

COMMUNIQUÉ

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FACULTY OF INVISIBILITY

Friday, June 15, 2007

The Faculty of Invisibility composes itself of a group of artists, practitioners, designers, theorists and teachers who mutually carry out an emerging institute. On invitation tutors open departments with regard to their very practice. The authority over these departments is at the disposal of the tutors. The departments hold their own sites and formats. Hence the Faculty's scope cannot be detached from the tutors' practices. The Faculty does not stage events and can therefore not be watched, but it issues its communications. As such the Faculty of Invisibility appears to be in disengagement, a potential context in withdrawing.

The first manifestation of the Faculty of Invisibility, *The Speech* took place on December 6/7/8 2006 at the Jan van Eyck Academie. Here we have six sheets of paper. 'standaard courantdruck' 45 grams. Printed as a newspaper, the sheets have been first disassembled, folded once, then put on top of each other and folded into each other again. Important is how the object is organised. Hence the use of the given format constructs an object that functions differently. Each page is cut through a blank inside, a gap, an opening. The blank introduces a rupture into the time that reading takes to come to an end.

The layout follows the construction of the object. Broad margins on the top and sides face almost no margins on the bottom. Each element is given its place within the usual structure. The communiqué is set in *Time New Roman* and *Times New Roman italic*. *Time New Roman* is commissioned by the Faculty of Invisibility in 2007 and designed by Ian Brown and Paul Vincent Gangloff to be of good readability at high speed printing processes on cheap paper. It will change unnoticeably within a space that reveals itself expressionless. The Faculty of Invisibility is working towards inoperative spaces.

Printed by Dijkman Offset this assemblage will also acknowledge that a responding community has taken place. Roé Cherpac, Wim Cuyvers (Department of Common Spaces), Paul Gangloff (Department of Haunting), David Goldenberg (Department of Post Autonomy), Sönke Hallmann (Department of Reading), Ingela Johansson (Department of Uncertainty), Nikita Kadan (Department of Parasitism and Symbioses), Lesya Khomenko (Department of Play), Volodymyr Kuznetsov (Department of Survival), Nebojša Milikic (Department of Learning), One Day Nation, Hinrich Sachs (Department of Speech Genres), Monika Vykoukal (Department of Doubt), Inga Zimprich (Department of Practice).

This communiqué — fourth manifestation of the Faculty of Invisibility — is issued in an edition of 1000 copies, distributed by the tutors.

The Faculty likes to thank Madeleine Bisscheroux and Anne Vangronsveld, Gon Zifroni, Achim Lengerer, Maria Iorio, Marres Centrum voor Contemporaine Cultuur, Ron Stoffels, Het Blauwe Huis, Patricia Reed, Ian Brown and Hilde Meeus.

The Faculty of Invisibility has been supported by Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht.

The Faculty of Invisibility has been initiated by Inga Zimprich.

The Faculty of Invisibility, as its own institution, is a consequence of two conflicting factors: There is my incapacity to live through all conversations we could possibly share, as much as there is the persisting curiosity to provoke them.

— Continued on page 3

Ok, let's try to open the Department of Learning with this letter to Inga. I would say that I find the Tbilisi project of Marjolijn Dijkman (Revolution is Just Around the Corner) quite problematic.

— Continued on page 4

Again I would like to tell you everything. It kept me from writing it. I am more likely to use oral communication. I warn you, the text sounds rather familiar. It is not the text of the speech I held in Maastricht.

— Continued on page 6

I find now three different ways of survival are possible: When you are alone it is an ascetic way of existence. In many cases you must think about your strength, your power.

— Continued on page 8

The development of Post Autonomy (PA) that I have opened here (although I am still unclear how a Department of PA is to work) extends the issues and experiments examined in the PA-website launched in March 2006 with the assistance of Stefan Beck — particularly the online debates, and is another platform that explores 'participation' and the materialisation of the space of PA.

— Continued on page 10

Since the early nineties in Ukraine and also in other Post-Soviet countries artists construct new relations with society. This process started when the entire system of social integration of artists in the Soviet Union was ruined.

— Continued on page 12

The precarious situation for a culture worker and the expectations from a post-graduate student in the Swedish welfare context formed the opening speech of the Department of Uncertainty in December 2006.

— Continued on page 13

This speech — for I was asked to give a speech, not a lecture, although I am not sure what exactly this means — will retrace the thought processes which led me to suggest The Department of Doubt in three sections.

— Continued on page 15

This morning I decided to re-write my speech, or at least to add some remarks and ideas from yesterday to which I would like to refer with some brief comments. I would like to do so, since these remarks relate in different ways to my initial speech as well as they, in my view, relate in a specific manner to the task of this first manifestation of the *Faculty of Invisibility*.

— Continued on page 18

Public space is the opposite of privat(ise)(d) space. The one who privatises space has obtained that space, bought it or inherited it, seized it or simply occupied it. She/he is protected by laws, habits and power.

— Continued on page 22

TO PROVOKE CONSTELLATIONS

 Inga Zimprich, Department of Practice

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Inviting you to join these potential conversations, at the same time, multiplies their number indefinitely.

The possible conversations inherent to and within the constellation of the Faculty is what I would like to declare the Faculty of Invisibility to be. Not something that it should arrive to or should become, but rather, as something that already *is*.

To welcome this potentiality of conversations with its own institutional body is, on the one hand, a gesture towards its imagined potential. On the other hand, I believe it to be the drafting of a structure that determines from within, what there is to be taught and what there is to be learned.

The institutional corpus of the Faculty of Invisibility, founded upon communication and inter-relations, confirms its fleeting nature and sets up its constitutional right to persist without proof.

By inviting you I abandoned the idea of specialisation in favour of my attraction towards your needs. To motivate my invitation I entered the space of your practice as far as I can expand mine. To reach out to you affects from where I speak. Inviting you through insistence makes me transgress the point where I feel safe. While finding myself within the space of your practice puts us both at risk. Intimately, we endure each other's presence, which leaves behind the assurances of convention. My invasion into the midst of your thoughts and work at the same time suggests the space of the Faculty of Invisibility: If not in a distribution of places and practices – I cannot think of a more appropriate space the Faculty could be set in. Is it possible to criticise spaces, both those established and erected, if not through practicing them, again, to re-do them from their very beginning? Where would one start?

The last time we met you said you had aimed at perfection, and finding that you would fail to arrive at that perfect state you decided to grow only those parts you found to be intact, good and healthy. You told me, how you employed walking in your projects as a way of reading space to surface information, which is usually rendered invisible in the face of the familiar. You told me about the campaigns you create, dedicated to your collaborators desires could they be amplified in spaces, times, or songs. You inserted me into your reading, in which I

hear myself writing while I read. You told me about the magic you apply to make people put their spaces from private to public when you live with these rules: not to spend money and not to sleep twice at the same place, travelling on recommendations of your hosts. And when I meet you, I wonder, whether it matters where one waits for something to arrive, and what it takes for something to fall into place. I guess meeting you in search of the best person has been inevitable.

You have been invited to become the Faculty by opening a Department. I, it seems, can't prevent to provoke constellations, which in their fundamental uncertainty can neither be calmed nor controlled - which can assume identity only through being practiced, being endured, and being used. This notion of usage as a proposal to learning, refining and drafting is what I would like to contribute as the Department of Practice. For the moment it is neither more, nor less than sharing into the risk that the Faculty is, what I can offer to you.

Scripting the points of a program, which will lead us through three days of conferring, can only consist in positioning substitutes which will naturally make room for what will appear in their stead. To begin with the Faculty can only mean to provoke it to fall in its place. The Faculty as an institute is characterised by its amount of unknowing. For the moment the Faculty is in the state of its own provocation.

Therefore I'd like to assure you, though an event entitled *The Speech* will be verbal in character, you'll find me a wordless director, speechless when it comes to giving directions what there is to be done. The lesson that is to be taught and to be learned within the Faculty is: How to read an invisible book and how to foresee its next chapter.

THE ECONOMY OF ETHNICIZATION

Nebojša Milikic, Department of Learning

— Continued from page 1

When I saw the presentation of the project on her website www.marjolijndijkman.com/projects/view/1/82 the first time I only noticed that it was too ‘ethnographic’. Today, after visiting the website again, I would say that it is even colonialistic, judging from the conceptual approach and with respect to the accomplished texts and explanations. Marjolijn is presenting us ‘an idea on the evolution of the displays from one piece of paper, a stick, a small table, self designed and developed inventive constructions into a standardized Coca-Cola kiosk...’ along with her intention to ‘collect and preserve some examples of displays and a try to get them into the ethnographic museum’.

The author’s concern that the native and cultural importance of these objects is endangered by the restricting and regulatory economic policy of the Georgian prime minister is kind of nonsense! My assumption is that the Georgian prime minister would gladly impose exactly the same treatment to these objects – sending them to history and maybe also to the museum.

For a start I really don’t see any crucial difference between this project and projects of early explorers of various African regions for instance, with their greed for curiosities and hunger for the classification of yet unqualified people and objects. The author’s need to enlighten natives and their institutions, to introduce present logics of world order by putting things first of all in order, and thus confirming certain ‘economic evolutions’ by musealised objects is upsetting for me. The common predecessor of today’s museums and zoos, the curiosity cabinet, is reintroduced here. Although not in the collector’s country but in the country, community from which the objects originate. Of course in opposition to the once explored Africans, who weren’t ever ‘enabled’ to reflect the aesthetic and evolutionary supra-layer of utilitarian objects, Georgians are invited to the circle of enlightened nations, which should take care of their present cultural habits as their own heritage in the future.

I have the impression that these street stands are problematically purified, aestheticised and even fetishized here. As it is the case with the (purification and) fetishization of mercantile goods that serves to hide the sufferings of those that produce them, here we might have a similar operation: sterilized objects, deprived of their grim content and function, appear to us, the connoisseurs, in their sophisticated texture and constructive elegance – in their (un)discovered beauty. Do we have to

forget the coldness of the streets that they are exposed to along with their owners, or their pocket knife practicality needed for a sudden appearance of an inspector or policeman? Why do we have to admire them as musealised objects? What is the artist’s intention in this project, and how can we check her argumentation?

Let’s put it this way: do we have to believe researchers and scientists in what they say and write about origins and meanings of design in warrior’s shields from Africa for example? It is not easy for us to check their argumentation, but there are many of their colleagues that would do that in the course of their professional practice. In the domain of contemporary art it seems as though no one is concerned with relations between diagnoses and deduction of facts, assumption and argumentation. This is where the problems can partly come from. I wouldn’t say that the evolution in construction of items presented in Marjolijn’s work matches or presents the evolution of the economy in the given country. There is hardly any evolution in the economy in Georgia or elsewhere in Eastern Europe, since it is altogether being transformed into a big multicultural colony. As is well known, colonies are not supposed to have their own economies. In that sense these objects might rather be a part of the economic history of Western than of Eastern Europe.

Still, the origin of shields or the evolution of economies can be disputed while the factual diagnosis in the arts is obviously of critical interest to no one. Let’s just take a quick look at an expert presenting an artwork, namely the explanatory label of the video by Marina Abramovic displayed in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. I just want to state that the song that we hear in this video is not the Serbian national anthem at all. Did anybody notice that? I’ve sent the information about that to the staff of the Stedelijk. Let’s check if there is any change in the work’s description and what it says now. Can anybody do it for me?

I also wonder if Marjolijn did some work of that kind in her own country or elsewhere in Western Europe, since the markets in Amsterdam or London do not lack this kind of objects at all.

Now let’s also consider those circumstances in which this kind of work might appear in the course of an artist’s residency in Tbilisi or elsewhere in Eastern Europe,

altogether with the author’s instruction to include this collection in the National Ethnographic Museum’s collection. There is a lot of criticism recently of so-called art-tourism, the fact that a big number of artists produce their art travelling across Europe. Apart from many good effects (contacts, opportunity for co-operations as well as misunderstandings) the question really is if there is a way to problematize (otherwise they are automatically reproduced) positive connotations of the ‘cultural and artistic exchange’. The impossibility or incapability to challenge this automatism would be the first bad circumstance, which will hardly be successfully treated by the scarcely informed and sometimes just ignorant cultural administrations in the respective countries of the artists or art-tourists. The second bad circumstance or better to say the constitutive agency for possible confusions is a growing number of art and cultural practitioners in the East that for some reasons uncritically accept every cultural –exchange-proposal that comes from their Western colleagues. Lacking an apparatus of analyses, a budget for decision-making and concepts to question the future of their economic and political underdevelopments, they yield to any offer from ‘there’ and usually passively collaborate in this exchange – that in turn has an effect of spontaneous colonization. And in spite of the fact that colonization might not be the worst thing in the world, especially when it comes on a voluntary basis, as for the future of the European and worldwide art exchange and their possibly productive roles in reflecting accumulated social, political and economic problems that we share, these and other related circumstances are quite annoying. In the choice between the overall incapability of questioning the present conditions of art exchange and the lack of means for critical resistance to discourses imposed by this incapability both circumstances are worse. For both exchanging sides.

RESPONSE

Marjolijn Dijkman

Dear Nebojša,

First of all I would like to thank you for your critical response/statement about my work ‘The revolution is just around the corner’. I’m very grateful that you took the effort to write your statement and provoke a discussion about the work, even before it’s finished! I hopefully will be able to finish the piece the coming year in Tbilisi. I have the feeling that your response is in some ways a bit too one-dimensional although some points were very striking for me to think about. For me the project is (even) more complex and tries to deal with the issues of ethnography and heritage in a different way than you proposed. Since you were right about the poor information about the work and it’s intentions on the web I decided to write down some thoughts. Before I would like to talk about your statement and go deeper into your comments I would like to sketch the context of the work during it’s development and the ideas for the continuation of the project next year.

— Continued on <http://facultyofinvisibility.tinka.cc/en/node/94>

THE MANY THAT TAKE PART IN ME

Paul Gangloff, Department of Haunting

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There, I listened, I looked and I spoke from my mind. The ancient Greeks called that *parrhesia*: telling everything, a sort of truth telling, a fearless speech, a speech in which one will say it all. It does not matter anymore where to start, when it is about saying everything. Everything - that does not really start somewhere and it doesn't end elsewhere. Now as I am in front of you, the matter will be our relation. Not analysing relations from some hypothetical remote point of view, but becoming aware of the relations taking place inside oneself. In doing so, one tries to deal with the strangers inside oneself.

How we relate to each other. Every time I am speaking everything, it is different, it changes each time I address it. I made many attempts, you should know. I tried many times to write everything to 'you'. It has not been without changing my mind. Changing my mind is the means and the aim. Or rather, there is no aim. Changing my mind is changing everything. I am inhabited and the words I use are not mine, they often come from someone else. They circulate through me, through you. It goes that way for words, it goes that way for the rest and by extension it goes like that for life in general. It goes through me, it doesn't belong to me as a property. What is proper? What constitutes me, us, what we are made of, is not ours. Our habits, our ways to do, ways to be, are not ours, neither are they characteristics to be categorized. It circulates through us. It inhabits us. We inhabit each other. We can't help being host of each other. We're never alone. We have been made by the others, my parents, dear parents, my sisters and my uncle, my friends, each of you, and teachers and people sharing our life. And anybody that just lives next to us. They inhabit us. I am one thing among others in the world and the distinction between me and not me or inside me and outside of me is not to be taken seriously. I am not somewhere located in the top of my head. I am not a body with hermetic borders between an 'around' and an interior.

'I' am happening, here, in space and time. I am part of those things going on. The depth of someone is not towards an interior secret place, where a smaller someone is sitting at the control panel. There is not a little room deep inside with consciousness sitting on the throne. The depth is the many that take part in me. Genetic depth, friendship depth, cultural depth. We are present at the same time in the same place. We are haunting each other.

Or I would like that we haunt each other, more silently interacting. Not judging, not controlling, not advising, not helping, curing, expecting, evaluating, checking, asking, demanding. But barely sharing, what is given. Maybe not even participating, contributing, but rather an economy of the sharing. Of the gift, the one way exchange. You give. I take. Consciously undergoing the unworking of our productions and competitions. No more and no less than being with each other.

Here, I open the Department of Haunting. To inhabit each other. A department in which it is a question of our multiplicity and of our sharing. Who is the guest, who is the host? I don't know. How can we enter each other, be guests, be hosts, multiply ourselves, undertake all the political actions necessary inside ourselves? How to be in each other's minds? Being in each other. Don't you have someone in mind? It seems that space and memory have a bond. I remember all the places I've been. What we do with haunting, is inhabiting spaces, being there, present, to inhabit memories. Do you remember me? Do you follow me? In a way. Let's forget who is talking to whom. We have similar stories: we are power at play within each other.

I always lived with people. I've never lived alone. I got their habits, their ways of talking. It has never been easy. You know what I am talking about. Don't you? It is not easy to deal with each other, to live with each other. There's always a third part, and a fourth and so on. One has to compose or to dispose. That is politics: how do we depend on each other, how do we shape this disposition. Who are we dealing with and how? I am already haunting the Faculty. I am inhabiting you or you are inhabiting me. Again I don't really know who is the guest and who is the host. I have you in my mind. I have Ro e in my mind, I think, yes it is about being present, about an encounter, haunting. It is about common spaces, about intruding in the private. Yes I have Wim in my mind. Ghosts like you? Like you, Inga. I rather repeat myself than read it again, otherwise I doubt, yes doubt and uncertainty, I don't know what 'I' want.

That sounds like a confession. Let's try to follow this thin line between fearless speech and pathetic confession. Actually it is not the pathos of confession that I dislike, it is the duty of confession, the institution pulling the confession out of me. What is the place for secrets in a fearless speech? So, I repeat myself, until it curves,

until I get out of it. It is about how we constitute each other. It is about property and invasion, or intrusion. We depend on each other. How to learn to live together? I do not claim or call for a more together, more united life in society. Not more together. I'm rather interested in how we can use the space together in a better way. That is haunting as a discipline. Finding ways to access, to open doors. A discipline, and yes, Vovan, we are relating to each other. Here it also is about our survival. Yes, it is a matter of necessity. Living without money. How to survive? Not only cosy ways, not only romanticism, practical. Yes, practice. Where to sleep in the city at night, without a home, without money? Romantic when it is said. Done it is an experiment. Done again it is practice. I eat the menu. 'I' don't know what I want. Haunting the Faculty, it counts as well for David: Post Autonomy? Do you mean that we depend on each other? Do you mean autonomy is an illusion, independence a lie? This text is like a big bag, where I can throw everything in. I warned you though. I don't know where to start. I start again.

Hospitality for the pilgrim: what are we doing with hospitality? Some enter, others don't. That is how it is. Who enters you? Whose words, faces and whose not? They enter you, they might become familiar, you might become them. What is good with the stranger, the intruder is that it makes me a stranger too. It makes me an intruder. And diet and wisdom? Diet, a little bit of everything at the right time. Finding the right amounts rather than a refusal of what is 'bad' and an excess of what is 'good'. It is maybe tiring to read. Maybe I should apply 'my own' principles: more silence, a good diet. No excess. And wisdom? Is diet wisdom? Is asceticism wisdom? No more, no less? Just being. Making my own schedule, having my time. Who buys my time? What for? Who am I selling my time to? A series of bold questions often indicates the near ending of my writing.

I have been told I might be fooling myself. Who is this 'I' that is fooling myself? I did what I thought would be true to myself. During two years I had the intention to follow those two rules wherever they would lead me: to not spend two nights in the same place anymore and to not use any money. Of course it is about not having to work. It is about living, it is about everything that I am trying to say. But then again, how true is it to live like that for a month and to then come back to graduate? I don't know. I am repeatedly addressing to you my doubts and the limits of my understanding, of my knowledge, only because they are a function of my beliefs and my actions, the oscillation of my awareness through the gap in between the two. I feel now too big a difference between holding a speech and writing a text addressed to an absent 'you'. I wish to meet you. Again or for the first time, to discuss everything again.

I MAKE A ROCKET

Volodymyr Kuznetsov, Department of Survival

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When you are alone you must have trust in what you do, you must be true to yourself. One of the main questions of survival are money and food, you must do something to work or take money from your parents or eat from the garbage or steal. Or you must find trust from someone else and then you have money and support from those people/that person.

Another way is when you survive not alone but with a group if this group is based on togetherness, common aims, shared interest and understanding. One of the best ways to survive is the group method, because you always may take support from someone and you give support to someone else. And one of the main factors here is love and understanding of each other, self-sacrifice. But when you do not share the interests of the group, but still have trust – then that is the combined way when you live alone and with a group or different groups. It is one of the free ways to survive. Free and interesting. But not everything is reliable, because it is a very free way and not always stable. In this way many things depend on your intuition. You don't know exactly what awaits you tomorrow.

My business is art and things which connect with creation. Every profession, every work is connected to creation... sometimes to abstract and unexpected creation. Is it possible to know and understand all?

It is impossible.

I want to know more to do my work better, and I try to learn new things, and work with people who have a maximum relation to creativity.

My drawing teacher said: You must live like it's the last moment of your life, and draw like that and live like that.

I told you about 'Nebojsa'. 'Nebojsa' means 'Don't be afraid'. In religion there are the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue 'Don't be afraid' is the eleventh commandment, which was cut from the Decalogue.

Don't be afraid.

Now I try in some words to describe, what I did in my life.

I know some things,

I worked the soil

I saw vegetables

I harvest

I mow grass and harvest wheat
 I pass a cow, a bull on the meadow
 I write I read I take mushrooms
 I catch fish and crabs
 I make a fire
 I cut wood
 I dig the ground
 put nails in wood
 I put stones in buildings
 I solder
 I break
 I collected used post stamps
 drawings from chewing gum
 climb on the buildings and constructions
 in the factory holes or canalizations
 I shoot a bow
 I shoot a gun
 I ride a bicycle
 I make a rocket
 explosions
 knives
 I steal
 and give back
 I am fighting
 making a salto on the ground
 and on the trampoline
 I cut myself
 I fall
 I did judo
 I climb on a rope
 I swim
 I run
 catch someone, run from someone
 I hide
 I cry
 I laugh
 drink alcohol
 have sex with living and not living things
 I am eating ants
 I am killing insects
 I am killing fish
 little animals
 I have no experience in killing animals and people
 sometimes I have
 lust but
 pity
 I pray

I clean dirt
 sew clothes
 sewing on the machine
 drawing
 smoking
 use narcotics
 study in the high school
 college
 in academy
 I work in a studio for clothes
 singing
 dancing
 lying
 was angry
 believe in the word
 was in hysteria
 and situations without control
 was at the funeral
 was at the wedding
 swimming in the boat
 diving in the deep
 swimming on the raft
 swimming on the ice
 riding skis
 riding on the skid
 sold newspapers
 work with glassmakers
 go to lessons at protestant school
 give compromatic questions
 doubt things
 doubt myself
 fighting
 was naive
 infantile
 trust too much
 make idols
 worried
 believe in something big and total
 believe in the good of the world
 don't trust
 work in a company for making road signs
 write prose and poetry
 live in student hotels
 draw portraits, caricatures on the street
 painted walls
 wanderer, travelling
 shoot video
 edit
 have some experience with graphic, text,
 video programs
 made radio programme
 was enjoying creativity – my and others
 was certain

made mistakes
 was inattentive
 recognize mistakes
 teach
 work with people
 made curator's work
 made advertising
 made books
 made exhibitions
 know how to prepare food/a meal from cheap or expensive products,
 know how to wash oneself or one's clothes without a bath,
 know how to live with minimum money,
 know how to make a bed and place for sleeping,
 know how to connect electricity,
 know how to warm oneself,
 know how to make false documents.
 Some things my friends know,
 some things it is possible to find in books
 or on the internet.

BUT THIS VERY MOMENT

David Goldenberg, Department of Post Autonomy

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During the talk I want to look at the role and understanding of speech and issues of context within the framework of the project of PA. From the outset PA can be seen to be a tool by functioning as a question: ‘What is PA?’ tests out our memory and understanding of the function of autonomy, whether in art or life.

PA introduces the possibility of looking at the Eurocentric tradition and history of art in a flexible way by working through a range of scenarios.

The possibility of rethinking and replaying its history. Looking at the historical body as a complete and finished body with the possibility of moving on to develop another model.

Developing, extending and evolving that tradition.

In that respect PA can be seen to be part of the tradition that includes Luhmann, Lingner and Rancière that looks at rethinking through how we think and define art and politics. Schiller’s notion of the aesthetic revolution, against Hegel’s idea of the reduction of art to an art object in the space of the museum. Luhmann’s idea that a particular stage of what we understand as art is complete. Or Lingner’s idea, that the trajectory and developments of art since its origins are a problem, with the need to start again.

Key to PA is the methodology of participation and communication as the central means for dismantling existing hierarchies. The notion of participation adopted in PA combines action and research, which looks at breaking down the role of the colonial view through recognising each individual’s own reality – and Lingner’s idea of using the audience to challenge the position and integrity of the authorship and the work of art.

Given the over-use of the terms ‘communication’ and ‘participation’, we may have an idea of what participation and communication are, but do we? Therefore, I want to suggest from the outset, that unless we have a clear idea of what participation is, or how participation works, we cannot go any further down this line. For that very reason many recent projects, particularly in collaboration with the Dutch artist Wim Salki, have looked at how it is possible for both communication and participation to work, along with developing criteria to evaluate these processes. Nevertheless, the coming together, mixing and meeting of people from different

backgrounds and cultures, and the exchange of ideas through discussion between people plays an important part in these projects.

The use of participation and communication adopts systems theory terminology – and it does so since the process that this introduces into a rigid, orthodox framework of art, provides the possibility to undertake a fundamental reconfiguration of positions available in this framework, away from the orthodox hierarchical structure we are familiar with, where the Eurocentric tradition is structured along the lines of artists, audience, curator, art work. But I do also see that the mechanism goes further by confronting and breaking down both internal and external colonisation – as I understand colonisation through Chomsky’s analysis and my reading of the invention and deployment of multi-culturalism in India – in whatever form that takes, along with the break up of other repressive mechanisms. This process marks a shift from ‘representation’ and the ‘representation of politics and art’, towards actual structural and mental solutions and changes, so that the politics becomes internal to the process!

So what is the Department of PA expected to do? To take part in the Department of PA all are asked to agree to co-exist as equals, to talk and share knowledge freely, and to put yourself in a position where it is possible to test out and dismantle your own and others’ belief systems and mind sets, as a trajectory towards reconstructing a practice/thinking/praxis along fundamentally different terms.

I understand the very process of speech making as a process of throwing obstacles in the way of (my own) thinking. But I also understand this performance of speaking (is) within the space of PA – as a space that has disengaged from the Eurocentric tradition of art – where I am working through the process of stripping away that tradition – en route to locating a point to begin reinventing another or different model. But what is important is that this very moment is this moment that breaks with the repetition of the Eurocentric model. So that the material of speech and language behaves in a completely different way, that language is both language and not language. A point that is simultaneously an exiting that leads to an entry point into the space of PA.

Before I discuss the central body of my speech I need to cover the basics about PA in order for what I have to say to make sense. The information about PA that I want

to sketch out is only specific to the speech. Many projects since 2002 have looked at different platforms to explore participation and communication, or more recently establish a context-specific location for materialising the space of PA. Current developments into PA:

Building PA.

The PA-website.

Exploration of participatory/interactive platforms, on-line discussions.

Examination of global context without occupying and colonising territory.

An on-going series of collaborative installations with Wim Salki to test out participatory practices.

A space to think and dream and get rid of ideas.

Plotting the formation of my cultural construction, understanding a Eurocentric tradition from the inside.

The development of PA has developed against the backdrop of the reinvention of the art system from the end of the nineties until the present – i.e. the Anglo Saxon commercial model, and can be seen to be equivalent to the conservative revolution! PA takes place in the wake of the failure of institutional critique - those critiques, procedures, tools that were at our disposal to understand the institution of art can in hind sight appear to have been fundamentally flawed, since the critique was only able to understand what was already in place, rather than proposing other models, or bringing about change of meaningful substance. How do we then locate new tools that are able to fulfill such a promise? The failure of existing critique is highlighted in its utter failure and inability to both understand and visualise the function of a Eurocentric tradition of art against a global context, particularly the link between a Eurocentric tradition of art and Western expansionism and global colonisation. In other words, how we understand art and how art functions with the existing globalizing forces and mechanisms is unavailable or invisible to us – here we can refer to Brian Holmes recent project *Continental Drift*, in collaboration with 16Beaver Group, who explore discussion as a practice.

A global context is not necessarily the problem, but the alignment of art with expansionism and colonisation is. However, how we understand spatial models – for instance the global – is a complex issue that is undergoing fundamental revision, especially with the development of the concept of global cities, which doesn’t necessarily illuminate the function of an Eurocentric tradition of art. How do we address or resolve these fundamental problems inherent in a Eurocentric tradition (along with the historical body of information we understand as the Eurocentric tradition of art)? If we cannot say what art

is or how it functions globally in spatial/political terms, then I want to put forward the possibility that we can use the model of PA to reconstruct how we think art functions, by rebuilding and rethinking art now on our own terms in a way we understand and can use.

Starting again – Going beyond a Eurocentric tradition. If we accept that there is a possibility for rethinking and rebuilding the Eurocentric tradition of art along fundamentally different principles, what are those principles and how is it possible to dismantle, disengage and strip away this inherited tradition and mind set, so that we reach a point to begin rebuilding another model? What space or room is available for disengaging from the Eurocentric tradition? If you move beyond this tradition is there nothing or is there something? My understanding is that if you strip away the existing system that is in place through which we understand art, all we do is strip away the European invention we understand by the Eurocentric tradition of art. The issue then becomes what do we put in its place? How do we identify a ‘model’ for a fundamental reinvention of a Eurocentric tradition, along with a language and methodology? How are we to understand this uncoupling and disengagement from the existing system we understand as art? The very real challenge here is that no other parallel model has replaced the Eurocentric tradition of art.

Thought experiment.

Navigating the space of PA.

Starting from this space.

AN ABANDONED AGENT

Nikita Kadan, Department of Parasitism and Symbiosis

— Continued from page 1

That system was determined by the opposition between official art and nonconformist underground art. After the fall of the USSR official and nonconformist positions were both devaluated. The place of art in the whole system of social communication was lost.

Contemporary art of the Ukrainian nineties presented different models to integrate nonconformist experience with external forms by 'looking like' Western art.

After the loss of the familiar social conditions and functions Ukrainian artists found themselves in the middle of nowhere. The nonconformist artist thought of himself as an 'agent of the West', but an abandoned agent. Superficial imitation of Western art (always with some delay) was treated as a kind of heroism. The role of the traitor of socialism which nonconformists played free of charge paradoxically made them outsiders when the socialist country was betrayed by the majority of its citizens. But if treason is committed by a majority – is it still treason? Ukrainian contemporary artists of the nineties were treated as parasites in their country.

The loss of the usual relations with society determined the Ukrainian art scene of the nineties: A shortage of any personal positions prevented it from building a new strong system of relations.

In the early nineties the Centre for Contemporary Art was founded in Kiev, part of the network of CCAs established by George Soros in Post-Soviet countries. For many Ukrainians, particularly for the conservative wing of intellectuals Soros' Centre was a 'base of occupation' while for a small group of Ukrainian contemporary artists it was the only refuge. It marked the birth of a tendency we can call the 'migrating monocentrism' of Ukrainian contemporary art. Soros' institution in Kiev was the only central point for the Ukrainian contemporary art community for eight years. There were grants, space for presentations, contacts with foreign curators, attention of the mass media and the public. A Soros Centre also existed in Odessa for a short time. Since 2000 the funding of CCA started to decrease and the activity around the centre ceased. The motor of the Ukrainian art-process moved to a Kiev branch of the Moscow Marat Guelman gallery. Guelman at the same time worked as political consultant for the party in power and started

to form a collection of Ukrainian contemporary art for businessman and parliamentarian Victor Pinchuk.

In 2005 the luxury centre for contemporary art founded by Victor Pinchuk became the main source of activity. By this time Pinchuk had ended his collaboration with Guelman and Guelman discontinued his business in Ukraine.

Even though these institutions existed in parallel they never formed any system of relations but each claimed a monopolistic position. Ukrainian contemporary artists (consisting of those who started to work at the end of the eighties in Kiev and a few artists from Odessa and Kharkiv) did not produce any alternative activity, a format such as artist-run spaces was not used. After one institution ran dry of resources artists migrated to another, supporting monopolism. This resembles the Soviet system of monopoly in which the State Union of artists controlled the sphere of official art.

All of these centres were connected with businessmen and politicians: George Soros, Marat Guelman, Victor Pinchuk. They were part of their public relations, thus including even that kind of art which was initially independent.

In this migrating monocentrism Ukrainian contemporary art was simply the same as the art represented in the institution of Soros (Guelman, Pinchuk).

And since the rise of 'contemporary art' (in Post-Soviet space these words are often used in English to separate 'modern' from 'contemporary' as they are the same word in Slavic languages) artists in Ukraine avoided to make any analysis of their place in a system of social relations. They took their social autism and status of 'parasite' as the proper thing. The language of contemporary art did not execute its communicative function. 'Contemporary art' just existed.

Now we can or we can not speak about the new generation of Ukrainian contemporary artists which started to act a little before the middle of this decade as if it were something different. We have reasons for both variants. Young contemporary artists build communities and produce a high level of communication, they create their own project spaces and networks. But they are still engaged in 'migrating monocentrism'. Future polycentrism would mean the necessity of choice, a new level of responsibility and symbiotic relations.

FUNERAL BUSINESS IS NICE

Ingela Johansson, Department of Uncertainty

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I was able to study due to the Swedish National Board of Student Aid -CSN.

Now, after graduating, I have started to pay back the loan. Not that I can afford it, or that it makes a big difference (as it is anyways merely touching the interests and I could probably postpone it), but I feel I should move out of the student life.

Student life in the periphery of Umeå did not include following the art market's trends or meeting important actors in the field. In my last year at Umeå Art Academy I discussed with professors whether to encourage an awareness of other actors/practitioners, as the role of the curator earlier in the education rather than during the last two months only. The curator has other functions besides networking; fundraising and organising make a major part of individual art practices. The reply to my request was that I should be content that Umeå was such a non-exposed place. Now, almost two years later collaborations with curators are a standard in the course of study.

After graduating, I was provided with a scholarship at an international residency program in Stockholm. IASPIS is a publicly financed, flexible institution, which has no fixed exhibition space but finds arenas for debate and exchange of knowledge as well as running a residency program for international artists.

I participated in seminars and discussions on the precarious plight of cultural workers and became aware of the economic structures related to organisational and institutional matters. Besides that, governmental financial policies affect both my individual, as well as institutional practices, this relation generally interests me:

What kinds of projects are preferred by state authorities and how do they affect the funding bodies' policies? Which decisions are being transformed into cultural formulas?

The tendency at the Swedish ministry of culture is to merge independent and flexible art institutions into umbrella organisations. It is an ongoing attempt to eliminate waste through applying a logistic approach.

A more operative, neo-liberal thinking has emerged in the political sphere in Sweden, as well as in the rest of the world since I grew up during the 70's. Neoliberal

thought, within both the social democratic party and the right wing and liberal parties, has made political life more centralized.

The right wing and liberal parties' alliance won the recent election with social democrat's rhetorics proclaiming the "new working class". Today, the social democratic program resembles much of the key slogans with which the right wing party won the elections. The new government has immediately affected cultural reality: Free entries to museums have been cancelled and unemployment funding has been cut down, having an impact on those cultural workers who depend on compensation between assignments. Other state organisations working directly under the cultural ministry have had difficulties after the election trying to adjust to decreased operating budgets.

Administering one's practice is still time consuming and people that are experts within their profession end up with piles of paper instead of doing what they are good at. I don't know if this problem is due to the long social democratic governance or not – but I wonder if and how the new government can turn politics and the administration of culture into a leaner production.

One of the organisations tightly connected to social democrats, the Labor Organisation, is defending socialist values using a threatening scenario: the arrival of a second employment market. I am collaborating with LO in a project and at one meeting I got a gift: the book by the American journalist Barbara Ehrenreich *Completely Broke*. Ehrenreich's experiment is to analyse the American class society by trying to survive on low income jobs for a couple of months, but she fails. The book shows the negative spiral of the American lower classes inability to break away from an abusive system, sustained by the profits of an open market economy.

I wonder whether this scenario described above will ever realise where the right wing parties have won elections with social democratic values. Nonetheless, low-income jobs have already arrived and many more are expected and artists would be taken into account for these.

My relation to the unemployment centre for culture exists no longer. But they offer graduates the opportunity to join projects and education programs tailored for un-

employed cultural producers. The centre is supported by the government and has an operative function, and this I consider difficult, to provide artists with flexible, interesting projects.

I joined a presentation at the centre 'Kulturkraft' called *Culture empowering*, a project in which photographers, graphic designers, architects, artists and journalists participated. The aim had been to provide experience in sales, marketing and project management during a six-month period and to encourage cross-disciplinary entrepreneurship. Very few projects relating to culture were actually channeled. One example was a funeral company, established by a group of participants.

I don't believe in this social setting, in bringing different professions together under one physical roof to call forth creative constellations. A funeral business is nice but when it comes to empowering and believing in cultural workers' potentials, I was surprised the centre proposed it as an example of a project with successful outcome for the project participants. Unemployment centres may be good in producing positive statistics of low unemployment rates, but they do not empower cultural workers, at least not in this case.

State funded scholarships and grants give me an opportunity to finance a practice that is not likely to meet the gallery market. There are tough conditions for receiving grants, especially for a recently graduated artist, but also for artists that move within more invisible or autonomous communication structures.

A friend of mine from Germany criticises Swedish artists living abroad on grants, saying it's a spoiled situation, which in the end does not generate anything, nor improves the local art context in Sweden. I will not feel guilty towards my colleagues if given a financial opportunity to live and work abroad – I have paid taxes to use the system too. My friend likes to pull my leg with clichés of the Swedish. If I play along, then yes – being an artist is a middle class phenomenon which means I am spoiled and grants make me lazy. Furthermore: I am so ingrained with the ideologies of a socialist democratic collective that I cannot seem to manage to spit things out.

I am insecure regarding sustainability and the probability to succeed financially as well as professionally if I would be starting something up myself. There are established institutions, artist-run spaces, but also new institutions announcing themselves as being alternative. What kind of activities do these new alternatives propose and how do these apply to institutional critique? The activities

might vary but isn't the foundation of these alternatives the same – funded by public funds or city councils? Often, it is well established curators that go through the eye of the needle of funding boards while the power structure remains intact. A problem with many artist-run spaces is funding, but if artists do succeed in acquiring public funding and become popular; this privileged situation can turn into an operational problem: *One's work becomes institutional leaving little room for inspiration and creativity, all the while being consumed by application procedures to sustain oneself.*

Recently, cost-efficiency has been the main goal in institutional reforms taking place in welfare states: Institutions seem to be merging under state bureaucracy, such as IASPIS or Najsonalmuseet in Oslo, Norway. Cultural politicians want to fuse different departments under one roof towards a quicker cultural exchange. Organisations which fall under direct bureaucratic supervision end up with cost efficient plans and reforms promoting fewer large-scale projects.

This private micro-perspective of mine on how to survive financially, even in a welfare state, with its continuous stimulation. I believe, however, that it can also be applicable within a vaster institutional practice and furthermore, applicable to financial situations in many other contexts. Where to find space for your creativity within the limitations and obligations of bureaucracy?

THE HEROINE VISITS HER BOYFRIEND

Monika Vykoukal, Department of Doubt

— Continued from page 1

This somewhat rigid structure, reminiscent of a short, but painful phase in the French Education System, will hopefully keep me afloat and offer something to cling to if I lose myself in my two main handicaps when it comes to public speaking and unfortunately also private conversation: namely 1) digression, followed by loss of direction and 2) radical scepticism of my own previous thoughts and arguments (which leads to a dialogue between me and myself, not really offering you anything to grab on to).

Where was I? Yes, three sections on why I want a Department of Doubt. Those will also incorporate practical examples on how doubt is manifest in my working life and on how I can envisage the functioning of this department. Usually, I encourage people to interject discussion during any talk I give. However, since this seems to contradict the definition of a speech as I understand it, I will keep going. Alone. In front of you. And I imagine, slightly breathless and somewhat terrified by now. As I am writing this, this seems a good moment to ask: Am I talking too fast? Too quietly? CAN YOU HEAR ME? Where was I?

Doubt as Pretext: Avoidance of failure and conflict.

Doubt – what does the word mean as opposed to e.g. uncertainty?

Doubt is uncertainty in the context of trust (where it takes the form of distrust), action, decision or belief. It implies challenging some notion of reality in effect, and may involve hesitating to take a relevant action due to concern that one might be mistaken or at fault. The term 'to doubt' can also mean to question one's circumstances and life experience.

When I accepted to come here, I partly suspected my motives: the 'good' ones, if I try hard and manage to do so, is that I can speak freely, meet new people who will do likewise to me, and openly discuss this doubt and other things and reach some, however fleeting, new clarities and doubts. The 'bad' ones are that it makes me feel good to be asked, I feel good about myself. And I get to travel, meet people and so on. As an example of doubt, this is quite close to the self-flagellation operating in moralistic themes of selling out, keeping it real, and, actually, most teenage coming of age plots I know. A certain element of indecision, a somewhat maybe adolescent feeling: confusion and insecurity of coming-

of-age fiction of all kinds; but then this is usually loaded with righteous anger, and so, maybe it has a point! I am now going to quote from this light classic, *Franny and Zooey*, which is very much teen lit, but please bear with me (you are allowed to laugh, just don't glare or I will turn into a puddle). The heroine is visiting her boyfriend for the weekend. They are in a restaurant and have been arguing for some time. Franny is explaining why she stopped doing theatre at University, and the boyfriend is suggesting she may be afraid to compete. I could have picked any part of the passage, but there you go:

'I'm not afraid to compete. It's just the opposite. Don't you see that? I'm afraid I will compete – that's what scares me. That's why I quit the Theatre Department. Just because I'm so horribly conditioned to accept everybody else's values, and just because I like applause and people to rave about me, doesn't make it right. I'm ashamed of it. I'm sick of it. I'm sick of not having the courage to be an absolute nobody. I'm sick of myself and everybody else that wants to make some kind of big splash.'

In those fictions characters learn to give up on some and gain other things, which means they grow up. However, I never liked them that much after – their pissed-offness seemed reasonable to me, but the solutions did not really solve anything. This kind of doubt can be deeply annoying, potentially insincere in its self-criticism, immune to outside intervention and stifling any idea of action, way out or movement, I guess. But it might just also carry a sense of possibility in its radical opposition to 'common sense'.

What do I know? What do I think? What is to be done?

Now, for the positive side of doubt. THIS IS PART TWO (of the three). If we take the aspect where doubt, to get back to the Wiki definition, 'implies challenging some notion of reality', this kind of doubt is created by some of the more grown up cultural stuff I have enjoyed recently:

L. Boltanski, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*
D. Graeber, *Towards an Anthropological Theory of Value*
J. Ferrell, *Adventures in Urban Anarchy*

In more or less rigorous ways such books question current conditions of life. So I can sit there and read socio-

logical surveys about how more or less poor sods more or less like me ‘justify’ their participation in a social, economic and so on reality that makes suckers of them. That’s Boltanski. Or Graeber, which is a bit fluffier and tries to show that the very notions of property and ownership have no existence in other tribal cultures. Ferrell, lastly, looks at crime as a cultural construct. He is, like Graeber, a declared anarchist (whatever that may mean here), and even more anecdotal in his writings. However, he introduces the concept of ‘aesthetics of authority’ and looks at why people conform to blatantly oppressive rules and regulations. Now, I am reading all this more or less perception altering, more or less insurrectionary material, yet... See, I am getting back to the doubt. It seems that the implication of any of the insights of those authors on my life is minimal. It lurks as some discomfort, but things go on regardless, until the next book, film, etc. etc. Or, as this Argentinian activist says in *‘T’ the movie*, a new docu about Indymedia:

‘It is not a criticism of communication. It is a criticism of when communication is forced to seduce. In this situation we’re always watching – separated from an ability to act. You can consume road blocks. You can consume revolution. You can consume Che Guevara... or not. For us, the situation of the audience is equivalent to absolute impotence. If I watch TV... sometimes they show me Madonna, and sometimes they show me road blocks. If more road blocks are shown, it doesn’t make me less of a spectator. I’m just a spectator of things I think are better.’

— *“T” the movie*. Directed by Raphael Lyon and Andres Ingoglia. USA 2006, 84 min

In this respect, doubt comes up, and directs my thinking, with a sense of, I guess, paralysed urgency (gotta do something, but what; and after all this life I am used to is quite safe and not so bad). If you really mean it, how can you take on all you read and make it something more than, in my case, a footnote in my next article?

Questions beyond the rhetorical – Doubt (or Uncertainty?), Change and the Refusal to Function

Doubt is between me and the world. It is very simple really:

I doubt my own up to now held views.

I doubt other people’s intentions and their actions.

I doubt things are what they seem.

I realise by now I am both digressing and circling, tracking back to the beginning. What I wanted to say is that doubt leads to new revelations, new discomforts and anxieties, and an entirely new potential to look at what’s

going on. To be more specific and indulge in my current rant: I attended a seminar on art and politics the other week. I am a coward, I will not name names now. Where and who and all that. They might kick me and not like me and my boss would not like that either. And most of all I would be talking behind their backs even more than I do now and that’s not right. I have talked to at least one of you about this before, so please fast forward. So, this seminar was a staff-only do at an art school. I heard about it through the staff and invited myself. The whole thing was filmed to be seen by students later. About half-way through the afternoon Mr. Chair asked about what made a political work of art ‘effective.’ I decided to have a go, after some other statements had been made. By then the debate had digressed. I was actually talking about audience surveys we need to do at the gallery I work at as demanded by the governmental funding body. In my statement, which I did not find spectacular, I just said that this measure did not really address any issue of power and representation in the gallery and was therefore nasty, disrespectful, tokenistic. Suddenly, this other participant in the seminar says that as a black woman she finds my remarks offensive.

Yes, here I am getting back to the doubt. I was shocked and thought a lot about things like:

Why did I offend her?

Do I need to review my view of audience surveys?

Did she understand what I mean?

What do I really believe?

And so on...

It was doubt of both of us, her and me. I felt bad at the time, and spoke to her after, which was friendlier but not clearer. There was a gaping hole between our views, somehow. I could understand that she felt current demands reflected that ‘we’ have ‘won’ something, at least, for now. I still could not understand how her identity would make my comment offensive. I wondered ‘Am I really racist?’, and so on. A lot of the issues were not only about the point I made, but how, where, the tone of voice and so on. Right now, if that interests you I do not think I was offensive and I still believe that equality and representation in any meaningful way has nothing to do with bureaucratic little forms and that they hide continuing inequalities and issues of domination (also in terms of acceptable cultural forms etc).

The discussion there, on the whole, remained, as can be seen by the offense my comment caused, stifflingly polite and I felt there was so much unsaid, almost intentionally: The artists present were almost exclusive gainfully

employed in academia; they almost exclusively produced conventional art formats shown in conventional art galleries, which dealt with political issues on the level of content, rather than form. They, again, almost exclusively, showed no engagement in political activity (apart probably from voting) beyond the content of their work. One of those present expressed surprise and shock that his ‘radical’ work could be bought by a big bad corporation. I did not comment upon any of this. But I would like to make those guys doubt.

I would also like to move this debate on. If I start to answer them in terms of art object, gallery context, market value, I am taking a role in what seems some everlasting retro-reenactment (in a similar way to talking about new new painting forms: painting reactionary, or not. Yawn). I am not going to do some cheap replay of a Joseph Beuys fan in the face of this, I guess I would like to call it stubborn disavowal. The surprising, or rather not so surprising thing is that all those clever discussions, in my case about art and politics, can occur in a manner that actually has no reflection on the level of form. I am not talking about verbal self-flagellation, but the persistent bemoaning of the lack of any potential for genuinely political art is somewhat disingenuous and, the nasty part of me thinks, what those guys really seem to want to do is political art without the politics.

In this case, the things left unsaid, I am doubtful of (in this case the political claim of their work) are, it seems to me, on some level easy to capture. I can say that they do not talk about the form of their work in political terms, only the content, that context and their position within are not examined, and on and on and on...

But for me, this is not the real question. The question, after a seminar like this one, is how can my doubt get me to seeing, or even creating, something different from this? Something less insincere? Less willfully blind to its own position? And another question: would it be better to raise all this in discussion within the institution, with those guys, at work, or should I keep it and bring it here, and kind of give up on them?

What do I know and what do I think is and is right?

What is my interpretation of what is going on?

What is the correct attitude to hold, or action to take?

How can doubt, can doubt lead to action!

I want to speak for myself, and I hope I also speak to you: I want to ask the questions better, not only find what I am looking for. As I am somewhat nasty, I also want to get better at making other people see the questions. I am now going to hand out a diagram I made. This was the first one, I have been doing maybe one every other month in my notebooks for the past couple of years. This

was in spring 2002, I think, sitting outside in London waiting for someone to call to meet. I draw those when I am thinking about decisions I have to make. Unlike a regular diagram the logic between the points is usually only in my mind. And the solution not one I would take. I guess this is somewhat whimsical and does not obviously fit with what I said so far. But I find them calming and they are part of the reality of doubt for me.

Maybe you want to draw me one too? No, they do not clarify the first point, but I calm down when I make them, I am secretly quite pleased with them. I thought that this would be a good way to begin.

FOR THE TIME READING

Sönke Hallmann, Department of Reading

— Continued from page 1

Maybe this might be an improper act of appropriating or incorporating, but I think it will also take place at the incalculable risk of being intruded, haunted or inhabited.

Within the name ‘Department of Reading’ exists a slight reference to Marcel Broodthaers *Musée d’Art Moderne. Département des Aigles*, of which I’d like to make use of for a short moment. Even though it would be worth, in the context of the *Faculty of Invisibility*, to elaborate on Broodthaers fictive museum in order to address such strategies that occupy the ‘site of institutional control and determination’ or that define the artist ‘as an administrator’ rather than a producer, I’d like to take up just one aspect, namely that of addressing. But even here I won’t try to embrace the complexity of this notion, the complicated and reciprocal inclusion of addressee and emitter. All I’d like to do in a few moments is to give some remarks on the proposition that there is not only a specific addressing inscribed within any given text but that this addressing forms the foundation of what can be called a community of readers.

To simplify matters I will shortly return to Broodthaers museum. Founded in September 1968 it was closed four years later right after *Documenta 5* in 1972. A series of Open Letters with the heading *Département des Aigles* accompanied the different manifestations of the museum. Their programmatic character concerning institutional codification is obvious - for instance an Open Letter from the 19th of September 1968, just a week before the first opening, transfers the geometric forms of the objects to the employees of the museum (1): ‘... A rectangular director. A round attendant ... A triangular cashier. A square guard ...’. Not less evident and that of course applies to the form of the letter as such is the question of addressing here and therefore the foundation of a community. In the context of the museum, this

1. Cp. Karolin Meunier, *Liebe Freunde 1968*, in: *Wenn sonst nichts klappt: Wiederholung wiederholen*, pp 108-126, pp 124-126.

circumstance became effective on the level of institutional framing. And Broodthaers must have had that in mind when he used the form ‘Dear friends’ in order to address an undefined public. So, my interest is simply to start from this correlation of the addressee, the institutional frame and the foundation of community. Involved in the constellation described above, is an aspect of language that has been described within the category of the *performative*.

In his commentary on Paul’s *Letter to the Romans*, Agamben defines the performative as a ‘linguistic enunciation that does not describe a state of things, but immediately produces a real fact’, and he adds, that this linguistic enunciation ‘can only function in circumstances, which, while authorizing it as an act, guarantee its effectiveness’ (2). This is a quite short, but useful recapitulation of the theory of the speech act, that was introduced in the early 1960s by Paul Austin - a typical example for such an act would be when a minister joins two people in marriage saying ‘I now pronounce you husband and wife’. And even though the performative is characterised by a self-referential quality, Agamben reminds us that it still depends on an instance that authorises it as an act. In order to produce immediately something like a real fact, the performative is also based upon conventions and circumstances, which assure its validity and therefore its effectiveness. This dependence becomes quite complicated by the time a speech act takes part in the constitution of this surrounding frame (3).

What happens when the dependence becomes a matter of the very same speech act it ought to authorise? This dilemma takes a particular turn within Georg Büchner’s drama *Danton’s Death* that was written in 1834/1835 and covers the historical period of 28 March to 5 April 1794, a time when the French Revolution had achieved its political goals but still was unable to produce social equality. Büchner’s drama cites the rhetoric of the revolutionary

2. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains, A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (translated by Patricia Dailey), Stanford University Press (Stanford), 2005, pp 131-132.

3. In how far this circumstance characterises the category of the performative in general won’t be discussed here. But such an analysis would have to address Jacques Derrida’s concept of iterability as it has been developed in the essay *Signature, Event, Context*.

National Assembly and initially links the politics of representation to a speech act that derives precisely from its validity from an authority, which it first and foremost constitutes. What is at stake is the rhetoric of foundation, which has as its goal, a coming into power.

Two corresponding scenes open up a sub-plot within this drama. The first takes place outside on the streets of Paris, the following one within the *Jacobin Club*. Both scenes have at their centre a speech given by Robespierre, who was at that time in control of the *Committee of Public Safety*. When Robespierre claims in the first scene to speak ‘in the name of law’, which he defines thereby as the ‘will of the people’, then his speech gains its effectiveness simply from the circumstance that it is characterised as an enunciation of the will of the people, the sovereign subject. It is precisely this circumstance, however, that is taken up by the subsequent speech in an inverse manner, since here the will of the people is defined by Robespierre as a ‘scream of unwillingness’, nothing more than a signal of alarm, literally a ‘noise-sign’. A yet-to-be articulated speech, yet already a particular sign, that calls for an indeterminate action. This state of the will of the people, as defined by Robespierre, comes close to what Agamben names ‘being in force without significance’ and what in his view characterises ‘our current relation to law’ (4). Therefore, Robespierre’s definition of ‘the will’ as a formal emptiness, a validation without content, performs at the very same moment the assignment of this pure validity to his own speech. The speech institutes to what it refers. The speech act is always already mired by that which precedes or surrounds it, in the constitution of those circumstances that assures its effectiveness, here its law-making authority.

At this point I will leave Büchner’s drama, its insight into the constitutive relation between law and language, and I will return to the notion of addressing. My initial idea to enter Danton’s Death was simply to demonstrate how far the category of the ‘performative’ can extend, to include speech acts that constitute those authorising circumstances to which they refer in order to achieve validity. I promised to give some remarks on the proposition that this applies also to the act of addressing, that there

4. Giorgio Agamben, *The Messiah and the Sovereign – The Problem of Law in Walter Benjamin*, in: *Potentialities*, pp 160-174, p 170.

is not only a specific addressee inscribed within a given text, but that the act of addressing forms the foundation of what can be called a community of readers.

While I was preparing this speech I realised that within the *Department of Reading* we hardly touched upon the question ‘A Community of Readers’, even though we discussed the essay such as *We Refugees* (5) by Agamben, a title that already calls this into question. Instead of paying attention to how the text might have already impacted us – namely that it might have assembled us as a specific community of readers in the first place (6) – we were concerned with such questions as: How to further a given text? How to insert comments? What about the distinction between reading and writing? What concept of spatiality, for instance, would a reading practice demand that at the very moment it takes place already has entered the realm of writing? What could it mean to un- and enfold the texture of a text? What could be an adequate manner to further the performativity of this texture? And how can we develop a figure of the text that would take in account the multiplicity of its texture? We were concerned with ways to further a specific potentiality of the text, which we called then its *texture*, even before we recognized its actual potential to constitute us as its community of readers, in the least, for the time of reading. And whether that would apply to different ethical, religious or political groups, a specific school of thought, the individual in its solitude or its profession, to an existing, past, future, substantial or potential community.

Of course it does matter. And of course I am trying to theorise upon an invocation, an anticipation that would institute the arrival of that, which it anticipates. Perhaps this is too close to an incantation yet I would still like to relate this assumption, that a text is performative in regard to its public, briefly with a context, which develops such an anticipating economy. A concept that adds up to this bond between a community to come and a specific eventfulness of speech, or rather Derrida’s notion of ‘*teleiopoios*’, that he associates in *The Politics of Friendship* with the gesture of the call, but also with the figure of the mourner.

5. Giorgio Agamben, *We Refugees* - www.egs.edu/faculty/agamben/agamben-we-refugees.html

6. This doesn’t necessarily imply the assumption that a text with the title ‘We Refugees’ assembles us as a community of refugees. As Derrida has shown in his essay *Signature, Event, Context*, the performative is an act of communication that is not essentially restricted to communicate a semantic content. Nevertheless the title ‘We Refugees’ might imply this assumption itself.

I will quote a passage from Derrida's book and underline two aspects that are interesting for our context of *The Speech*:

'*Teleiopoios* qualifies, in a great number of contexts and semantic orders, that which *renders* absolute, perfect, completed, accomplished, finished, that which *brings* to an end. But permit us to play too with the other *tele*, the one that speaks to distance and the far-removed, for what is indeed in question here is a poetics of distance at one remove [...]. (7)'

Derrida develops this concept of *teleiopoetics* starting from an exclamation: Nietzsche's (taken from *Beyond Good and Evil*): 'Alas! If only you knew how soon, how very soon, things will be — different!'. (8) Nietzsche's incomplete sentence, this is Derrida's point here, announces a knowledge that is immediately withdrawn. The initially assumed nescience of the addressee – if only you knew – gives way by the end of the same sentence to a knowledge – that things will be different – which essentially turns out to be non-knowledge. At stake here is the thought of a linguistic event that opens '...to the coming of what comes...' (9). As such, the teleiopoetic speech is defined by Derrida as an act, which brings to an end, whilst characterised as a poetics of distance, which means, by withdrawing the *teleiopoetic* act one '...makes the *arrivants* come - or rather, allows them to come' (10). and therefore the teleiopoetics find their kinship to Jewish Messianism as a 'relation between the event and its non-occurrence' (11).

This marks the difference to Agamben's exegesis of the messianic event, which follows Paul's *Letter to the Romans*. Where Derrida speaks of the one, *who calls*, Agamben places the figure of the emissary. Each 'time the prophets announce the coming of the Messiah, the message is always about a time to come. [...] The apostle speaks forth from the arrival of the Messiah. [...] The word passes on to the apostle, to the emissary of the Messiah, whose time is no longer the future, but the present' (12). Agamben therefore criticises Derrida's *Deconstruction* as a suspension of the messianic event,

a 'thwarted messianism' (13). Furthermore, Agamben exposes a certain performative power of the messianic, leading it to 'an experience of the word, which [...] manifests itself as a pure and common potentiality of saying' (14). The notion of potentiality concerns one of the most important concepts in Agamben's writing. To give an adequate account of that would absorb too much time here. Therefore I will leave this question of a pure and common potentiality aside and get back to the figure of the apostle. As Agamben postulates, the time of the apostle is not - like it is for the prophet - a time to come, but rather the present. To be precise, the time of the apostle (and that counts for the messianic community as such) is the 'now-time', a term Agamben takes up from Walter Benjamin. With 'now-time' Benjamin refers to an 'actuality of the past in the present', a specific encounter of past and present, a possibility that remains to be actualized and therefore bears the 'intensity of a promise of sudden change' (15). It is an exegetical practice:

'*Das Jetzt der Lesbarkeit* "the now of legibility" [...] defines a genuinely Benjaminian hermeneutic principle, the absolute opposite of the current principle according to which each work may become the object of infinite interpretation at any given moment [...]. Benjamin's principle instead proposes that every work, every text, contains a historical index which indicates both its belonging to a determinate epoch, as well as its only coming forth to full legibility at a determinate historical moment.' (16)

The 'now of legibility' evolves in a particular manner, if one relates it with another crucial concept in Agamben, namely that of 'ease' by which is meant an adjacent space. A chapter from *The Coming Community* entitled *Ease* can thus be read as a sort of translation of Benjamin's exegetic principle towards a mediation on human community:

'But there is also another interpretation of Badaliya. According to Massignon, in fact, substituting oneself for another does not mean compensating for what the other lacks, nor correcting his or her errors, but *exiling oneself to the other as he or she is* in order to offer Christ

hospitality in the other's own soul, in the other's own taking-place. This substitution no longer knows a place of its own, but the taking-place of every single being is always already common – an empty space offered to the one, irrevocable hospitality.' (17)

What exactly does it mean to exile „oneself to the other as he or she is'? How do we understand this 'taking-place of every single being' as a commonality, if the space to which we exile is always, already an adjacent space, which seems to be similar for Agamben with the taking-place of the other? Well, I won't be able to answer such questions here, but if we are talking within the *Department of Reading* about possibilities and potentials to collectivise the experience of reading, then this common taking-place of every single being, this exiling into an adjacent space, might be a promising point to start from.

I have to admit, that both, the notion of *teleiopoetics* and that of *ease*, are not yet quite elaborated and rather remain vague. But to turn to Derrida was an attempt to offer a concept that attempts to grasp this correlation of the speech act, or rather, "how to do things with words" - and a community to come. Derrida's *teleiopoetics* is about an anticipatory economy of addressing, that would make the *arrivees* come by withdrawing, thereby opening up the possibility of that which remains unanticipated. I wonder, if we can make use here of Derrida's *teleiopoetics*, as an *advancing backwards*? And isn't this also a question of the gift - the possibility of a gift, that wouldn't allow for any recompense, even in the form of gratitude or pure conscience? 'How to welcome the intruder?', seems to be an appropriate question.

I attempted, here, to elaborate on the bond between addressing and the institution, which is in my view related to the category of the performative as well as to more general questions concerning the foundation of community. Performative speech took place yesterday and it was addressed in different manners. I have the notion of confession in mind, to which Paul referred, the practice of truth-telling 'which insists less (or not only) upon the assertional content of confession', as Agamben

notes, '...than upon the act itself of uttering the truth...' (18). Confession is performative. It is about relations to others, in regard to oneself and changing these relations by the very act of speaking, in so far, as the subject is bound to the truth he/she tells. As a religious practice, the effectiveness of confession is framed and therefore regulated.

Another performative speech I would like to expose is the beautiful enumeration at the end of this potentially endless letter of the *Department of Survival*. For a moment this enumeration reminded me of meditative practices, that are aiming for an ecstatic state by repeating religious excerpts – drifting away in speaking, *désajustement*, in being displaced. What about the parasitic quotations of the commandments last night? Or the notion of game that might open up a practice of disengagement, to release a given object in playing from a specific regime of use. It might be applied to the question of another usage of language that would end with a given set of conventions, which regulate and dominate the public sphere. How to bring language to its very own degree zero in order to reformulate a linguistic practice that might fulfil a language beyond language? Talking about constituting ones addressee, I also had to realise yesterday, that it is necessary to think about strategies to get to know your addressee. As it was proposed yesterday, to invent a new language, we need to address the very setting in which we are living and communicating.

(19)

Well, it brings me back again to Agamben's notion of *ease*. Can we make use of Agamben's concept to understand the very first manifestation of the *Faculty*, its instantiation and its common space?

If it is correct, to say that here, right now, we are more or less in the situation of *promising*, maybe just suggesting or speculating about a possible manifestation of the *Faculty of Invisibility*, then all the *Department of Reading* can offer is reading or re-reading excerpts, quotes, comments in order to address the power-play that seems to be at stake with the *Faculty*.

18. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, p. 134.

19. As a last remark – while re-writing this speech, I asked myself how far I am attempting to render the *Faculty of Invisibility* for the short moment of my speech, visible, just by speaking this theoretical narrative.

7. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 32.

8. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 31.

9. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 31.

10. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 42.

This might mean to give space to the arrivants as a derangement in 'our' time, a ghostly existence.

11. Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 46.

12. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, p. 61.

13. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, p. 103.

13. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, p. 135.

15. Katja Diefenbach, *The Spectral Form of Value - Ghost-Things and Relations of Forces*, <http://transform.eicp.net/transversal/1106/diefenbach/en>

16. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, p. 145.

17. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, p. 23.

SPACE OF NOT-HAVING

Wim Cuyvers, Department of Common Spaces

— Continued from page 1

The one who privatises space controls it.

The powerless need the public space.

Public space is not-controlled space.

Public space is the space of powerlessness.

Public space is economically meaningless.

Public space is the space of need.

Public space is the space of transgression.

The perfect public space would be a space where anybody could do anything at anytime. Public space is thus a platonic idea since a 100% public space is unthinkable.

Public space is indicated by dirt.

Streets are not public spaces; they separate different traffic movements, they avoid the conflict between them, you need a car to be allowed on one part of the street, or a bike for another part.

Squares are not public spaces, the bar or shop owners appropriate the space for their terraces or for displaying their goods and clean up the assembled dirt carefully.

Public spaces are characterised by waste: in a society that is unambiguously driven by profit, places where waste lingers are ignored places.

Public space is the space of loss, not the space of profit; public space is the space of wasting energy, not of carefully saving it.

Public space lies close to privatised frequented space per definition; the faraway, isolated woods are not public spaces.

The moment of violating the rules of society is the moment of confrontation with oneself and with the world.

The real violation takes place out of the controlled private space: kids playing with fire, the first sexual encounters, drugs...

Public space is the space of breaking the societal rules.

Public space is the space of not-having.

Public space is the space of being, public space is the existential space.

Public space is the space of need (the urge to violate the social standards). Public space is the space where those in need go, where those in need meet.

Leisure kills public space.

Those in need leave their traces in the public space (waste by waste) like bodily fluids: tears, blood, sperm, urine.

Nobody cleans it up, the space is owned by nobody.

People of different ages, races or cultures, people with completely different needs visit the same public spaces.

Their needs are different but they read the space in the

same way: the child, the old man, the drug abused and those looking for (homo) sexual contacts, those who give in to their need, read this space in the same way.

Those who accept their need will see, read, recognize and understand public spaces.

We all need spaces to violate rules, to trespass the standards of our society. We are all in need and vulnerable.

When a writer writes a book, the reader will read another book and another reader will yet read something else, but we all read space unambiguously, without noise or disturbance from the moment we accept our need and forget about power, knowledge, insights and contemplation.

Through the public space a non-verbal or pre-verbal talking is possible.

When I am able to read the public spaces in the same way as many others, I am be able to talk with the others about myself, about the others, about our needs, our fears and about the world, through (public) space.

I can touch you, for a moment through (public) space.

A better word for public space might be common space.