
On behalf of

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Letter dated 13 September 2009 from the Faculty of Invisibility addressed to the selection committee of the Jan van Eyck Academie's Fine Art Department

On 5/6/7 December 2006 the Faculty of Invisibility has been initiated at the Jan van Eyck Academie in the frame of the research period of Fine Art researcher Inga Zimprich. The former researcher Sönke Hallmann (Theory) participated in this event and has since, together with Paul Gangloff (starting his research period in the Design Department by January 2010), been very engaged in processing the Faculty of Invisibility and its central questions.

Just as the inaugural event *The Speech* questioned the format of the conference or seminar as well as expertise as a condition for participation, the Faculty of Invisibility has continued to work on formats of public organization, such as that of the art institution. *The Invitation*, issued in 2008, has been a series of six letters and two postcards issued in four languages, that were sent over the course of three months to approximately 550 receivers who the authors remembered personally. The series questioned a concept of communality and assembly that could possibly be offered from within the realm of art, also considering such factors as time, place and (involuntary) memory as potentially communal. In communication with the Shedhalle Zürich this spring, the Faculty of Invisibility developed the formulation of looking *at the White between the Words* to describe its own practice of transgressing the conditions of the contemporary art institution. Not in order to demand more political art, it instead aims to revisit and realize some of the inherent political potential of the institutional condition itself. Unnoticed but decisively, just as the white between the letters facilitates the readability of text, the constitutive formats at the bases of the art institution partake in defining what meaning can possibly be developed therein.

Naturally the Jan van Eyck as an institution prolongues its own traditions in the way it assembles participants and audience, in recruitment and compensation, in the distribution of its resources and in the personnel's endeavors, in administrating the public communication and advertising its events. It simultaneously maintains, mediates and updates the readability of artistic contemporary production.

Throughout the last year *the United Nations* have functioned as an institute of reference for the Faculty of Invisibility, as it displays a highly refined and orchestrated structure of proceedings that organize the communication amongst its member states. The vocabulary and instruments at its disposal – from the *mandate*, the recommendation and decision, to the spokesperson or the position of the permanent observer – has provided us with valuable terminology to further investigate forms of organization of the public realm. The United Nations anchor international law, adopt resolutions that constantly refer back to previously issued documents and decisions, as if summing up its own history in order to progressively prolongue the writing of the institution. In its performative use of language as well as in claiming an incessant process of negotiation it furthermore reveals parallels to the constant proceedings within contemporary art production.

In theoretical writing an array of figures has appeared that, more than holding positions in the realm of the metaphor, implies realizeable positions. Moreover these figures, when brought into tension with the proceedings described above, allow us to perceive them from a different angle: The figure of the helper in Agamben's texts, a persona who remains essentially without work, without an *euvre* in his constant activity, and the king's couriers from Kafka's Blue Octavo notebooks who in absence of a king call out to each other the messages that now have become meaningless. The mandatory, the accredited, the interpreter as much as the messenger possibly point at a position of ease, in speaking on behalf of, being in the place of another, in being there, as if.

Within the Jan van Eyck Academie we would like to establish a researcher's position that operates *on behalf of* the Faculty of Invisibility. As its messenger, courier or interpreter, as a carrier of messages who maybe only in the act of translating them into the conditions of the Jan van Eyck enfolds their meaning. We envision a position that implies a production of the as if, a mode of being there as if not being there. While the art institution provides a place for artists to produce new work, being there *on behalf of* can suspend the act of producing „one's own“ work. Instead of suggesting a collaboration of a number of artists, who would share an annual stipend, and contrary to a symbolical „empty studio“ we would like to create an empty place that can be taken by different persons on behalf of the Faculty and thus remains without work in its ceaseless activity. In the position of the helper, interpreter or courier we would like to foster a position that cannot but initiate translations, by functioning as a threshold between different realms, contexts and situations. Essentially questioning and investigating the space of the (UN) *mandate*, the herewith proposed position makes part of the Faculty of Invisibility's ongoing research into formats of public organization.

Throughout the ongoing communication of the Faculty of Invisibility we have enjoyed the engagement – in works, in conversation, as commissioners as much as critics – of a number of artists, curators, philosophers and other practitioners who we would like to engage in this work. We would like to provide over the researcher's stipend according to the proceedings of the Faculty to engage changing intermediaries to work foremost at the Jan van Eyck but also at its partner institutions and between them, including the intense negotiation with the Jan van Eyck Academie's researchers and employees. Furthermore we would gladly arrange the engaged parties to meet for evaluation and presentation the Jan van Eyck Academie.

The persons undersigned as applicants on behalf of the Faculty herewith sign responsible for the process of this work, its appropriate introduction, implementation, continuity and administration at the Jan van Eyck Academie. They will not assume the position of the intermediary themselves.

For further questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

On behalf of
the Faculty of Invisibility

Sönke Hallmann
Inga Zimprich