with the EPFL doctoral program in Architecture and "Sciences of the City," Mathilde Chénin, a TRANS– master assistant since 2017, is currently working on a doctoral thesis within the TRANS– master's program.

¹¹ In particular, research (carried out by Cécile Boss and supervised by *microsilons* in 2017-2018) on the outreach project "Passeuses et passeurs de Culture" at the Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne.

¹² Derrida, J. (2002). "The university without condition." In: Kamuf P (ed./transl.), *Without Alibi*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 202-237.

knowledge – as Spivak says about the teaching of literature¹³ –, and not as a profitable or cost-efficient service (in terms of real, measurable impact on a social group or in terms of symbolic added value).

While the TRANS– program strives to put down local roots, it also involves forging a – *planetary* – network of *critical friends* who participate in the program in various ways (lectures on theory, workshops, conferences, exhibitions etc.).¹⁴ Above and beyond this network, the pedagogy of the master's program is committed to *planetarity* in a wider sense: acting locally but with a planetary consciousness, an awareness of being part of an ecosystem that contains many other systems of thought and organization. Planetarity goes beyond a *global* vision that levels diversity to conform to a unitary structure (ignoring the conditions of numerous substructures) or an *international* approach that fails to allow for the *transnational* dimension of some of these systems.¹⁵ It requires constant attention to postcolonial, intersectional¹⁶ and environmental¹⁷ issues. It calls for the creation of networks of solidarity that may serve as alternatives to the competitiveness and expansionism of the dominant paradigm. What is more, this approach keeps us from losing sight, in the various spheres of action and discourse of the TRANS– master's program, of our privileged vantage point.

¹³ Spivak, G. C. (talking with Anne Verjus and Juliette Cerf) (2014). "Enseigner les humanités." In: *Philosophie magazine*, 2014. Available from: <https://www.philomag.com/les-idees/enseigner-les-humanites-10643#_ftn14> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

¹⁴ Since 2015 have lectured at the TRANS– master: Mabe Bethônico (artist and researcher), Bureau d'étude (artists collective), Kadiatou Diallo (artist and educator), Dias & Riedweg (artists), Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez (researcher in pedagogy), Janna Graham (artist and educator, member of Ultra-Red collective), Pablo Helguera (artist and head of program in MoMA), Myriam Lefkowitz (artist), Olivier Marboeuf (author, critic and curator), Mathieu Menghini (historian of cultural action practices), Carmen Mörsch (researcher, former director of Institute for Art Education in Zürich), Nils Norman (artist), Sofia Olascoaga (curator), Nicolás Paris (artist), Marie Preston (artist), *Rester. Étranger* (artists collective), Gregory Sholette (artist and theoretician), Tilo Steireif (artist, teacher in visual art didactics), Nora Sternfeld (professor "documenta" in Kassel and member of the critical mediation collective trafo.K), Agnès Vannouvong (author), Mathilde Villeneuve (curator), *Wochenklausur* (artists collective).

¹⁵ Spivak, who proposes the term "planetarity", writes: "Planet-thought opens up to embrace an inexhaustible taxonomy [...], including but not identical with the whole range of human universals: aboriginal animism as well as the spectral white mythology of postcolonial science. If we imagine ourselves as planetary subjects rather than global agents, planetary creatures rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us; it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away." Spivak, G. C. (2003). *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 73.

¹⁶ Thinking in relative terms about forms of oppression based on origins, gender, sexual orientation and economic power is a particular challenge for socially engaged art practices, but these issues should be at the heart of any educational project.

¹⁷ In her essay "Après la séparation: utopie et écopédagogie," Isabelle Fremeaux shows that the way universities are organized, divided up into disciplines, departments, modules, study hours and skills, and the ever-prevalent modern myth of critical detachment from the living world makes it "almost impossible to discuss (much less perceptibly experience) the concepts that would necessarily be at the heart of any ecological understanding of the world." Fremeaux, I. (2013). "Après la séparation: utopie et écopédagogie," in: Valdès, L. (ed.), *Des utopies réalisables*, Genève: A-Type, 2013, pp. 109-117, p. 113.

The object of the pedagogy developed in the TRANS– program is to develop and support a community of learners¹⁸ (including students, of course, but also teachers, alumnae/i, and the above-mentioned *critical friends*) that is organized as a solidarity-based network. In an increasingly competitive and individualistic art world and job market, solidarity can be a first basic response. During and after their studies in the TRANS– master's program, students join forces and team up, pooling their desires and resources to continue their practices, to keep their intellectual and interpersonal exchange going as well as to obtain grants, residencies or prizes. In order to lay the foundations for the formation of such a community (in the sense of an open, numerous and complex group of people producing shared knowledge and to foster the solidarity that binds it together, almost all TRANS– program students in the same year take the same classes together, thereby forging a set of shared references and experiences (collective projects, workshops given by outside instructors, study trips etc.). *Conviviality* is a key element of these exchanges and is not confined to casual encounters, to the pleasure of being together, but chiefly figures in the act of sharing tools (co-managed web platforms, participatory photo studios, mobile equipment for collective exhibitions etc.), comparable to those of the *convivial society* described by Ivan Illich¹⁹ (see the case study on Les Libellules on page 354).

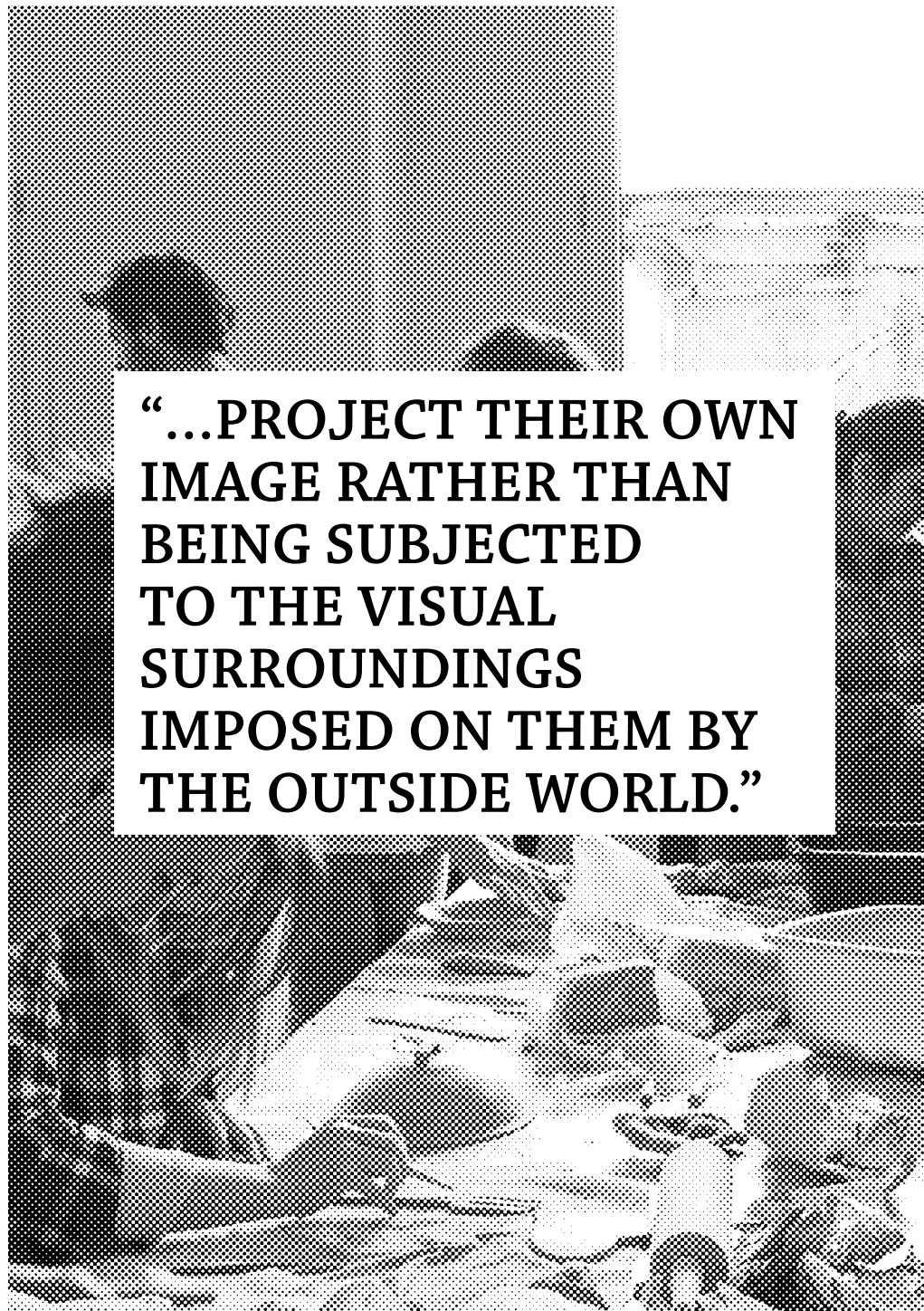
The TRANS– master's program offers a framework for the experience of a unique pedagogy and formulates projects which the students, assistants and teachers carry out not as exercises, but as real projects of socially engaged art. As *microsillons* pointed out in an inaugural lecture entitled *Entre deux chaises*,²⁰ while practicing such pedagogy in an art school's official curriculum may seem paradoxical and problematic (involving, for example, thinking about other ways of evaluating individuals working in groups, other ways of crediting practices inspired by self-governance, and devising ways of adapting a long-term strategy to a predetermined period of time), it is actually a matter of simultaneously rethinking and defending the institution by thinking up new ways of going about things, new arts of socially engaged practice, by cultivating what the Greek-French philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis called an *instituting social imaginary*.²¹

¹⁸ Echoing to the idea of "Teaching Community" developed by bell hooks. See: hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, London: Routledge.

¹⁹ Illich, I. (1973). *Tools for Conviviality*. New York: Harper and Row.

²⁰ Talk given to the Visual Arts Department of HEAD — Genève, September 19, 2016.

²¹ For philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis, the concept of the radical imaginary permits a non-deterministic understanding of history capable of appreciating the importance of the unpredictable emergence of new ideas, new types of behaviour and new social rules. One aspect of this radical imaginary is the *instituting social imaginary*, which allows for the need for institutions established by human communities to be capable of altering themselves. See: Poirier, N., Cornelius Castoriadis. "L'imaginaire radical". In: *Revue du MAUSS*, 2003/1 (no 21), pp. 383-404.



**“...PROJECT THEIR OWN
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BEING SUBJECTED
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THE OUTSIDE WORLD.”**

LIBELLULES

**TRANS– master’s program actions at the
Art’Lib neighborhood exhibition space,
2015–2018**

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The following is a case study of a long-term action from two perspectives: as a socially engaged art project and as a pedagogical project. For three and a half years, HEAD–Geneva’s TRANS– master’s program – Art, Education, Engagement – took charge of the programming at the Édicule Art’Lib, a neighborhood exhibition space used as a cultural center in Les Libellules. A neighborhood on the outskirts of Geneva.

This neighborhood is organized around a large single building that provides *very cheap* [très bon marché] housing for about 1200 people. Per capita income in Libellules is among the lowest in the Canton of Geneva and the place is notoriously plagued by social problems. In the fall of 2015, an overall renovation of the building was completed, including the construction of several “édicules,” small kiosk-like edifices placed in front of the building, intended to promote social interaction. One of these spaces, called Édicule Art’Lib (ill. 47), is run by the Culture and Communication Department of the City of Vernier. So the following January, the TRANS– master’s program took charge of the cultural programming for Art’Lib, an approximately 50 square-meter space. We received logistical and financial support from the City of Vernier and the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations.

This task provided a practical and thought-provoking framework in which TRANS–, a master’s program focusing on the connections between art and society, was to conceive and develop novel approaches to link up a study program and a cultural project. Its master’s students as well as its teachers, lecturers, and a great many local and international actors in culture and the arts eventually came to this space to hold meetings, screenings, workshops, exhibitions, debates and discussions about art and other subjects.

From the outset, we insisted on the prime importance of involving residents, local associations and the Libellules school, which adjoins the building.

We wanted to work with them, but also imagined the space could host cultural events and other content wholly generated by the residents themselves.

We envisioned Art'Lib as the *right tool*, as Ivan Illich terms it in *La Convivialité*,¹ to promote conviviality in society rather than productivity, to empower users instead of enslaving them. We developed the Art'Lib project over the ensuing months, without any strict rules or a uniform method, with the aim of building it up according to the desires, skills and availability of the actors on hand, whether institutional or not: residents and visitors, students and teachers, social workers and fellow citizens, associations and the school. All the formats we proposed were free of charge.

The pedagogical aspect of this experiment was based on confidence in each student's ability to find a way to get involved in the proposed context – a neighborhood close to Geneva brimming with the diverse life stories of its inhabitants – as well as to ask themselves the questions necessary to develop a complex approach to their action. How can I create a dialogue between personal and collective narratives? How can I bring people with disparate interests together? How can I use art to allow for different individual temporalities and set a shared objective? How can I generate exchange between residents of Les Libellules and a wider public? How can I produce a dialogue between different cultural repertoires and conceptions? How can I produce representations that go beyond stereotypes, whether about *working-class neighborhoods* or about *highbrow* culture and contemporary art? How to identify and deconstruct one's own privileges? How to facilitate forms of reciprocity in the exchange?

This essay recapitulates, from our perspective as supervisors of the master's program, the actions, projects and events that brought the Édicule Art'Lib to life. It is based on the important work of planning and implementation as well as documentation and reflection by our TRANS–master students. Direct quotes from the students involved² serve to point up the complexity of the issues, aspirations and affects involved in such a situation. Our guiding principle was not to impose any formats, while suggesting various experimental means of including residents who were interested in participating. So, in parallel to the long-term collaborative projects (14 projects lasting for a year or more were developed over the course of the TRANS– *aux Libellules* action), a great many events, receptions and screenings were held here at the initiative of students and teachers, artists involved in the master's program and, more rarely, local

residents. Unconditional hospitality³ was a principle of vital importance at these events, which brought together a diverse public, including locals and curious outsiders, friends and supporters.

There is a lack of tools, concrete tools. Though naturally, it shouldn't be a sort of instruction manual either...

For a citizens' museography

We will not attempt an exhaustive description here of each of the various offerings, but will try to show, based on a few guiding principles, how the use of this venue was continually revisited and how it contributed to the emergence of what we call a *citizens' museography*. This term describes our vision of the space not as a venue in which to introduce institutionally legitimized culture into a social environment considered to be suffering from a cultural deficit, but as a place of exchange, as the locus of an ongoing circulation of cultural tools and content emerging from collaborative efforts with local residents. The Édicule was used as an exhibition space solely to present ongoing projects with the neighbourhood's inhabitants or to present an intermediary retrospective overview of the actions carried out by the master TRANS– in Les Libellules (with the exhibition 2 ½ in Spring 2017) (ill. 66).

Valorizing their desires, their interests, their cultures... what they want! Yes, that's what I'm interested in.

Rather than hewing to a model of cultural democratization, we made use of the existing cultures there, seeking to take into account and give visibility to existing skills within both the student team and the local community. This sometimes proved difficult, our invitations did not always meet with success, but some formats provided an opportunity for exchange and shared production.

Some of our ambitions for this unique cultural space were similar to Thomas Hirschhorn's in creating the *Musée Précaire Albinet*, a temporary museum of classical modern 20th century art in the Paris suburb of Aubervilliers. On a plot of land near his own studio, the artist set up a temporary edifice to serve as a museum for three months. In partnership with the Centre Pompidou, it exhibited “masterpieces of modern and contemporary

¹ Illich, I. (1973). *Tools for Conviviality*. New York: Harper and Row.

² These quotes are drawn from a series of interviews conducted by Marie-Avril Berthet — a researcher invited to take part to the pedagogical process in Libellules — with each year's TRANS– master students.

³ In reference to Jacques Derrida, see: Derrida, J. & Dufourmantelle, A. (1997). *De l'hospitalité*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

art” by artists “whose utopia was to change the world,”⁴ including Malevich, Mondrian, Duchamp, Le Corbusier, Beuys and Dali. Rather than simply importing this *established* culture into a culturally disadvantaged area, the artist endeavored to create a locus of exchange and contextualized reflection based on these works. He invited about ten youngsters to undergo a course of training enabling them to mount the works in the museum and run the site. He also organized several workshops and talks.

The Centre for Possible Studies, a satellite project of London’s Serpentine Gallery launched in 2008 at the initiative of Janna Graham, proposes another model of interconnecting a cultural site and its surrounding neighborhood, namely by promoting the long-term exchange and valorization of skills in a facility devoted to the production of discourse. The stated objective of the Centre for Possible Studies was to put the people living around it, along Edgware Road, in touch with artists-in-residence with a view to exploring issues directly related to everyday life in this central London district, an area of widely differing cultures in which the richest and poorest denizens of the city cross paths daily. The Centre for Possible Studies was a project as much about celebrating a neighborhood’s history and its residents’ life experiences as about opening a space in which to imagine its future. Unlike other museum institutions, discourse and stories are produced at the Centre through a generative process involving locals, who make up the majority of its users.

In our efforts to develop a civic museography we also drew inspiration from the District Six Museum, a South African institution that seeks to preserve the memory of former inhabitants of color who were forced out of an inner-city residential area of Cape Town during Apartheid in the 1970s (a big map of the city on the floor shows where they used to live) to make room for white residents. The museum also seeks to construct a dialogue around urban transformation using oral history, including reminiscences of its once-vibrant street life and shops, even shared recipes that highlight the multicultural richness that once prevailed here.

In Les Lilas, another eastern Paris suburb, we paid a visit to the Espace Khiasma with students in the winter of 2015. Now closed, the Espace Khiasma, founded by Olivier Marboeuf (who was to be a regular guest at Les Libellules), was an art space and meeting place in Les Lilas, which, in addition to projects by various artists, initiated art projects involving local public participation, self-management and the creation of collective experiences.

⁴ Rencontre Internationales Paris/Berlin. Contemporary Moving Images, “Coralie Suard. *Jours tranquilles au musée précaire Albinet*,” 2004. Available from: <<http://art-action.org/site/fr/cat/sample.php?oeuvre=J63745&lang=fr>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

In all three of these projects, we drew inspiration from the nexus between center and periphery, institutional and informal, exhibition and research, artists and residents, and between short and long temporalities.

Employing the term *citizens’ museography* with regard to Art’Lib points up two different dynamics: on the one hand, that of a museum, evoking the institution and its established legitimacy as well as its physical permanence; on the other hand, civics, the practice of citizenship, conceived as a process, an ongoing exchange of rights and responsibilities.

I think it’s a matter of trust. We have to trust one another.

From representation to self-representation

One of the tasks assigned to this *institution in the making* was to produce other representations of the neighborhood and its inhabitants. This was a core aspect of several of our projects: to go beyond preconceived journalistic or sociological images and explore different ways of representing the life of a neighborhood such as Les Libellules.

In the spring of 2015, for example, the TRANS– master’s program held a photography contest, the theme of which was humor. The purpose of this contest was partly to initiate interaction with as many people as possible (by offering free photography workshops, among other things) and to observe the self-representations that emerged, opting for a positive theme as our point of departure. The level of participation was disappointing, however, so the TRANS– students came up with another approach: they set up a neighborhood photography studio in the space for a few weeks. Visitors were photographed against a green background and could then choose the setting they wished to be portrayed in using digital montage. In other words, they could project their own image into an ambient space of their own choosing, rather than their self-image being subjected to the visual surroundings imposed on them by the outside world.

The results from this photo studio were then presented in an exhibition along with information about the history and use of this public photo studio. The photographs submitted for the contest were also displayed in connection with other images. The workshop was run entirely by the students, with the assistance of Adrienne Domingos, a young local resident, who was paid for helping out.⁵

Following up on this project, a group of students developed *Mon quartier, ton quartier* to continue the exploration of self-representation commenced

⁵ We routinely recruited young local residents to help carry out projects at Les Libellules – and remunerated them for their assistance.

by the photo studio, moving it to actual sites in the neighborhood where local children spend their time. Louise Baillat, Arthur Miffon, Céline Privet and Sanja Vuckovic worked with a primary school class of 10- and 11-year-olds from Les Libellules to create images of their neighborhood blending imagination and reality. Drawing on the know-how of the schoolteacher, Mr. Urfer, and his methods (especially the making of photo-novels), the students devised a series of steps to produce photographs in which the pupils staged themselves in surrealistic scenes set in their own neighborhood (ill. 50). The first step involved location scouting – identifying important places in the children's daily lives – followed by experiments with framing. Then, in small groups, they wrote scenarios (including imaginary elements) set at the scouted locations. In the second step, the schoolchildren acted out their stories and photographed them under the students' supervision (ill. 51). In the final step, the students handled the post-production and put together an exhibition in the space, presenting the photographs along with a booklet recounting the whole project. Each of the children received prints of the images they helped produce, and the large-format prints featured in the exhibition were donated to the school, where they are still on display to this day.

Another project, *Pictomaton* (ill. 60), was developed by Alice Izzo and Lomée Mévaux with the aim of changing representations of the neighborhood by inviting several artists to draw portraits of its inhabitants. Seated inside a mobile structure on wheels shaped like an ordinary photo booth, the artists went to various parts of the neighborhood, providing a sort of public outreach service in the manner of public letter writers. Each model was seated facing the artist in a *private* compartment screened off from the outside world by a curtain, visible only to the *portraitist* sitting very close to the subject. The artist would produce a signed portrait within a matter of minutes and give it to the model.

We found that children and families felt more clearly addressed by the TRANS– master projects than other groups of locals. So a student collective calling themselves Fanz Lib' (Sandrine Balli, Kelly Cavadas, Greg Clément and Milly Saugy) used the format of a fanzine to reach teenagers. Two issues of Fanz Lib' were produced in collaboration with Olive, a Geneva-based comic artist, who created the characters of Eddy Kull and Edith, both of whom bring up thoughts and questions addressed by the collective (ill. 61). Put together during evening workshops, this self-published fanzine drew a fictional portrait of the neighborhood, developing a story line and characters that were not *inspired by true events* and demonstrating that fiction can be created out of a quotidian context. With a print run of 100 copies, this desktop publication was distributed from hand to hand, which in turn made for new encounters with neighborhood residents.

Circulation

Circulation is another concept at the heart of all the TRANS– projects in Les Libellules: circulation between the practices and interests of students and residents, between established forms of culture and grass-roots productions, between groups from central Geneva who frequented Art'Lib in Les Libellules and neighborhood residents, between locals invited into the city of Geneva to take part in projects and cultural institutions.

Our *Lost & Found* project is a good illustration of this circulation at various levels. Involving a series of round trips between Les Libellules and the Ariana Museum, it employed the technique of ceramics to highlight the connection that can be established with objects lost or found at different times in one's life. These objects metonymically evoke the memories that form milestones or signposts on our individual or shared paths in a migration society: what have we lost and what would we like to find in our lives? Taking advantage of existing skills within the group, we chose ceramics as the medium through which to materially represent these objects. Four students in the TRANS– master's program, Carisa Mitchell, Alexandra Nurock, Hugo Hemmi and Margrét Gyða Jóhannsdóttir, initiated a collaboration with the Libellules community center to make contact with its many users and involve the staff of a facility that is essential to the life of the community. A partnership was also formed with the Ariana Museum to promote a dialogue between the amateur practice of ceramics which the students sought to implant in Les Libellules and the expertise of a Geneva institution specializing in this field.

To begin the collaboration and introduce them to the project, residents were invited on two tours of the Ariana Museum and a visit to Geneva's Lost and Found Office. About fifty women who were taking French courses at the local community center took part in these outings, along with other residents, including a number of children, and the Ariana Museum's outreach workers. A bus from Les Libellules was specially chartered for the occasion. A ceramics workshop was then started up on the premises of the community center (ill. 53-54). In all, over two hundred objects were crafted by about fifty people and then fired at the CERCCO workshop at HEAD – Geneva.

An exhibition about the project was then mounted at the Ariana Museum, for which the students designed a display consisting of two large showcases in which the objects were sorted by category as in a lost and found office (ill. 55). The exhibition poster listed all the participants, and a leaflet recounted the various stages of the project. At the opening of the exhibition – including a buffet prepared by users of the local community center, and with music provided by a DJ – the Minister of Culture of the

City of Geneva, Sami Kanaan, stressed the importance of the project both as a form of cultural outreach, opening up the museum to a new public, and as a social action. Efrem Ukbagebriel, Rabi André and Madhi Akbari, three young residents of Les Libellules who took part in the various stages of production, gave several guided tours for the public.⁶

Some second-year students in the TRANS– master's program, Fanny Badaf, Mathias Good, Marie-Sabine Reber and Luisa Veillon, chose to work on the issue of neighborhood relations. Seeing as certain practical and legal information about housing is not always easy to obtain, they decided to compile and distribute selected information for residents based on their questions and suggestions. It took the form of a brochure containing important and useful information (emergency phone numbers, noise pollution regulations, even how to handle bed bug infestation etc.), information about life and leisure in the Geneva area (where to go out, where to find a library, where to practice sports etc.) and some more unusual *tips and tricks* (how to create a beehive, park a trailer, cool a bottle in 15 minutes etc.).

Circulation was also a core concept in a project developed in collaboration with two other establishments, the Haute école de travail social (HETS) (school of social work) and La Marmite, an association that promotes access to culture for all. Some TRANS– students and about fifteen HETS students (and their teacher Mathieu Menghini) worked together on the concept of movement and mobility. First they took part in a series of events organized by La Marmite: a discussion with Chantal Jaquet, a philosopher who wrote a seminal book (*Les Transclasses*, 2014) about the social mobility of individuals who actually do change their social class; a visit to the Art and History Museum in Neuchâtel to discover Jaquet-Droz's automatons (1767–1774) and their *programmed* movements; a discussion of Jacques Tati's film *Trafic* (1971); a visit to the Comédie de Genève to see Samuel Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) about the movements of memory and recollections accumulated over the course of a lifetime.

This team of students was called the *Galileo Group* in homage to the famous Tuscan astronomer who dared to suggest that the planet earth moves amongst the stars, thereby upsetting the established world order.

Summing up the *Galileo Group*'s impressions and representations with regard to the theme of movement and poetically retracing their itinerary, the TRANS– program students drew up a series of experimental walks and subsequently transformed them into protocols for walks that could be done by others.

An exhibition (curated by TRANS– alumnae Alice Izzo and Lomée

Mévaux) retracing the various stages of the exchange addressed the question of mobility in a neighborhood in which social mobility is a particularly sensitive issue. To take it to the next level, mobility was the subject of a day of discussions entitled *Libellules – Circulations* on April 24, 2018. The guest speakers that day, Ghislaine Heger (a video artist and photographer working on social welfare issues), Marie Preston (an artist who works with people who do not define themselves as artists) and Mathilde Villeneuve (co-artistic director of Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers), discussed their experiences and thoughts on projects carried out in so-called peripheral areas, and the TRANS– students talked about their projects in Les Libellules. The event concluded with a concert by a group of local musicians.

Conviviality

The concept of *conviviality*, which was essential to our relations with Les Libellules residents, also informed the ethical position we sought to develop there. While we tried to give Art'Lib some measure of exposure and visibility and to connect it up with other places, it was also crucial to integrate this cultural space into the life of the local community. So we ended up organizing or participating in celebrations and festivals, such as the inauguration of Les Nouvelles Libellules after the building's renovation (which provided an opportunity to produce some giant collective graffiti on Art'Lib's inside walls) or a *Neighbors' Day* festival, to which we contributed *public drawing* and *collective collage* activities.

How can we create opportunities to *be together* by means of artistic offerings and thereby question our social and cultural habits? Some students came up with approaches that were both simple and thoughtful, such as *Pop Queen* (ill. 58). Conceived by an English-speaking student named Carisa Mitchell, the project questioned her position as an artist and the concept of socially engaged art, but also the difficulties she had meeting and talking to other people due to her hesitant French. She prepared and offered people popcorn to try to break the ice, thereby creating a minimal but necessary framework for a convivial encounter. In addition to a bag of popcorn with the statement *I am making art* on it, she gave each visitor a questionnaire about their personal tastes.

While it is not always easy to start up a dialogue with people from different walks of life, a cultural object can serve as a tool for the purpose of this exchange. So we routinely suggested to guests of the TRANS– master's program that they propose a cultural offering to locals and users of the space, whether it be a performance about the practice of blackface,

⁶ Some of them were subsequently hired by the institution for other outreach assignments.

as given by Olivier Marboeuf,⁷ or a selection of artists' videos from the Macval collection, as presented by Stéphanie Ayraud.⁸

Emilie Bujès, at the time a video curator and programmer of the *Vision(s) du Réel* documentary film festival in Nyon (she is now its artistic director), and filmmaker Pauline Julier were requested to join forces to put together a video program for Art'Lib. They prioritized medium-length films by young filmmakers in the region who could come and talk about their work and share their experience. Each evening screening was followed by a discussion over a light meal. These events were a good example of encounters between locals and members of Geneva's arts scene. In this context, films by Aude Sublet, Basil Da Cunha, Karim Sayad and Mari Alessandrini met with a different resonance from that of a specialized festival.

Conviviality is also reflected in the very design of the space. TRANS-student Selim Boubaker developed special furniture to make the space more welcoming. The first module he produced was a series of four wooden tables, objects that may seem commonplace, but are, in fact, potent inducements for people to share. To sit facing a person and start up a conversation or discussion is already to create an exchange. One table is designed for playing chess, while the others proved useful for other purposes in the life of the space.

Exchange of skills

It's a matter of passing on sensibilities through a common language, common references, mutual understanding.

Given the TRANS- program's fundamental interest in alternative pedagogies, in approaches that favor dialogue and horizontality, the question of potential alternative forms of education and pedagogical exchange was repeatedly discussed and explored at Art'Lib.

TRANS- guest artist Philip Matesic, for instance, set up a format called *Each One, Teach One* with the students at Les Libellules. It was about a collective, cross-fertilizing form of learning by and for everyone, using the knowledge and skills on hand among those present. So the students offered their peers and visitors an opportunity to learn the rudiments of modern Greek and Icelandic cooking, how to do schematic drawings and how to set up a fishing line. Following these three days of exchange, the TRANS- students developed a program for sharing their interests and

skills in various fields. From an evening on the subject of tattooing to an afternoon on pinhole cameras, the offerings functioned as invitations to which the locals responded unevenly; some of the students took low or no turnout as a form of rejection of what they had to offer.

In May 2017, Chantal Küng, an artist and teacher at Zürich's Hochschule der Künste, paid us a visit with her *Mobile Classroom* (ill. 63), a large and very heavy box containing all the equipment (projector, books, miscellaneous tools) needed to give a class adapted to a given context. Touring the neighborhood with her mobile classroom, she gave the TRANS- students a class in the public space, taking up British anarchist educator Colin Ward's concept of the *Exploding School*.⁹

Another form of exchange was the contribution of master's student Isabel Guerrero, who asked visitors, during the 2016 Neighborhood Festival about their memories of school. The responses were noted on slips of paper that were then deposited in the archives of MURO, a *Mobile Museum of Education* built out of elements of school furniture.

In the master's program we were also taught to think deeply about methods of transmission. That's where you really see the mechanisms that get put in place.

Students also gave workshops, open to residents and anyone else interested, on various techniques, including collage, graffiti, drawing, photography, video.

At the sight of a group graffiti session during the inauguration of their neighborhood Édicules, local kids expressed an interest in learning how to spray-paint. To satisfy this demand, Jean Oberson, a student interested in street art, set up a graffiti workshop called *Pédagogie de la Cité* (*Pedagogy in the City*) in partnership with the extracurricular program at the local school. From January to June 2017, Oberson went through the history and techniques of street art in weekly sessions with six girls and three boys about twelve years old, culminating in spray-painted wooden panels that were presented at the end-of-year school festival in Les Libellules (ill. 62).

Another such exchange was *Cut & Paste*, a collage workshop started up by Yan Su and Laura Rivanera, two students with divergent artistic practices who found common ground in this project. At the outset, the point of the project was merely to enter into contact with residents and users of the Libellules neighborhood. The students soon took to social media (including the *Meetup* platform, which networks common interest groups) to expand the reach of the

⁷ See above.

⁸ Public relations officer at the Musée d'Art Contemporain in Val-de-Marne.

⁹ Ward, C. (1973). *Streetwork: The Exploding School*. London: Routledge & K. Paul.

project and to promote exchange. They did collage, a technique that is easy to use, playful and accessible to everyone, in an experimental workshop. After half a dozen sessions devoted to individual work, the students proposed a group collage, which gave rise to an interesting play of territories, styles and attitudes, and culminated in a large-scale composition (ill. 59).

To place this collective production and exchange of knowledge and skills on a long-term basis, proceeding on the conviction that real dialogic action takes time, we also sought to establish a certain regularity in the Art'Lib programming. For one semester, artist and TRANS– alumna Louise Bailat, for example, was assigned to open the space every Wednesday afternoon. She developed a workshop there for anyone who wanted to come and draw. Several Geneva museums lent items from their collections for the workshop participants to draw, discuss and find inspiration in, which involved trying out a new form of exchange.

The master's students also got to experience dialogic forms of exchange with pupils at the primary school in Les Libellules. First-year students Laura Braillard, Elvira Fabregat, Bo Lee and Jeanne Martin-Taton conducted a project with 11- and 12-year-old schoolchildren (ill. 65). In dialogue with the class's schoolteacher and under the supervision of Tilo Steireif, an artist and teacher in the master's program, they put together a sequence culminating in the production by the pupils of a series of collective silkscreens representing changes they wished to make in their schoolyard. These sessions combined observation, drawings and discussions about the children's relationship to the schoolyard, an area of freedom which is, paradoxically, overseen and regulated by adults. The pictures made during these sessions were recapitulated on three posters, which were then reproduced so that each participant could get one, reinforcing the collective aspect of the project's approach.

Lastly, Giulia Ferrati, Louise Lafarge, Antoine Montessuit, Antoine Poudret and Magali Raspail developed a collaborative project called *Libelol* with the Libellules community center. For a festival project revolving around games, they thought up an environment and workshops that enlivened the space during the festival week (April 2018): collecting childhood memories in various cultural contexts, they explored the ways in which people of all ages relate to games. Looking back on the project afterwards, the students pointed up the difficulties of working in an unfamiliar environment such as Les Libellules at the start of their experiment.

A nested place

At the outset, taking charge of the programming for a facility that had no pre-existing public was a challenge: would we be capable of occupying

and animating the space over time, while preserving the qualities of experimentation and adaptability necessary for the pedagogical framework of the master's program and for a *socially engaged artistic practice* (which cannot be entirely pre-defined, but must be readapted as a function of the ensuing exchanges)? Above and beyond our efforts to enliven Art'Lib, our occupation of the space raised the question of our political, ethical and social vision thereof. In order to guarantee a certain regularity in the programming of events there while meeting these aspirations, several suggestions operated according to the principle of nesting dolls for a few days or weeks.¹⁰

One case in point was *Le Club*, started up in May 2016 by the master's student Céline Privet. She ruminated as follows: "A political, philosophical, activist club, a book club, a night club? A temporary place in which to gather around the movement of body and mind, through exchange, close contact, contemplation and action." The scenography she envisaged was a mix of spatial transformation (by changing its interior layout) and social transformation (as it became a locus of new forms of exchange). The resulting overall environment welcomed cultural actors from different fields to suggest activities to be held in this context. During *Le Club*'s one-month run, the events already scheduled for this period were *encompassed* within an immersive and dialogic installation. In addition, *Le Club* hosted the TU – Théâtre de l'Usine, which offered a self-defense workshop for women given by Leila Talib, as well as the *Fish-Tank* collective's "newspaper headlines" workshop, and even a one-day *disco kid* event with musical programming by *Lunapark* (ill. 56). Here again, neighborhood locals, friends and families joined with students and faculty members to engage in an activity that intrigued or amused them, with which they could identify – or not.

Alice Izzo and Lomée Mévaux appropriated the space for *On em-ménage... [We Move In...]*, a week of workshops on artistic co-construction using recycled materials. Each day of that week, an artist was invited to talk about their practice and conduct a workshop about a specific technique. Some requirements were laid down: the workshop had to run for a single afternoon; it had to be adapted to all ages and address the question of identity in one way or another; and it had to be collectively planned in advance in a session with the project leaders. Following these rules, a cardboard hut was built inside the space. Every step of its construction was discussed, from its planning and foundations to its facing. Like the material expression of group feeling, this cardboard nest was constructed

¹⁰ Following a slightly different principle, invitations were also made by students to other artists. For example, in 2016, the collective *Macaco Press* was invited by Hugo Hemmi to develop a proposal using the Édicule (ill. 57).

day by day with contributions by the various participants. And the walls of the hut served as temporary supports for other artistic productions developed over the course of that week.

A diverse mix of people showed up because it was accessible, because it was in the neighborhood and it kept the children busy... plus those who came from far away because this is not an easily accessible neighborhood.

The *Tipinema* was born of the desire among another group of students, Greg Clément, Isabel Guerrero and Laura Rivanera, to try out experimental forms of exchange and develop a film workshop at Les Libellules to make movies with local kids. To avoid the constraints of a rigid registration process, though also simply to enjoy working outside in the sunshine and as a strategy to arouse the kids' curiosity, the students went out of the space with 14 two-meter joists, tape and fabric and began building a teepee near the playground where plenty of children spend their Wednesday afternoons (ill. 64). Several kids came over to help out. This experimental structure – designed to serve as a hangout as well as a place to make and project films – became the fulcrum of the first encounters. In this tent, which could be swiftly dismantled and set up again, pre-formed groups (chiefly from the local community centers) were then invited to watch film excerpts and put together their own shorts (cumulatively, i.e. one group would pick up where the previous group had left off). The team, attentive to the desires and ideas aired by the children, provided technical support in making films there on site.

Disappointment and reinvention

It's always pretty disappointing when you do a thing and no one shows up, because sometimes you've worked for a long time, it cost you time and energy... and you actually succeed – but no one's there to see it.

Since the beginning of the collaboration between the TRANS– master's program and the city of Vernier, the pedagogical team felt it desirable to limit the duration of an action plan drawn up and driven by a study program and its students. It was understood from the very first discussions that the presence of the TRANS– program should permit the emergence of an approach that differed from what the Vernier city administration initially

had in mind for this cultural facility. Our approach was to be more rooted in local everyday life and geared towards diverse forms of co-production and participation.

As the end of our mandate approached, it was decided in talks between TRANS– and Vernier that the 2017–2018 academic year would be a year of transition and deliberation on how best to follow up on what had been achieved since the space first opened.

So, with various projects still ongoing, we issued a “call for projects” to the residents of Les Libellules, in order to identify potential internal resources in the neighborhood who might get involved in the future activities of the Édicule. Everyone was requested to suggest an event, exhibition or workshop to be held in the space for a period of variable duration. And a budget was allocated for the implementation of these suggestions. But we only received two suggestions: one for a photography exhibition and the other for a Brazilian music concert. Even the nucleus of neighborhood regulars that had formed over time failed to come forward despite our repeated requests for their input. In the end, the photo exhibition never materialized, though the concert did – and drew a large turnout.

While we were disappointed that our call for suggestions did not elicit more local input, we understand the limitations of certain forms of outreach, which may be cast too widely and may well be intimidating in some respects to people unfamiliar with certain codes in the world of culture and the arts. This non-participation echoed a recurrent difficulty in mobilizing residents around the projects proposed: while participation varied widely from one framework to another, it was never easy to bring together a large public for open projects (i.e. those not targeting a specific group via an existing institution), regardless of the means of communication employed (many different avenues were explored). Planning a project, publicizing it and failing to attract the public we had in mind occasionally caused considerable disappointment (and prompted many deliberations) among the students and faculty. It was only through a wide range of actions and formats over a long period of time that a public gradually took shape around the Édicule Art'Lib.

How are we to appeal to them when this is their neighborhood?

In the wake of the difficulties encountered during the call for suggestions, artist Marie van Berchem was invited to fill the gap with a week-long project entitled *I'm trying to be coherent (and eat)*. It involved thinking about different strategies that use art to put up resistance to capitalism. Conceived of as a research residency on the work of our guest artists,

an installation was developed that week based on interviews with young aspiring artists. The questions zeroed in on three of their key concerns: profitability, visibility and coherence. It emerged that young artists often feel left to their own devices when it comes to coping with these issues, both because of the absence of any discussion of these matters during their academic training and the subsequent lack of any exchange of information. So the interviews themselves became an opportunity for exchange and mutual assistance: they gave the artists interviewed and the interviewer herself a sense of being supported, understood and less alone, and led them to consider ways of breaking free from this precarious state by pooling their experiences, strengths and ideas.

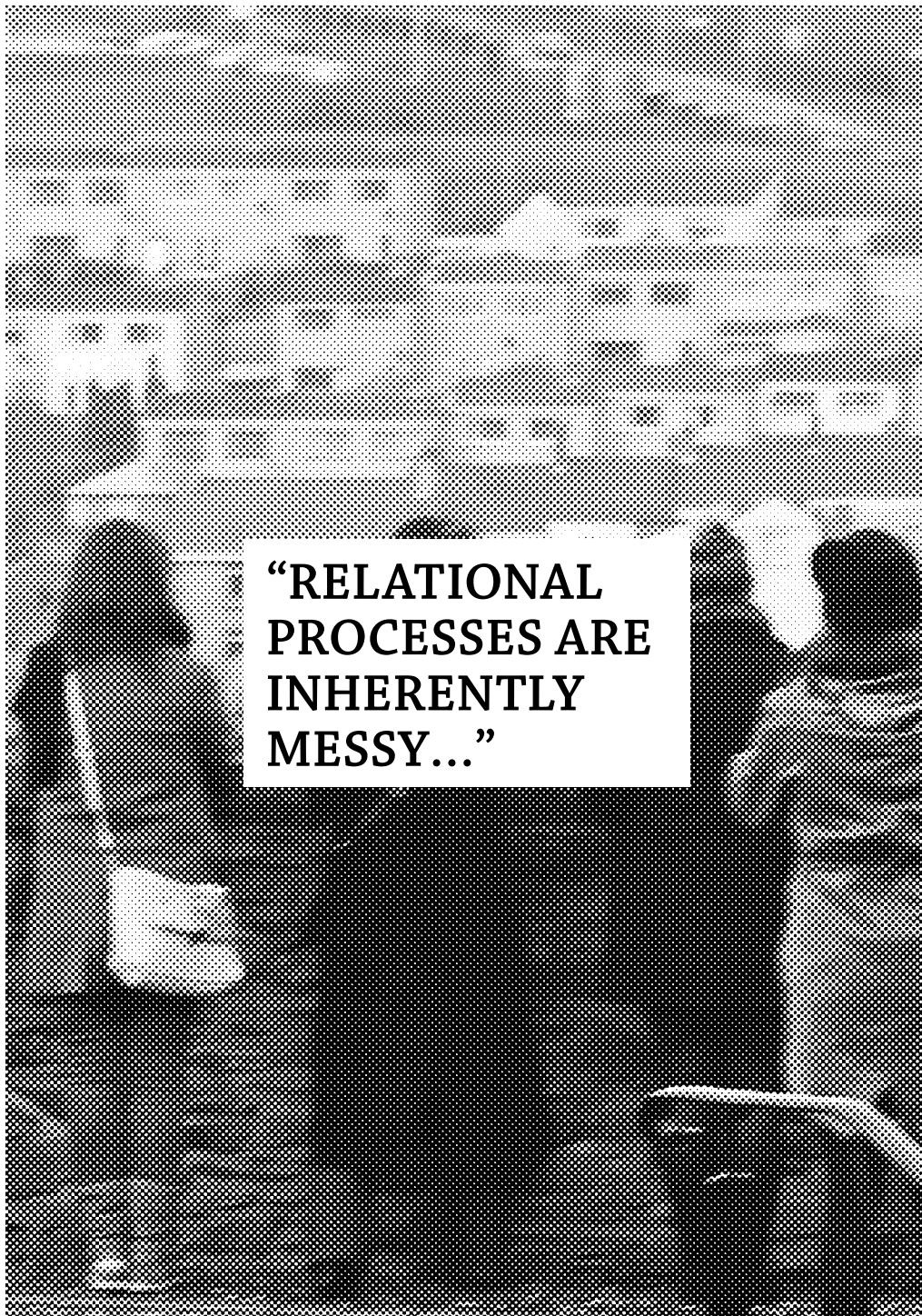
*We ask ourselves a lot of questions all the time
– maybe a bit too many sometimes?*

As a pedagogical project of the TRANS– master's program, the programming of the Edicule Art'Lib and, more broadly, the projects initiated in Les Libellules have now been completed. In dialogue with the various project partners and in order to maintain and further develop the connection we forged to that neighborhood through the Art'Lib space, another kind of collaboration is currently in the making. Together with Vernier's department of culture and the arts, we are creating a joint committee (made up of representatives of Vernier's mayor's office, the TRANS– master's program, Les Libellules residents and associations) to select residents with whom to carry out cultural projects over a six-month period. A call for projects will be issued in early 2019.

This experiment is made possible thanks to the durability of the ties forged between the TRANS– master's program and the Vernier municipality, between TRANS– students and Les Libellules residents, between Art'Lib and its surrounding neighborhood.

The wide range of actions past and yet to come demonstrates a willingness to keep the Art'Lib going in its present state: as an institution in the making, a space capable of fostering complex, experimental, multifarious and open-ended positions.

But how can that be sustainable?



“RELATIONAL
PROCESSES ARE
INHERENTLY
MESSY...”

A DUBLIN BASED MA IN FLUX

Fiona Whelan (Joint Coordinator MA Socially
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Introduction - A note of caution to begin

A man who lived by a pond, was awakened one night by a great noise. He went out into the night and headed for the pond, but in the darkness, running up and down, back and forth, guided only by the noise, he stumbled and fell repeatedly. At last he found a leak in the dike, from which water and fish were escaping. He set to work plugging the leak and only when he had finished went back to bed. The next morning, looking out of the window, he saw with surprise that his footprints had traced the figure of a stork on the ground.¹

In her book *Relating Narratives*, Italian philosopher Andriana Cavarero recounts this story told by Karen Blixen, which she recalled being told as a child. I believe this story is significant to the field of socially engaged practice and those of us who are educating for it. As Cavarero acknowledges, quoting Hannah Arendt, it is not “that life could be or rather should be lived like a story, that what must be done in life must be done in such a way that a story comes after it”.² Practitioners with socially engaged and collaborative practices are so often involved in multiple concurrent processes, which can’t be seen as a linear story. Relational processes are inherently messy, many of them take place in private, they engage complex relations of power from intimate group structures to larger political economies, with layered negotiations on the go at once. These practices require a level of comfort on the part of those engaged, in not knowing where something is going, or if a “stork” will indeed emerge.

¹ Cavarero, A., (2000) [1997]. *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*. New York: Routledge, p. 1.

² Cavarero, A., (2000) [1997]. *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

At a time when the field of socially engaged practice has been professionalised, the same principles of openness and not knowing need to apply at the meta-level of the field of practice. Many clear definitions have emerged to define and categorise approaches to practice, each with their own language and characteristics; increasingly named, framed and funded. Viewed through the lens of social movement theory, the field of “socially engaged art” might already be said to be entering the end-stages of a process, which is analogous to a life-cycle.³ According to Jonathan Christiansen’s “four stages” theory, social movements “emerge” and “coalesce” before passing through a period of “bureaucratization”, after which they enter a terminal period of “decline”.⁴ Decline can be characterised by repression or co-optation but also by a movement’s success, where a field lives on, but experiences a kind of rigor mortis in which it loses its capacity to unsettle or transform.⁵

In an era overwhelmed with capitalist modes of control and governance, where pedagogy in the university is increasingly managed and learning prescribed,⁶ the biggest challenge in formally educating practitioners in the professionalised field, is to hold open the space of not knowing and avoid determining the future of the field of practice i.e. colonising the future, with the present. With those concerns in mind, I will describe the trajectory of a Dublin based post-graduate programme in Socially Engaged Art and Further Education (FE) at Ireland’s National College of Art and Design, which is currently under review and is in flux, on the verge of its third iteration. Starting out as a Graduate Diploma in Community Arts Education (2001-13), in 2013, this programme developed to become an MA in Socially Engaged Art + Further Education. In the coming years, we intend to replace the existing provision with a separate FE programme and a new MFA (titled to be confirmed), which is currently being developed to run across multiple schools within NCAD and take a wider and less determined view of the field of social practice. In that context, it is timely to reflect upon the critical impulses, values and pedagogical coordinates of a changing programme.

Background to NCAD’s post -graduate provision in socially engaged practice

At NCAD, we have been supporting post-graduate students with collaborative, community based and socially engaged practices for nearly 20 years. Since 2013, this provision takes the form of a two-year Level 9 Masters programme in Socially Engaged Art and Further Education (MA SEA+FE), located within the School of Education. Focusing on the relationship between socially engaged arts practice and pedagogy, this programme creates an opportunity for students to explore two fields of practice; socially engaged art and teaching and learning within further education (vocationally orientated education programmes delivered in local colleges, Youthreach and community training centres). To date, the programme has attracted diverse practitioners with backgrounds in fine art, photography, film, design, education, community work, youth work, theatre, urban planning and social-science, creating a trans-disciplinary educational environment.

Like many such programmes globally, the MA SEA+FE was developed in response to the growth of the national and international field of collaborative and socially engaged practice and accompanying critique. While the ‘field’ constitutes a hugely diverse and disparate set of practices, the history and associated legacies of community-based art in Ireland has a specific resonance in the background to the MA SEA+FE and its position within the School of Education in NCAD.

Ireland has a rich history of community based arts practice. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, state supports for this work are evidenced through policy, funding and commissioning structures, as well as educational provision emerging in tandem with the field.⁷ In 2001, a new one year Graduate Diploma Community/Arts/Education (GDip CAE) was established in the School of Education at NCAD in line with key developments within arts and education practice. The development of the GDip CAE was influenced by a diversification of roles and practices of artists working within community and participatory contexts, developments within formal and informal education and changes to arts provision in higher education can also be seen at this time.⁸

Running from 2001-2012, as the first post-graduate programme of its kind in Ireland, the GDip CAE critically engaged with practitioners from different disciplinary backgrounds interested in engaging with communi-

³ Whelan F. & Ryan K., (2016). “Beating the Bounds of Socially-Engaged Art? A Transdisciplinary Dialogue on a Collaborative Art Project with Youth in Dublin, Ireland.” In: *Field Journal*, Issue 4, Spring. Available from: <<http://field-journal.com>> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

⁴ Christiansen, J., (2014). “Four Stages of Social Movements”. In: *Sociology Reference Guide: Theories of Social Movements*. Pasadena: Salem Press, pp. 14-25.

⁵ Whelan F. & Ryan K., (2016). *op. cit.*

⁶ Harney, S.M. and Moten, F., (2013). “The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study.” In: *Boundary 2: an international journal of literature and culture*. Research Collection Lee Kong Chian School Of Business. Available from: <http://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/lkcsb_research/5025> (Accessed 5 February 2019).

⁷ Hunt, N., Granville, G., Maguire, C. and Whelan, F. (2012). “Academy and community: The experience of a college programme in socially engaged practice.” In: *International Journal of Education through Art* 8: 3, pp. 271-285.

⁸ Hunt et al, 2012. *op. cit.*

ties of place or interest in the making of their work. Shifting the School of Education out of a singular focus on initial teacher education,⁹ the GDip examined the radical ideas and pedagogies that informed the birth of much community based arts practice. The critical tensions and ethical challenges of collaboration and participation were also explored, engaging with ideas of citizenship, community, and civil society from the position of artist-educator. Over 125 students graduated from the GDip CAE programme during its 11 years, the programme content adapting and changing over time in line with key developments in the field.

As many will be aware, the field of community art encountered a process of bureaucratization and what has been described as a subsequent depoliticisation.¹⁰ Irish sociologist Kevin Ryan highlights how the language of power was radically altered during the 1980s and 1990s, both in Ireland and the EC, and the effect of this on the community arts movement. What had started out as a deeply political set of practices motivated by issues of inequality and fights for equality became reframed using the language of disadvantage and social *exclusion*. The remedy thus prescribed was social *inclusion*. Neo-liberal workfare regimes emerged and participation became scripted. Fights for equality were replaced by state supported processes aimed at “activating” and “empowering” “disadvantaged” individuals and communities, the movement becoming increasingly controlled.¹¹ One could see this through the aforementioned four stages theory, as a period of decline where the previously unruly set of practices became managed and controlled, and in some cases lost their capacity to unsettle or transform.

In 2011, on the ten-year anniversary of the GDip CAE, our staff team engaged in a process of evaluation and reflection of the existing post-graduate programme, and started to imagine a new provision that would respond to the growth of the wider field of socially engaged, collaborative, public and participatory practice and associated critique from both within the arts and wider afield. At the same time, in response to the Bologna agreement, NCAD was restructuring its programmes to become three-year undergraduate degrees and two-year master degrees (replacing our previous four year/one year model). Also significant changes occurred within Further Education and Training (FET) resulting in a restructured and rationalised sector. Consequently the Teaching Council of Ireland required those employed within the FE sector to acquire a formal teaching qualification. The FE sector remains a site for

many artist-educators with informal creative and educational practices working with adults and young people. It was in response to these overlapping factors that, in 2013, the current MA Socially Engaged Art and Further Education¹² was born, replacing the previous GDip CAE and becoming the second iteration of post-graduate provision at NCAD, for this changing field of practice.

Pedagogical overview of MA Socially Engaged Art and Further Education, NCAD (2013-19)

Uniquely in Ireland, the MA SEA+FE is positioned at the centre of the dynamic relationship between socially engaged arts practice, pedagogy and research practice, with an embedded teaching qualification for those wishing to work in the FE sector. The two-year Level 9 MA SEA+FE is currently in its third cycle, having run every two years since 2013. The programme is delivered two consecutive evenings a week in the School of Education at NCAD’s main campus in Dublin city. Typically, the programme attracts students from across Ireland, many commuting from their home county to attend the taught programme, returning to a specific context of their choice to engage in research and practicums.

On starting the programme, lots of students describe two or more distinct practices they have (e.g. art, education, community work), and become committed to exploring their relationship and the possibilities or pitfalls for their convergence. Another common background for new students on the MA is to have established a participatory practice characterised by some commissioned short-term processes, but wishing to progress into a long-term collaborative practice. Some students come on the programme with a wealth of experience in arts practice or education but feel disconnected from the contemporary discourse surrounding their field, others are recently graduated from an undergraduate programme with an appetite for deeper learning in this area.

The lecturers on this programme adopt active teaching methods and encourage engagement and participation. The range of approaches, include the delivery of lectures, facilitated workshops, readings, off site trips, and immersive experiences in specific contexts. An emphasis is placed on the active engagement and agency of the student learners. The programme course document emphasises learning that requires students to

⁹ Hunt et al, 2012. *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Whelan F. & Ryan K., (2016). *op. cit.*

¹¹ Whelan F. & Ryan K., (2016). *op. cit.*

¹² The MA Socially Engaged Art + Further Education was initially called MA Socially Engaged Art (Further, Adult and Community Education), later amended to better identify its connection to FE.

research, interpret, analyse, discuss, debate, position, document and describe thinking and practice in socially engaged arts and further education practice. Modules of five or ten credits are assessed summatively through presentation, written assignments and group work. This is followed in the latter part of year two by a 30-credit self-directed research project in a subject area of the student's choosing.

MA SEA+FE programme content

Negotiating the hybrid territory of socially engaged art and education requires an understanding of their distinct disciplinary axes, their origins and the lenses from which they view each other as well as their modes of governance and their methods of ascribing value. As such, the MA SEA+FE provides a comprehensive grounding in the practical, theoretical, ethical and pedagogical coordinates for those interested in the intersection of socially engaged arts and education practice. In addition, students engage in modules focused on critical practice skills needed for working in social and educational contexts and are provided with opportunities for supported practice-based learning.

Semester 1 (ill. 70)

In Semester 1, students begin the MA SEA+FE learning about the multiple genealogies of the field of socially engaged practice. Drawing on practices from within the history of art and those external to it, they examine key concepts including society, aesthetics, ethics, space, knowledge and activism, with a view to grasping some of the critical and social dynamics that inform the practice today.

At the same time, they engage in a complimentary module 'Pedagogy and Practice', which takes as its starting point the diverse backgrounds, knowledge and experiences of the new class group. This module includes an off-site field trip, which in the past has included visits to the locality of Rialto nearby the college, to Dublin Port - *Port Perspectives* project and *North-55* visual arts organisation, which develops site-specific public art that engages divergent communities on the border of Ireland and Northern Ireland (ill. 71). While examining the practices of other artists and organisations, students are supported to identify and critically reflect upon their own motivations and intentions for their practices, as they operate across multiple fields of knowledge. As the student cohort will constitute the primary base for collaborative learning, there is an emphasis on peer support at this early stage. This

first semester traces some critical impulses for socially engaged practice that guide students to position their own practice within a historical, ideological, and critical framework.

Concurrently in the first semester, students engage in a module examining developments in theories of education and learning, including behaviourism, constructivism, experiential learning, learning as transformation, dialogic approaches, adult learning and critical thinking. This theoretical foundation is crucial as students begin their first practicum, 100 hours of teaching in an FE context, such as a vocational college, Youthreach or community based training centre. In the past, students engaged in teaching arts-based programmes for those wishing to enter third level, to alternative accredited programmes for young people no longer in the mainstream school system. Modules in teaching and learning encourage students to develop an awareness of the diversity of FET and acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence to respond to changing educational contexts.

Semester 2 (ill. 70)

Students continue their FE teaching practicum for much of semester 2, supported by a module providing key skills and strategies when undertaking teaching and learning in further education settings, including classroom planning processes and methodologies appropriate to the teaching diverse groups of learners.

At the same time, students take a further lecture-based module exploring the values of socially engaged art which aims to equip students with the critical vocabulary and methodological tools required to interrogate how socially engaged art projects result in the production of different types of counter knowledge and experience that challenge the neoliberal discourse of value that increasingly shapes the cultural and educational landscape. This includes an interrogation of socially engaged art in relation to cultural policy, the market, the public realm, the museum and its collection, and the archive. The module is developed around key terms and key questions in these fields.

Students are also supported to situate their practices in relation to local, national and global issues, once again orientating students to a range of community contexts and social challenges, and the role of creative practices in responding to those challenges, exploring why and how different practitioners engage others and act upon ideas. Students are taught how to frame their ideas and create proposals for residency and funding opportunities.

Semester 3 (ill. 72)

The second year of the programme starts with a second practicum experience, with each student immersed in a social or community context of their choosing, creating learning opportunities that are situated, complex, inter-disciplinary and relational, and promote students' agency. The choice of experience has varied from student to student, depending on their level of experience, their motivations, interests and learning intentions. For some this opportunity has included assisting on another artist's project. Examples of this included two students working with renowned artist Suzanne Lacy on her 2016 project *The School for Revolutionary Girls* at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, another living and volunteering in *Project Row Houses* in Texas, USA for a week during the summer of 2014. In some cases students may choose to reposition themselves in their current workplace or practice to explore an ongoing thematic interest through a different lens. Others have chosen to establish a new project or enquiry, locating themselves within community or organisational settings or in multiple sites linked thematically. Experiences can then be unpacked and explored in assignments and in a classroom setting with fellow students and staff, in order to better understand complex relational structures, ideas, positionalities and vantage points that influence a social or pedagogical encounter.

The current group of students (2017-19) are currently setting out on their practicum projects, each making relationships with external partners throughout Ireland, to lead creative enquiries exploring themes including LGBTQI youth identity since the historic Irish marriage equality referendum of 2015, increasingly privatised waste management practices, dementia in the elderly and the role of anonymity in addiction services.

Concurrently to their practicum, students are engaged in a module concerned with the creation and delivery of curriculum within the FE sector. Since curricula are contested sites, students engage in a problem based learning approach to devising and changing modules and programmes. This collective experiential approach intends to foster a sense of the complexity associated with pedagogical practice particularly within formal FET contexts. Another module "Spaces for Learning" reflects upon competing traditions, trajectories, and technologies, with the specific intention of transforming understandings of what it means to be an educator and learner in a trans-disciplinary space where socially engaged art and further education intersect. The educational turn in art is examined and students are asked to propose a new space of learning, a real proposal or a utopian idea, a practical solution or an ideological vision. As technology is pervasive and the tools continue

to change, students also engage in a series of workshops where the teaching of technology is embedded within a range of creative exercises, which can be applied to practice.

Semester 4 (ill. 72)

In the final semester, students undertake a major student-led research project. The research project can be a practice-based project including a written dissertation or it can be a substantive written dissertation based on experience, research and ideas related to socially engaged arts and/or education practice. As a self-initiated piece of research, this module gives students the opportunity to select a specific area of interest and enter a process of action research or lead a case study to enquire into their subject matter in a deeper way. For some students this process will bring together the SEA and FE components of the programme. For others, it will involve the student focusing in on one specific question related to an area of either field. Diverse subjects from 2017 include artist Liz Smith's thesis *The Animal Turn and the Ethics of Collaboration* in which she proposes an ethical framework for engaging animals in socially engaged art practice (ill. 73) and artist and chef Eilish Langton's practice-based research in which she explored the collective development of a community based cob oven as a pedagogical platform.

Public profile of the MA SEA+FE

The MA is not currently a studio-based programme and there is no requirement for a student and their collaborators to bring their practice into the public domain in any resolved way. Oftentimes this happens beyond the timeline of the programme. One example of this was graduate Louise White's (MA student 2013-15) theatre work *Mother You* (Fringe Festival, 2015) which emerged some months after she completed the programme, as 'a culmination of much of what had been learned'.

The programme has lacked the visibility that is achieved when students individually present work for the annual public NCAD graduate exhibition. However, other devices have been used to position the programme publicly in ways that align to students interests, approaches to practice and stage of practice development such as in 2015, when the graduating group hosted a resource room for socially engaged practice which displayed individual field work, film interviews, extracts from written texts which reflected a dictionary of key concepts for the field (ill. 74) and a large scale group poster drawing together key questions for the field. Students from the graduating class group for 2017 opted alternatively to create an

event presenting their thinking and practices publicly through presentation and conversation.

Other ways that the programme stays visible and contributes to the field of practice, is through partnerships with local, national and international collaborators. In 2016, we became the UK and Ireland hub for the Creative Time Summit, due to our commitment to live streaming the conference annually in Dublin over three years, in collaboration with other Irish partners including Create, the national development agency for collaborative arts in Ireland, Fire Station Artists' Studios, Dublin City Gallery: The Hugh Lane and Fatima Groups United, a community organisation based near the college (ill. 75).

Another key output connected to the programme is the publication series *TransActions – dialogues in transdisciplinary practice*, an international collaboration with Stockyard Institute in Chicago.¹³ The series encourages a cross-fertilisation of thoughts and ideas that avoids any easy distinction between theory and practice. The first issue (2015) took Dublin and Chicago as two contemporary urban sites for exploration and explored the physical, geographic and social fabric of the two cities, the publication's strength lying in the divergence of the collection of positions and views presented. Subsequent issues would be developed independently by NCAD or Stockyard Institute and involve further collaborations with diverse organisations, institutions and individuals.

For issue #2 *Field and Academy: Knowledge and counter knowledge in socially engaged art* (2017) (ill. 76), NCAD partnered with Create, the national development agency for collaborative arts in Ireland and Fire Station Artists' Studios, to collectively curate a polyphonic publication on the theme of knowledge and counter knowledge production, connecting academic analyses with artist, activist and educational practices. Importantly, the issue discussed strategies and possibilities in re-thinking and re-formulating how the academy, institution and the field of collaborative/socially engaged art practice relate to each other. Issue #2 was launched at the iJADE international conference *Art and Design as Agent for Change*, hosted at NCAD in November 2017, by USA based artist, writer and educator Gregory Sholette, following a seminar unpacking the themes of the publication, and posing many challenges for the field of socially-engaged art, and the organisational and educational infrastructures that support it.

What's next?

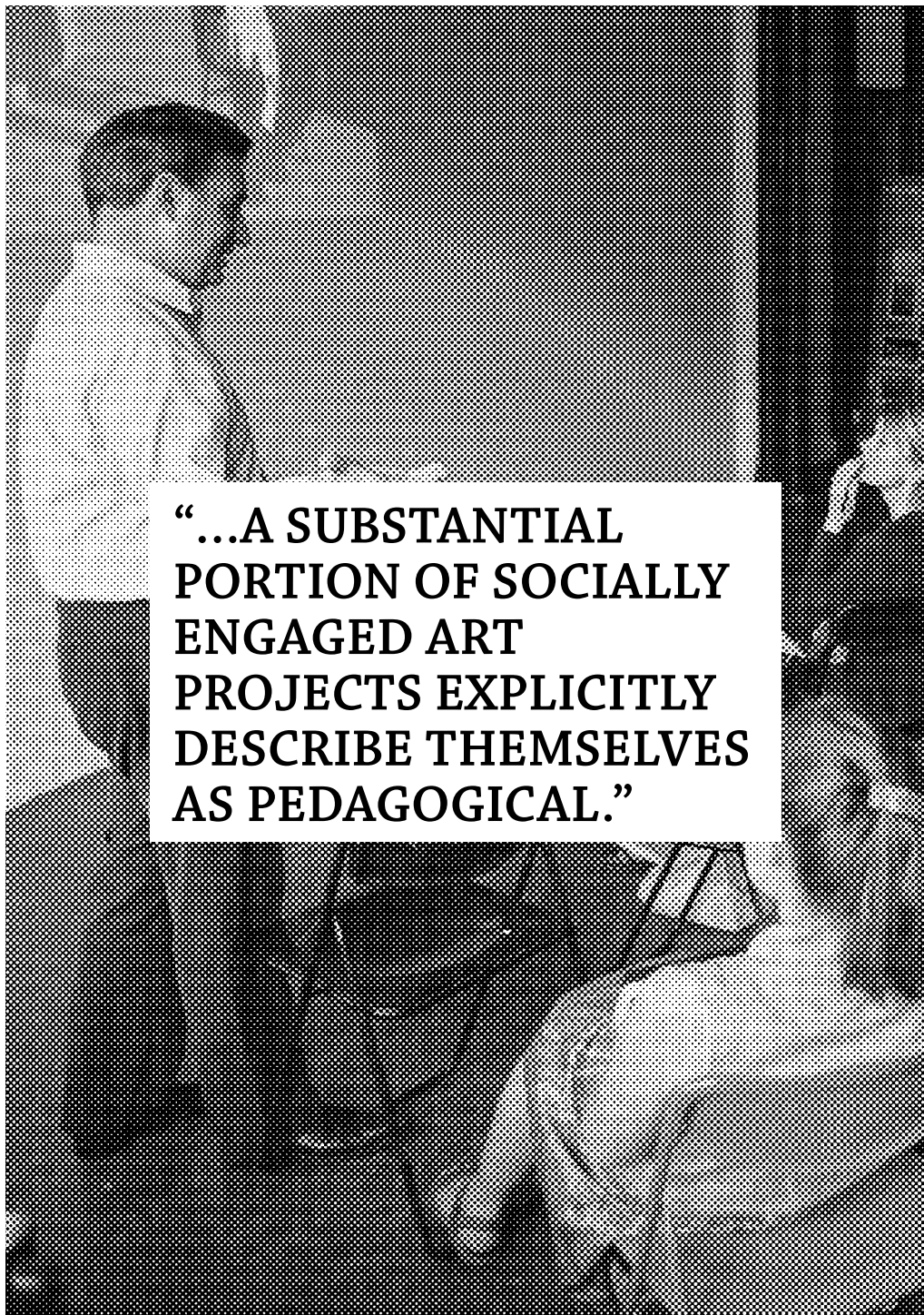
While there is a belief amongst many staff as to the potential for practices to operate at the intersection of Socially Engaged Art and Further Educa-

tion, we have come to recognise that the specificities of this juxtaposition are particularly niche and not fully serving a wider spectrum of creative practitioners concerned with reimagining the social. Staying responsive to the field of socially orientated practice, we are currently developing our third iteration of post-graduate provision for the field, to be managed and taught across multiple schools within the college, to replace the current MA SEA+FE in the coming years. The new MFA intends to attract students from multiple backgrounds who believe in the capacities of art, design and activism to imagine our world differently. What is imagined and what will emerge is a story that can only be told at a later date. To be continued.

¹³ See transactionspublication.com. Accessed 9 February 2019.



Perspectives



**“...A SUBSTANTIAL
PORTION OF SOCIALLY
ENGAGED ART
PROJECTS EXPLICITLY
DESCRIBE THEMSELVES
AS PEDAGOGICAL.”**

EDUCATION FOR SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART, A MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES HANDBOOK

(excerpts)¹

Pablo Helguera

The present texts were written in 2010-2011 at a time when discussions around pedagogy and curatorial practice were very present in contemporary art. A few years prior the phrase “the pedagogical turn in curating” started reverberating online and being used in public forums. In 2009, partially to engage in the discussions around education and contemporary art practice, I organized the conference “Transpedagogy” at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The present texts tried to look critically both at the notion of “deskilling” and “art-as-education”, trying to make a distinction between conceptual practices that self-identify as education and the actual process of education.
Pablo Helguera, December 2018

Definitions

what do we mean when we say “socially engaged art?” As the terminology around this practice is particularly porous, it is necessary to create a provisional definition of the kind of work that will be discussed here.

All art, inasmuch as it is created to be communicated to or experienced by others, is social. Yet to claim that all art is social does not take us very far in understanding the difference between a static work such as a painting and a social interaction that proclaims itself as art—that is, socially engaged art.

We can distinguish a subset of artworks that feature the experience of their own creation as a central element. An action painting is a record of the gestural brushstrokes that produced it, but the act of executing those brushstrokes is not the primary objective of its making (otherwise the painting would not be preserved). A Chinese water painting or a mandala,

¹ The excerpts were selected by *microsillos* in Helguera, Pablo, *Education for Socially Engaged Art, A Materials and Techniques Handbook*, New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011, pp. 1-8 ; pp. 77-88. The author wrote the introductory note below in December 2018.

by contrast, is essentially *about* the process of its making, and its eventual disappearance is consistent with its ephemeral identity. Conceptualism introduced the thought process as artwork; the materiality of the artwork is optional.

Socially engaged art falls within the tradition of conceptual process art. But it does not follow that all process-based art is also socially engaged: if this were so, a sculpture by Donald Judd would fall in the same category as, say, a performance by Thomas Hirschhorn. Minimalism, for instance, though conceptual and process based, depends on processes that ensure the removal of the artist from the production—eliminating the “engagement” that is a definitive element of socially engaged art.

While there is no complete agreement as to what constitutes a meaningful interaction or social engagement, what characterizes socially engaged art is its dependence on social intercourse as a factor of its existence.

Socially engaged art, as a category of practice, is still a working construct. In many descriptions, however, it encompasses a genealogy that goes back to the avant-garde and expands significantly during the emergence of Post-Minimalism.² The social movements of the 1960s led to greater social engagement in art and the emergence of performance art and installation art, centering on process and site-specificity, which all influence socially engaged

art practice today. In previous decades, art based on social interaction has been identified as “relational aesthetics” and “community,” “collaborative,” “participatory,” “dialogic,” and “public” art, among many other titles. (Its redefinitions, like that of other kinds of art, have stemmed from the urge to draw lines between generations and unload historical baggage.) “Social practice” has emerged most prominently in recent publications, symposia, and exhibitions and is the most generally favored term for socially engaged art.

The new term excludes, for the first time, an explicit reference to art-making. Its immediate predecessor, “relational aesthetics,” preserves the term in its parent principle, aesthetics (which, ironically, refers more to traditional values—i.e., beauty—than does “art”). The exclusion of “art” coincides with a growing general discomfort with the connotations of the term. “Social practice” avoids evocations of both the modern role of the artist (as an illuminated visionary) and the postmodern version of the artist (as a self-conscious critical being). Instead the term democratizes

the construct, making the artist into an individual whose specialty includes working with society in a professional capacity.

Between Disciplines

The term “social practice” obscures the discipline from which socially engaged art has emerged (i.e., art). In this way it denotes the critical detachment from other forms of art-making (primarily centered and built on the personality of the artist) that is inherent to socially engaged art, which, almost by definition, is dependent on the involvement of others besides the instigator of the artwork. It also thus raises the question of whether such activity belongs to the

field of art at all. This is an important query; art students attracted to this form of art-making often find themselves wondering whether it would be more useful to abandon art altogether and instead become professional community

organizers, activists, politicians, ethnographers, or sociologists. Indeed, in addition to sitting uncomfortably between and across these disciplines and downplaying the role of the individual artist, socially engaged art is specifically at odds with the capitalist market infrastructure of the art world: it does not fit well in the traditional collecting practices of contemporary art, and the prevailing cult of the individual artist is problematic for those whose goal is to work with others, generally in collaborative projects with democratic ideals. Many artists look for ways to renounce not only object-making but authorship altogether, in the kind of “stealth” art practice that philosopher Stephen Wright argues for, in which the artist is a secret agent in the real world, with an artistic agenda.³

Yet the uncomfortable position of socially engaged art, identified as art yet located between more conventional art forms and the related disciplines of sociology, politics, and the like, is exactly the position it should inhabit. The

practice’s direct links to and conflicts with both art and sociology must be overtly declared and the tension addressed, but not resolved. Socially engaged artists can and should challenge the art market in attempts to redefine the notion of authorship, but to do so they must accept and affirm their existence in the realm of art, as artists. And the artist as social practi-

² In this book it is not possible (nor is it the goal) to trace a history of socially engaged art; instead I focus mainly on the practice as it exists today, with reference to specific artists, movements, and events that have significantly informed it.

³ See “Por un arte clandestino,” the author’s conversation with Stephen Wright in 2006, <http://pablohelguera.net/2006/04/por-un-arte-clandestino-conversacion-con-stephen-wright-2006/>. Wright later wrote a text based on this exchange, http://www.entrepreneur.com/tradejournals/article/153624936_2.html.

tioner must also make peace with the common accusation that he or she is not an artist but an “amateur” anthropologist, sociologist, etc. Socially engaged art functions by attaching itself to subjects and problems that normally belong to other disciplines, moving them temporarily into a space of ambiguity. It is this temporary snatching away of subjects into the realm of art-making that brings new insights to a particular problem or condition and in turn makes it visible to other disciplines. For this reason, I believe that the best term for this kind of practice is what I have thus far been using as a generic descriptor—that is, “socially engaged art” (or SEA), a term that emerged in the mid-1970s, as it unambiguously acknowledges a connection to the practice of art.⁴

Symbolic and Actual Practice

To understand SEA, an important distinction must be made between two types of art practice: symbolic and actual. As I will show, SEA is an actual, not symbolic, practice.

A few examples:

- Let’s say an artist or group of artists creates an “artist-run school,” proposing a radical new approach to teaching. The project is presented as an art project but also as a functioning school (a relevant example, given the recent emergence of similar projects). The “school,” however, in its course offerings, resembles a regular, if slightly unorthodox, city college. In content and format, the courses are not different in structure from most continuing education courses. Furthermore, the readings and course load encourage self-selectivity by virtue of the avenues through which it is promoted and by offering a sampling that is typical of a specific art world readership, to the point that the students taking the courses are not average adults but rather art students or art-world insiders. It is arguable, therefore, whether the project constitutes a radical approach to education; nor does it risk opening itself up to a public beyond the small sphere of the converted.
- An artist organizes a political rally about a local issue. The project, which is supported by a local arts center in a medium-size city, fails to attract many local residents; only a couple dozen people show up, most of whom work at the arts center. The event is documented on video and presented as part of an exhibition. In truth, can the artist claim to have organized a rally?

⁴ From this point forward I will use this term to refer to the type of artwork that is the subject of this book.

These are two examples of works that are politically or socially motivated but act through the *representation* of ideas or issues. These are works that are designed to address social or political issues only in an allegorical, metaphorical, or symbolic level (for example, a painting about social issues is not very different from a public art project that claims to offer a social experience but only does so in a symbolic way such as the ones just described above). The work does not control a social situation in an instrumental and strategic way in order to achieve a specific end.

This distinction is partially based on Jurgen Habermas’s work *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981). In it Habermas argues that social action (an act constructed by the relations between individuals) is more than a mere manipulation of circumstances by an individual to obtain a desired goal (that is, more than just the use of strategic and instrumental reason). He instead favors what he describes as communicative action, a type of social action geared to communication and understanding between individuals that can have a lasting effect on the spheres of politics and culture as a true emancipatory force.

Most artists who produce socially engaged works are interested in creating a kind of collective art that impacts the public sphere in a deep and meaningful way, not in creating a representation—like a theatrical play—of a social issue. Certainly many SEA projects are in tune with the goals of deliberative democracy and discourse ethics, and most believe that art of any kind can’t avoid taking a position in current political and social affairs. (The counter-argument is that art is largely a symbolic practice, and as such the impact it has on a society can’t be measured directly; but then again, such hypothetical art, as symbolic, would not be considered socially engaged but rather would fall into the other familiar categories, such as installation, video, etc.) It is true that much SEA is composed of simple gestures and actions that may be perceived as symbolic. For example, Paul Ramirez-Jonas’s work *Key to the City* (2010) revolved around a symbolic act—giving a person a key as a symbol of the city. Yet although Ramirez-Jonas’s contains a symbolic act, it is not symbolic practice but rather communicative action (or “actual” practice)—that is, the symbolic act is part of a meaningful conceptual gesture.⁵

The difference between symbolic and actual practice is not hierarchical; rather, its importance lies in allowing a certain distinction to be made: it would be important, for example, to understand and identify the difference between a project in which I establish a health campaign for children in a war-torn country and a project in which I imagine a health campaign and

⁵ Paul Ramirez Jonas’s project, produced by Creative Time, took place in New York City in the Summer of 2010.

fabricate documentation of it in Photoshop. Such a fabrication might result in a fascinating work, but it would be a symbolic action, relying on literary and public relations mechanisms to attain verisimilitude and credibility.

To summarize: social interaction occupies a central and inextricable part of any socially engaged artwork. SEA is a hybrid, multi-disciplinary activity that exists somewhere between art and non-art, and its state may be permanently unresolved. SEA depends on actual—not imagined or hypothetical—social action.

What will concern us next is how SEA can bring together, impact, and even critique a particular group of people.

Transpedagogy

in this book I have discussed SEA primarily through the lens of pedagogy. For that reason, it is particularly relevant to acknowledge that a substantial portion of SEA projects explicitly describe themselves as pedagogical. In 2006 I proposed the term “Transpedagogy” to refer to projects by artists and collectives that blend educational processes and art-making in works that offer an experience that is clearly different from conventional art academies or formal art education.⁶ The term emerged out of the necessity to describe a common denominator in the work of a number of artists that escaped the usual definitions used around participatory art.

In contrast to the discipline of art education, which traditionally focuses on the interpretation of art or teaching art-making skills, in Transpedagogy the pedagogical process is the core of the artwork. Such works create their own autonomous environment, mostly outside of any academic or institutional framework.

It is important to set aside, as I have done in previous sections, the symbolic practices of education and those practices that propose a rethinking of education through art only in theory but not in practice.

Education-as-art projects may appear contradictory through the lens of strict pedagogy. They often aim to democratize viewers, making them partners, participants, or collaborators in the construction of the work, yet also retain the opacity of meaning common in contemporary art vocabularies. It goes against the nature of an artwork to explain itself, and yet this is precisely what educators do in lessons or curriculum—thus the clash of disciplinary goals. In other words, artists, curators, and critics liberally employ the term “pedagogy” when speaking of these kinds of projects, but they are reluctant to subject the work to the standard evaluative structures of

education science. Where this dichotomy is accepted, we are contenting ourselves with mimesis or simulacra—we pretend that we use education or pedagogy, but we do not actually use them—returning to the differentiation of symbolic and actual action discussed in previous chapters. When an art project presents itself as a school or a workshop, we must ask what, specifically, is being taught or learned, and how. Conversely, if the experience is meant to be a simulation or illustration of education, it is inappropriate to discuss it as an actual educational project.

Second, it is necessary to ask whether a project of this nature offers new pedagogical approaches in art. If an educational project purports to critique conventional notions of pedagogy, as it is often claimed or desired, we must ask in what terms this critique is being articulated. This is particularly important, because artists often work from a series of misperceptions around education that prevent the development of truly thoughtful or critical contributions.

The field of education has the misfortune, perhaps well earned, of being represented by the mainstream as restrictive, controlling, and homogenizing. And it is true that there are plenty of places where old-fashioned forms of education still operate, where art history is recitation, where biographical anecdotes are presented as evidence to reveal the meaning of a work, and where educators seem to condescend to, patronize, or infantilize their audience. This is the kind of education that thinker Ivan Illich critiqued in his 1971 book *Deschooling Society*. In it Illich argues for a radical dismantling of the school system in all its institutionalized forms, which he considers an oppressive regime. Forty years after its publication, what was a progressive leftist idea has, ironically, become appealing to neoliberals and the conservative right. The dismantling of the structures of education is today allied with the principles of deregulation and a free market, a disavowal of the civic responsibility to provide learning structures to those who need them the most and a reinforcement of elitism. To turn education into a self-selective process in contemporary art only reinforces the elitist tendencies of the art world.

In reality, education today is fueled by the progressive ideas discussed above, ranging from critical pedagogy and inquiry-based learning to the exploration of creativity in early childhood. For this reason it is important to understand the existing structures of education and to learn how to innovate with them. To critique, for example, the old-fashioned boarding school system of memorization today would be equivalent, in the art world, to mounting a fierce attack on a nineteenth-century art movement; a project that offers an alternative to an old model is in dialogue with the past and not with the future.

⁶ See Helguera, “Notes Toward a Transpedagogy,” in *Art, Architecture and Pedagogy: Experiments in Learning*, Ken Erlich, Editor. Los Angeles: Viralnet.net, 2010.

Once we set aside these all-too-common pitfalls in SEA's embrace of education, we encounter myriad art projects that engage with pedagogy in a deep and creative way, proposing potentially exciting directions.

I think of the somewhat recent fascination in contemporary art with education as "pedagogy in the expanded field," to adapt Rosalind Krauss's famous description of postmodern sculpture. In the expanded field of pedagogy in art, the practice of education is no longer restricted to its traditional activities, namely art instruction (for artists), connoisseurship (for art historians and curators), and interpretation (for the general public). Traditional pedagogy fails to recognize three things: first, the creative performativity of the act of education; second, the fact that the collective construction of an art milieu, with artworks and ideas, is a collective construction of knowledge; and third, the fact that knowledge of art does not end in knowing the artwork but is a tool for understanding the world.

Organizations like the Center for Land Use Interpretation, in Los Angeles, which straddle art practice, education, and research, utilize art formats and processes as pedagogical vehicles. The very distancing that some collectives take from art and the blurring of boundaries between disciplines indicate an emerging form of artmaking in which art does not point at itself but instead focuses on the social process of exchange. This is a powerful and positive reenvisioning of education that can only happen in art, as it depends on art's unique patterns of performativity, experience, and exploration of ambiguity.

Deskilling

Assuming that socially engaged art requires a new set of skills and knowledge, art programs engaged in supporting the practice have quickly begun to dismantle the old art school curriculum, which is based on craft and skills—ranging from what remained of the academic model (figure drawing, casting, and the like) to the legacy of the Bauhaus (such as color theory and graphic design). What is replacing it is tenuous at best, and the process often creates a vacuum in which the possibilities are so endless that it can be paralyzing for a beginning practitioner. The social realm is as vast as the human world, and every artistic approach to it requires knowledge that can't be attained in a short period of time. This is, perhaps, the main reason why students often wonder whether an SEA practitioner can be any kind of expert. Disenchanted with poor guidance and with no sense of purpose, students may turn to a social work discipline instead, leaving the conventional tools of art behind. Some believe that it is the future role of art to dissolve into other disciplines; I think such a dissolution would

be the product of poor education about what the dialogue between art and the world can be.

The underlying issue is, of course, the crisis of higher education in the visual arts, which involves far more complex problems than what we can address here. I will, however, point out some problems in the traditional curriculum that should be taken into consideration in a discussion about teaching and learning SEA.

In a traditional art school, the emphasis on craft and the subdivision of departments (sculpture, painting, ceramics, etc.) promotes the development of specialties that each bases its discursivity in a discussion about itself. In this framework, artworks are judged by how they question or push notions intrinsic to the craft, an approach that enters into conflict with the direction Post-Minimalist practices have taken, including SEA. In them, craft is placed at the service of the concept, not the other way around. Furthermore, the promotion of a craft specialty makes it difficult for an artist to achieve a critical distance from his or her work.

The disconnect between art programs and art practice is another problem. In an art school, the school itself is the primary context in which the art will be produced and analyzed. This artificial environment, while necessary and positive in some aspects—such as the social environment it creates for artists of the same generation and interests—too often is not challenging enough or does not provide students with a clear understanding of the world in which professional art activity takes place.⁷

The lack of distance from craft, the use of historical forms of art as the guidelines for future art-making, and the absence of practical experience may inspire an impulse to dispense with historical art disciplines completely and instead give the students an open field in which to play. However, this dismantling, deskilling, or "deschooling" (to use Ivan Illich's term) soon can become chaotic and aimless. Something must take its place.

It may take years to establish the best way to nourish SEA practices. In this book I have made a case for education processes as the most beneficial tools for furthering the understanding and execution of SEA projects. However, any new art curriculum for SEA needs to be multidisciplinary in its reach and creative in its individual development.

Christine Hill is an artist whose work ranges from small editions to the exploration of social transactions through her project *Volksboutique*. She

⁷ In 2005, I wrote *The Pablo Helguera Manual of Contemporary Art Style* (Tumbona Ediciones, Mexico City) a critique of the social dynamics of the art world. I hoped it would serve as a practical guide for art students in understanding the underlying social system in which art is evaluated and supported. Little effort has been made in schools to prepare art students to engage in the social terms of the art scene and thus lessen the great anxiety of a young artist facing the world at large for the first time.

chairs the new media program at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar where she has created a course entitled “Skill Set” in which students learn a series of non-art skills for which they also transform our studio/classroom space into a suitable environment for the task. The skills taught have included 50s hair styling, Alexander technique, stenography, and Japanese tea ceremony, amongst many others, as they change every year. While the program retains the idea that artmaking requires technical knowledge, it emphasizes the value that any non-art specialty may bring to the art and design practice. In Hill’s own words about the objective of the course: “The notion is for them to rely on their own resources (i.e., not to just spend money to recreate something) and [develop the] ability to innovate as designers, and involves a tight enough deadline system so that they are pretty much working non-stop on these installation rotations... like flexing a muscle repeatedly.”⁸

The new art school curriculum (or a self-guided program or someone interested in SEA) should contain these four components:

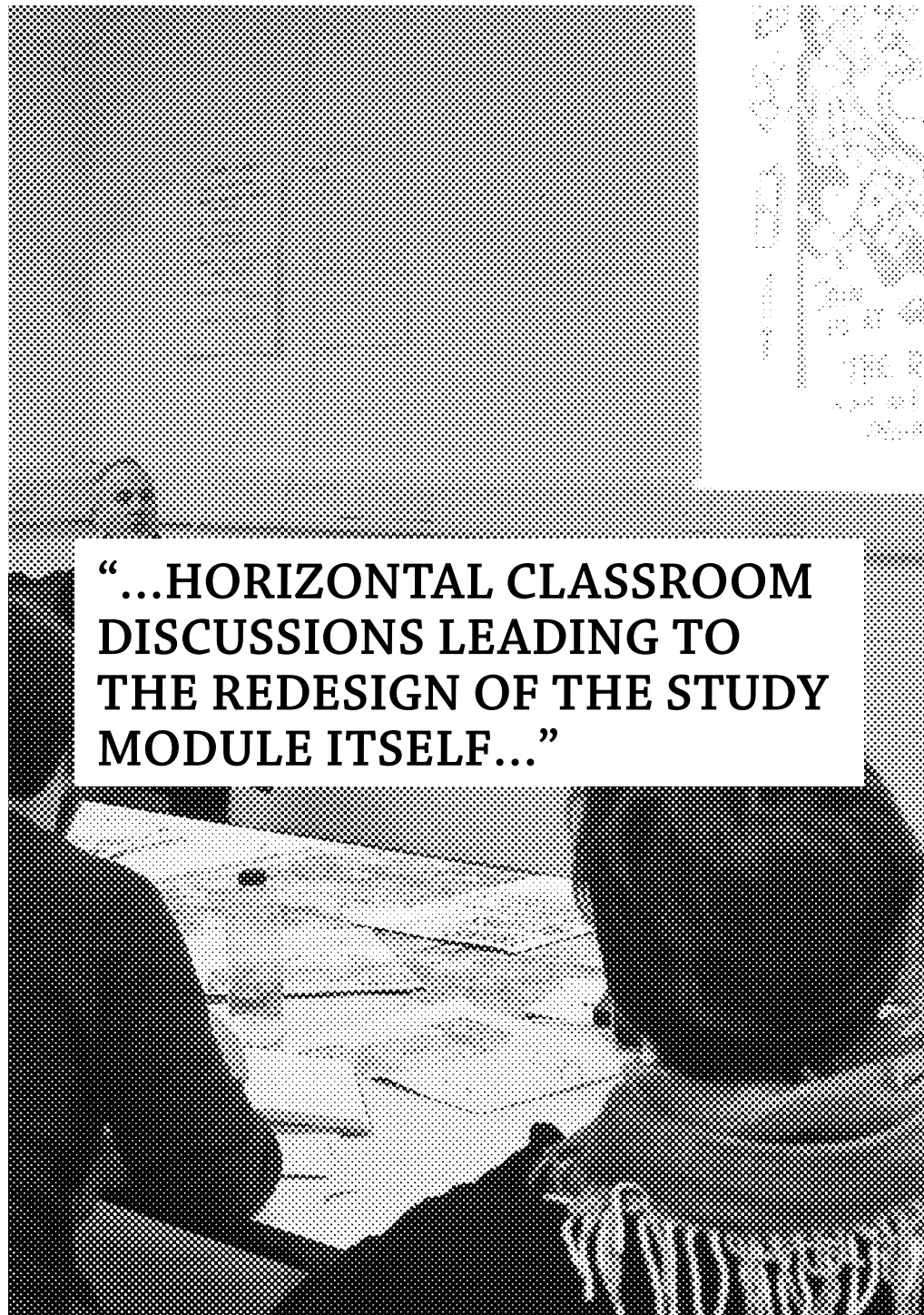
- 1) A comprehensive understanding of the methodological approaches of socially centered disciplines, including sociology, theater, education, ethnography, and communication;
- 2) The possibility of reconstructing and reconfiguring itself according to the needs and interest of the students;
- 3) An experiential approach toward art in the world that offers a stimulating challenge to the student;
- 4) A refunctioned curriculum of art history and art technique, including a history of the way these things have been taught in the past.

Implementing these four components would require a significant rethinking of how curriculum is constructed in a university or art school (particularly the bureaucratic process). As in the Reggio Emilia Approach, the curriculum would not be a monolithic schedule of subjects but the result of an organic exchange between professors and students, in which the former listen to the interests of the latter and use their expertise to construct a pedagogical structure that will serve their needs. Some basic tenets must be maintained, which would form part of the third objective, providing the student with a sense of the real world so that he or she understands that contexts are not always under the artist’s control.

It may seem counterintuitive to seek a reintroduction of the traditional components of studio art and art history, and it definitely is contrary to the direction of social practice programs today, which are severing their links to studio programs. Yet that division is, I believe, unnecessary and limiting.

⁸ Correspondence with Christine Hill, July 12, 2011.

As I have argued throughout this book, the disavowal of art in SEA to the extent that it is even possible, at best weakens the practice and brings it closer to simulating other disciplines. If we understand the history of the forms of art, the ideas that fueled them, and the ways these ideas were communicated to others, we can transpose and repurpose them to build more complex, thoughtful, and enduring experiences.



**“...HORIZONTAL CLASSROOM
DISCUSSIONS LEADING TO
THE REDESIGN OF THE STUDY
MODULE ITSELF...”**

DEWEY, BEUYS, CAGE, AND THE VULNERABLE YET UTTERLY UNREMARKABLE HERESY OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART EDUCATION (SEAE)

Gregory Sholette

Concluding essays are never conclusive, and this is no exception. I will, however, venture some general observations and more specific questions about teaching socially engaged art, beginning with a few excerpts from *Art as Social Action* (ASA):¹

“This exercise is based on collaborative decision-making processes mirroring the experiences encountered when forming and working within art and political collectives.”²

“Public Faculty uses strategies to rethink, redefine, and reenter public space through collective action.”³

“This produced a different kind of atmosphere and facilitated other ways of being together in a collectively created space where new forms of learning and sociality could emerge.”⁴

“The method of ‘becoming Zoya’ became the theme of the collective performance whereby participants reflected on a principal assignment: from a position of weakness or fear, how does one overcome oneself for the sake of some greater, higher ideal?”⁵

“Instead of classifying practices as artistic or not, we followed questions via experimentation to wherever they led.”⁶

¹ This article was originally published as a conclusion to the book *Art as Social Action*, edited by Gregory Sholette, Chloë Bass and Social Practice Queens.

² Dipti Desai and Avram Finkelstein, “NYU Flash Collective,” in *Art as Social Action*, eds. Gregory Sholette, Chloë Bass, and Social Practice Queens (New York: Allworth Press, 2018), 149.

³ Jeanne van Heeswijk and Gabriela Rendón, “Lesson Plan for Public Faculty No. 11,” in *ibid*, 245.

⁴ Katie Bachler and Scott Berzofsky, “Social Practice Studio,” in *ibid*, 40.

⁵ Natalia Pershina-Yakimanskaya (Gluklya), Jonathan Brooks Platt, and Sonya Akimova, “Becoming Zoya,” in *ibid* 187.

⁶ Matthew Friday and Iain Kerr, “SPURSE Lesson Plan,” in *ibid*, 171.

These snippets of curricular advice by Dipti Desai and Avram Finkelstein, Jeanne van Heeswijk and her collaborators, the Social Practice Studio, Chto Delat/What is to be done?, and SPURSE could be applied to most, if not all, lesson plans in ASA. But for some readers—as well as students, artists, educators, and members of the public—socially engaged art (SEA) will still remain puzzling. Cooperative self-care projects, participatory community activism, urban and environmental mapping, even political protests performed in public spaces... when did these become art? And how can acts of listening, walking, conversing, cooking, and gardening be related to, or even equated with the well-established history of painting, drawing, sculpture, installation, and other recognized art forms?

For the record, simply assuring someone that this is “social sculpture” does not relieve unease. If we remove the word *art* from the equation bewilderingly subsides for some. After all, who would dismiss the sensual pleasure of everyday, nonmarket pursuits, and what scholar would cast doubt on the aesthetic dimension of scientific fieldwork, critical analysis, or academic debate? But for others, it is more effective to do the opposite; as Desai and her students discovered in Washington Square Park, calling something art in a cosmopolitan setting adds both clarity and allure. But it is precisely this ontological and epistemological uncertainty that, I will argue, sooner or later catches up with everyone involved in this field of SEA, especially teachers. It can be a strange and even humbling experience, as I discovered in 2013 while standing before a room of skeptical art students with my coteacher Tom Finkelpearl. Using an open-discussion format we endeavored to impress upon the class that even though SEA looks like a social service activity it is art and worthy of their study. Ultimately they rebelled, generating an imaginative social sculpture all their own that assimilated the two of us “learned pedagogues” into its central performance. (More on this below.)

“Intimate education” is how Chloë Bass describes such encounters,⁷ while Grant Kester applies the term “vulnerable receptivity,” believing this affect to be fundamental to all SEA practices, and not just academic study.⁸

⁷ Chloë Bass, “Where Who We Are Matters,” in *ibid.*, 5.

⁸ Kester in fact makes a fairly complex argument in *Conversation Pieces* by first observing that critics Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried advocated that serious art must distance itself from mass culture, including kitsch and advertising. The solution was an embrace of frequently inscrutable artistic practices. But in doing so, all forms of accessible cultural production including community art were grouped into the same category as mass culture and condemned as simplistic, or even complicit, with the manipulative spectacle of consumer society. Kester writes that “this paradigm (in its various permutations) has made it difficult to recognize the potential aesthetic significance of collaborative and dialogical art practices that are accessible without necessarily being simplistic.” Nevertheless, he contends that formalist works do seek to establish an “openness to the natural world” as well as to artistic materials. In this respect, “dialogical artists adopt a similar attitude of vulnerable receptivity in their interactions with collaborators and audience members.” Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 13.

Examples abound. Consider Mierle Laderman Ukeles’s exemplary late-1970s Touch Sanitation project that brought her into direct physical contact with all 8,500 New York City sanitation workers, or Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn’s collaborative poster campaign fending off gentrification in London’s Docklands neighborhood at the same time, or Mel Chin’s *Operation Paydirt*, in which typically passive art audience transforms into an investigative team to research and visualize the spread of lead poisoning; and there is Suzanne Lacy’s *Between the Door and the Street*, in which she facilitates the gathering of community organizers to publicly reflect on their approaches to organizing, as well as Rick Lowe’s *Project Row Houses* in Houston, and his recent Victoria Square Project at Documenta 14 in Athens, Greece, that Lowe says will ultimately become “what people make of it.”⁹ In each case, these works embody Kester’s “openness to the specificity of the external world.”¹⁰

This same vulnerable receptivity carries over into the educational examples in this book, including Bo Zheng’s instructions to his “creative media” class in China to “deviate from the norm,” and to do so in public, after which his students compared these digressive acts to normative rules of social conduct, or Jaishri Abichandani’s South Asian Women’s Creative Collective (SAWCC), who collectively denounced male sexual violence and femicide towards women and girls in India by staging a choreographed protest piece in which individual artistic preferences were dissolved into a larger act of solidarity. ASA offers these and other lesson plans in which a given group of stakeholders—artists, students, instructors, community members—are transformed into participatory agents actively shaping and analyzing both the nature and outcome of the learning experience itself. In short, SEAE and SEA share a vulnerable receptivity through collaboration. They also intimately share something else: a fundamental relationship to the theory and practice of *radical pedagogy*.

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Claire Bishop and Tom Finkelpearl’s research convincingly demonstrate that SEA’s public practices are grounded in the legacy of radical pedagogy, an unconventional approach to critical learning associated with 1960’s counterculture.^{11,12} And while this volume references a wide range of challenging, even revolutionary, influences, prominent among them is the pragmatic phi-

⁹ Rick Lowe, the Victor Square Project website: <http://victoriasquareproject.gr/>.

¹⁰ Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

¹¹ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012).

¹² Tom Finkelpearl, *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

losophy of John Dewey and the artistic pedagogy of Joseph Beuys, two key figures about whom I will have more to say below. ASA contributors also acknowledged directly or indirectly Bertolt Brecht's learning plays (*Lehrstücke*), (Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, Augusto Boal's liberatory theater, the Situationist International's urban interventionism, Alan Kaprow's art-life fusion, bell hooks's transgressive teaching methodologies, Henry A. Giroux's performative classroom insurgency, Michel de Certeau's tactics of everyday life, SNCC's freedom curriculum in the Jim Crow South, Black Mountain College's experimental aesthetics, and Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's figure of the subversive intellectual who pilfers knowledge from the academy in order to give it back to the undercommons, like some scholarly Robin Hood or Leonarda Emilia.¹³

If I were to devise a shortlist of SEAE pedagogical operations it would include five steps: participatory curriculum planning, performative research (or art-based research), horizontal classroom discussion, and critical group reflection leading to the redesign of the study module itself. Put differently, SEAE is inherently Socratic and heuristic insofar as a given student, or participant, is encouraged to *learn how to learn*, as opposed to mechanically memorizing facts or artistic techniques. Yet notably, as Jane Jacob points out in her introductory essay, this is an approach Dewey proposed over a hundred years ago. And this also means SEAE appears opposite medium-specific studio art instruction focused primarily on teaching skills such as drawing, painting, sculpting, video, and so forth. But appearances can deceive. As this volume reveals, many SEAE instructors incorporate object-oriented craft techniques into their broader pedagogical objectives, even if these remain subordinated to Dewey's maxim that preparing a student for the future means readying "all his capacities," rather than turning him *necessarily* into an *artist*."¹⁴

As different as SEAE appears to be from classic forms of artistic education there is actually a sixth tendency that truly separates this approach to learning from other pedagogical models. Conspicuously demonstrated throughout the preceding lesson plans is student activity that occurs fully outside the classroom. How is this any different from, say, the hard sciences, where fieldwork is essential for gathering data or testing hypotheses? I will argue that the difference is more than just a matter of degree, and represents something profound and far reaching, and very much linked with the puzzling ontological status of SEA and SEAE described above.

¹³ Also known as La Carambada, legendary folk hero Leonarda Emilia was a young female *bandida* from the Mexican state of Querétaro who allegedly dressed as a man, killed corrupt government personnel, an distributed stolen money to impoverished campesinos in the 1870s. See Pascale Baker, *Revolutionaries, Rebels and Robbers* (Cardiff, UK: University of Wales, 2016).

¹⁴ John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," in *The Collected Works of John Dewey: Early Works Volume 5: 1895–1898, Essays*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 86. First published in *School Journal* LIV, (January 1897).

Before elaborating on this let me first say something about the long-standing conflict involving the very presence of art instruction within a university setting.

Those of us teaching art in academia know the drill well: *making* art objects is either too technical to fall under the rubric of liberal studies, or too subjective to be considered a rigorous category of empirically driven inquiry (this remains true whether students produce socially engaged art or paintings, drawings, video, sculpture, and so on). SEAE is no less burdened with this skepticism, yet it still insists on framing its already suspect creative practice within the language of scientific analysis using terms such as *research*, *experimentation*, *testing*, *self-assessment*, *learning metrics*, and so forth. In this regard, SEAE finds itself in the same storm-tossed pedagogical waters as its European kindred, *Art Practice-as-Research* (APR).¹⁵ And, not surprisingly, there is a level of institutional suspicion directed at both SEAE and APR, so much so that it can make acquiring research monies, or sometimes even gaining academic promotion, challenging (to be diplomatic).

But SEAE's pedagogical misdeeds go further. Not only does it frequently formulate research methods *in collaboration with the very same subjects who constitute its alleged field of investigation*, thus violating traditional notions of scholarly objectivity, but SEAE simultaneously, and some would say, seditiously, shares actual material assets—university research funds, technical resources, the enthusiastic labor of students and faculty—with the communities, inmates, single mothers, homeless people, and activist campaigns that it is supposed to be treating as its object of inquiry.¹⁶ Ultimately, therefore, what most differentiates SEAE from other modes of artistic learning, and most other forms of pedagogy, is the degree to which normative boundaries separating the type of learning that takes place in a school, and that which happens outside, in the *real world*, are not merely blurred, but aggressively, even gleefully, deconstructed (though of course SEAE softens its heresy some by generating the mandatory white papers and diagnostics all institutions lust after, and social practice students are no less obliged to leap through bureaucratic hoops in order to graduate).

It's almost as if no meaningful distinction were any longer possible between pedagogical spaces and life spaces, between art and life, and this

¹⁵ Henk Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (Netherlands: Leiden University Press, 2016).

¹⁶ Within academia, SEAE is not unlike the anthropological approach of Michael T. Taussig who even calls his research methods *fictocriticism* insofar as they blend "fiction, ethnographic observation, archival history, literary theory and memoir." See Emily Eakin, "Anthropology's Alternative Radical," *New York Times*, April 21, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/21/arts/anthropology-s-alternative-radical.html>.

sentiment also rings weirdly true across our entire culture today, bottom to top, an impression I will return to and try to clarify in my conclusion. Now, however, let me look at this question of SEAE's odd superimposition of everydayness and heterodoxy from a more historical perspective.

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From a certain historical perspective, SEAE could be described as simply the latest iteration of a much older academic dispute between those who teach art as a medium-specific process of individual expression (think of Hans Hoffman, christened by Clement Greenberg as “the fountainhead” of abstract expressionism, and mentor to such painters as Lee Krasner and Larry Rivers¹⁷), versus those who believe artistic learning is rooted in experimentation, transdisciplinarity, and self-reflexive design (consider the German Bauhaus and Russian Vkhutemas in the 1920s, or Mountain College in North Carolina between 1933 and 1957). Closely related to this second type of cultural pedagogy is the conviction that studying art is integral to developing a well-rounded, democratic citizenry, a conviction that dates back to American progressives like John Cotton Dana who established the populist education-oriented Newark Museum, and of course Dewey, founder of the Laboratory School in Chicago.¹⁸

As Mary Jane Jacob put it earlier in this volume, teachers and practitioners of SEAE should come to recognize a similar pedagogy has a longer genealogy than typically assumed. She proposes rereading Dewey, who, as early as 1897, asserted that “school is primarily a social institution” and “education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies [powers, interests, and habits] are concentrated.”¹⁹ (Notably, this integration of the social and cultural with other areas of education is at odds with the compartmentalized academic world many of us teach in today as described above.) In the 1960s, Dewey's pragmatic ideals flowed into the educational philosophy of the Freedom Schools in the segregated US South, and another decade later, they reemerged in transfigured form when Joseph Beuys cofounded the Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research (FIU) in Düsseldorf in 1974 as a protest against the official local art academy, which had just fired him. And it is here, I will argue, where SEAE's

uncanny ontological status first takes shape.

Though not a scholar of either Dewey or Beuys, I believe something shifted in the 1970s, especially towards the decade's end as the radical energy of May 1968 began to falter, something that transformed the idea of aesthetic pedagogy conceived as an essential ingredient for a healthy democratic society into a constituent of individual emancipation. Yes, certainly, Dewey sounds like Beuys when he insists that all students should be trained through “a process of living and not a preparation for future living.”²⁰ But Dewey the pragmatist philosopher also maintained that the institution known as school “should simplify existing social life; should reduce it, as it were, to an embryonic form.”²¹ This may seem like splitting hairs, but Dewey's version of academia as a protected micro-society—one in which educational guidance is provided by dedicated pedagogues (such as Dewey himself)—still is organized around a concrete institution complete with faculty, students, and rules.

By contrast, Beuys wryly appropriated established pedagogical tools and practices, treating blackboards, didactic lectures, educational symposia, and other classroom accessories as artistic material and media for his installations and performances. The resulting collapse of art and education is like a Surrealist collage conjoining Beuys the artist and Beuys the teacher, much as he also montaged Beuys the artist with shaman, and Beuys the artist with political activist by cofounding both the German Student and Green Parties in 1967 and 1980 respectively. Despite these multiple ironic *détournements*, however, the FIU aimed to transform “students” into true artistic beings. After all, Beuys was himself the program's very archetype who, as Jen Delos Reyes tells us, “challenged institutional conventions by directly incorporating his practice into his teaching,”²² or, as Bishop confirms, Beuys asserted that being a teacher “is my greatest work of art.”²³

This all fits neatly into the anti-institutional and anti-authoritarian zeitgeist of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the status quo, including traditional trade unions and prevailing Left parties, came face-to-face with an unprecedented historical revolt. Students and workers went on wildcat strikes and carried out increasingly militant confrontations with police, authorities, and government institutions in hopes of not simply reforming a broken liberal welfare state, but sweeping it away. As theorist Paolo Virno argues, “It is not difficult to recognize communist inspiration and

¹⁷ Cited from a 1955 review entitled “Introduction to an Exhibition of Hans Hofmann,” in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 3*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 240.

¹⁸ Carol G. Duncan, *A Matter of Class: John Cotton Dana, Progressive Reform, and the Newark Museum* (Pittsburgh: Periscope Publishers, 2010).

¹⁹ Mary Jane Jacob, “Pedagogy as Art,” in *Art as Social Action*, eds. Gregory Sholette, Chloë Bass, and Social Practice Queens (New York: Allworth Press, 2018), 10. See also Dewey, 86.

²⁰ Dewey, 87.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Jen Delos Reyes, “Why Socially Engaged Art Can't Be Taught,” in *Art as Social Action*, eds. Gregory Sholette, Chloë Bass, and Social Practice Queens (New York: Allworth Press, 2018), 200.

²³ Bishop, 243.

orientation in the failed revolution of the 1960's and 1970's."²⁴ Virno's reference to a mass communist imaginary is exactly opposite the centralized state model of Lenin, drawing instead on Italy's autonomist Marxist tradition and upon Situationist slogans as "never work"; "live without dead time"; and "be realistic, demand the impossible!"²⁵ But then the uprising ended. Instead of realizing its radical emancipatory aspirations at the level of the state or society, the historical failure of 1968 led to our consumption-driven "creative economy"²⁶ that simultaneously exploits and gratifies basic biopolitical desires as long as one has the necessary cash or, more precisely, credit ready at hand. As McKenzie Wark puts it with regard to "Bifo" Berardi's theories, "Before 1977, desire was located outside of capital; after, desire mean selfrealization through work."²⁷

In short, while Beuys's educational approach sought to free individuals from every oppressive authority, including the state, but also the academy, Dewey's theory pivoted on the belief that the state must take responsibility for education if democracy is to thrive. Now, I am not implying that Beuys was either a communist provocateur or an agent of neoliberalism *avant la lettre*, any more than Dewey was a closet conservative. Rather, both men's pedagogical ideas set out to liberate our imagination, as much as our being in the world. What I am focusing on instead is the degree to which larger social, political, an economic forces mold the contour of even the most progressive intentions. In the gap between Dewey's pragmatist defense of education as collective self-representation, and Beuys's idea of education as autonomous self-realization, a significant political ramification emerges for SEA, SEAE, and contemporary art and society more broadly. Nonetheless, it is Beuys's anarchoeducational pastiche whose influence persists, but for better and worse assimilated today through the lens of enterprise culture and its society of highly individualized risk. Its impact is visible within SEAE, but also in a range of twenty-first-century informal educational experiments, including Charles Esche's former Proto-Academy in Edinburgh, Bruce High's Quality Foundation in Brooklyn, Jim Duignan's Stockyard Institute in Chicago, Home Workspace in Beirut, and even Tania Bruguera's former Cátedra Arte de Conducta in Havana or Marina Naprushkina's multipurpose refugee center New Neighborhood Moabit in Berlin that she has explicitly labeled an "artificial institution."²⁸ These

community building and alternative learning projects celebrate a high degree of autonomy from state support structures, which is not a criticism because these endeavors are important and often necessary at a local level. Still, there is a catch, and one that we must grapple with now that the very concept of the democratic state is in radical free fall.

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Drilling down into history a bit further I see a noteworthy and illuminating precedent to these pedagogical differences in the conflict between Joseph Albers and John Cage at Black Mountain College in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and it is worth a short detour to consider this. Albers was a strong proponent of Dewey who understood art to be the experimental arm of culture. As historian Eva Díaz tells us, for Albers's art served society by developing "better forms" as "the precondition of cultural production and progress."²⁹ Studying art is like doing research and development that is later incorporated into actual real-world experience. Cage, on the other hand, understood creative experimentation quite differently by championing not contemplative design, but uncertainty, disorder and disruption. He introduced chance operations into music by rolling a pair of dice or casting I Ching sticks and letting the outcome guide his compositions. Before long Cage antagonized Albers and other Black Mountain College faculty when in 1952 he recruited "faculty and students to perform short, time scripts, resulting in many unrelated events scattered throughout the performance space."³⁰ The result was *Theater Piece no. 1*, or simply the *Happening*, in which solitary overlapping actions unfolded, seemingly without order or logic, much as we encounter contemporary life as a fragmented, even alienating experience. Whether this was neo-Dadaism or ultrarealism, the composer nevertheless cast doubt on Albers's Deweyan faith that art is a testable medium for improving society through aesthetic research and design. Cage later undermined the very notion of the academy itself when he famously goaded an audience in Germany with the Zen-like query, "Which is more musical, a truck passing by a factory or a truck passing by a music school?"³¹

The discomfort generated by Cage's intentionally interventionist educational aesthetic echoed through a seminar I cotaught with Tom Finkelpearl for Social Practice Queens in fall 2013 called *Participatory Art and Social Action*. The premise was simple: an increasing numbers of artists, curators,

²⁴ Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (MIT Press, 2004), 110–111.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Wark is discussing the ideas of "Bifo" Berardi on the website Public Seminar, June 5, 2015: <http://www.publicseminar.org/2015/06/franco-bifo-berardi/#.WabX-tN96rx>.

²⁸ These projects are further discussed in Gregory Sholette, "From Proto-Academy to Home Workspace Beirut," *I Future Imperfect: Contemporary Art Practices and Cultural Institutions in the Middle East*, ed. Anthony Downe (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 190–204.

²⁹ Eva Díaz, *The Experimenters: Chance and Design at Black Mountain College* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

³⁰ Díaz, 7.

³¹ Cited in Edward Morris, "Three Thousand Seven Hundred Forty-Seven Words about John Cage," *Notes*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1967): 472. doi: 10.2307/895075.

and critics are turning their energies towards a new type of participatory art activism, and therefore students should engage in research about this phenomenon. Graduate and undergraduate participants were read work by or about Rick Lowe, Tania Bruguera, Martha Rosler, Teddy Cruz, Marisa Jahn, Stephen Wright, Claire Bishop, and Nato Thompson, as well as excerpts from our own writings.³² However, it soon became apparent that for most of these studiobased art students, SEA was an entirely new paradigm, and after a few weeks of presentations, readings, and discussions the class broke into smaller research groups focusing on such questions as the following:

- “Is there a social practice art aesthetic or form or repertoire of forms specific to this kind of work?”
- “Is social practice art radically opposed to mainstream art and culture?”
- “How does social practice art differentiate itself from social services?”

It was this last question that most vexed and amused the class, ultimately leading them to stage a mock trial at the end of the fifteen-week semester, in which Finkelpearl and I were respectfully cross examined. At one point the *prosecutors* presented us with the following thought experiment:

Explain to the jury exactly what significant difference exists between, on one hand, a project in which artists, working out of a moving truck adorned with a logo indicating that it is an art project, operate social services like babysitting or assisting with predatory landlords; and, on the other, the very same service that is run by a group of community activist volunteers? Does it come down to a question of which institution provides funding: an arts agency or some municipal social service organization?³³

Our expert testimony began to derail as us *learned* instructors scrambled for logical clarification. Meanwhile, our students rejoiced in their intoxicating self-emancipation from the authority of experts as our prayers to Dewey went unanswered. I could almost hear Joseph Beuys and John Cage chortling from the shadows.

³² Also included were a few of our own writings and the full bibliography can be found here: <http://www.sholette seminars.com/new-forms-2013-readings-and-resources/>.

³³ I am paraphrasing from memory here, and also wish to note that the class discussed Marisa Jahn's Nanny Van (2014–ongoing), and the Austrian collective *WochenKlausur's* mobile medical clinic for homeless people (1993), thus providing two SEA examples that may have inspired their prosecutorial rebellion.

Traditional education fails, Dewey contended, because it neglects the “fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life,”³⁴ though I doubt that the pragmatist philosopher envisioned circumstances quite like the present-day world of contemporary art in which the relationship between school and society, between reality and fiction, between culture and politics have more or less become a single continuous surface, not unlike a Möbius strip. To recognize the degree to which an ambient aesthetic spectacularity now deliriously saturates all aspects of our experience we need only mention “fake news,” or refer to the weird mimicry between the current White House administration and certain television shows including *House of Cards* or *Saturday Night Live*; or we can point to the protest art organized by the 1,000 *Gestalten* collective in Hamburg, Germany, who choreographed hordes of ashen-covered zombies in a cinematic public pageant to protest the 2017 G20 summit.

It is this strange state of looping and doubling that contemporary art, including SAE, operates within, though not necessarily by choice, but by circumstance. Which may be why the *Pedagogy Group* astutely cautions about the danger of SEAE programs defining a “new autonomous sphere” as socially engaged artists “stand apart from social practices created in everyday community and movement making,” thus substituting cultural activism for political work in the real world.³⁵ As important as it is to heed this warning, I sense that this apprehension is itself a symptom of the broader sociopolitical, historical, and pedagogical subsumption whereby art conceived as a reflection upon reality is taken as that reality, tout court. One can hear the strain of this entangled conundrum in a statement made by several young artists from Los Angeles struggling with their role in gentrification.

We write in hopes that more artists will finally break with their sense of exceptionalism and consider their roles in gentrification. We recognize that art is an industry with a structural reality that must be acknowledged in order for artists to challenge their complicity in the displacement of long-term residents in low-income and working class neighborhoods and fight against this.³⁶

³⁴ “I believe that much of present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life. It conceives the school as a place where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed. The value of these is conceived as lying largely in the remote future; the child must do these things for the sake of something else he is to do; they are mere preparation. As a result they do not become a part of the life experience of the child and so are not truly educative.” John Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” in *The Collected Works of John Dewey: Early Works Volume 5: 1895–1898, Essays*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 95. First published in *School Journal* LIV, (January 1897): 80.

³⁵ The Pedagogy Group, “Toward a Social Practice Pedagogy,” in *Art as Social Action*, eds. Gregory Sholette, Chloë Bass, and Social Practice Queens (New York: Allworth Press, 2018), 75–86.

³⁶ An Artists' Guide to Not Being Complicit with Gentrification: <https://hyperallergic.com/385176/an-artists-guide-to-not-being-complicit-with-gentrification/>.

We have entered the time and space of the “uncanny present,” writes political scientist Rebecca Bryant, a present unfamiliar in its very *present-ness*,³⁷ or, as Wark summarizes with reference to Jod Dean’s theory of “Communicative Capitalism,”

Communicative capitalism relies on repetition, on suspending narrative, identity, and norms. Framed in those terms, the problem then is to create the possibility of breaking out of the endless short loops of drive. But if anything the tendency is in the other direction. After blogging came Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, driving even further into repetition. The culture industries gave way to what I call the vulture industries.³⁸

Of course, Beuys was correct, everyone *is* an artist, though I suspect the current materialization of his proposition within the so-called creative economy has much more to do with the needs of neoliberal capital than with those of an artist in a felt suit and hat. Still, as Bishop asserts, the German postwar artist remains simply “the best-known point of reference for contemporary artists’ engagement with experimental pedagogy.”^{39,40} It is also fair to say that Beuys’s artistic patrimony above all now provide the groundwork for the growing appeal of SEA and SEAE within both mainstream art and academic circles, with all of the resources and complications that brings with it.

Nonetheless, what is missing from the experience of the uncanny present in general is that discernible moment of alienation between subject and object, learning and doing, metaphor and thing, the very ground of both artistic study and social critique. The only point of rupture visible today is that flash of recognition when we discover which tiny minority of artists truly succeeds, and which remains structurally locked within the dark matter of our bare art

world.⁴¹ And finally a response to my initial question is glimpsed: SEAE is simultaneously heretical and humble, strange and utterly familiar because it embodies the asymmetrical, uncanny present of our twenty-first-century reality in a singular fashion, call it a pedagogical uncanny, leaving us with one Dewey-inspired question left to pose: how do we go about learning how to live, make art, and engage in social action and community building when the world around us is in free fall? However preliminary and partial, I believe the preceding pages offer readers an impressive compendium of imaginative endeavors and practical experiments that take the vulnerable, yet utterly unremarkable, heresy of socially engaged art education as their point of departure.

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As if in a dream, I hear John Cage’s noisy truck rumbling over and over; only, by now the music school’s oboists, sax players, and drummers have stolen the tires off it, perhaps using them to build barricades, or maybe exchanging them for weed off campus, who knows, and yet either way, the truck strangely keeps idling, its engine refusing to give up, so that its clamor, the very same din that once interrupted student rehearsals, is now fully part and parcel of the academy’s basic educational experience, disappearing within the architecture of the campus, like the ambient unnerving white noise in Don DeLillo’s novel of the same name.⁴²

⁴¹ “What if this surfeit of invisible producers demanded economic justice? This appears to be the tactic of Working Artists and the Greater Economy (WAGE) and others seeking exhibition fees for artists. Or, contrarily, what if the majority of artists simply decided not to participate in the art world, perhaps following Stephen Wright’s sardonic suggestion that contemporary art is seeking to break away from itself, a process that even generates a new area of study he calls escapology. Who would be left in that case to teach art, fabricate projects, subsidize museums and conferences and industry journals? Where would the art world’s hierarchies and value production be in that situation? Even more terrifying, to echo a question raised by Carol Duncan some three decades ago, what if the majority of those whose creative potential has never even been tapped by the system were to suddenly be illuminated within it as a bare art world sweeps into view that vast surplus army of dark matter creativity? What was previously (and perhaps in some cases as we shall see, thankfully) hidden from sight now becomes painfully manifest in the bare art world.” Gregory Sholette, *Delirium and Resistance: Activist Art and the Crisis of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 76.

⁴² Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (New York: Viking Press, 1985).

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³⁷ Rebecca Bryant, “On Critical Times: Return, Repetition, and the Uncanny Present,” *History and Anthropology* 27, no. 1 (2016): 27.

³⁸ McKenzie Wark, “Communicative Capitalism,” *Public Seminar*, March 23, 2015, <http://www.publicseminar.org/2015/03/communicative-capitalism/#.WabfL9N96rw>.

³⁹ May 1968 Graffiti from the Bureau of Public Secrets website: <http://www.bopsecrets.org/CF/graffiti.htm>.

⁴⁰ “For all of these artists, education was—or continues to be—a central concern in their work. It is Joseph Beuys, however, who remains the best-known point of reference for contemporary artists’ engagement with experimental pedagogy; in 1969 he claimed that ‘to be a teacher is my greatest work of art.’” Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 343.

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