

*Museums beyond  
the Crises*

CIMAM 2012  
Annual Conference  
Proceedings

*Salt Galata, İstanbul*  
12–14 November 2012

# Program

Monday  
12 November 2012

*Welcoming remarks:*

Zdenka Badovinac — President of CIMAM,  
Director, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana and  
Vasif Kortun, Board Member of CIMAM,  
Director, Research and Programs, SALT,  
Istanbul, Turkey

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*Keynote 1:*

İsmail Ertürk — Senior Lecturer in Banking,  
PMO Division, Manchester Business School,  
Manchester

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*Case Study 1: New Regions:*

Sarah Rifky — Co-Director, Beirut, Cairo

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*Understanding Local Context 1:*

Merve Çağlar — General Secretary, SAHA  
Association, İstanbul

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*Case Study 2: New Histories:*

Eungie Joo — Director, Art and Cultural  
Programs, Instituto Inhotim, Inhotim

*Case Study 3: New Histories:*

Tirdad Zolghadr — Independent Curator,  
Berlin / New York

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*Understanding Local Context 2:*

Emre Baykal — Exhibitions director and  
curator, ARTER, İstanbul

# Tuesday

## 13 November 2012

### *Keynote 2:*

Bassam El Baroni — Founder and Director,  
Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum (Acaf),  
Alexandria

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### *Case Study 4: New Dialogues:*

Sandra Terdjman — Founding Director, Kadist  
Art Foundation, Paris

### *Case Study 5: New Dialogues:*

Koyo Kouoh — Founder and Artistic Director,  
Raw Material Company, Dakar

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### *Case Study 7: New Contingencies:*

Cosmin Costinas — Executive Director, Para /  
Site Art Space, Hong Kong

# Wednesday

## 14 November 2012

### *Keynote 3:*

Keti Chukhrov — Philosopher, Berlin /  
Moscow

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### *Understanding Local Context 5:*

Panel Discussion —  
Volkan Aslan, Co-Founder Director, 5533;  
Banu Cennetoglu, Artist, Founder, BAS;  
Didem Özbek, Director, PIST///;  
Moderated by Özge Ersoy

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### *Case Study 8: New Collaborations for a Global Heritage:*

Miguel A. López — Independent Curator, Lima

### *Case Study 9: New Collaborations for a Global Heritage:*

Róza El Hassan — artist, Zaytoon, Syria /  
Cairo and Shadi Alshhadeh, activist, writer,  
artist and cyber-activist, Syria / Cairo

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### *Workshop conclusions*

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### *Conference closing remarks and General Assembly*

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### *Credits*

Monday  
12 November  
2012

# Welcoming remarks

Zdenka Badovinac  
President of CIMAM  
Director, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana,  
Slovenia

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It has been a great pleasure to organize this meeting in collaboration with SALT. I would like to thank Vasif Kortun, Director of Programs and Research, for his commitment, for subsidizing the organization of the conference, and all the support we have received from his office. I would also wish to thank *Turkish Airlines* for their support to fund our speakers' travel, the *Getty Foundation*, the *Fundación Cisneros/Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros*, and the *British Consul* for their donations and grants, the result of which twenty-three professionals from low- and middle-income countries, five professionals from Latin America, and four from the United Kingdom have been able to take part in this conference.

Finally, I should like to express my deepest gratitude to the institutions and private collectors who have opened their doors to us. Thank you all for contributing to the success of this conference. This year's meeting draws attendance from over two hundred leading professionals from over fifty-five countries in relation to subject as the art world is rapidly changing and new regions are increasingly asking for their share in dialogues as the need to reconsider the places of the role of the museum in society is evident. We often hear nowadays that there are no more centers and peripheries and that the groundwork for meaningful dialogue has already been laid. This type of thinking can have its pitfalls. The only real difference

seems to be that the positions of power are harder to define and locate. The relations between the influential and the less influential are changing much more rapidly than before and things can no longer be put under a common denominator.

But is that really so? The common denominator we have chosen for our conference is the crisis, which is considered global. At the same time, this CIMAM conference is being hosted by a country that can boast economic growth. And Turkey is not alone in this, yet there seems to be no immunity against crisis—sometimes the crisis is next door. Yet in Turkey's immediate vicinity, for instance, there are spaces of permanent economic and political crisis that affect not only art of the new approaches to the cultural production in spaces that have only recently become interesting to the art world: new monuments and new histories are becoming produced. That is using global capital for the global exchange of ideas. One of the questions we have suggested the speakers of this conference to address is: What kinds of international dialogue are most suitable in this situation? The different spaces worldwide increasingly impact one another and also increasingly recognize the traits they share and those in which they differ. Unfortunately, the traits shared by all these unstable working conditions go by either poor funding or by underdeveloped infrastructure. This leads to the formation of new alliances and new alternative collaborative networks, both globally and locally. And these developments also give us an idea of the future that lies ahead. One thing is certain: things will never be the way they were, and this includes museums. To paraphrase the title of our conference, we are facing the future of museums beyond the museum.

We have gathered an excellent group of speakers. Their experience and fields of interest are quite different and we are confident that they will generate thought-provoking debates. As you may imagine, involvement is vital for the success of the meeting. I therefore hope that you will actively participate in all the discussions. Wishing you a very stimulating and enriching conference, last but not least I would like to thank our executive director, Jenny Gil Schmitz, and the coordinator of the program at CIMAM Inés Jover, for the really excellent organization of this year's conference. Now I would like to invite Vasif to say some words.

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*Vasif Kortun*

*Board Member of CIMAM*

*Director, Research and Programs, SALT  
Istanbul, Turkey*

Thank you, Zdenka. Great seeing all of you at CIMAM this year, and I'm thankful for the participation of the CIMAM team and the organization and my colleagues in Istanbul who have done their best to see that this operation has a minimum level of inconvenience to you all. We cannot control the city government—sorry about the streets—or the traffic, but we try to keep the house in control.

It's been over fifty years since such a strong international gathering has taken place in Istanbul. The first and the last one was in 1954. And 1954 is telling because Turkey had recently entered NATO and had started naturalization also; it had sent soldiers to Korea to the war that they did not know about and it was enjoying a phenomenal economic growth rate. So today in Istanbul there are similarities to 1954.

To pick up where Zdenka has left off, and discuss the beyond the crises, it's not to say

that the museum has always been in crisis. As far as I remember, it was the Marxist art historian Otto Werckmeister in 1982 wrote a seminal article about the discipline of art history in crisis. And I hope CIMAM will be a facilitator in the conference over the next few days. Thank you so much for being here.

## Keynote 1

# *Mapping the Distance of Museums and Culture from the Vortex of Financial Crisis*

I would like to introduce our first keynote speaker, İsmail Ertürk. İsmail Ertürk is an old colleague of mine; he was one year my senior in high school and I know him as a philosopher, someone who was always reading books all the time, not as an economist. He is Senior Lecturer in Banking at *Manchester Business School*.

*Vasif Kortun*

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*İsmail Ertürk*  
Senior Lecturer in Banking, PMO Division,  
*Manchester Business School, Manchester*

*Mapping the Distance of Museums and Culture from the Vortex of Financial Crisis*

I would like to thank CIMAM and especially Zdenka for inviting me to be keynote speaker. Also to Vasif Kortun for enlightening me about my past, not revealing the secrets, but for organizing this well in this beautiful building.

I am an economist but my interest is not limited to economics. The kind of economics I do is called 'cultural economy', and I'm sure you'll find out—hopefully by the end of my speech—what I mean by cultural

economy. Now, the title of my speech has 'museums' and 'crisis', in it because this is what this year's CIMAM meeting is about. And I put some other interesting things in the title like 'vortex', so it sounds fancier. But the vortex of finance is a research project that I'm working on and I've already published on, with my colleagues in Manchester at the *Centre for Research on Socio-cultural Change*, where we study finance and economics in an interdisciplinary way. Now, because I'm an economist, I'll start with an equation:  $FS > AS$ .

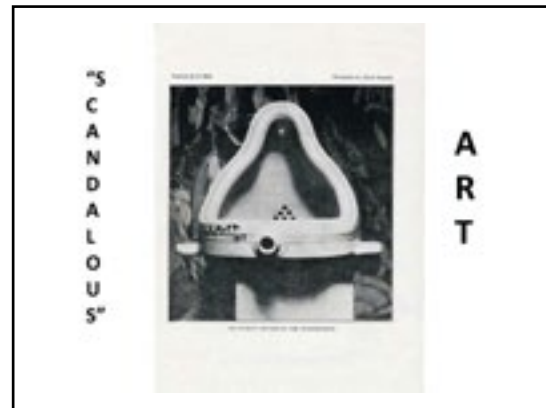


Figure 1. İsmail Ertürk, slide 2: Financial scandals are greater than art scandals 95 years after Duchamp's Fountain.

As you can see, Duchamp's iconic urinal becomes the sign for 'greater than.' 'AS' is 'Scandalous Art', in quotations. And 'FS' is 'Scandalous Finance.' So you art guys are well behind bankers in creating scandals

these days. The world and society have been shocked by what is happening in finance and banking recently. And the most recent scandal in finance is the *Libor* scandal (as fig. 2 visually describes). The banking crisis has been going on for quite some time. It all started with the subprime crisis in the U.S. in 2007, and since then we've seen a number of other scandals—disclosures about how bankers make themselves rich at the expense of the rest of society. But financial scandals do not seem to be coming to an end. Each day we hear of a new type of financial scandal—JP Morgan Chase's *Big Whale*, HSBC's money laundering, UBS's fraudulent trader, etc. Two days ago, one of the finance journalists called me about a new scandal that came out that weekend. I'm sure you're going to read about it in the papers next week. Now, this is important, the *Libor* scandal, because banking is about trust and the bankers who are responsible for setting the *Libor* rate misused the trust of the society.

'*Libor*' stands for '*London Interbank Offered Rate*' and to most people it is a technical banking term. However, *Libor* influences most people's lives directly or indirectly. The technical side of banking and finance has grown in size and importance immensely in our financialized economy; this has become a source of danger for stability. With its complex technicality and jargon, modern-day finance mesmerizes people and politicians. Figure 2 shows the movement of the *Libor* rate in the last quarter of 2008, when it was manipulated by bankers. By the way, these graphs showing financial market data always look beautiful, full of certainty and meaningfulness. But there are dangers lurking behind them that are not disclosed and are not immediately visible. *Libor* is a price at which banks agree among themselves to lend and borrow wholesale money. *Libor* is very important: it's a benchmark. And on this benchmark other prices of money are determined in the market. So if you borrowed from the bank to buy a house, the fee that you pay to the bank, i.e., the interest rate, is based on this benchmark rate. Bankers fixed this rate, so there are double meanings here—'fixing'—they have to fix it, i.e., establish a rate, but there is also a second meaning of fixing, i.e., they collaborated to manipulate the rate.

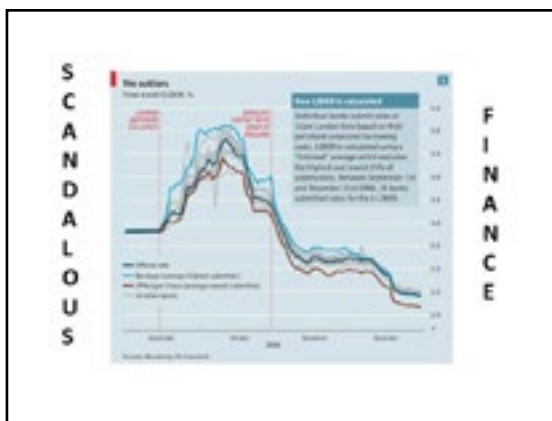


Figure 2. Ismail Ertürk, slide 4: Manipulation of London interbank Borrowing Rate (LIBOR).

This CIMAM meeting mentions 'ethics' in the list of things that will be discussed during the course of this conference. Banking, too, for quite some time has been discussing how to be ethical and whether the society should trust bankers. So ethics bring the art and finance worlds together just like scandals do. Now let me go back to the *Libor* scandal:

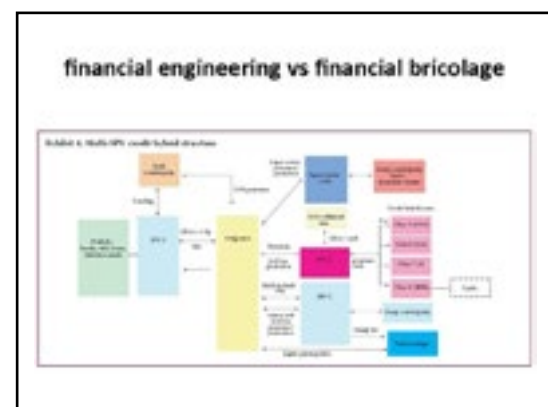


Figure 3. Ismail Ertürk, slide 5: Diagram of fourth-generation collateralized debt obligation (CDO).



Figure 3 shows a fourth-generation CDO, collateralized debt obligation. If you read the academic literature on finance (by some academics who won the Nobel Prize in economics for example), or if you talk to bankers who describe themselves as talented and work in big investment banks, they call this 'financial engineering.' Most mainstream financial economists and most investment bankers and regulators, such as important and influential people like Bernanke and Greenspan, believe that financial engineering delivers economic efficiency. CDO is about credit risk management.

As a result of this financial engineering, we are told by these academics, bankers, and regulators that ordinary people can have access to credit; finance becomes democratized, and low-income people can borrow at lower rates to buy houses. So this is how the bankers sold financial innovation. Now, as you can see, *Libor* appears in many parts of this diagram in fig. 3. Before the crisis, bankers sold the regulators and politicians the idea that they were the masters of risk management. So we would enter into a new economic era that would have sustainable economic growth, because bankers can manage the economy through these innovative financial products. Now, my view on this is that this is not financial engineering, which associates itself with science, this is financial bricolage. I have already published an article on financial bricolage with my colleagues, and luckily I'm one of the few economists who had written about these designs in a critical way before the crisis. So I'm not one of those economists who just started to look at these things critically; I had publications before 2007 that criticized financial engineering and the re-invented banking firms by adopting the 'cultural economy' approach.

Here I'm using the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of '*bricolage*'. As you may be familiar from anthropology, Lévi-Strauss looked at traditional societies and tried to understand how they thought differently than Western societies or science-driven societies. If I can explain in a very crude way: according to Lévi-Strauss an engineer starts his/her work with a concept (abstraction) and then creates an event, a concrete thing, a structure. But in traditional societies, thinking starts with the structure, the concrete, the event to be created. For example, if they want to build a bridge they start searching for and collecting the inputs, ready-mades—just like how an artist works—that are necessary to build the bridge. In contemporary finance, bankers start with a concrete objective, namely, how to make more money for themselves. They do not start like scientists or engineers with an abstract concept about how to build an efficient economy, stable financial system, and so on. So this CDO structure is not an engineer's, a scientist's work. This is financial bricolage. But the major economics departments and business schools in the world explained these financial instruments to their students, and then their students introduced these to the financial community as financial engineering. (There is another critical literature on finance under the category of social studies of finance, which describes this process as performativity, i.e., economic models shaping, formatting the economy). This was supposed to be financial engineering and scientific way of managing risk.

Well, my view is that this is not about managing risk scientifically because this diagram of so-called financial engineering hides many things. One of the things it doesn't disclose is the amount of bonuses these schemes create: more arrows, more boxes, more bonus-generating opportunities. The

objective here is to create a structure that serves bankers' interests. This is not a laboratory-tested innovation. That's why I call it financial bricolage. I have to be very brief here and simplify things. The concept of financial bricolage is explained in much more detail and sophistication in my co-authored academic publication. But nevertheless I hope it is clear that the objective of a CDO is, ultimately, to maximize bankers' bonuses and fee income for the financial institutions involved. So that's the objective, the concrete result to be achieved. And then bankers start putting together various tools to create the structure, just like the tribal societies, or traditional societies. *Libor* is one of those tools, and regulatory changes are, for example, other tools. In this case it is something called the *Basel Capital Adequacy* accord.

After the crisis, the regulators said: 'Banking is so complex!' and the financial crisis is a failure, an accident that happens in most complex systems, like nuclear plants. Therefore, the regulators wanted to map this complexity. If you thought the CDO diagram that I have just shown you was complex enough, look at this diagram (fig. 4): this is called 'shadow banking', and this diagram was created by the economists at the *Federal Reserve Bank* of New York. It does look complex, like a circuit board in an electronic device. But my main concern with this kind of epistemology that deals with banking and finance is that it is about looking at stabilities—arrows, boxes.

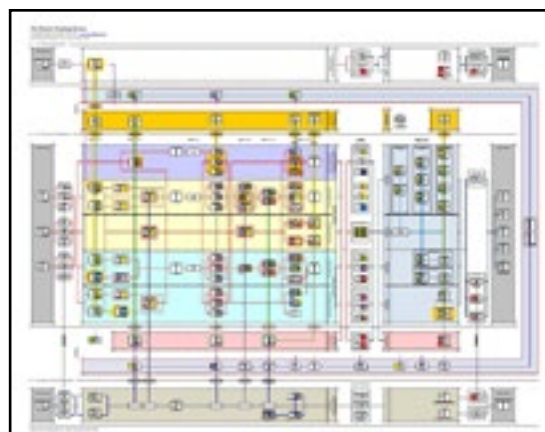


Figure 4. Ismail Ertürk, slide 6: Diagram of shadow banking in the U.S. drawn by the economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

This really comes from economists' obsession that economics is a science like physics: i.e., if we can discover the laws of economics, like the physical sciences discover the laws of nature, then we can map the economic reality; we can control the economy because we know how it works, we know its laws.

Now with bricolage, my view is that bankers will move on and the connections among the numerous financial institutions on this map will change and the map itself will be continually reconfigured. Hence my concept of vortex, which I borrowed from Michel Serres, and about which I will talk in greater detail later on. Economic reality is like a vortex, which is both stable and unstable at the same time and whose laws are not universal.

But this map of shadow banking is what the regulators came up with after the crisis, and that's why we are still in serious trouble—because the regulators reduce the problems in finance to one of being able to map the complexity. My view is that unless we have an epistemological paradigm shift about how we study finance and economics, we will not find a socially useful solution to the problem of finance. This epistemological shift requires seeing today's finance as a vortex, not as a mappable, fixed complex system that invites the application of principles of physics of

solid materials. Present-day finance is more like a system of hurricanes, whirlpools, or spinning tops.

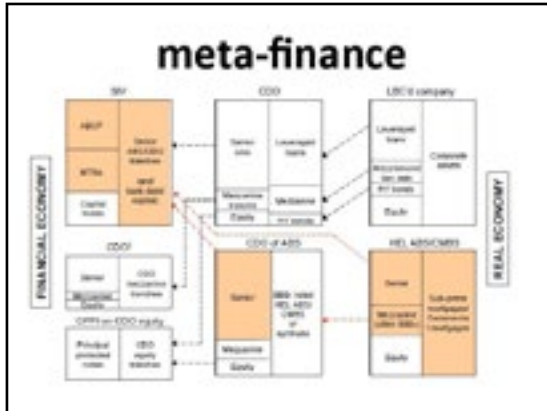


Figure 5. Ismail Ertürk, slide 7: Complexity of collateralized debt obligations in linking financial economy to real economy according to Andrew Haldane, Bank of England economist.

Figure 5 is about how finance and real economy are connected. However, I call this intermediation process ‘meta-finance’; that’s again a concept that is developed from my cultural economy approach to finance.

This diagram, created by the economists at the *Bank of England*, is an example that shows how the regulators and policy makers think about the relationship between banking and productive economy. You will see in this diagram that the productive activities generating employment and growth and the financial economy are linked through financial innovation—instruments called CDOs, which I talked about earlier. This is the complication that the bankers claim that they have created through financial innovation to make the real economy more efficient. However, I call it ‘meta-finance’, because most of the activities described in this diagram are between financial institutions, not between firms, households, and banks. This is a self-referential system where the value and price of all transactions are determined by the community of financiers between themselves.

The meaning of all these boxes and arrows are only understood by the finance community. This is finance about finance. This is not finance about real economy, where

goods and services are produced. This is meta-finance. Like modern art it is self-referential: In modern art, self-referentiality works and nobody gets hurt. But in finance self-referentiality wastes economic resources and creates economic crises, as we have just experienced. So, we live in an age where finance is meta-finance; it is self-referential. It is possible to demonstrate this empirically as well, by measuring the activities among financial institutions—for example, financial institutions lend less to the firms and individuals; they lend more to each other. There are more transactions between financial institutions than there are between financial institutions and firms and households. I call that ‘meta-finance.’ So it is finance about itself, trading among financial institutions themselves. Financial innovation creates lots of boxes, arrows, relations, and transactions among financial institutions, not between the real economy and finance (fig. 5).

What I’ve been telling you so far has been turned into a contemporary art piece by Goldin + Senneby. Here (fig. 6) is the actor, Hamadi, as me, and this is me in the white shirt, lecturing my students, and in the background you see the blow-up of the shadow-banking map. And you also see a priest in this picture; this is a reference to Luis Buñuel’s film *The Discreet Charm of Bourgeoisie*—to which I’ll come back in a moment. So my idea of ‘meta-finance’, through collaboration with Goldin + Senneby, turned into a performance in Rotterdam’s *Witte de With*, a contemporary art museum. Increasingly I’m engaged with contemporary artists discussing finance and economy. My cultural-economy approach to finance appeals to them. But contemporary artists appeal to me as well. Goldin + Senneby approached me because they read a collective article that I wrote with my colleagues in Manchester on hedge funds.



Figure 6. Ismail Ertürk, slide 8: Scene from Goldin + Senneby's *The Discreet Charm of Meta-finance*.

Now hedge fund managers, you've probably heard, are the nasty people, the nasty financiers. Some hedge funds are alleged to have attacked banks, bond markets, and stock markets to make personal gain. The mainstream economy sees them as useful institutions because they are arbitrageurs. In economics, if you are an arbitrageur you create efficiency in the market; you help the market to discover the right price. But then the hedge funds attacked banks in 2008—it was with something called short selling: basically you expect that the banks' stock prices will go down and you sell stock that you don't own, which means it is in your interest that the economy gets worse. Hedge funds were benefiting from the economy getting worse. And then the media called them 'speculators', 'bad people.'

My conceptualization was they're neither arbitrageurs nor speculators, they are nomadic war machines, again a concept that I borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari. In Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the nomadic war machine you have the state organ. Here in fig. 7 you see, in 2011 in Cannes, the state wanted to perpetuate the organs of power; this time, they wanted to control the euro crisis; they want to save the euro. But then you have the nomadic war machine. The *Daily Mail* reported in February 2010: 'A secretive group of Wall Street hedge-fund bosses are said to be behind a plot to cash in on the

decline of the euro.' This is the nomadic war machine!—they've been doing this since the early 1990s, attacking the European exchange rate mechanism, attacking the Malaysian currency market in the late 1990s, attacking the banks' stocks in Europe and the U.S. in late 2000s. And now the hedge funds plan to attack the euro, as reported in *Daily Mail* at the 'ideas dinner' at a private townhouse in Manhattan.

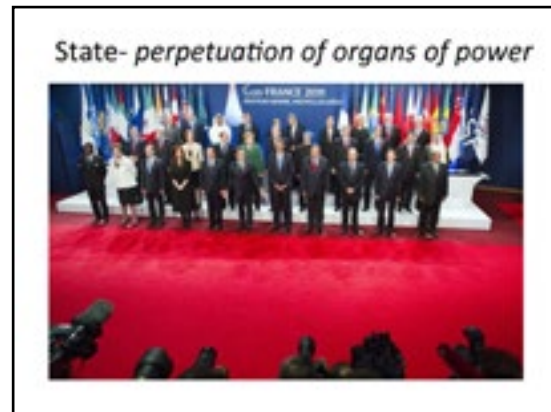


Figure 7. Ismail Ertürk, slide 9: Leaders of G20 countries at the 2011 meeting, where the eurozone crisis was discussed.

So what we have in the eurozone is the state—state power, regular economy—trying to fight the finance. And on the other side we have a nomadic war machine. But both exist together. Hedge fund owners and managers are like gang leaders or stars. They are not the heads of states. They can be easily abandoned by their people. At the moment they are bad people, but in my nomadic war machine framework—again using the Deleuze and Guattari's concept—they are interrelated with the state; interrelated with the central power. Without access to contacts, both in politics and in big banks, hedge funds cannot operate. Just like a nomadic war machine.

So we're moving, now, from the banking crisis of 2007, which was caused by CDOs, to the euro crisis. Figure 8 is my view of things: this is a scene from Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel*.



Figure 8. Ismail Ertürk, slide 11: Scene from Luis Buñuel's film The Exterminating Angel (1962).

if you've seen the film, you'll know that the elite, or the bourgeoisie, have a very civilized dinner but then—you know Buñuel is a Surrealist—they cannot leave the dining room for some unexplained and surreal reason. As they cannot leave the dining room, they become very uncivilized and take to cannibalism. When I look at this scene, I recall the scene in fig. 7, where the *Group 20* heads of states, at their 2010 meeting in Cannes, cannot exit the eurozone crisis. They've been living this problem for four years now, like the nightmare in Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel*. Our political and financial elites fight each other. Respected hedge fund managers like George Soros appear in newspapers as plotters against the euro. Our elites cannot exit the problem that they have collectively created.

... to "no exit" in the eurozone

	Austria	Belgium	France	Germany	Greece	India	Italy	Netherlands	Portugal	Spain	UK	Total
Austria	0.00	1.1%	5.6%	0.8%	0.3%	5.6%	4.4%	0.0%	2.0%	5.9%	10.0%	100.0%
Belgium	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
France	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Germany	1.7%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Greece	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
India	1.4%	2.0%	1.0%	20.7%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Italy	1.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Netherlands	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Portugal	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Spain	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
UK	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: Ertürk et al. 2012

Figure 9. Ismail Ertürk, slide 12: Cross-border credit flows among the eurozone countries plus the UK—the high interconnectedness of banking systems.

Figure 9 shows my response as a serious economist. My cultural economy analysis does not go well with most mainstream economists but the kind of analysis in fig. 9 does go well. What does this table in fig. 9 tell us? If you remember in the euro crisis, the common framing of the problem identifies the 'saving north' and the 'lazy south, Mediterranean countries.' In this kind of analysis, the solution to the eurozone problem is to get the lazy southerners—the Greeks, Spanish, Italians, Portuguese—to work harder, to be more productive. Well, the situation is not like that. Economics tends to aggregate things—this is a framework that I borrow from Michel Serres. In the case of the euro crisis, the mainstream economists aggregate countries in the eurozone into good economies versus bad economies, productive economies versus lazy economies, economies that save versus economies that don't save, developed countries versus less-developed countries, etc. It's again the epistemological problem in economics that I mentioned earlier.

My approach to economics is different. I believe we need to disaggregate rather than aggregate; we need to look at the specifics; we need to study the particularities. The table in fig. 9 is my disaggregation of the Eurozone crisis. If you look at, for example, France on this table, you see how much banks in France lend to those countries at the top. This is lending to banks, private institutions, and governments in those countries, as a percentage of GDP. French banks lend 16.2 percent of their French GDP to the Italian economy. That's huge, 16.2 percent! Now I can understand why Berlusconi had to go; it was a coup d'état—if this had happened in Latin America it would have been called coup d'état. Berlusconi—whether we like him or not—was a democratically elected politician. He had to go, because of the

French banks' exposure to the Italian economy. Hence my use of Buñuel: when things get worse, our elites behave in an uncivilized manner. That means in Europe, we can forget democracy for a while. Well, that analysis of mine was turned into another performance by Goldin + Senneby. I like working with them. This performance was in the Contemporary Art Museum in Aachen. In fig. 10 you see Hamadi, playing me, explaining these things to the audience.

Now I'll try to move to the art world. The art world and finance have similarities. Figure 11 shows a scene from Orson Welles's *F for Fake*. This film is about fraudsters, forged art, lying, tricks. That's what the bankers have been doing. The crisis involved a group of U.S. banks generating fraudulent financial assets that were supposed to be financial innovation products, i.e., subprime mortgages that were converted into the CDOs that I mentioned earlier. Financial innovation turned risky lending to subprime borrowers into securitized bonds; then these bonds were sold. Some German banks, *Landesbanks*, were supposed to be conservative banks. After the crisis, these German *Landesbanks* blamed the American banks for selling them fake, fraudulent financial assets.



Figure 10. Ismail Ertürk, slide 13: Scene from Goldin + Senneby's 'I dispense, divide, assign, keep, hold.'

Remember the 'no exit' in Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel*, where civilized people were behaving in an uncivilized way and start attacking each other? What is the value of a piece of paper that a German bank buys from an American bank?

We've seen in fig. 7 how the so-called financial engineering involved lots of different intricate calculations and mechanisms to turn risky loans into riskless bonds. So as in this film *F for Fake*, we have these people, German *Landesbanks* who wanted an object—riskless bonds—and paid for it, then afterward they found it was a fraud. But as long as nobody discovers it's forged, it's ok. And in this film, you will remember, Orson Welles interviews Elmyr de Hory, the big arts fraudster, who says: 'look, the big galleries bought this stuff from me and didn't ask me whether it was forged or not. Because there was someone who was going to pay for it and galleries sold them my fake paintings.'



Figure 11. Ismail Ertürk, slide 14: Scene from Orson Welles's film *F for Fake* (1975).

So before the crisis, everybody was happy, because there was a price at which they could sell someone else what they had bought. Now moving into your territories—linking again economics with contemporary art—this photo in fig. 12 is from the *New York Times*, from September 9, 2012, and this gentleman is Hans-Joachim Fuchtel, a deputy labor minister and member of the German

Parliament. Angela Merkel sent him to Greece to mend relationships. Read the top bit, this is the quotation from the newspaper: ‘During his final dinner in Corfu...’ That again reminds me of Buñuel’s troubled bourgeoisie, where they keep having those dinners but they never finish. Well apparently he masterminded a camel race in Berlin, so he’s a creative person, yeah. And he gave some advice on how to rescue the Greek economy. For example, he proposed a ‘televised cooking program with a German chef and a Greek chef’ to generate some revenue for Greece. He also proposed exhibiting Greek contemporary art in forty shows across Germany again to generate revenue for the Greek economy. Now, this is called ‘financialized economy.’ In a financialized economy, contemporary art can become an asset class just like stock shares and bonds and currencies and just like these financial assets can create a bubble.

Now I am returning, as I promised at the beginning of my discussion, to the concept of the vortex of meta-finance—how finance sucks different realms of the economy, including the art world, into its vortex. And then it creates bubbles. I’m not being judgmental here about the contemporary art world. I’m just observing. Now what do I mean by vortex? To answer this question I need to talk about financialized economy. As you can see so far, I’ve never talked about neoliberalism or globalization.



Figure 12. Ismail Ertürk, slide 15: German politician Mr. Fuchtel tells the Greeks to export contemporary art to pay their debts.

Fuchtel must have heard about how the Goldin + Senneby performance and exhibition at Aachen has become a collectable item (fig. 13). He might have thought that if contemporary art in northern Europe is creating a market out of the euro crisis, why should not the Greek artists turn the Greek crisis into money-generating activity? I am just joking.



Figure 13. Ismail Ertürk, slide 16: Exhibition of Goldin + Senneby's 'I dispense, divide, assign, keep, hold' at Neuer Aachener Kunstverein

I think these are old baggage to explain what is happening in today’s economy. We need new concepts to understand new realities. And we need to develop new concepts for specific things.

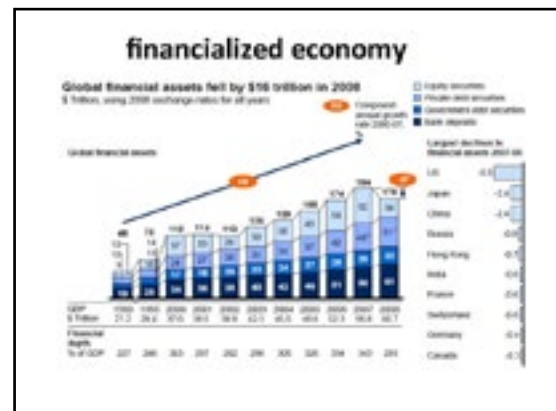


Figure 14. Ismail Ertürk, slide 18: Global financial assets are two or three times bigger than global production and services.

We live in a financialized economy, which is when the amount of money in the economy is much greater than the real goods and services. You see in 1990, the amount of financial assets is 227 percent of the world GDP (fig. 14). Just before the crisis, in 2007, it had reached 343 percent. So we have too much liquidity in the world economy. That's why we have these bubbles. That liquidity searches for high yield in financial markets rather than going to real economy and to investments. So as a result, when the stock market goes down, some of that money wants to go into a new asset class. Just like the way the hedge funds I mentioned earlier want to make the euro a new asset class, currencies in a financialized economy become an asset class. Since the 2007 crisis, some of this liquidity goes into contemporary art as this quote from *The New Criterion* shows (fig. 15).

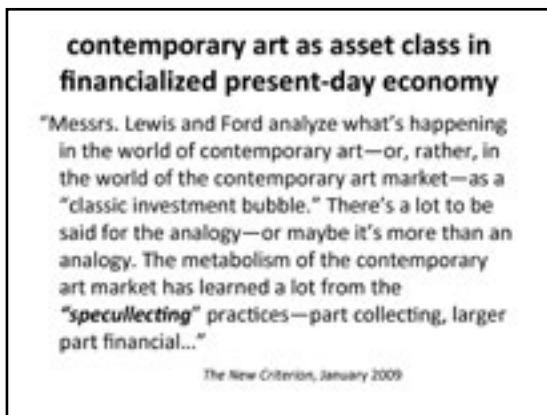


Figure 15. Ismail Ertürk, slide 19: investment bubble in the contemporary art market.

I have a student in China—a PhD student—whose father owns a wealth management company. So he's going to take it over, and therefore he's preparing himself. Last year—or was it two years ago?—creative industries had become an important sector for investments in Chinese five-year plan. And in China there is a shortage of investments that wealthy people can invest in, and the Chinese

government allowed contemporary art to become an investible asset. So that's why we're seeing make big purchases of contemporary art in China. Now in a financialized economy, the quantity of money is very important. But stories are important too. Without stories, people don't move their money; they do not invest money in new asset classes. As Roland Barthes so effectively explained, stories have exchange values. In our financialized economy there is a story that the creative industries in which art plays a role will generate the next economic growth. These stories need to be supported by initiatives. For example, UNESCO now has a *Creative Cities Network*; big cities in the world become a part of that network, as fig. 16 shows. So that matter is important.



Figure 16. Ismail Ertürk, slide 20: The Creative Cities Network. Performability and narratives drive financialized economy Barthes and exchange value of stories.

That's why both in the developing world and the developed world the policy makers, the mayors, and local authorities use these theories of creative economy as models of development. Policy makers perform the theory. They want to make their cities globally competitive and the creative industries play a big role in achieving this. And such performativity can play a fantastic role in places like Abu Dhabi: fig. 17 shows the 'Saadiyat', the cultural village in Abu Dhabi. Here you see their branch of the Louvre, and this is the



branch of Guggenheim. And they want to have content in these museums and hence there will be a lot demand for art in places like Saadiyat.



Figure 17. Ismail Ertürk, slide 21: Computer image of Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, where Guggenheim and Louvre will open branches.

So my view of present-day economics is that it is like a vortex—a vortex of a financialized economy. We have conjunctures in a financialized economy, periods of five to seven years where there is stability when a bubble builds up. Remember the films *Wall Street* (1987) and then the sequel, *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* (2010)? *Wall Street I* was the vortex of the late 1980s, the junk bond conjuncture, and *Wall Street II* was the vortex of early 2000s, the subprime conjuncture.

Again, these are concepts I borrow from Michel Serres: there is ‘turba’ and ‘turbo.’ Turba is the disorder, the confusion, whereas turbo is like a spinning top. Before the bubble bursts and the crisis starts, we have a turbo, an orderly movement, and during the crisis period we have a turba—confusion, chaos. So now we are in a turba period in finance. But in art you could be in a turbo period, an orderly movement before the bubble bursts. Again, I don’t want to over-simplify things, I’m just suggesting ideas. I’m more comfortable with these things in finance. I have not analyzed the art market. I know (that) in a financialized economy there is a logic; this logic creates

asset classes. Contemporary art is becoming an asset in our financialized world. There’s a narrative about creative industries and creative economies where the countries and the cities perform that idea by building museums, organizing art events, and encouraging artistic activities.



Figure 18. Ismail Ertürk, slide 24: Spinning tops, hurricanes, and the vortex.

I talked about ethics, because we all have—economists have—ethical concerns. My personal view is that in economics we need to forget the physics-based economics, where the economists believe that there are laws of economics that the economists can discover and then can use to control the economic phenomena. My view is that in economics we need to use fluid physics as a model and acknowledge that economics is like a vortex, like the examples in fig. 18 show. And in a vortex you have the circumference and the axis, and those create storms, hurricanes, spinning tops. What happened in finance is that we allowed finance to have a huge circumference, which was made possible because, as I showed you, we have financialization and too much liquidity, and there was also a long axis because there is a very long chain of interconnectedness in a global economy. So when this vortex collapsed, it collapsed to create great destruction. What we should do—and this is my current work on reforming the financial sector—is to make

finance simple. It should have a smaller circumference and a shorter axis, so if things go wrong, when it collapses it doesn't destroy us and the world.

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*Questions and Answers*  
*İsmail Ertürk*

Question: Thank you very very much. Great talk. I have a whole set of questions but I'll try to narrow it into two maybe. I wanted you to talk about the extent that black money is in this system. In other words, money that is illegally obtained; in different ways, or its origin—its 'provenance', to use an art word—is not something that the owners wouldn't necessarily want to be traced, and the extent to which that has also contributed to the notion of contemporary art as an asset class. Because the value of contemporary art is—rather like football—completely dependent upon a very small group of people determining whether something is 500,000, or 5 million, or 50 million. In a sense it doesn't matter as long as such people agree to that. So to what extent... or, Can we speculate around the percentage of that financialized economy that is actually black money or has its origin in semi, or illegal, practices?

And the other thing is: As I understand it—and it's a little bit vague—the contractive curve which we looked at, where mostly towards the end of that there is this process of financialization; that is at a time of profound lack of innovation and lack of creativity, historically, that actually waits to the second—which is a new form of innovation. It seems to me quite ironic that the moment we have an economy which claims itself to be creative; claims itself to be innovative, but actually—as I understand

it—through that contractive analysis you would say that it's in one of its periodic moments of stagnation.

İsmail Ertürk: All right, thank you. Black money has always existed and it's difficult to measure, but one of my professors at NYU, Ingo Walter, did this study in a book a long time ago, so I'm less concerned by the black money. Bubbles are created by legitimate money. It is legitimate money searching for high yield. High yield means 15 to 20 percent return, which is unachievable. But the bankers give the impression that it is achievable; it is sustainable. So we should be worried about the legitimate money creating bubbles and I'm less concerned about the black money. Of course there's black money trying to go into all sorts of pitch but it is the legitimate money. It is the asset class for pension money, it is asset class for wealthy individuals who pay taxes that's more important and that I'm more worried about.

Innovation, yes. Economy goes up and down; historically we can look at electricity, steam, but this is not innovation. I'm not buying that story. As I said financial innovation is a financial bricolage, and it ends up enriching bankers. All these scandals show us how they enrich themselves. So this wasn't a creative destruction at all. Now when you have a creative destruction you have some physical assets. We had several financial crises, we will have financial crisis. *Dot.com* was bubble; it burst, but it gave us *Amazon!* With this financial crisis, what do we have? Inflated houses in Spain. Inflated houses in Ireland. They are not productive. We did have a financial crisis in the 1980s in emerging economies, those countries borrowed lots of money, but at least they built roads, the built hospitals. They couldn't pay their loan back, but they had physical assets. But this is a

different kind of crisis. It is a financialized economy, a financial innovation crisis, and it is not creative destruction.

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Question: I also have two questions. You used the metaphor of 'nomadic machines' coming from Deleuze and Guattari. In Deleuze and Guattari, this is a revolutionary machine, which is undermining the logic of capital. And you, on the one hand, mentioned this as some kind of juxtaposition to the state, but on the other hand, you said that it's somehow connected to the state power. So what is this 'nomadic financial machine'? Is it a counter-force that is interconnected to the state power, legitimately producing this meta-finance or 'meta-power'? This is one question. Second is: You made some kind of differentiation between 'good; just financial world', which you called 'bricolage', and 'bad finance.' Isn't this 'bad finance' part of the logic of economy as such? Because from your speech we can say that there is 'good capitalism' and there is 'bad capitalism.' So this is the question.

Ismail Ertürk: You always have to be careful when you borrow from other humanities. I've been trying to be very careful when I applied it but yes, in Deleuze and Guattari, they have positive qualities in terms of alternative ways of doing things—epistemology. But at the same time he does talk about pillaging, killing... He gives the idea of Genghis Khan as a '*Nomadic War Machine*' because it turns a tool into a weapon. So I was using the assemblage to look at how hedge funds turn tools into weapons; work systems into war systems. So hedge funds they were using legitimate financial institutions like short selling—short selling is allowed—and they are using corporate governance reforms. But they were turning those tools that were

supposed to be helping us to create more efficient accountable economy into weapons for personal wealth. I'm using parts of it, but without being judgmental but also showing that the '*War Machine*' cannot exist without the state—i.e. Nomos can be bad, but law—order—can have dirty relationships with nomos, as we've just seen in Congo today, or four years ago: Western powers used warlords—and then when they're finished with them then they—I can give lots of examples in Iraq, etc. And the same thing with hedge funds without being criticized. Some people go as far as to say that they cause the crisis. No! Nomos and law co-existed. So I'm using the co-existence rather than the separation of the enemies.

I've been doing lots of work with various financiers, since the crisis. One example I gave is—well I haven't said that before but I have to give specific examples—*American Express* used securitization, a financial innovation in a simple form, because credit cards were simple cards. And it was a useful thing, because before they get their salaries, people can buy things; they don't have to wait until they get their cash. In 2002, an investment bank went to *American Express* to sell these more complicated instruments. The CEO of *American Express* said: 'I don't understand this! So I'm not using it!' So *American Express* didn't use it. So financial innovations, they are useful, but there are certain companies, like *Lloyds Bank* in the UK, that didn't use it. But then sometimes they use it. But the majority uses this things and it created problem. (Things like) the building societies, savings and loans institutions, coop' banks, credit unions—So there is now a huge—At the moment I'm working with some of my colleagues on how to get pension funds involved in directly investing in infrastructure. I mean finance is not categorically bad. Not all financiers and bankers were. Again, I'm against aggregation. We need to disag-

gregate our categories. I agree, there is good finance, but there is a huge resistance—political resistance—from the big finance.

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Question: You seemed to be advocating for a 'smaller circumference.' I wondered if you could suggest what that might look like and whether smaller circumference would essentially mean more local.

Ismail Ertürk: Partly. Again, the work I do with pension funds in the UK, for example in Manchester, because banks don't lend to individuals or the SMEs, the *Manchester City Council* has its own pension funds and is using a part of these funds to lend to local SMEs and create social housing locally. And there are some extreme examples, for instance, in Bristol, in the UK, where they created their own currency: the *Bristol Pound*. So that people spend their currency locally, instead of the money going to investment bankers or pension funds and that might be invested in speculative things. But, what I mean with simplicity is—I'm sure you all heard about 'too-big-to-fail banks'; 'to-big-to-save banks.'

We need to split banks into smaller functional units: just doing retail banking or just doing investment banking. I'm not against hedge funds, but as long as there are people who want to put their money; who want to take the risk with hedge funds, I have no problem with that. But those hedge funds should not be using the deposited individual savings from the big banks. So if we take a bank like *Citibank*: they collect deposit from individuals and those individuals don't know that their money goes to hedge funds. So we need to have separation of banks and increasingly the banks—UBS finally decided to get rid of their

investment banking in order to concentrate on asset management and retail banking. So that's what I mean: we need much smaller, simpler units. Even Sandy Weill, who created in the U.S. this big bank idea said, finally, we need simple finance, simple financial institutions.

# Case Study 1: *New Regions*

## From Beirut with Love...

Good morning again. *New Regions* is a chapter of the organization of this congress that looks at study cases and examples of how the Middle East, not Africa, has become a very relevant place for creativity and institutional development, and some weeks ago I received a message saying: 'Beirut opens in Cairo' and I imagine the entire city of Beirut just moving in Cairo and opening it up. But Cairo is an institution run by Sarah Rifky, who is a pleasure for me to introduce. Sarah Rifky is co-founder of CIRCA, the *Cairo International Resources Centre for Art*; she has been a curator at *Townhouse Gallery* since 2009 and she taught as well at the *American University of Cairo* together with Wael Shawky. She has been managing MASS *Alexandria*, which is a kind of a studio-study center, she also writes for various art magazines. It is my pleasure to welcome Sarah Rifky.

*Bartomeu Mari*

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*Sarah Rifky*  
*Co-Director, Beirut, Cairo*

*From Beirut with Love...*

In the context of the occasion of a talk on crisis, I am encouraged to think of myself as being part of a new region, or at least to speak on or on behalf of this position. But regions, like relationships, like home, are somehow not fixed. It is possible to suspend this question and to think of a place that temporarily is a little less hinged on certain mechanisms that govern art. I imagine that art is a resource, like oil or natural gas, that has not been identified in its raw form and hasn't been assimilated into a certain economy. Of course this is changing slightly, when we look at the region (of the Middle East, say) rather than just as cities (like Cairo or Beirut), isolated from one another. In the most hopeful way, I imagine that the space that contemporary art affords is still like an oasis, a possible parallel place for thought and practice, and inhabiting it sometimes feels like an illicit privilege.

When I was much younger, my refuge into art works and their stories was a little like my love for literature. Gradually this fantasy expanded from singular art works into spaces that manifested around art works—museums, exhibition spaces and so on. There was a transference of this fantasy space that an artwork could create to the idea of the institution: a museum of art, an art school, and so

on. This impulse, a love for institutions, predates my desires for creating institutions.

Some time ago, I came across a text, which is a key to some of my questions around thinking of institutions, which is helpful in this discussion on new regions. The text is by John Searle and is called 'What is an institution?' It reminds me a little of the Haddaway song from the early nineties, 'What is love?' This is how it goes: 'I don't know... you're not there... what is right, what is wrong... give me a sign... what is love... baby, don't hurt me, don't hurt me no more...'

In the opening of his text, Searle poignantly points out the nuances of teaching economics; he speaks of the voice in which he was taught. Learning about equal investment, in the same tone of voice one uses to teach that force equals mass times acceleration, for example. He points to this uncontestable voice of science. This makes me think of what voice and what language we use to think and talk about art institutions today.

Over the course of my working in art, it was never suggested that the reality of the art world and market, and the reality of art institutions, like economic and historical realities, is largely dependent on human beliefs and attitudes.

In the same way that two dogs fight over a bone, and how their scuffle is an engagement in the disposal of scarce commodity, this kind of example is largely ignored in economics discourse. In the same way, I imagine one could turn to certain art works and imagine how they relate to a discourse on institution building and discussion on the art economy and its relationship to new regions.

It was in a lecture earlier this year that I misunderstood a point Diedrich Diedrichsen was making while talking about institutions. He said: 'I don't care if people chose to learn by going to school or to an art work. In my notes, I wrote: every art work is a school.'

Later on, I scribbled next to it: send institutions to art works.

I think of Walid Raad's *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*, and a particular point he made of a physical phenomena, where colors, lines, and forms hide in documents, stationery paper, they become encrypted into the bureaucratic tools of an institution. I imagine it is safe to say that to safeguard art, perhaps it has to be also embedded within the structural realization of an institution.

When we came to think of starting a new institution in Cairo, there were many practical considerations at the backs of our minds. What type of institution would we start? And not in the programmatic sense, but what kind of structure, which means of financing it, and how do we conceive of its role within the constellation of already existing spaces? We realize that a large constituent of our public is not just artists, cultural producers, and an art audience, but also art institutions form a type of public. Much of our day-to-day communication is with program partners, readers of our grant proposal. As such, we conceive of Beirut and the backchannels of our work as part of our curatorial work. Each element of setting up the institution is conceived with artists. To give an example, the legal status and framework of the institution is being conceived through a set of instructions by the artists Goldin + Senneby.

To go back to Searle, a simplistic way of understanding his argument around institutions is that historically, thinkers have taken language for granted; therefore they have presumed the economy, the institution of economics. He goes back to question how with the writing of the social contract it is already presumed that people speak a language. The first question instated then becomes: How do these people, how do we form a social contract?

When we speak of artists and art, we also speak of language, and here I wonder why, when thinking of institutions, their relations and their future, do we not assume a language that is more akin to art?

The glossary that informs much of how we speak of the conditions in which we work today, involves addressing crisis and austerity. Perhaps, like when I was much younger, escaping into art work and into books, as a space from which to perch myself onto imagination (or onto a stage) or open the world up laterally and side-ways, to conceive of a space, that playfully suggests a subtle reinstitution of places (Beirut in Cairo), I don't see it as a gesture that refrains from certain pleasures. Of course, one could say we work within an unstable situation and at a time of extreme difficulty, politically, ecologically, economically, though these conditions are not the only determinants of our work, and if they are, then they can also be generative of new thought.

I would like to conclude thinking of Sophie Calle's *Take Care of Yourself*. She receives an email telling her that her relationship is over. She doesn't know how to respond. It ends with the words 'take care of yourself.' A love crisis. Bent on investigating love, desire, and ourselves, we have all suffered, we suffer from crises of love. Orhan Pamuk and Elif Shafak both allude to this state of crisis of love, in love.

As art institutions, we are bound to each other. Some of us are dependent, co-dependent, or counter-dependent to one another. Ideally, we strive to be interdependent, in love. Sophie says: 'To deal with crisis, she invites over a hundred responses, from women (including two made of wood, and a parrot). To deal with crisis—to analyze it, comment on it, dance it, sing it. Dissect it. Exhaust it. Understand it for me. Answer for me. To take care of yourself. To take care of art. To take care of institutions. With love.'

# Understanding Local Context 1

Thank you Sarah we are going to do the Q&A I think after the second session. It is my pleasure to invite Merve Çağlar from SAHA, it's part of the *Understanding Local Context* of Istanbul. Just briefly before she takes the stage I will say that at this moment a whole range of institutions in Istanbul are stepping into roles that the public sector has abandoned, and SAHA is one of those critical institutions that support curators, writers and artists for their exhibition projects outside the country. It's kind of an NGO serving the arts. Likewise, the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts supports and organizes the Venice representations or Biennale representations of Turkey. They are not a state structure either and that's the hyper privatization that Istanbul is going through now. It is yet to see the results and consequences of this in the long run. Thank you, Merve.

*Vasif Kortun*

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*Merve Çağlar*  
*General Secretary,*  
*SAHA Association, Istanbul*

First of all, welcome. I would like to start my talk with a quotation from Martin Luther King, which I am sure many other speakers have done before me: 'Philanthropy is commendable but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary.'

Listening to Ismail Ertürk's speech before me, his enlightening speech where he outlined contemporary art becoming an asset class, at SAHA which is a non governmental organization supporting contemporary art

from Turkey, we try to create a model, a support mechanism that eliminates the patron of the arts from the equation. I will try to explain how and what we do.

I would like to thank CIMAM for providing this tremendous opportunity for us to introduce SAHA to our target audience and also to SALT for hosting this conference and of course to Vasif Kortun for supporting contemporary art from Turkey from many years and creating this important shift in perception of contemporary arts from Turkey and also the region with other outstanding individuals like himself and bringing the long-overdue reappraisal of contemporary arts from Turkey. You can see images that are flowing freely basically, these are the projects that we have supported. My speech will not be necessarily following up with the visuals. In the past year I have worked with artists who have been invited to exhibitions but could not attend because they did not have the money to produce their works, I have seen artists who have been accepted to residency programs but could not attend because they could not pay their expenses, and I have seen curators with great ideas and venues to do exhibitions but could not realize their ideas because of budget constraints and the support that was provided was a temporary budget solution.

The idea behind establishing SAHA was the result of a collective enthusiasm to fulfill the lack of funds available to contemporary visual arts in the country. *The Ministry of Culture's* reach does not yet include a support mechanism for contemporary arts and what is provided it is often inaccessible and inadequate in many respects. The sponsorships from corporations are constraining and often include a trade off and individual attempts to



support contemporary arts fail for lack of ambition and persistence, and state and individually supported projects mostly do not allow the existence of progressive perspectives especially with conservative-ruling governance in the country. The main principle behind SAHA was to consider all points of view from an equal bases and be approachable from all fronts.

When we took off, SAHA literally meaning 'field' in Turkish; we tried to create an open field for cotemporary arts in the country with a free environment, with a democratic approach respectable of universal values that enables diversity and opposing ideas to coexist and for individual perspectives to prosper.

How do we do this? Through a new model of supporting arts. We studied various support-structures around the world and our main principle was not to put any individual patron on a pedestal or bestow the right to choose whom to support. SAHA is basically a hybrid model that emphasizes the merit and the acknowledgment of institutions and not the personal taste or agendas of corporate entities or individuals. SAHA tries to support art without contemporary art ever becoming a PR tool for anyone or corporation. In a time when contemporary art sometimes becomes a means of power at SAHA we have supporters who also have collector identities. We tried to create a model that does not put any individual in the forefront.

The institutional approach does not allow a patron to be in a power relation with the supported individual. So how do we generate our money? Through the dispersal of monetary resources, which secures the sustainability of the model. With forty-nine members at SAHA today and also four corporations that have regularly supported our cause without receiving any solid sponsorship benefit, we have tried to sustain a budget of,

at the moment, around 320,000 euros in order to support contemporary art from the country. So how do we support when we do not select? Basically we collaborate directly with the institutions and support projects that either have been commissioned or approved and by not playing any role in the selection process. We do not get involved in the career planning of any individuals. And up until today—we were established in July of 2011—I am very happy to have supported quite a few projects.

The production cost of the artist that took part at the *Istanbul Biennial*, the 12th *Istanbul Biennial*, an artist in *Performa*, the production cost of artists at *la Triennale* in Paris, at *Documenta 13*, at *Manifesta*, the *Second Mardin Biennial*, and the *53rd October Salon* in Belgrade and we have been involved in the publication of a book about one of the artists that we represented at *Documenta*; a book in Turkish and English which involved figures from the international art scene as well as professionals from Turkey. We have been involved in education, we have supported educational programs; we have a three-year partnership with İCİ.

Up until now we have supported four curators' participation in curatorial intensive programs, which we'll continue in the upcoming years. And we have had a three-year partnership with *Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art* in Rotterdam, with ongoing projects at the moment and the participation of an artist to take part in the creative summit organized by *Creative Time*, and we have just recently initiated a program, where the short-term accommodation of curators visiting Istanbul is provided for any curators interested in doing field research in the country.

So basically this is where I leave off, the word to the audience. You can see some of the projects, the images from the projects

that we have supported. Since we do not select we need all of you in order to make contemporary art from Turkey more visible and present in the future and in the international art scene. Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions and meeting each one of you individually.

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*Questions and Answers:*

*Merve Çağlar and Sarah Rifky*

Question: My question for both of you is, what is your take on the international? You know we are using the term 'new regions' as opposed to established regions so there is a certain notion of the hierarchy in the international. I would like to ask you what are your thoughts on the international.

Sarah Rifky: I think, my thoughts on this have changed in very recent years. In 1998, when *Townhouse* was first established as the primary space that allowed for contemporary art to have a platform in the city, the aim was to offer, or support, young artists from Egypt and the region to be able to access the international world of art in some ways. I am summarizing, and I feel now there may be an inversion of that, that actually I do see young artists, maybe with difficulty, but mobility has increased. Artists, after soccer players, are the most traveled members of any vocation in the world and that also includes artists from the region. In the case of Cairo, for example, what I find missing is, is the other way around—it is actually the arrival of the international world of art in the city in the absence of museums, in the absence of a strong support structure of museums—state or private or otherwise, you also have a huge range of works, like art works and artists that actually don't arrive and we are constantly

welcoming a flux of visiting professionals, curators, and also many young artists and residents, but there is an entire range of things that we actually don't experience in the city.

Thus artists don't get to experience particular works, for example, so in this sense perhaps for me this question on the international is a bit inverted. I am sort of shifting a little bit, decontextualizing local art internationally to actually focus on contextualizing international art locally, to create a balance between the two. Perhaps it is a bit important because, there isn't a separation and the only tricky thing is within the funding structures that do exist, it comes with a certain benevolence and development language and all these things. You constantly try to push artists outward or give them opportunities—just an example off the top of my head, why it is important to have an Anish Kapoor sculpture in Cairo for six months? Nobody is going to give me money for that. I think this is my position now. Might change tomorrow.

Merve Çağlar: Well, yes of course we support artists from Turkey to be more visible in the international scene. What I mean by international is, of course there is a need to support art also in the country and we are very lucky at the moment to have, for example, SALT and institutions like ARTER that have been making really good presentations of contemporary art in the country. We have constituted an international scene, which is not only the West—when I was studying the West we understood it as the international art— but just meaning that it's outside our country, because this is what we could concentrate on. Like Sarah just said with a Ministry of Culture that does not provide support for contemporary art here or outside, we had to concentrate on a certain specific scene and for example, we are also trying to establish programs not just west of Turkey but also

east of Turkey. For example, a critical book that we are trying to establish with Bidoun at the moment. So for me, I guess international just means outside of Turkey.

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Question: I have a question for Sarah. I've been listening very carefully to your idea of institutional building and also how you relate this to internationalism and I am very interested. Could you talk about your point of view on internationalism from the Cairo perspective? How much of a geographic consciousness do you put into the context of Egypt being in Africa?

Sarah Rifky: It's a very good question. I think, I mean definitely the awareness of geography, or being situated, let's say it's already given, I am encouraged to think of myself always as being placed in a certain city within certain parameters and that comes with particular realities. I would say, to provoke this further, it's maybe a choice and an interest in finding it more interesting to forge investigations where it is more difficult actually to like, to create that. By that I mean for example, to insist on having Cairo, looking more south, rather than collaborating in a northern way. It's actually more difficult because the funding flows are not given in that direction. So it's actually probably much easier to be able to receive one line of funding through Switzerland or through Denmark and then by encouraging that kind of exchange, more than trying to do a project with Dakar or art from Johannesburg. But this in itself already features its part of this map of mobility realities that I think we are extremely conscious of. But it also makes us think on a programmatic or content level to give a regional definition of artists' practices. Essentially the idea is to try and allow

geographic considerations enter the exhibition space as a platform of representation and try to make structure propositions on an institutional level. We insist more on forging relationships that are actually harder to maintain: long-distance, complicated relationships.

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Question: Thank you for two wonderful presentations as you pursue the important work that SAHA is doing. I just wanted to air a few thoughts or ideas and maybe you could comment on them. I understand you want to evade the traditional sponsorship model of the philanthropist, but isn't it so that in end we are always making distinctions in the sort of Pierre Bourdieu sense; somebody is making choices, somebody is being left ultimately, maybe SAHA, who becomes the philanthropist to certain artists, and while you personally may not be choosing a given artist, somebody somewhere in this constellation is making a choice. I think that we need to be fair to artists, in the sense that they are also making choices and decisions constantly in their work and in many ways the reactions of curators and various support organizations are reflections also of their choices. I think that a world doesn't exist where distinctions and choices, and visibility don't exist. I mean you are visible here today.

Merve Çağlar: You are absolutely right. Of course, saying that we do not choose the people who are supported can also be controversial because we have many applications and we will have even more in the future. Up until now we have had twenty-one applications and we have supported ten of the projects. Some of them were not new work or a nonprofit institution. We do not always support established projects but we did not

think it was, just didn't. But how do we protect ourselves from this—basically also we try to disperse the application selection process.

Of course there are board members who are also the founders at the moment and the professional team that is at SAHA is also included in the voting and at times when we really cannot decide and we do not know enough about the project, about the institution, we have consultants, who change every year. This year they are Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Fulya Erdemci and Jessica Morgan, and they will change every year so that we can diversify the opinions of the people. We may have artists in the future, we may have curators again, and directors of institutions. What I have been coming to realize is, supporting contemporary art from Turkey comes down to a select few who are being circulated in the system. How can we change these select few? We are going to keep on having the same institutions, artists, and curators applying.

Sarah Rifky: Just to add: Many of the organizations or the entities that you listed are quite established internationally and so on and you say it's very open in terms of supporting all kinds of things. I don't know which parameters you use for accepting projects. You also currently or in the future plan on supporting much smaller initiatives with younger artists because I am assuming, also from the images, it seems quite established.

Merve Çağlar: Yes, basically we are open to everything, we have been established more than a year and these were the things that came to us through our existing networks. That is why I was saying that this is a tremendous opportunity to introduce SAHA because we need to have ambassadors. Recently at a meeting I told a group of very established curators, we have to have ambas-

sadors so that people communicate the fact that there is support for contemporary art from Turkey and we are definitely open to supporting less-established exhibitions and institutions. We hope they will come to us.

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Question: I'll go back again to Sarah actually, the relationship of the internationalization and the cross-reference—geographically. Why are you calling an institution Beirut if it is located in Cairo? I know it's the typical cliché but I think you knew this question would come back when you started. Thank you.

Sarah Rifky: I normally answer this question in private because there are different versions so I'll answer you afterward. The answer is often individualized, I am not joking. It will take us a lifetime now to say why it is called Beirut. Look how many of you there are.

Well ok, just so you don't think I am just sidestepping the question, I put up one slide with a quote from a novel by an author that I really like, Sonallah Ibrahim's Beirut, Beirut. It is on its way to be translated into English and the story in short is, he leaves Cairo in the 60s, goes to Beirut tries to get his novel published, he thinks he ends up being distracted and never publishes his novel, and instead writes a novel that is called Beirut Beirut and there is an art space that features in that novel and it is quite interesting description—so that's one reason why it's called Beirut.

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Question: I wanted to ask a question to go back to the creation of SAHA. You implied that it was partly to counteract the influence of private philanthropy and could you say a bit more about why that influence can be pernicious?

cious or unhelpful and what were the motivations for the private individuals who are members of SAHA?

Merve Çağlar: It goes back to my moment in SAHA, looking at models basically we could see that a lot of patrons of the art have been in the forefront and probably would be making this introduction, instead of me, because a lot of people use it as a PR tool because at the moment the arts its powerful. There were nine founders creating SAHA and these were people who were individually supporting projects but not going very far in terms of creating networks and supporting on a large scale, and the motivations behind creating SAHA were that there was no institution like the *Mondrian Foundation* or *British Council* or like *Artangel*—of course all of these institutions do different things, but there is no support mechanism in such a way for contemporary arts in the country. There is a lack of funds available and I guess that was the motivation and some of the founders are collectors, some are not, and I guess they wanted to be involved in the contemporary arts more and they would like to talk about it more and make sense in the world.

Question: I wanted to ask you, to Merve that if you can tell a little bit more of the fronting streams of SAHA because I am not quite getting it, in the sense that it is an independent organization doing a quite a national program in terms of profiling Turkish contemporary artistic production abroad and, that's one question, and also do you have plans or ideas in the future to do the reverse program in terms of bringing the world to Turkey as opposed to, parallel to bringing Turkey to the world?

Merve Çağlar: I guess I can explain more simply how it works, at SAHA we have nine founders, and that's how we started in Turkey in order to establish a nonprofit organization. One of the methods could be to form an association that works through memberships, and at SAHA we have forty-nine members today and each pay annually, they pay 5,000 euros for their membership and this is the backbone of our budget basically and then we have four corporations that are supporting our cause and they pay 25,000 euros each year and through other donations basically we have a budget of around like I said 320,000 euros at the moment hopefully this will grow and the nine founders are also members of the board but every year, in association law you also have to choose the board members, so these board members may change but they have to be from the original members that have been in the association—so it is a nongovernmental organization but legally funded through memberships so that's how we operate, does this answer your question?

Yes, that I don't know, not for SAHA because in our mission statement and also since we started, we had to focus on something, we have to focus on specific points and SAHA is to increase the visibility and presence of contemporary art from Turkey in the international scene. Hopefully it will inspire other models where contemporary art that comes to Turkey is also supported.

Vasif Kortun: Just a brief question, Sarah what would you say, I mean 1998 was *Townhouse* and then it was an avalanche of everything, pretty much, in a way to institutions like *Alexander* and *Contemporary Arts Forum* and such—and to me this does not look like a genealogy of normalization for the Egyptian case, it's a different kind of genealogy, whereas the Istanbul or the Turkish case is a genealogy of normalization.

(Sarah's question: What do you mean by normalization?) By normalization I mean institutions where you can actually predict what would happen and then it happens and then they do, it becomes a sectoral case, if you could just speak to that a little bit—especially in the case of Beirut.

Sarah Rifky: I feel like bouncing the question to you and saying did you expect SALT to be what it is. But... I think there is of course—this is a huge question I think because—I think to be honest, like, when I was still a student and *Townhouse* was still starting and there was this all introduction into art and vocationally speaking, I imagined that the situation would become a lot less dire ten years from then and as it turns out it, is not that it becomes more dire, it just becomes more complicated and it becomes more unstable, like the more you dig beneath the surface, like the main structural problem in reality for art institutions in Egypt is at, at a sort of state organizational level that generally through the *Ministry of Social Solidarity* is extremely complicated to set up an NGO, I mean so when I hear you speaking about this association, I wish we had that. But it's actually extremely difficult to exist legally as any institution; it has been almost like impossible and riddled with many problems. So already you have a structure of co-dependence always somewhere on something else outside, in a way. So I think this produces other things, if it was a much more straightforward process we could actually easily just find any entity we wanted; maybe we wouldn't have small projects like Beirut, but I don't know if this actually answers your question, not really...

Vasif Kortun: Not really, because I am not talking about structures, but more like zones in the system that think differently and make

the system look differently opened up—when I look at the Egyptian situation, I see the Egyptian situation more like that.

Sarah Rifky: I think it relates, though, because if you didn't have these sort of like thorny complications and this terrain that it makes legally and financially impossible. You have no patrons, nobody buys contemporary art, there're no museums, there is not a single museum of contemporary art there is no corporate sponsorship for contemporary art—I mean all these categories that don't exist. So of course you have to be extremely inventive and also again co-dependent. If one is uncomfortable with the status quo you sort of start scratching the surface and that maybe produces things that are interesting but at the same time I can't also say that any of these structures existing or are completely sustainable I mean they rely on individuals, they rely on hope, they rely on people, they rely on other organizations, which to me it's simple call, I mean again, as you were saying to our public, I mean what it would be really nice is also to think a little bit about what it means this, or more honestly to put on the table what does it mean institutional interdependence, you know?

Can one or several smaller spaces in other places rely on sort of like networks like sort of more sustained institutions, older establishments of art in other places as a way of I don't know creating different kinds of circulations of art. I mean these are thoughts that I am constantly sort of considering, how not only to rely on particular types of funding but actually to make it art institution to art institution rather than art institution to please give me a grant, please give me a grant. So to create at list a mixture and I think through that to also vary the kind of support and to vary the kind of programming.

Vasif Kortun: Ok, we have two more questions and then we are going to close the session.

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Question: One more question for Sarah. I guess, my question is kind of a follow up on something that Vasif asked. I have two questions you can answer either one. I know Beirut just began but, this question of how institutions function in this context and negotiating the politics of funding etc., which is not just an Egypt question but obviously affects larger areas, if you see a history of your institution, is there a history of strategies that you would think of in terms of your own history, is there a history of institutions, there is a history of questions, I guess you sort of contextualize it in relationship to works of art but I guess I am interested especially in the strategic history of Beirut. And then my second question is, I visited the opening exhibition at Beirut and, it's an interesting exhibition but it is also a sort of conventional exhibition in the sense that you go and you see works of art in the wall so I am wondering how that connects or relates to the idea of having artists participate in the institutional building of Beirut and are there two classes of artists, the artists who show in the space and the artists who create the legal or administrative network foundations of the space. So those are my two questions.

Sarah Rifky: I'll answer the second and then the first. So the exhibition that is currently on, just for reference, is Maryam Jafri's work on labor. It looks very much like art yes. I think it's not exclusively one or the other but also we can't stipulate that every work that we show fits into the structural desires, so there are two parallel programs: so on the one hand we have the institutional building as a curatorial process which is one aspect of our

programs and then the other, parallel to that, is our seasonal program and every three months we depart from a set of questions which also maybe in some ways inform of what we think about things, so the first one being this question of labor and thinking about image making and working in art as also part of a labor process which ends sort of translates into tying in other projects for example, with Maryam it's a much wider kind of connection thematically, looking at the work or the image as a site of labor. So it is also to live with certain works that thing about some questions in the space that might inform our thoughts so it's not always artists working within the back channels.

The other question of the history: There is a set of strategies and it's still a learning process. For several years there has been this imaginary, this institution that has been directing my thoughts CIRCA, so *The Cairo International Resource Centre for Art*, which essentially wanted to be an institution without liability and as it turns out that in order to have an institution registered you must have a space, which is immediately a liability and so CIRCA insists on not having a space as such. It might become a shelf organization through which there are different models of raising support through this inter-institutional support, creating micro funds, through the support of a network of art institutions on the one hand, and the second part is actually something we are still developing, offering services to artist—we will talk about that later because that is not fully thought out yet. Essentially we will try to create a substructure within Beirut that would actually allow for raising in-kind resources like flight tickets, books, someone writing an essay for free.

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Question: It's a question to Sarah. You alluded to that in various bits but, if you sort of complete-dream-thinking what would make a good international exchange for you, from where you are in Cairo at the moment.

Sarah Rifky: Do you wanna open a museum? And in Cairo? All right, so I imagine— Oh my God—it's like my birthday! It would be really nice to imagine, it would be really nice first of all to imagine maybe, this is vast, I mean I could start with saying like having a political lobby that ensures that there are certain structures that actually take care and you know all the existing artistic institutions but I could also say, you know, it would be really fantastic to, you know, start an art academy. There was a ongoing joke with William, who unfortunately isn't here today, where right after the January uprising, he was just going to some meeting or conference and I said, just tell everybody who wants to help to open a museum we can open a temporary museum for like two years where every museum that wants to sort of support the situation can loan a work for a number of years then you could have this traveling pop-up temporary museum. I mean I like museum, is not that they are the only model but I understand museum in a very lateral sense also. Egypt has an unusually high number of museums that are really the inversion of how you would think of a museum in New York: twenty thousand people, forty thousand people going every day in Egypt—very few people and they are not very welcome.

Yeah, I mean an Art School I think also would be really nice, a publishing house, I don't know maybe it's like an integrated multi-complex center for the arts in general with lots and lots of money.

Vasif Kortun: Well I guess Merve's and SAHA's subtext has a short biography, obviously—a year long and that biography is in a very, very Western direction which has to be obviously, rethought in the long run but that has to the applications that come in, if the applications don't come in from different directions. Thank you Merve, thank you Sarah.



## Case Study 2: New Histories

Good afternoon. I would like to introduce our next speaker, Eungie Joo who is becoming the *Director of Art and Cultural Programs* at *Instituto Inhotim*, in Brumadinho. Before—or still—she is at the *New Museum* in New York, where she spearheaded the *Museum as Hub*. Actually Eungie is going to talk about this, and next time probably about Inhotim.

Zdenka Badovinac

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*Eungie Joo*

*Director, Art and Cultural Programs  
Instituto Inhotim, Inhotim Brumadinho, Brazil  
Flexible Futures*

I recently joined Inhotim, which is a unique site for contemporary art, featuring over twenty permanent installations in a vast botanical garden in Brumadinho, Brazil. But the organizers have asked me to speak today about a project that I have been working on for about six years, which I am no longer in charge of—now Lauren Cornell, who is curator at the *New Museum*, is taking over the *Museum as Hub*. But I am happy to speak a bit about the project, because I think the *Museum as Hub* offers an interesting model as a case study about how contemporary art institutions can think about collaboration and partnership over extended periods of time.

As you see in fig. 19, the original partners were *Insa Art Space* in Seoul, *Museo Tamayo* in Mexico City, *New Museum* in New York, the *Townhouse Gallery* in Cairo, and the *Van Abbemuseum* in Eindhoven. Many of those institutions are still part of the extended network, but some of the curators who had

been participating from the beginning have changed institutions and rather than stay strictly with the institutions, we tried to follow the ideas, and include also their new organizations: *Art Space Pool* (Seoul), Beirut (Cairo), *De\_Sitio* (Mexico City), and *Miami Art Museum*. This was based on a notion of flexibility around partnership that I think has been a very successful part of the experiment.

The *Museum as Hub* was founded in 2006 by the *New Museum*, conceived by the education, digital media, and curatorial teams at the museum, which then included Anne Barlow, Gerardo Mosquera, Defne Ayas, and Dan Cameron. As I understood the idea when I was first approached to direct the project, the *Museum as Hub* was to become a signature project, starting from the basic question of how a museum dedicated to contemporary art could best present art from around the world. And this would be presented through the direction of an education department and not a curatorial department.

So, I inherited this concept that I didn't create, and was charged with activating it with individuals and institutions with whom I did not have histories. For me, coming from a smaller art center in Los Angeles (REDCAT), associated with an art school, I was at that time interested in avoiding the part of curatorial and institutional work that makes us what Philippe Vergne has called 'exhibition-making machines'; this way of producing that might sometimes require us to be driven by calendars, marketing, and funding sources rather than ideas. I was interested in slowing down this part of the productivity and monetization of curatorial work and to instead

engage with ideas around art and how we, as institutional practitioners, mediate contemporary art to the public. I was also interested in the artistic practices of the 1990s to 2000s, in which artists began to create complex mechanisms of nurturing their own and others' practices through discursive activities, collectivity, and various forms of knowledge production that continue today. My question when I began working with the *Museum as Hub* was the question that guided me for five years and continues in my collaboration as a representative from Inhotim to the *Hub*. And that is: What can art institutions committed to contemporary art do to follow contemporary art closely enough to respond, react, present, and support urgent needs and concerns?

The *Museum as Hub* is kind of a complex project. It's a collaboration among art institutions, a dynamic series of public programs. *Museum as Hub Fellows*—young scholars or curators recommended by the different institutions to work with the *Hub* in New York—then take that knowledge back home with them. There are annual closed-door meetings of the *Museum as Hub* partners in various cities with a public conference and exhibitions in the fifth-floor space at the *New Museum*. Also, we tried—and we try still—to do manifestations of the project at the partnering institutions in the form of exhibitions, discussions, and sometimes sharing artists whom we are working with, maybe starting a residency in one place and traveling it to another. We had a desire to do some publications, and at the very end I'll show you the kind of publications that we produced together.

In the first year of activities at the *New Museum*, newspapers with commissioned texts accompanied each partner organization's presentation at the *New Museum* on their 'neighborhood.' That concept came to

the table at the December 2006 meeting, from an idea presented by the *New Museum* on nationalism. And allegedly a couple of the partners at that meeting said that they could not or would not address nationalism directly, so the compromise was to do it on the idea of neighborhood. In fact, it was a useful topic from the *New Museum's* perspective because the launching of the *Museum as Hub* coincided with the reopening of the *New Museum* on the Bowery, which is a small neighborhood in downtown New York, on the Lower East Side. If you haven't been there before, the area was what people considered a derelict neighborhood for many years, with a lot of restaurant supply stores, artists' studios, a lot of immigrants, and a lot of veterans—homeless, forgotten veterans, living on the street. And along with the new *New Museum* came a period of great gentrification to this neighborhood. One of the big questions for me, coming into New York to work for an institution for the first time, was how to engage with the local population who are Mandarin Chinese speakers, Dominican Spanish speakers, native English speakers, as well as a lot of artists. So the opening was a chance for us to engage in some really interesting experiments with public programming, one of which was called *Night School*, a work by Anton Vidokle, based on unitednations-plaza in Berlin, an autonomous project located in a very nice building—a former grocery-store shopping mall. There they were doing one- to three-week-long workshop seminars with thinkers and artists. Many of you participated in that project so I will not go through it at length. It was a very special project, and one of the reasons why I became a director of education was to follow that kind of work.

We invited Anton to make an institutionalized version of unitednationsplaza for the *New Museum*, and he came up with this

project called Night School, which was a once-monthly workshop seminar with thirty core participants, students who applied to participate. There were three days of public lectures and presentations and then one closed session on a Sunday afternoon with the participants and presenters. This was an important project to be able to accomplish in our first year. It stated to our potential audience that even as the *New Museum* was moving into this very shiny building (with sometimes contentious programming for New Yorkers because of a nostalgia for what the *New Museum* once represented, or what they think it represented), we would also engage with practices less connected to the market.

The reason that I linger on the first year is because crucial concerns emerged that would go on to shape the relationship of the partners to the museum and force the *New Museum* to develop the project self-reflexively. One of the most important critiques was initiated by William Wells of *Townhouse Gallery*, who asked, 'Why should we produce anything for an institution in New York? Why should we spend our very limited resources to help you understand, as part of your programming, when we need so much help back here in Cairo?' Countering the assumption that presenting projects in New York would somehow be a prize in and of itself for the partners, his questioning underscored that this experimental initiative was in many ways repeating a form of exhibition production that reinforced certain ideas about otherness and marginal practices. So we tried to change that with a lot of discussions, telephone conference calls—now Skype—every two weeks to discuss projects that we were working on to inspire the next project. And one of the discussions that was ongoing for a long time was about residencies and the problems of international residencies for institutions; how often, it was impossible to

cater to the needs of an artist, or that artists were mismatched, or that the artists felt that they were being instrumentalized by institutions' expectations of a residency.

I think it was probably early 2009, when the *Townhouse* organized a symposium on residencies and, based on that discussion of the symposium that they were organizing, we decided that the *Museum as Hub* would also approach the concept of residencies through a project called '*In and Out of Context.*' Part of the idea was to bring together projects that all of us had commissioned in our own institutions and shove them all together—to make a mess—to not be worried about developing a thematic group exhibition, but to start playing around with what we had been working on independently. We invited the artist Choi Jeong Hwa, from Korea, to redesign the fifth-floor space, because a lot of people were complaining that it was the ugliest space in the museum and that it was not a real gallery. So we tried to alleviate that limitation. But we also wanted a space that was flexible enough to use for smaller conversations. We wanted, on a Thursday night, to see what would happen when we were free to the public, if the entire space would stop because twenty people were sitting on benches and having a discussion. We were trying to disrupt our comfort in a clean institution.

Around this time we started a second seminar project called *Propositions*. The last session of the first proposition was a discussion with Kara Walker. She spoke about domestic violence, painting, and power, and she invited Soniya Munshi, a sociologist and activist who works on domestic violence in South Asian communities, to give a seemingly unrelated talk to bring these two ideas together.

That fall, in October, the *Museo Tamayo*, which was then an active member and may one day again be an active member of the *Hub*, invited Heejin Kim, the *Hub* partner from *Insa Art Space*, to their museum to make an exhibition: an important manifestation outside of the *New Museum*. She made an exhibition of Korean contemporary artists' work and one of the artists was Chan-Kyong Park. Then they invited me to moderate a conversation between Chan-Kyong Park and *Tercerunquinto*, a collective based in Mexico City.

Recently, before my colleagues knew officially that I was leaving the *New Museum*, the question came up: 'How would you assess the first five years and what would you say that we have accomplished together? What worked and what didn't work?' It was really nice to hear from William Wells actually, that he tried to get out of the *Hub* for years but every time he would see us and would talk about it, he would fall for it again. And he told me, 'It's actually your flexibility, your ability to take us yelling at you and still go 'ok then, what do you want to do?' that allowed us to continue to work together for this many years.' And I think it's really true and this is why I really wanted to acknowledge the people who started this project. I think they envisioned something and gave it away. It is my pleasure to have worked on this project for five years and now to pass it on to Lauren because we all make the institution, but to really believe that institutional work can change, we have also to make room for the next person to incorporate better ideas for moving forward.

If I were to summarize the first five years, I would point to the *Triennial* I curated for the museum last spring, as it bookends the whole project for me. That my experience managing the *Museum as Hub* resulted in an exhibition is kind of strange, but relevant. In fact, the 2012 *Triennial, The Ungovernables*,

was a great chance to use the access that we had gotten from the *Museum as Hub*, the many colleagues that we had met, and the many artists we had worked with. And a great chance to use that network to grow our information and try to put together an exhibition that would demonstrate the urgency of working with young artists from around the world without being in a position where we were 'discovering' artists, as though we were explorers, but to present the work of an international group of artists in New York who had established careers—or were having growing attention—in their countries, their 'regions', and in different networks from those already acknowledged in New York.

We embarked on a really ambitious series of conversations with our *Hub* partners, who helped us to contact artists and to suggest projects. We developed the triennial to incorporate the activities of the *Hub* inside the exhibition by setting up a series of residencies that started a year before the exhibition opened, and continued beyond the exhibition. These residencies were administered by the *Museum as Hub* to bring most of the artists to New York to have an experience there that we could support institutionally, both financially and through the various resources that we had on the ground. This is the difference between making a triennial in an institution versus making a triennial that is its own institution. We have an audience at the *New Museum*; we work very hard to keep the conversation open with them and the hope was that we could continue the conversation through this kind of an exhibition.

The idea of *Public Movement* was to begin a rumor in New York before they participated in the exhibition. Group leader Dana Yahalomi came and spent most of 2011 with us in New York, working carefully to develop a relationship with the *Direct Action Group* of the *Occupy Wall Street* movement. Eventually

she invited them to participate in her action—to take the mic from her after *Positions* at Union Square under the cover of the institution's permit, and inform people about *Occupy's* method of assembly. This developed into a series of salons that happened during the exhibition. *Public Movement* never appeared in the gallery, except for a small flag and a schedule of events, a series of five salons and a final action that had to do with interrogating the possibility of a birthright Palestine movement.

Nicolás París was similarly invited to participate in a residency that was invisible in the galleries, what we called an 'indefinite pedagogical residency.' We guaranteed him one year to pursue his ideas about drawing and pedagogy with our partner schools and educators, and that he could keep doing this for as long as he wanted to, and could resolve it in a way that had yet to unfold. So at some point he stopped working with the curatorial team and really began working with people specialized in education for high school students. And we had one very traditional residency—traditional in the sense that it was production-based—with Adrián Villar Rojas. We took the upstairs of 231 Bowery, which is a building next to the *New Museum*, and cleared it out so that his team could make a giant mess and build his project, which was included in the final exhibition.

I'm one of those unorganized curators who does not have any photographs of the exhibition, so I just downloaded these from the internet, so they are a little sketchy. I'll just mention that at the upper-left corner you see an installation by Jonathas de Andrade across from a beautiful work by Amalia Pica; to the right, the paintings on the back wall are by Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, a 'table' sculpture by Dave McKenzie, a sculpture by *Slavs and Tatars*, and the *Plexiglas* on the wall is work by Julia Dault. The lower right shows an

installation by Ala Younis featuring her floor work; on the back wall, drawings by Cevdet Erek; on the other wall, drawings by Doa Aly; and on the floor a film transferred to video by Masao Adachi and Kôji Wakamatsu. And finally, in the lower left corner, Kemang Wa Lehulere's wall drawing flanked by a DIY still called *Habemus Gasoline* by José Antonio Vega Macotela (fig. 19-21).



Figure 19. Eungie Joo. Courtesy New Museum, New York, photos by Benoit Pailley.

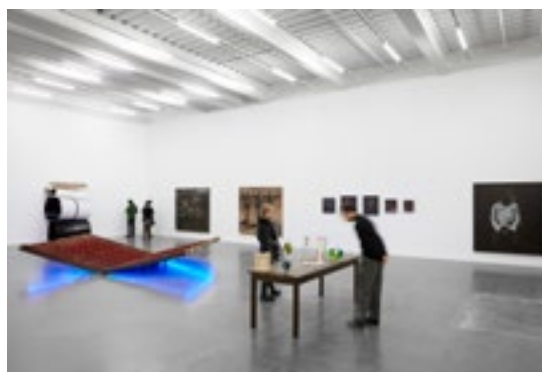


Figure 20. Eungie Joo. Courtesy New Museum, New York, photos by Benoit Pailley.



Figure 21. Eungie Joo. Courtesy New Museum, New York, photos by Benoit Pailley.

If *The Ungovernables*, as an exhibition, was one culmination of our work together in the *Hub*, the other end of that was the publication of the *Art Spaces Directory*, a book in which many people in this room are included. It's a book that presents over 400 art spaces, from 96 countries, in a guide that was inspired by the *Alternatives* book by Furuichi Yasuko produced by the *Japan Foundation* about alternative spaces in Asia around 2000. Given our network, we wanted to do an international book that could potentially expand the network even further. As I left the *New Museum*, they were redesigning the website and they digitized this directory. So now the information on the directory is available online and I encourage you to go and check out people and their spaces on this website, because it is amazing: there are photographs, mission statements about each of the spaces, and really practical information about their focuses.

## Case Study 3: New Histories

Thank you Eungie, that was fantastic. For those of you who don't know me I'm Elizabeth Ann MacGregor, I'm the director of the MCA in Sidney and a *Member of the Board* of CIMAM. It's a great pleasure to introduce you to our next speaker. There's a nice link back to our opening keynote speech today because I know that he's curated an exhibition with a wonderful title *Lapdogs of the Bourgeoisie*. That's not what he is going to talk about today, though. He's had an extraordinary range of international experience, from *Venice Biennale*, to *Taipei* and *Sharjah*. He is currently at the *Bard Center for Curatorial Studies* in New York. He's not in Berlin, he pointed out, as it says in your program, and he is going to talk to us today about Teheran. So please join me in welcoming Tirdad Zolghadr. Thank you.  
Elizabeth Ann MacGregor

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*Tirdad Zolghadr*  
*Independent Curator, New York*  
*The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art*

In many ways, the *Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art*, or *Muzeh*, as it is usually called, is just another sleepy public venue, its promise hampered by sluggish management, like thousands of other public museums across the globe (fig. 22–24). Maybe this leisureliness makes it the actual standard fare of what prototypically represents the public museum worldwide, contrary to the few museums that have become breathless infotainment multiplexes hogging the limelight. But that would be the object of

another, much longer essay. This particular essay is devoted to what distinguishes the *Muzeh* from other places. What distinguishes it, first and foremost, is the fact that, although the museum does its best to decontextualize and neutralize the art—as most art venues are wont to do—it does so only to immediately embed it within a proper matrix of political conflict, urban legend, and architectural idiosyncrasy. A framework so dense, you end up reading every show as yet another baffling *Muzeh* occurrence in its own right.

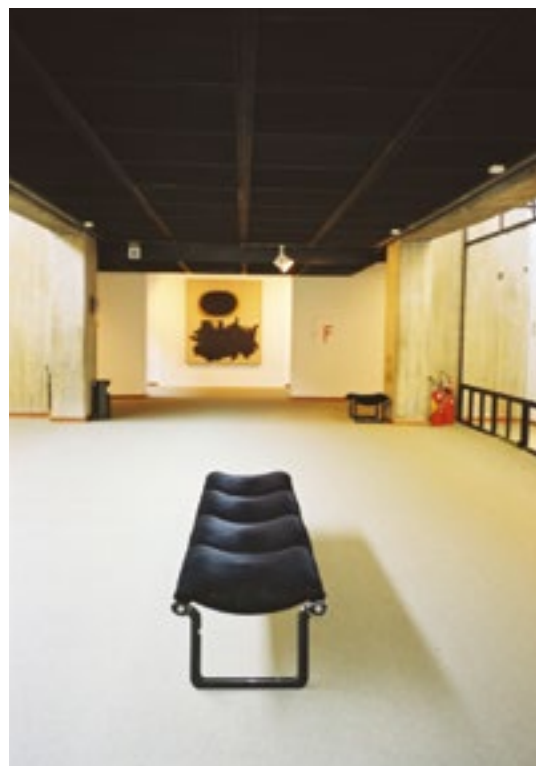


Figure 22. Tirdad Zolghadr. Museum Collection © Solmaz Shahbazi.

The *Muzeh* is often referred to as a museum of modern art. To be fair, that's what it is most famously: a prominent collection of modern art, encased within a striking example of modernist architecture. But as the institu-

tional epithet makes clear, this venue is devoted to the contemporary. And it's perhaps telling that 'modern' is not translated into any other lingo when used in the arts in Tehran, whereas, 'contemporary' becomes 'mo'aser.' Internationally speaking, the 'contemporary' is defined by a highly effective form of indeterminacy that allows it to travel far and wide, channeled primarily, if not exclusively, by the laws of capital. The *Muzeh*, however, reflects a definition of the contemporary that strays from the transcontinental consensus. To be clear, it's not uninterested in a transcontinental conversation. But it's not in a hurry. It also seems to insist on a conversation on its own terms.



Figure 23. Tirdad Zolghadr. Museum Collection © Solmaz Shahbazi.

This unhurried, obdurate temperament could rightly be referred to as a postcolonial one—a postcolonialism rather unlike the one we're accustomed to in contemporary art, transcontinentally speaking. The *Muzeh* has nothing in common with Mideastern curators quoting Deleuze at the CIMAM conference, nor with a *Documenta* workshop in Kabul. In other words, in the eyes of people who use terms like postcolonial in the way I do, the *Muzeh* is a frustrating, self-provincializing stick-in-the-mud. It's also a form of non-heroic refusal. To be sure, the art world routinely celebrates refusals of all kinds. (Even the *Frieze Art Fair* holds panel discussions to commend them.) But it's a celebration that

simply sees refusal as a more intelligent, edgy, sustainable form of business as usual. The refusal at play in the *Muzeh* is a little too unwieldy to fit into an agenda such as the *Frieze's*, or ICOM's. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.



Figure 24. Tirdad Zolghadr. Museum Offices © Solmaz Shahbazi.

It was the early 1970s when Queen Farah took an interest in contemporary art and announced the need for a public museum. Taking advantage of a slump in art market prices, Farah swiftly invested sizeable sums that actually saved scores of weathered American galleries from bankruptcy, and the collection quickly grew to include a spectacular range of Western canon masterworks which is now worth nearly \$4 billion USD.<sup>1</sup> The budget was derived from the *National Iranian Oil Company*, the advisory team included David Galloway, who was

<sup>1</sup> 'The Art No One Sees', *The Guardian*, October 28, 2007.



appointed chief curator, Karimpasha Bahadori, chief of staff for the Shah's cabinet, the heads of *Christie's*, *Sotheby's*, and the *Beyeler*, and *Kamran Diba*. The latter multi-tasked as architect of the new venue, first director of the museum, and as cousin to the queen.

The 5,000-square-meter museum was inaugurated in summer 1977 with a solo show by David Hockney. It features a bewildering poly-circular trajectory that winds its way through generous hallways as well as small, quirky chambers, and back again, sometimes leading underground, at other times offering delightful views of a 7,000-square-meter park. In a style that is highly characteristic of the time, the edifice combined stark modernist architecture with local elements, most conspicuously in the form of turrets reminiscent of the wind funnels that mark traditional Iranian architecture. To say the least, the *Muzeh* does not exactly offer prime conditions for exhibiting art, at least in the *White Cube* sense of the term, but given the building's elegant idiosyncrasy, it's hard to hold that against it. It bears mentioning that the *Muzeh* was inaugurated at the same time as the *Pompidou*, also a brand-new venue right at the heart of a capital city, besaddled with heaps of national ambition. (On the other hand, the multidisciplinary temperament, the bare-bones architectural style—meant to promote an atmosphere of 'transparency'—and the polemical tenor of the programming did set it apart from the top-down orientation of the *Muzeh*.)

From what I've heard over the years, despite the widespread coverage of systematic human-rights abuses in Iran, you'd be hard pressed to find an international artist in any field or genre, from Peter Brook to Andy Warhol, who had any qualms about being in the service of the monarchy. I did hear a rumor, however, that Lawrence Weiner

had refused his invitation, and immediately asked him if this was true. Weiner replied that he was '70 years old', and 'didn't have time to stand around and congratulate himself for his political credentials.' I take that to be a yes.

Today the museum is widely associated with the park surrounding it. It features stores, playgrounds, teahouses, teenage lovers, unemployed day laborers, and junkies on crystal meth, along with a sculpture garden including some Giacomettis being eaten away by acid rain, looking more measly and miserable than ever. Not to mention there is a stunning carpet museum, designed by Farah Diba herself, which holds a vast and fascinating collection. But it's also associated with its resources, given that most noticeable public funding for projects local or international are channeled through the *Muzeh*. Moreover, the venue serves as a allegory for the country at large. It's become a conversational cliché is to say that the *Muzeh* is a 'mirror of Iran.' Or as a discreet temple to what was once the glory of the Shah. Or as a melancholic waiting room resigned to its fate. Or as a building paying lip service to local flair, but adhering to a brutalist top-down temperament. Or as a mirror of reigning political paradoxa: paranoid and controlling, but offering surprising moments of openness. Finally, the *Muzeh* is also a thoroughly pedagogical experience. Few museums will impress themselves upon you with such vigor, and few will linger and haunt you as evocatively. In other words, as a didactic experience, a national emblem, a funding body, and a social space, the *Muzeh* ticks all the usual museum boxes.

With this, I am not trying to embellish or idealize. Inside the museum, you not only see occasional collection shows, clumsily curated, but exhibitions of anything from calligraphy to landscape to portraiture by local artists who are exceedingly traditionalist in the use of

their respective media. You will also see curatorial scandals at every turn. Clunky glass walls separating you from the art, a permanent soundtrack of traditional tunes or classical concertos, comical misspellings in wall labels and catalogues, baffling juxtapositions, a crooked Donald Judd, and so on. Said scandals also include financial mischief. In the one case I can substantiate beyond gossip, painter Khosro Hassanzadeh was once summoned as a court witness; he'd received 300 dollars as per diem for a Beirut show co-organized by the *Muzeh*, only a fraction of the money that reportedly disappeared into staff pockets.

Such colorful cases of mismanagement have everyone worried about the famous collection. Rumors abound. There are stories of cobwebs and dust, deaccession and theft. As far as I can see, no damages of any kind have been detected thus far, and there's been only one official case of deaccession. In 1994, the museum exchanged Willem de Kooning's *Woman III* (1953), for a 500-year-old volume of the ancient Persian epic *Shahnameh*, which belonged to American art collector Arthur Houghton at the time. Interestingly, the volume was worth about \$6 million—although a few years ago David Geffen reportedly sold *Woman III* for \$110 million.

For some reason, allegations tend to fly particularly thick and fast when, every few years, it comes to a rumored sale of Jackson Pollock's legendary *Mural on Indian Red Ground* (1950). The latest panic was sparked when the painting was loaned to the *National Museum of Modern Art* in Tokyo, and confiscated by the Iranian customs bureau upon its return to Tehran in 2012. The confiscation was basically a ransom demand. Customs officers were demanding the settlement of debts still owed to them on behalf of the *Ministry of Culture*. Obviously, hostage-taking represents a proud tradition in Iran.

As it happens, according to prominent Swiss journalist Serge Michel, the collection also includes a number of Adolf Hitler watercolors, which were presented to the public at a 2001 press conference, when the staff unveiled the works with a vague air of embarrassment, then simply carried them back to the cellar without a word of explanation.

I'd equally like to mention the striking permanent installations in the atrium of the museum. A 1977 rendition of Hiroki Haraguchi's *Matter & Mind* is a tub filled with oil that the Shah reportedly dipped his little finger in at the opening, as he was chatting to Nelson Rockefeller. A rumor so fitting that it deserves to be spread, regardless. Alexander Calder's *Orange Fish* (1946) now unendingly frames the portraits of Ayatollahs *Khomeini and Khamenei*, which come to mean something very different when glimpsed through the dangling contours of the dangly mobile—especially in the light of Calder as a pawn in the context of U.S. attempts to capture hearts and minds in Latin America and Iran. (A Cold War story exceedingly well told by artist Balteo Yazbeck and historian Media Farzin, via their research project *Cultural Diplomacy*, 2009.) Finally, Shahryar Ahmadi's *Spider's Web* (2001) has long been spanning the atrium, a classic example of institutional critique that became the hallmark of a 2001 show entitled *Conceptual Art*.

The said show was carnivalesque in the scope of practices it branded as 'conceptual', but was also a spectacularly refreshing—and highly decisive—moment in a recurring collective learning process. In what is, again, fairly typical of institutional settings across the world, museum directorships are politicized in Iran, which means that every governmental transition brings a new museum director, along with a new team—burdened with brand-new suspicions and insecurities. Then, every new team becomes profession-

alized over time, until a new president is elected and the whole process begins all over again.

Dr. Alireza Sami Azar was the director who marked the reformist era beginning in the mid-90s. He's opinionated, charismatic, disarmingly confident, and holds a PhD in architecture from the *University of Central England*. Sami Azar himself went through what he admits was an extensive learning process, but by now he's indisputably done more for the Tehran art field than any director before. Having served with sensational success as a consultant to *Christie's* in Iranian art, Sami Azar now edits the Tehran art magazine *Art Tomorrow*. Like many others, he too sees the museum to be a metaphor for the country, citing excessive velocities of modernization. The notion that too much top-down modernization is violently counterproductive in Iran is currently very widespread. Though I personally have my doubts as to the maxim's real-life applicability to the museum or beyond, recent political history obviously lends it much credence.

My one professional experience at the *Muzeh* was on Sami Azar's watch; a week-long exhibition-in-progress entitled *Group Project*, in June 2000, featuring five emergent artists from Geneva, Switzerland. We were greeted with much suspicion, and not much support, but to be fair, it was a pleasant surprise to be able to do our thing within the museum to begin with, blustering whippersnappers that we were at the time.

As a goodbye gift, Sami Azar ended his tenure in autumn 2005 by putting on show of what was ostensibly almost the complete collection, under the terse exhibition title *The Modern Art Movement*, which ensured that the 188 artworks on display were documented in the public eye. The said eye was watchful, to say the least. *The Modern Art Movement* sparked eager, not to say lascivious coverage worldwide, some of it idiotically conde-

scending, describing artistically starved Iranians gorging themselves on Picasso. Most coverage also heralded the factual inaccuracy that it was the 'first time' any of the collection was on display since the 1979 revolution.

I recently asked Sami Azar whether he'd do anything differently in retrospect, and he admitted that at the time of this tenure he was too circumspect with regards to the powers that be, and should have pushed harder for his ideas politically. Still, when asked what advice he might offer his successors, he said he'd tell them to step down, since the *Muzeh* had become a battle that could only be lost.

Incidentally, immediately after my afternoon tea with Sami Azar, I had the privilege of taking a cab to the *Muzeh* to meet current director Ehsan Aghai. I knew nothing about him and was somewhat apprehensive, and was pleasantly surprised to be introduced to a soft-spoken man my age who was friendly and forthcoming, and, again, did not sound markedly different from public museum directors elsewhere. Aghai pointed out the residencies that the *Muzeh* organizes in Paris, and the support it lends to the Iranian pavilions at the *Venice Biennale*, but also an upcoming survey of the work of Guenther Uecker. Of particular interest to me was his insistence on the problem of charismatic leadership. Aghai took issue with Sami Azar not along ideological lines, but due to the fact that he ran the museum according to personal whims and fancies, in a classic case of charismatic leadership. Aghai stated that he'd finally introduced a board to which he and other decision makers were accountable.

Before concluding, I'd like to introduce a brief parenthesis, and mention the somewhat lackluster documentary film *The Queen and I* (2008), which culminates in a former Marxist revolutionary confronting the former queen of Iran. The ex-Marxist describes growing up in utter misery under Farah's reign, exclaiming,

'don't you understand why we hated you?' The queen's answer: 'You made one mistake—you should have written me a letter.' What comes to my mind is not only Farah's mind-boggling, arrogant naïveté. It also suggests a common denominator among museum decision makers in museums within Iran and without, before the revolution and after. A rhetoric of the devoted public servant that masks a complete lack of accountability. If I deal with your critique, I'll be praised and commended. If I don't, no one will notice, let alone dream of holding it against me. Which is why there's ultimately little interest in criteria on behalf of institutions—ethical criteria, qualitative criteria, political criteria—seeing as criteria would only serve to make you more accountable in the long run.

There is no curator who doesn't want to be empress of the *Muzeh*. Every curator who flies into Tehran and walks into the place, including myself, has that very fantasy. Oh, the things you could do. The irresistible, bittersweet spleen of what may have been and never will be. Our intuitive proposal is always to wake people up and speed things up—to do the Iranians a favor and interconnect. Somebody call CİMAM. But the question is, given what museums have become internationally, is the *Muzeh* really in need of 'wakening'? Personally, for a host of reasons that are described or hinted at in this essay, I cannot think of a museum experience that is more distinctive, more pedagogical, and more haunting than the *Muzeh*, especially if I compare it to the professional routines and the mainstream ideologies that currently define museums in New York and elsewhere.

In its brief for this 2012 Istanbul conference, CİMAM claims that 'museums have done away with the future.' When a number of museums are, in point of fact, busy creating precisely the kind of future the CİMAM brief is outlining—a future that is

all-inclusive, in which any specificity of contemporary art is abandoned, along with any specificity of strategies specific to place and time—if there's anything uniting most museums today, it's the call for the all-inclusive. Across the disciplines, professions, markets, borders, cultures, age groups etc. CİMAM subscribes to this too, calling for 'a common picture of our future', for a 'global heritage, one that we all share and one that we all have access to' even for 'different cultural and epistemological traditions to be reconciled.' These and other, comparable tenets are unquestioningly espoused in our field. Once an internationalism of the socialist variety, the latter-day internationalism informing contemporary art is little more than undertheorized wanderlust channeled by economic opportunity. So it sounds tedious to ask who benefits from all the cultural and epistemological reconciliation. Or what reconciliation even means in this context. It seems tedious to question whether we really do need access to all shards of the global heritage. If we look at the overambitious biennials, the hyperambitious discourse, and the clunky transregionalist premises that litter the curatorial panorama, that's what reconciliation looks like. And as long as it's the best we have to offer, I do believe the *Muzeh* can afford to take its time.

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#### *Questions and Answers*

*Eungie Joo and Tirdad Zolghadr*

Zdenka Badovinac: Thank you Eungie, Thank you Tirdad. I was really inspired by both of your contributions; very provocative. also I am sure there are many questions in the auditorium. So let's start with the questions.

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Question: I have two questions for Eungie: One relates to the adaptation of the word 'hub': a traffic organization that supposes that there is a center and a periphery to this hub. How much do you use those distinctions within the *Museum as Hub* project? That's one question. The second is if you think that the rise of the relevance of the education department—as shown in this case—also translates, or occurs in relation to, the crisis of the traditional curatorial departments in the museum structures?

Eungie Joo: First, the first question about the *Hub*, probably Defne knows more than I do about why they used this terminology. I think there was always an understanding among the founding partners that we all inherited it from our directors. I mean, it was originally a meeting of directors of museums that became a collaboration of curators who were assigned this project. So I think we never got overly caught-up in the 'original design'; which is this issue of the flexibility to throw things away. So there was of course this issue that had to do with New York being this kind of market center, and things happening in New York in a certain way, and you know, places where maybe there is less of an art market, or no art market, were feeling that privileging New York within the organization was always going to be a problem; that there would always be a power imbalance that—as you are suggesting from the terminology—that would make things not work. So the first thing I did to try to alleviate that was actually to remove all the fees. The original structure was that each other institution got paid by the *New Museum* to participate in this project. So the first thing I did was cut that. Everybody said it was unequal so I said, 'Well then you're not going to be paid anymore. If you want to

be in this project you participate in it and we pay the artists, we don't pay the institutions.

As for the second question, I don't know that there has been a rise in the role of education departments in museums. I joke with colleagues of mine all the time that I had never had so many condolence letters as I did when I became a director of education. The question was always 'What happened at the *Redcat* that you became a director of education?', I said: 'They fired me!' Well that's what I liked to say.

I think I've been asked by over twenty institutions, in the last five years, if I could tell them who else would do what I do, for them. And I honestly have to say that I'm not really super sure because curators would not want to become a director of education, because education departments are in service often to curatorial departments. So if I can credit the *New Museum* for doing something really strong, I think it was to empower the autonomy within the education department to behave not within the prescribed role. I think this is really the history of the education department at the *New Museum* that was revived with this initiative.

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Question: This whole question about hierarchies is really fascinating to me, Eungie. I think the *New Museum* has been fantastic in the way you've dealt with it. But my question to you is: Who did you see as the audience for this project? And how was that different from the people of New York, or interstate or international, coming into the *New Museum* and how their perceptions of the *Hub* may or may not have been different from their perception of things done by the curatorial department? Do you think it was clear that there was a different ethos running through it? Eungie Joo: I think that as far as I understand it,

the thing that made the *Hub* presentations stand out the most to the general public—and by ‘general public’ I mean people who would come on *Free Thursdays* because that is a good example: a lot of young people, which is traditionally the viewership of the *New Museum*, and people who don’t want to pay 16 dollars to get into a museum. The only difference they could tell from the 4th floor to the 5th floor is that they thought it was a smaller space. Curators would say ‘The *New Museum* is such a hard space! But, man, the *Hub* space sucks! It’s really terrible.’ I never felt that the *Hub* space sucked; I thought the *Hub* space was a little teeny strip of a space that could have been bigger, but if you watch the people reading about the history of military bases in South Korea with a lot of interest and asking about it quite a lot—you realize that also, for a lot of people, the scale of our museums are not comfortable for the public. A lot of people could linger. We are also the only floor that has seating, so a lot of people lingered there, they’d sit down; they’d catch up with what they had seen so far; they would take a little bit of time there.

But I think that in terms of program-mation the public is not looking at the signs that we are looking at. So to get to the bigger issue of public and audience for this project, particularly—when I think about the audiences for museums in New York, I think about people who talk about this imaginary ‘community’, which is always somehow implying people who are not as sophisticated as we are, it really infuriates me. I have always tried to say that the community for a museum is us. We are the community, and we are a valid community, along with a larger public. I’m not trying to sound egotistic or self-centered, but I always tried to program something that I would like to go see in the competition of all the things that happen in New York City, what was not happening. But

now it’s quite different because now there’s so much discursive programming happening in New York, but in 2007 there was not as much. It has changed a lot. Obviously, I think that very actively, the people that worked before me and the people who worked with me, were really hoping to provide some perspectives that maybe were not available in prominent places in New York at the time. Even if they totally existed in other places.

Tirdad Zolghadr: Would you say that if the *Hub* was located outside the institution would that solve some of the awkwardness that you were talking about, would that outweigh it? There would be a drop in audience figures obviously but would that bring something else to the table instead?

Eungie Joo: I think it’s important for museums to attempt ways to approach the public that maybe are unequal. I actually like the inequality of it: not that you want to be in the basement, so to speak, but I think it’s important for institutions to experiment with what we expect we are supposed to be doing and how we expect things are going to go. I’m sure many of you have had, have created, or have seen really high tech education centers in many museums that absolutely failed. But this was supposed to work; because people are going to want computers; they are going to want information technology. I think we have to try something, see if it works, see if it fails. Thinking about the *Museum as Hub* outside of the *New Museum*, as it could operate in many of our partnering institutions that are not formal museums, is a different project, which could have maybe much more intellectual nuance—and maybe even artistic nuance—but it couldn’t necessarily have some of the nuances that we have.

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Question: Tirdad, I really enjoyed your talk and want to thank you for what seemed like a really important challenge to all of us.

Because it seemed to me that you were making the argument for benign neglect. I wonder how far we should take this as a professional community?

Tirdad Zolghadr: 'A *Benign Neglect*', it's a good title for a show. I think it's important to understand that I was trying to be very specific to the place I'm speaking of. And, although I've worked in Teheran with artists in very different ways, I think it would be very clumsy and misplaced of me to start to explain how their needs would be catered to more precisely than what the museum is currently doing. Of course I have a few ideas but I think that what was more important—and more à propos in a setting such as this—is to think about how we would intuitively engage with a museum such as that. That is to say, how we would engage with it in a way that our gut instinct—our primary ideologies—as art professionals would dictate. And I think that would be in a way that strips it of a particularity that has accumulated over the years and which, for better or for worse, is something which stands apart as a museum experience. You might hate it for all the fuck-ups it's accumulated over the decades; but I think everyone will admit to it being an extremely instructive and bizarrely haunting experience of seeing the museum. So in a context where everyone is complaining about this endless circular—this cat chasing its tail—about the global and the local and how to be distinctive and how not to be condescending, I thought it would be most productive to simply describe and to maybe point to a potential critique of business as usual—which I partake in myself, I don't

exempt myself from this routine—than to try to say 'Well, the museum should be chastised for doing this and not giving money to these people and these people...' and so on and so forth.

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Question: Tirdad, thank you for sharing such a wonderful research on which I think you've worked quite a bit. There was a word that you brought up in the end and maybe you two could discuss it: 'reconciliation.' If I understood correctly, you brought it in being very critical to the global condition of contemporary art, as being this platform that reconciles.

I had the impression that the final show at the *New Museum, The Ungovernables*, was reconciling as any other globalized exhibition. I was wondering what is inherently more neo-colonial; Is it the reconciliation of the global platform? Or is it the imported canon of Western modern art in Tehran? Or, Could we think that those are experiences of a certain neo-colonial experience?

Tirdad Zolghadr: What makes the question difficult to answer is what you said in the end. Because of these different shades of neo-colonialism that you are talking about. In a way what I was trying to do in my talk was to... How to put this? I think that framing contemporary art as a colonial endeavor has the advantage of marking a certain epistemic violence that we can visualize very clearly and that opens a more, in my eyes, refreshing conversation. And I know the problems that are inherent to that approach.

I'm aware of the problems of playing down the contributions of that which is mapped as the periphery in a frame such as mine. I know and I don't think there are any perfect solutions in this situation. But I think the highlighting of something as a colonial

project has very clear advantages. To get to what you were saying in terms of 'reconciliation': That's something that I plucked from the brief for the conference and I apologize for what might seem some hair-splitting textual analysis, but I thought that this is actually mirrored quite accurately in many contributions and I think that art's role as a supposed bridge-builder, is something which creates more problems than its marking as something which has unavoidably colonial sub-texts and ramifications. Does that make sense? You look a little dissatisfied from what I can see through these spotlights.

Zdenka Badovinac: I have an additional remark for this question, for Tirdad. I think it is not necessary to place it in this colonial context but I would still ask you if you have some alternative, utopian or existing models or ideas that you would rather apply in case of Tehran or other regions. Of course there are very utopian models (such as) Joseph Beuys democratic social structure; and there are less utopian models like Secession in Vienna, which was founded by artists and still today the artists' board decide what to exhibit and what to put on display. When you talk to other artists do you have other utopian ideas which you would prefer for a collection?

Tirdad Zolghadr: I was very sure of what I was going to say until the very last word of your question: the collection. I was thinking that maybe I should pretend that I didn't hear. I'll give you an answer to my ideal question...

Zdenka Badovinac: There are two questions, the first about the display and then second, about collection.

Tirdad Zolghadr: When it comes to a collection, it has to mirror such a wide array of factors, which would have to do with the

needs of the art scene but also with the political climate in the country and everything in between, that I think we would have to account for in quite a detailed case study when it comes to the museum, and in particular if it were not to devolve into a very general discussion of collection practices. I think it would be very hard to answer that.

Zdenka Badovinac: Maybe you can reduce it to local, regional experiences.

Tirdad Zolghadr: Well, that would open so many cans of worms. I've tried to be of help when it came to the impossible project that many in this room have been involved with in Abu Dhabi, where they are trying to build up a collection from scratch which would do justice to both the brand name of the museum and to local aspirations, and it's quite a tortuous discussion that goes round in circles and that we could only do justice to it in an interesting way if we really looked at certain details. Speculating on the collection here is not... Maybe someone else here would like to do it; I know there are others here who know it well.

As for the first part of your question, I would simply suggest that the utopian potential of what can unfold in art is simply something that doesn't travel that well. It is not something that you can easily summarize for a conference, whether it is CIMAM or—I'm thinking of the slide that was shown earlier: the *Creative Time Summit* in New York—other places that showcase deeply idealistic projects which have a strong local resonance, and the distinctive utopian features of which are simply not mirrored in a context like this. I'm involved in small projects in Teheran that do have far more idealistic ambitions than what I would have ever hoped to achieve through the *Museum of Contemporary Art*, but those are initiatives which, by definition, once you drag them into



the limelight, they tend to become caricatures of themselves. And you start to wonder why you even did that to begin with. My utopian fantasies are things that are aspired to in places that do not necessarily need visualization, or need this kind of bridge-building, to be realized.

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Question: I was actually going to ask about the same two issues. One is about what you said about the post-colonial contemporary; I wonder if you also mean that in terms of the use of this term. In the case of Tehran, there isn't the shade of the biography of this term that is coming from modernism or museology. So your critique of the CIMAM's brief about reconciliation and also the idea of a kind of world culture that museums, as a community, could facilitate. Is the problem there a very fundamental epistemological violence that the very museology that we are looking at simply does not fit into local elements and very different multicultural situations? It is still something that has developed from enlightenment and modernism?

Tirdad Zolghadr: That would be the flip side of the pretense that I was describing earlier. Namely, the idea that I could account for what are the necessities of the local field in a place like this, with suggestions as to what the museum should do to be a more responsible—slash, efficient—kind of place. Because if I were to say that the museum is out of place intrinsically, in terms of its very conceptual architecture and in terms of its history; that it was out of place in Tehran, that would be actually taking the very same position of representing a local context as a kind of speaker for something which is actually extremely complex and contradictory and which I couldn't do justice to. I could just

answer very speculatively and say that I don't think so. I would argue that the problems I've seen—and this is where I'm slipping into the role of the native informant and thus contradicting what I said earlier. But maybe, just to avoid this misunderstanding, I would just say that, on purely personal experience, the challenges that I have encountered in the local art field are not related to an intrinsic cultural alienation from the idea of a collection or museum that houses it. It's related to questions of class configuration, and other factors that are at play everywhere but that become even more difficult in a third-world context.

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Question: I have more a comment—on the history of the *Museum as Hub*, and also maybe in relation to your question, the relationship between curatorial and education. When the education department at the *New Museum* took the lead and the leap to conceive the *Museum as Hub* project, it actually came via the adjunct curators (who were actually not living in New York—they were living in Latin America and so forth); it came via education because education felt like periphery. Because it never felt embraced by the rest of the museum, and it was a resistance project of the education department to actually make sense of the *New Museum* as it was all searching, post-Marcia Tucker, in the whole process of building a new building—leaving the Broadway space and moving to Bowery—and that was also a time when *New Museum* was deciding whether to have a library or not; keep the Lucy Lippard archives or not (which was an inspiration for *The Museum as Hub*, obviously, her files from the 1980s). So it actually came via education but it was a whole vision for the whole museum. And then it was plugged into only one floor

and what you've done with the past five or six years was incredible of course, but in a way it was a bit of a collision between the curatorial and the education department and I think it's important to discuss it here, in a CIMAM context.

Eungie Joo: I think it's maybe something that is in front of us rather than behind us as well, because with my departure from the museum, the coordination of the *Hub* is actually leaving the education department. Lauren Cornell is a curator at the *New Museum* and the curator of the next *Triennial*. But then in another way it's swapped because now the *Hub* is associated with the *Triennial*; it's two separate projects but under one person which I think is interesting because I think that the possibility then of organizing public programs from curatorial, instead of education and public programs, as a foundational part of the *Hub*, could be an important advancement.

## Understanding Local Context 2

This is the last session of the day before we get on the road and go to the institutions, one of which is going to be presented right now. This is the second part of the *Understanding Local Context* sessions of the day. It is my great pleasure to introduce Emre Baykal, the director and curator of ARTER art space. Thank you for coming Emre.

Vasif Kortun

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*Emre Baykal*  
Exhibitions director and curator  
ARTER, İstanbul

Thank you to Vasif. And I would like to thank to the organizers of CİMAM for inviting us to make a presentation on ARTER. ARTER is a new contemporary art project with its own space and program and it joint to the rapidly changing and developing art scene of İstanbul in 2010. It is initiated then supported by the *Vehbi Koç Foundation*. In the field of contemporary art the foundation has some other major undertakings as well and these are increasing in number and context especially in the last few years. So I will like to briefly mention some of them hoping that this would help a better definition for ARTER among other projects that are founded by the same foundation and clarify the relationships between these in a wider frame.

Established in 1969, the *Vehbi Koç Foundation* is the first private Turkish trust which has evolved from a grant-making institution to a major foundation with operations mainly in the areas of healthcare, education, culture, and arts. The flagship of its cultural operations is the *Sadberk Hanim Museum*, established in 1988 as the first private Turkish museum, this museum houses a fine

collection of Turkish and Islamic artworks as well as an archaeological collection based on *Anatolian* civilizations. Besides its other activities, the *Vehbi Koç Foundation* has developed three major projects for contemporary art in the last five years. It has been establishing the first institutional and at the same time exclusively contemporary art collection in Turkey; it has initiated and supported two projects: TANAS in Berlin and ARTER in İstanbul, and lastly a contemporary art project to be open in İstanbul, currently in the process of planning. The collection has been initiated in 2007 with the objective of forming the backbone of a future contemporary art museum in İstanbul.

Today the *Vehbi Koç Foundation Contemporary Art Collection* comprizes nearly 700 works by 240 artists with an emphasis on the art produced in Turkey; yet the collection embraces other geographies as well, especially the neighboring ones. The acquisitions by the collection have been directed by René Block and Melih Fereli: *The Vehbi Koç Foundation's* culture and arts advisor and since 2010. I also became a member of the acquisition team. A small part of this collection was shown at ARTER's inaugural show curated by René Block. It was titled *Starter*, to start the new space and this exhibition was the first institutional display of the collection, even though it was not shown not in a museum yet with in a museological context. *Starter* presented 160 works by 87 artists at ARTER, which is neither a museum nor a space with a collection-based exhibition program and even though initiated and supported by the same foundation, ARTER is a separate entity from the collection and from the museum and it is, to tell you the truth, modest compared with any museum scale.

ARTER has exemplified one of the concerns while making the collection is based on a geographical distribution: 45 percent of the collection is planned to have a focus on Turkey, 30 percent on neighboring countries, and 25 percent on the rest of the world. These are installation shots from May 2011, when ARTER was opened. There is also an art-historical niche in the collection, which is dedicated to *Fluxus* moment of 1960s and '70s; this includes works from artists such as George Maciunas, Joseph Beuys, John Cage, just to name a few.

Another focus area for the collection which we have already started and wish to complete by the opening of the museum is the art produced in Turkey in the '70s and '80s, comprising seminal works by pioneering Turkish artists. Yet I have to underline that we are also very much interested in what is being produced today in Turkey: 60 percent of the works in the collection are dated 2005 and later but these are both by younger-generation artists as well as from more established ones. So in a sense the *Vehbi Koç Foundation Contemporary Art Collection* aims at preserving the past while at the same time bringing together today's production for the future and it is not a thematized collection.

So I wanted to show some pieces from the inaugural show to give you an idea about the collection and probably the establishment of this major contemporary art collection is, obviously, part of a preparatory process toward a museum. Yet two space-related projects preceded this bigger-scale museum project. One of them is TANAS. There is an installation shot from 2010, from an exhibition called *Mahrem*. This space was established in Berlin, for future Turkish contemporary art. It was founded to increase the visibility of contemporary Turkish art in the international context of Berlin and the space and its program is directed by an executive team led

by René Block. Later in 2010, TANAS was followed by ARTER in Istanbul as the second space-related project by the same foundation.

This is our building, ARTER is housed in a historical building on İstiklal Street—one of the most crowded pedestrian streets in the world, probably. It's modest in scale; it has an exhibition area of 900 cubic meters, on four floors. And a fifth floor is spared for the offices; the team is again not so big. The overall team comprises 26 staff; this includes security and maintenance. ARTER is conceived as a space fully dedicated to the encouragement of artistic production by providing a relievable and sustainable infrastructure to Turkish and international artists and, we do this within the exhibition program, so what is being facilitated for the art scene at ARTER is actually being realized within a certain exhibition program. So first of all, it is a space for exhibitions. And while structuring this program's various concerns are taking into consideration but coming to all, each exhibition involves in its own scales, a process of production and presentation of new works, and actually the only collection-based exhibition in ARTER's program until now, was, was the *Starter*, the inaugural show.

We do not aim to have any other collection-based projects in the following years, and instead we prefer to continue with the program that allows us to collaborate closely with artists on the production of new works and new exhibitions. The second project, following the inauguration exhibition, was mainly based on this idea, on the idea of ARTER as a facilitator for artistic production. In that second exhibition we invited twenty artists from Turkey to produce works projecting the idea of institution and, in a narrower sense, art institution. I will show you some images from this exhibition and from the works that we have collaborated and produced together with the artists.

But I have to tell you that each year in our program there is a similar kind of exhibition that entirely focuses on new productions. *The Second Exhibition* targeted a close collaboration between the institution and the artists and it also tried to trigger an encouragement for the expansion of production networks in Turkey, which is unfortunately still quite inadequate compared with the potentiality of this geography today. With the *Second Exhibition*, ARTER founded and realized the production of more than thirty works and two complementary books where published to accompany the project. Our program, each exhibition in the program is actually being accompanied by exhibition books, extensive publications, and these can be sometimes in two volumes, depending on the nature of the exhibition. If we are working on new productions, we have an opening, we have a book for the opening, and then we also like documenting the actual show, the actual exhibition and the process with a second publication.

Now, let me show you some of the works from this show and actually what you will see were later acquired for the collection as well. When we do work with new productions, when we organize exhibitions based on new commissions, actually we don't start with the idea of getting the works into the collection, but whenever there is a dialogue between the work and the collection then through further negotiation we like acquiring those works into the collection.

This is how ARTER looked from outside during the *Second Exhibition*, on the entrance Ayse Erkmen made a site-specific installation which was actually based on the history of this space of this new institution and it was trying to relocate ARTER into an environment which has changed drastically in a hundred years of time.

This is from the inside. On the front again an intervention by Canan Tolon,

basically it is scaffolding, holding the space together but at the same time somehow destroying the floors, the walls and the ceiling of the new institutional space. At the background you have a glimpse of Ali Kazma's multidiscipline video projection; it was called OK and I wish to show you a little extract from the video [video clip].

So this is how Ali Kazma represented monotonous and repetitive functioning of the institutional order beat in an art institution or elsewhere. This is a performative photograph by Volkan Aslan which actually brought a very familiar scene from the public space in Istanbul into the institutional art space. This was a large photograph covering a whole wall and again it was realized during the time of the inaugural show so you can have a glimpse of the first exhibition at ARTER.

This is a joint project by Banu Cennetoglu and Yasemin Kaya. When we invited Banu and Yasemin they sought assistance of a non artistic discipline to measure the space of the institution, so what you see the therapist holding in his hands is called '*Acmos lecher antenna*' this device is usually used to measure the energy flow in the body and they measure the energy flow to diagnose the problems in human bodies; this time it was served to diagnose the space itself; it was quite interesting experience for all of us and it resulted in a quite metaphorical reading of the new institutional space. So I really want to show you a very small excerpt from it [video clip]. So this is how we were diagnosed.

*The Second Exhibition* was followed by *Tactics of Invisibility*, which was a co-production by the *Vehbi Koç Foundation* and *Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary*. The project was conceptualized as an exhibition in three phases. It was launched in 2008 with some preparatory research, and then it was first realized in Vienna in 2010, later adapted to TANAS in Berlin and finally to ARTER as its

final stage in the same year. And in line with the vision of both organizing institutions, the project also aimed at commissioning some new works besides already existing projects. So let me also show you some of the works from this exhibition. This is Cevdet Ereğ's piece it was called *Sky Ornamentation with 3 Sounding Dots and Anti-Pigeon Net*. What you see it's actually the indoor counter part of a larger intervention in the courtyard of T-B A21.

So the whole idea was based on the architecture of the space. The roof of the courtyard was, was covered with a pigeon net, which is used in Vienna to protect buildings from birds, and the three squares. The dots are a directional loudspeaker, so Cevdet was able to create three separate sound fields for the visitors coming into the space. This is a close-up and following Vienna, the project was adapted in a totally different manner to TANAS again, taking architecture as its starting point. TANAS has a lot of columns as part of its architecture, these elements are usually quite invisible to the eye and Cevdet created and added a fake column to the existing ones. And the same idea at ARTER. So we are very happy to have these pieces after the exhibition in the collection as well. It is just a coincidence but a second sound project proposal came from Ayse Erkmen for *Tactics of Invisibility*, which is again related to the history of the building of T-B A21. It was based on a rumor that Beethoven was living in that palace for two, three months and had a relation with the Countess Anna Maria Erdödy, the owner of the palace. Another rumor says that still there is a ghost of a girl, of a young girl still walking today in the building. So, some of the pieces of Beethoven were dedicated to Erdödy and Ayse Erkmen played with one of them, which was a canon and Ayse asked a soprano to sing the keys and adapted it to a single voice. So I will give you the sound of it for a little while [sound clip].

In addition to such group exhibitions, where we commission new works from artists, we also like working together with younger-generation artists on their large-scale projects, which actually cannot be realized without the support of an institution. *5 Person Bufet* by Deniz Gül, *Stage* by Nevin Aladag, and *Freedom to the Black* by Erdem Helvacioğlu are projects in that series. I will show you some images from these projects. This is Deniz Gül's *5 Person Bufet*, which actually starts with a poetic text the artist has written a couple of years ago with the intention of finding its spatial counterparts in an exhibition space. So the text is not there anymore but instead of five persons she has lined up five pieces of furniture; somehow mixing the interior and exterior and the power relations between the two and into the exhibition space. This is an intervention she did on the window fence.

We had some boiling milk, which give smell to the whole project. '*Stage*' by Nevin Aladag occupied the third floor and transformed the space into an open transformed area. It was composed of stage units made of artificial hair of various colors. The installation referred to the performative aspect of gender identity through the material and the form. This is another installation shot. Last year we started also a new series based on sound art and these series is being curated by Melih Fereli. Kicking of this sound art series was an exhibition entitled *Freedom to the Black*, which was inspired by a work in the collection: *Piano Piece* by George Maciunas and it featured a composition by Erdem Helvacioğlu. This is how it looked and this is how you feel when you are inside [sound clip].

Survey exhibitions of more established artists constitutes again a major part of the programming at ARTER. We have collaborated with artists such as: Kutlug Ataman, Patricia Piccinini, Berlinde De Bruyckere, and Mona Hatoum. And whenever possible we are

also very happy to support at least one or two commissions within the scale of these solo exhibitions. For example, *Mayhem* by Kutlug Ataman shown in *Mesopotamian Dramaturgies* was a coproduction with ARTER. And at Mona Hatoum's solo exhibition: *You Are Still Here* we were able to produce with her two new pieces in Istanbul; she has collaborated with some local ateliers, and this is the first piece, a carpet piece called *Shift*, and *Kapan* a metal and glass installation at ARTER. We are very proud to have these works in our collection.

So I think this is almost the end of the presentation as I tried to explain in principle we present exhibitions and projects that are produced by the institution itself. In other words, we do not host collection exhibitions nor include existing touring exhibitions in the program, that is to say, we not only enjoy facilitating new productions within the exhibition program, but encourage exhibition making as well. Until now we have produced ten exhibitions some curated in house, some through collaboration with other invited curators. For example, the current show at ARTER *The Move* is curated by Basak Senova whom we invited to make an exhibition on the moving image. This exhibition does not involve any new commissions, yet we made the space available for such a large scale exhibition for an independent curator and at the same time through the foundation all the requirements of the exhibition were funded. You will see, many of you, hopefully, this evening this exhibition at ARTER but maybe I should tell you before I finish, the next project, the upcoming project in January will be again focusing entirely on new commissions, it is called *Envy, Enmity and Embarrassment* and we are collaborating with eleven artists from Turkey. So maybe we will continue our conversation at ARTER later, maybe face to face if you have some more questions.

Tuesday  
13 November  
2012



## Keynote 2: The Non-Crisis of the Museum

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### *The Non-Crisis of the Museum*

I must start by mentioning that many of the ideas in this talk are ideas I was struggling to formulate until very recently, when I returned to certain notions that I had left about four years ago. This return came from an interest in looking at these notions anew in light of the recent political events. One of those notions I would like to revisit is that of crisis.

The word crisis has probably never been used more frequently throughout history than it has since the financial crisis started in 2008. One can claim that the relationship between the social sphere and the domain of politics witnessed the emergence of a slight but important shift in 2011. In this paper I will try to describe this shift as it increasingly constitutes the relational sphere in which art is produced today. It is an attempt to make a rather abstract diagnosis of the circumstances under which art and its institutions function today, to explain how these circumstances might be affecting them. The shift can basically be described as the intersection of two conditions.

The first of these conditions is what can be called the 'stationary state.' The stationary state is the condition of non-growth and the incapacity of the world economy to renew itself in order to move toward a new era of

further accumulation. It asserts that today's neoliberal capitalism, with all its shades and variations, will continue to be what economically shapes the sociopolitical situation for a long time to come. Unlike in the state of crisis, in the stationary state there will be no end, in the foreseeable future, to the current economic situation, to where capitalism can emerge stronger and fairer. The stationary state also implies that this normative, static condition of continuous crisis is also coupled with an inability to structure a decidedly different political-economic ideology. The concept of the stationary state thus replaces the notion of crisis as the world economy's de facto condition, making for a more realistic understanding of time in relation to capital and human existence.

Theorist Gopal Balakrishnan paints a detailed picture of this condition in his short essay '*Speculations on the Stationary State*'.<sup>2</sup> For him, the coming period will 'be shaped by the convergence of a conjunctural crisis of accumulation with ongoing epochal shifts in world capitalism—in its technological bases, demographic patterns and international division of labor—that have diminished its capacities for sustainable growth'. In other words, the stationary state can be described as the condition of an extended pause in a ruling economic ideology and its markets. This extended pause means that the conditions for the ideology's growth and sustainability are no longer ripe with options and space for advancement. But while this is one

<sup>2</sup> *New Left Review* 59 (September–October 2009), <http://newleftreview.org/ii/59>.

side of the stationary state, the other side is that the conditions for the creation of a full-fledged practical alternative to this ruling economic ideology have still not manifested themselves, thus leaving socio-economic life in a seemingly infinite state of limbo.

While the condition of the stationary state delineates our possibilities, we have also come to realize the emergence of another condition. While this second condition is not a new phenomenon, its intensity, contagious nature, and the breadth of variations it manifests are indicative of our times. This condition is that of a social antagonism visible and perpetually present within many different societies, as well as constant everyday antagonisms based on ideologies, perceived identities, economic factors, social struggles, and ecological issues, to name but a few. The uprisings, strikes, riots, conflicts, individual acts of aggression, and street fights that we have seen unfold since the start of 2011 have managed to make evident the reality of a perpetual, multifaceted, and real antagonism colored in the different shades of the political spectrum and hued with all sorts of divisions and fissures. The force and quantitative extent of this antagonism has in a sense rendered social antagonism as a visible and present element in each society and in international political discourse.

Social antagonism can be described as any action, emotion, communication, or method an individual or a group in a society uses to reify or express a conflict, disagreement, or opposing opinion on an ideological, social, cultural, economic, or political issue that another individual, group, or political entity considers to be a nonnegotiable issue or a line that cannot be crossed. The years 2011 and 2012 are rich with examples of such antagonism expressing the increasing polarity of the socio-economic and sociopolitical spectrums. Notable examples

are the *Arab Spring* demonstrations against military-based or police-state dictatorships, the *Occupy* movements expressing anger against the inherent and persistent inequality of the capitalist system, and the continuing and sometimes aggressive clashes between supporters of secularism and those of ultra-conservative Islamism in North Africa. It also includes the return of fascist political parties in Greece (*Golden Dawn*) and their opposition to economic policies that show lenience toward economic emigrants, who instigate increasingly violent attacks on non-Greeks—but also the fight against *Golden Dawn* by Greek anti-fascists groups, the Oslo shootings perpetrated by Anders Breivik expressing his longing for an imagined purified society devoid of different cultural backgrounds, and the rise and fall of the *Tea Party* movement in the United States and the movement's use of inflammatory tabloid tactics to build a super-conservative base. The examples are almost too many to enumerate.

No longer can these societal and ideological divisions be easily washed over with a glaze of economics jargon. The global surge of everyday consistent antagonism happens within the ongoing condition referred to as the stationary state. These two conditions bring about important questions for culture and art. For if we can claim that the current situation of constipated economics and its effects on politics will last for at least another decade or two (in my pessimistic imagination, likely more than that) along with a volatile and consistently agitated landscape of social conflicts, if we can claim this to be both our present and our near future, does this not mean that a rupture of sorts has already manifested itself?

And can we not already sense in our increasing nervousness as art laborers that something is not quite right? As art laborers,

it is as if the coordinates we have been accustomed to remain familiar, locating the same place—but on arrival to that place we sense slight differences, making it unexpectedly unsettling. It is as if we wake up in the morning and leave home to find ourselves in familiar surroundings and with all the people around us speaking the same language but with a different dialect—not totally different, just slightly mutated, making it difficult to place. Do we continue to deal with the context as if nothing has shifted at all? How do we deal with that slightly unsettling place that is the same but different? How do we communicate with that slightly mutated dialect? It is as if we always come with ideas that are already too late, and the old justification that identifies the speed of the media space as the cause of this problem is just not convincing us anymore. What is this speed that we keep talking about? What has really changed in your laptop or phone except different power chargers, a few apps, and slightly better screens? What has changed in the interfaces for your social networking websites except the way they look? Welcome to the stationary state! What has changed has nothing to do with speed but all to do with unsettled places and mutated dialects existing in an age of cumbersome dead-ended economic strategies and political frameworks in which we remain landlocked.

There is a strange and new feeling of guilt circulating in our artistic quarters as we witness a growing disparity among the increasing antagonisms on the street, in the square, in the park, in the battlefield and in the mediascape and their dissimilar institutionalized antagonistic vernaculars in the museum, the gallery, the biennial, or the art text. Embedded in the very protocol of contemporary institutional practice is the idea of instigating, designing, or crafting some form of antagonism. This is a conditional

antagonism, conditioned by the profession of art, and it is an important component in many curatorial projects, exhibition programs, or artworks. This could be a result of the post-1968 condition in which the former harbingers of change retreat into a kind of semi-academic life where they form ideas that later create the very vocabulary we use to develop our artistic and curatorial projects, the displacement, after 1968, of the political field toward the cultural as a space of dissidence. But, whatever the reason, this conditioned and professionalized antagonism is instigated curatorially, institutionally, or artistically to structure the conceptual skeleton that carries the rest of the project's formulation.

This professionalized antagonism has been exposed and disrobed like never before with the realization that art today happens and lives within the space of a stationary state of global socioeconomic conditions, which is uncoincidentally interclasped with what can be described as the normalization of global mass antagonism. Global mass antagonism is amateur antagonism; it is raw, and with a grandiose air of the incalculable yet foreordained to its being in the world. With this realization that professionalized antagonism exists in the same space as its amateur counterpart, can we simply continue to use forms of professionalized antagonism in contemporary art, its exhibitions, and institutions in exactly the same way we have been accustomed to?

The major characteristic of what I call professionalized antagonism is that it is based on the idea of betterment, the betterment of humanity. Professional art antagonism is rooted in humanism and the almost infinitely deep and ever-growing roots of the enlightenment. It may critique them and aim to nudge the roots that feed it, but it knows that these roots remain its essential

umbilical cord. The link to the notion of betterment helps reveal the growing disparity between professionalized art antagonism and that other antagonism in our daily mediascape. Art antagonism—or to coin a term, artagonism—does something very specific with the notions of justice and rights: it believes them to be positive terms. What do I mean by that? Schopenhauer's formulation of what a human right is brings this meaning home: 'The man who starts from the preconceived opinion that the conception of right must be a positive one, and then attempts to define it, will fail; for he is trying to grasp a shadow, to pursue a specter, to search for what does not exist. The conception of right is a negative one, like the conception of freedom; its content is mere negation. It is the conception of wrong which is positive; wrong has the same significance as injury in the widest sense of the term. An injury may be done either to a man's person or to his property or to his honor; and accordingly a man's rights are easy to define'.<sup>3</sup>

I think the growing schism one feels between professional art antagonism and amateur real antagonism is that the amateur version understands this concept of right as a negative conception and exists in a *Lebenswelt* where real stakes are a currency in an economy of injury and rights. In the conflicts that are being played out today, the infliction of injury definitely helps us: the public—or the witnesses, if you like—defines what a right is. So, for example, when people are 'martyre' like we see happening in Syria today or in the earlier days of the Egyptian uprising, we come to know the idea of martyrdom as exactly that, a wrong, an injury leading to death, which in turn becomes the positive

image or persona of the martyr that is then used in the media fight against injustices to gain, or at least fight for, certain rights. One can see this mechanism of embodiment at work in this example quite transparently. Art has no such mechanisms of embodiment, of trading injury for rights, and museums cannot develop them, either.

The bottom line is that museums and the art they produced and exhibited were doing fine as long as society at large was still somehow, even partially, buying the idea that capitalism was simply in crisis. In fact, art loved crisis because it could use it to develop criticisms and be professionally antagonistic. But in 2011, the year that Žižek calls the year of dreaming dangerously, I think an awareness came online that this was no crisis, and that this was a condition that would be shaping generations to come. The thought of that multiplied the antagonistic energy in societies to the maximum. It brought to the fore this twofold condition of the stationary state infused with concentrated social antagonism, which in turn makes the museum, and in many cases art, with its no-life-lost, crisis-based, symbolic antagonisms seem redundant, out of place, and not very relevant to the temperature of the current moment.

This, in my humble interpretation, is really what is behind the notion of museum in crisis. The art institution in general has lost the partner it once served so well. That partner was crisis, economic capitalist crises, replaced by the stationary state, so now it must be in crisis. However, I think the museum and art institutions in general are not in crisis as such, they are just a little behind in formulating vocabularies that are better equipped to deal with this new semi-permanent condition of the stationary state and its intense antagonisms. Art has survived everything—the rise and fall of civilizations, wars, and much darker ages. Contemporary art is

3 Arthur Schopenhauer, 'On Human Nature', *The Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders (Fairford, UK: Echo Library, 2006), 'Government', p. 16.

the latest proof of art's flexibility as a human vocabulary in circulation. It is only a matter of time before art and its institutions figure out how to adapt to the stationary state. This will require some mutation but not a complete reformulation of the rules. The museum does not need to be purified and built anew; it just needs to adjust its dialect, tone, and stature to equip itself to live without the type of crisis it has flourished on in the past.

Meanwhile, what can be done, if anything? This is the question I am constantly confronted with and can't claim to answer. But I can ruminate. I think my response is to make a shift in the curatorial from the urge to incite artistic antagonisms and the urge to practice betterment to questions of perception. And it must be clear here that I am definitely not propagating a curatorial practice based on art that is contained and read through its sensory aesthetics, an art that can reveal an imminent or transcendental truth from within itself, for I believe the curatorial should consider and work with a radically diverse array of artistic positions and practices. What I mean is that instead of starting one's project from the position of wanting to make humanity, the world, or politics better (whether this is expressed in a statement or is latent), one should perhaps start from the position of wanting to see (as in sight of the mind) the world better and more clearly by starting from perception. This is a delicate shift that can often be missed when crafting and developing a curatorial concept.

We are never without perceptions of the world around us. If we consider Merleau-Ponty's views on the primacy of perception, that all consciousness is in fact perceptual, then asking what makes us perceive an object or an issue the way we do is more vital and more fundamental a question than asking how we should change it. It can only be eventually

made to change if we first understand why we perceive things the way we do. Why does a Marxist perceive Marxism as the only way or system that can do justice to the world? And, why does the *Tea Party* member or the Islamist demagogue also perceive his outlook on the world to be the only valid one?

Not to limit it to ideologies, why do we perceive some artworks to be artworks despite their lack of any criteria making them look like art to the untrained eye? Such questions are important in addressing the current sociopolitical condition as a phenomenon that came into being through the conditions of perception. While we endure the long-term stationary state and the intense antagonisms it produces, an opening seems to have appeared where curating can do something other than embed itself in the loop of crisis and criticality that has shaped the curatorial for the past fifteen or so years. Still a young crack in a huge and old monolithic wall, this opening is where curating can explore and experiment with the conditions that shape the political, social, and aesthetic perceptions that dominate our world.

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Question: I'd be interested to have you talk about the cycle, and if the pattern is just an opposition between stasis and crisis, or whether there are more phases, and how that might relate to the origins of the museum in the eighteenth century, and what stage you would define that as. Is the pattern stasis-crisis-stasis-crisis? Or are there more stages? And in terms of the historical cycle, when the museum was found in the eighteenth century, how would you define that period?

Bassam El Baroni: That period was a very particular period, and it had a lot to do with edification, the term I was trying to describe a

few moments ago. There was a struggle between the idea of individual freedom and the idea of social brotherhood. In a talk I recently gave I represented the struggle by using two figures. Friedrich Schiller representing individuality, artistic freedom, aesthetics, and beauty as being the primary goal of art, and John Ruskin on the other end, he even had this special utopian community of workers, where aesthetics were built into the community, very much like projects in recent years. In that sense, there's not a lot of difference. If we look at, for example, the *Berlin Biennial*, it alternates, from one to the other, it alternates between neo-Schillerian and neo-Ruskinian—these are two polarities that exist in the art world and they haven't gone away. It's a matter of which one you prefer in terms of your position. I think merging the two or bringing them closer is important, so I think the museum grapples with this polarity. But there are many things from that age of the eighteenth century that are still with us today and very much alive.

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Question: Bassam, I really like your talk. Just a comment: I like the fact that you talk about the stationary state as the perception of the crisis and the way you show this perception of crisis and I'm wondering if this stationary state is becoming something like a tradition of crisis in the same way that Octavio Paz in the seventies formulated modernity as a tradition of rupture, of change, so it seems to me what you described is like saying we are thinking about our crisis state as a tradition that we have to live with.

When Octavio Paz said this in the seventies, it was a moment of changing of paradigms from modernity to postmodernity, so what is changing now are the paradigms, because we are in a contemporary crisis.

Bassam El Baroni: Yes, but it becomes a noncrisis. I can no longer relate to the notion of crisis, I think this is how it's going to be from now on, at least from where I'm situated. And I think that means a lot about how you're going to formulate your ideas and your work. Because just a few years back we were in this luxury of defining political and economic ideas as a series of crises, which meant that we could respond with criticality, but I think that's gone. We can't respond with criticality any more—what is on a more sophisticated level, something that has to be a perception. And of course the idea's a bit rough; it's still in formulation I need to find my way to elaborate it a bit more but I think it's grappling with perception is the vocabulary that surpasses the idea of criticality. At least this is what I think at the moment.

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Question: Thank you very much, Bassam. I really appreciate you drawing a line within the museum, between the institutionalized antagonism and the offsite museum in the larger social sphere perhaps real antagonism but I was just wondering if the question of perception as a question—if that begins with the museum as a frame, actually, if you put objects in the museum, because of the post 1968 or going back to the avant-garde tradition, that whole genealogy of epistemology within the museum—How do we get out of that? As soon as you put something in the museum that perception is already framed by the museum as the context of this antagonism.

Bassam El Baroni: For me the idea of completely purifying the museum or radically reformulating the meaning of a museum doesn't really make much since if you relate it to the function as an institution that shifts in

shape from one era to another but retains certain protocols. So if you would say, for example, its as if TV has to change radically and become images in the sky or something—it doesn't make much sense. A museum is a place where things are framed but what can change in a museum is exactly this slight adjustment in dialect, which is about the moment when criticality shifts into an analysis of perception. Because an analysis of perception deals with the root causes of what got us into this situation in the first place. So I'm not a great believer in the idea that museums are in crisis and art needs to be—I think that the museum is a space that needs to be there because it plays an important role and I think the stationary state will continue to be the facilitator and framer of art. What will change is the dialect, but the global dialect that Tirdad was reflecting on yesterday, that will change. But does the museum have to completely reformulated? I don't think that is going to happen, we would all be out of jobs!

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Question: Thank you for quoting Schopenhauer at an ungodly hour. I was reading about Frank Kermode's book *The Sense of an Ending*. I'm going to read this quote because I think perhaps it's useful; you don't need to respond. 'There must be a link between the forms of literature and other ways in which (quoting Eric Auerbach) 'We try to give some kind of order and design to the past, the present, and the future.' One of these ways is crisis. He begins by saying something about the modern sense of crisis. Crisis is an inescapably a central element in our endeavors towards making sense of our real world. For him, we think of our worn crisis as more eminent, more worrying, and more interesting than other crises. It seems doubtful that our crises, the relation to the

future and to the past, is one of the important differences between us and our predecessors. And we can best talk about the differentiae about modern crises in terms of the literature it produces. It is by our imagery of the past and the present and the future rather than from our confidence in our uniqueness of our crisis that the character of our apocalypse must be known'. He adds that 'The moments we call crises are the ends and beginnings'.

I kinda like that (audience laughter). Uhh because it suggests that one way of thinking about the crisis is not by the legitimacy of whether the crisis exists or not but actually to retroevaluating it in his case by the literature it would produce. And in our case by the art it might produce or the institution it might produce. But your suggestion that we're always in crisis goes hand in hand with what he's saying which is that crisis is also part of our necessity to narrativize constant ends and beginnings, right? Which I see also in the discourse of capitalism or even financialized capitalism. The boom and the bust. Um is also a permanent condition.

Bassam El Baroni: Yes, well I think the term crisis doesn't work any more. I feel very uncomfortable with the term crisis. I think this is just the way life is. It doesn't make sense any more to call it a crisis. I don't even know if it's a period of signalling change. I think it's just a period where things break down into this kind of pause of this relationship between what I call stationary state and antagonism.

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Question: I really have been inspired by your lecture mainly because I agree that all museums have to be in crisis, always. It's not that we have these economic crises or that we are doubling our crisis. But when you're

trying to deal with this perception with critics  
I was thinking of this statement in an  
exhibition in Paris: 'Attention perception  
needs participation'. I would like to ask you  
what participation means for you in your  
proposal.

Bassam El Baroni: At this point I want people  
who are already informed—I don't think I'm at  
the point where I can develop something that  
has enough functionality for participation for  
people outside the art context. But I think  
within the art context I do agree it needs  
participation. The text for this exhibition—the  
accessibility of it—I think worked quite well....



## Case Study 4: New Dialogues

Good morning, I am Christine Van Assche, curator at the *Pompidou Center* and a board member of CIMAM. There are different Art Foundations in France which have an important role; we have *La Maison Rouge* in Paris, we have the *Fondation Lambert* in Avignon and we have the *Kadist Art Foundation* in Paris, too. These foundations, they have a role next to the museums, next to the art centers. *Kadist Foundation* is organizing local activities in an international context, but also international activities in a local context. And Bassam makes the links between *Kadist Foundation* and what's happening in the art world. Sandra Terdjman is founding director of the *Kadist Foundation* since 2003, and I welcome Sandra for her talk.

*Christine Van Assche*

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*Sandra Terdjman*  
*Founding Director*  
*Kadist Art Foundation, Paris*

Good morning, thank you for the invitation and the introduction. So, at the very beginning of my short career, I was involved in developing the artistic branch of a philanthropic foundation that was pursuing and supporting NGOs internationally concerned with social issues—mainly health, medication, and economic development. So this is a parallel branch dedicated to contemporary art, and, as the director, we opened a space in Paris in 2006. When you open a space in whatever city, it's about desire, it's about love, as Sarah explained a bit yesterday, but it's also about

complementarity. It's about looking at what exists already in terms of the art organization and seeing where one can step in and complement what exists.

Now, in Paris in 2006, when we wanted to open, a lot of artistic spaces had closed and there were very few private foundations. In 2006 in Paris there was still a lack of international perspective and international exchange and there was a lack, I think, of space dedicated for research and production. So it is in this sort of context that Kadist opened, and we had, at the time, already constituted the beginning of a collection, which became the starting point of a program, so when we opened the space it was not to show the collection but rather to invite artists from that collection to work together with us on a research and a production. And so we started this residency program, inviting artists but also curators to develop a research for about a maximum of four to six months and an exhibition. And so the collection and the program work as two complementary tools.

I'd like to give you a few numbers so that you can quickly understand the scale of *Kadist*. So, seven years later, today, there are five hundred works that constitute the collection, we have now two spaces, one in Paris and one in San Francisco. Each of them has two flats for the residencies. There are two advisory boards that are not renewed every year; we actually work with the same individuals from the beginning, and they advise on the collection but also the program, and ten people work in the team. Now, behind those numbers, I think what's really important is, maybe not a vision but more of a concern

and a worry that has through the years become more and more important. And this is how I phrased it, as: 'The ability to change and the adaptability to changes, which I think refers to goodness, so, how an institution or even a museum can change and adapt through the years and remain in movement, so remaining maybe un-institutionalized. And I'll try through this talk, in the next minutes, to show you a few attempts to keep with this line, with this sentence.

The first one is what I call the practice-based institution, just it's very simple, it's just to make sure that the institution doesn't come before the work and the practices. I think I'll go back to the numbers and I've added one at the top, which is two hundred practitioners, which is the number of people who were involved in the *Kadist* program through the years and every single one who gave the identity of the foundation. And I think behind those people is basically their practices, which we try to follow, to be challenged by and to accompany, support, produce. And so, being practice-based is also about time, it's also about valorising time, it's also about understanding the practices so that you can position the institution in relation to them.

I'd like to show you two works, which were also two exhibitions that were important to me, and I think, quite challenging for the foundation. So here you probably recognize Frank Stella, the American minimalist artist. And this is a picture taken by Dianne Arbus. Let me tell you about an exhibition that we did with a French artist, Pierre Leguillon, maybe one of the few exhibitions that we did with a French artist. Pierre came to me in the beginning of 2008 with the desire to do a printed retrospective of Diane Arbus at *Kadist*—this famous, as you know, American photographer. *Kadist* is very small as you might have seen in the picture. Pierre Leguillon's point was, he had different

arguments: the first one was the lack of visibility of Diane Arbus's work at the time in Paris. She hadn't had a large exhibition or retrospective since the eighties at the time. Fortunately, later one happened at *Jeu de Paume* with Marta Gili. But then more than showing Diane Arbus's work, what Pierre Leguillon wanted to show was the context of the apparition of her work at the time. And at the time, Diane Arbus mainly published her images in fashion magazines printed between the 1960s and 1971, when she died in New York. So, what Pierre Leguillon wanted to show is how those images are shown in relation to the context, which is basically both the design, the design of the page...maybe you see it better in this one. Using the words, columns, the margins of the page as the natural frame, but also in relation to the articles at the time, and the political context at the time.

And then, Pierre Leguillon wanted to put value on the vintage, and maybe to question where the value should be of an art work, and that maybe sometimes the vintage, this page of a magazine, can be more valuable than the prints, which are, sometimes reprinted very basically. And then, for Pierre Leguillon what was also very important is to make it a touring exhibition. To make it as the cheapest retrospective of Diane Arbus and to make it available to show in different institutions. This is the exhibition view from *Mamco* and it sets different institutions, including the CAC gallery it toured maybe five times since then. And as you can see, the crates were especially made to put the frames inside and so when we exhibited the retrospective at *Kadist*, these crates were already there as the announcement of this touring show. What was challenging to us what not only to accompany Pierre Leguillon in the research, it was also of course to collect all these magazines from *Ebay* and all small shops around the world.

But it was, for us, the responsibility of also acquiring that work, as part of the collection, and to be responsible for its conservation, but also for this touring exhibition, so to go there and install it from time to time in different spaces. And for the collection, it was not only acquiring the work, it was also acquiring another collection and acquiring actually an exhibition.

The second example is—I'm sorry for the picture, it's a phone picture—this is a work of Danh Vo's, so as you probably already know he's an originally Vietnamese artist. He came to *Kadist* in residency in 2009, he was quite obsessed—even before arriving—about those chandeliers that you can see, which became a sculpture later on. Now, these chandeliers were in a hotel called *The Majestic Hotel*, in Paris, which has a particular history because it was occupied by the *Nazis* during the *World War II*, and it was later on the headquarters of the UNESCO. And so it became an international conference room that witnessed the peace treaty of the Vietnam War. So, there are pictures that Danh Vo collected—and it's part of the book—where you see this huge round table with twelve nations discussing the future of Vietnam.

And I think what he was basically pointing out when we were dismantling the chandelier, which is this, actually that probably inspired how he presented it later on—I think this is at *MoMA*. For him, it was dismantling this symbol of democracy, of the Western values, the qualities, and to point at this power relation again. Now, this work is not part of the collection; we did not have the budget at the time, but fortunately it's in very good collections now, including, I think, the *MoMA*.

Now, I'd like to help you understand what *Kadist* is now, go back to the crisis because the ability to change is not only following artistic practices but also following political

changes and social changes. And so, how do you adapt to them? I would agree—maybe I don't know if I agree, wait a second—there's an accelerated, there are many crises, and they're completely intertwined: political but also ecological, scientific—and on top of that, we are supposedly in the center of the world. The geologists define our era—now its official—as the anthropocene. So the human is in the center and supposedly is responsible for that. And I'd like to maybe ask the question of how do you do, as humans, but also as practitioners and museum institutions.

So yes, just very quickly, there's more and more complexity of those global issues, they are multiplied but on top of that they are more and more complex, and I think Ismail talked about shadow banking, which is probably one of the good examples of this complexity. And on top of that, there's a multiplicity of information sources, so one has to decide in the morning among the press—international press or local press, social network and so on—and so what happens is maybe not crisis but controversies, where experts from one information tool to another contradict each other, and that's also the basis of this scientific crisis.

And so the issue for us is how do you represent those large issues and controversies? I called it, well, 'the crisis of representation', which is not how we, as the people, are represented but how those issues are represented to us, so we can better understand them, take positions. So, if art has a role in that I saw three points that I'm concerned with as the future of *Kadist* but we can also share.

The first one is the importance of valorizing artistic research. And I know some of us do it, as much as we can; through the residency we try to give the time for that, but I think it has to go through academics and administrative fields to valorize and give

resources to that research and consider art as a field of knowledge.

The next one is to actually accompany those researches. Many of the artists I encounter today have the desire to be in dialogue or to exchange information with other researchers, throughout the field of research. Now, that doesn't mean that we have to fall in the trap of transdisciplinary practice, but I think, institution, museum, whatever space you have, should try to mediate if necessary, or allow this exchange.

And the third thing is this articulation between local and global, the famous global issue, which is not something that we have to be concerned by just for the sake of saying that we're international and global and local, but I think mainly to relate to those issues, which are global, which are completely intertwined and complex, and this is why we might need this global approach, it's just to have different perspectives and share perspective on those issues.

So to go back to *Kadist* a bit, I think this local global became more and more important when we opened the second space, and that was in 2010–11. So, you know, the two spaces: the first one in Paris and the second one in San Francisco. So we grew, in seven years, but I think the strategy behind that was not to grow vertically and to have a huge space in one of the cities to show the collection, but maybe to take the decision to have two smaller spaces in two different cities. And I think the issue of scale is very important to go back to this adaptability to change. Of course, when you have a smaller space it's easier to be flexible and to react, although I think it's more of a choice that any of us can take and can make. But it's quite a sustainable scale, it's about putting more attention to the project rather than the management and the administrative and to keep a scale that you can basically commit to.

And so, having two spaces made us want to do even more, to share more perspective and to be even more mobile, but we couldn't open many spaces—I think this is the maximum we can do—and so we started to think of how we can collaborate with other art spaces. And we had this idea of an arts space residency, which I don't say it works but we're trying, through different experiences and last time with Bassam we had quite a few conversations on how ACAF and *Kadist* could work together, which didn't happen. So this collaboration is not about working with the same institution as you, not with the same scale necessarily, it's not about working between private institutions—I think private and public can work together—it's mainly about individuals, again. It's about the two hundred practitioners, it's about who the people are behind the institution, I think it depends on the individuals.

And so I'll just give you one example of a current exhibition, now in *Kadist* in San Francisco. So there was a dialogue between the director of *Kadist* in San Francisco, Joseph del Pesco, and *San Art*, which is one of the few independent spaces in Vietnam, directed by Zoe Butt. Now, *San Art* had faced numerous difficult circumstances with exhibition license restrictions by the Vietnamese government and the ministry of culture. This is one of her recent exhibitions that was not presented in *San Art*, it was cancelled. And, a number of times, Zoe Butt explains that political issues had to be addressed in a highly symbolic way by artists to bypass the restrictions. And so she curated an exhibition at *Kadist* now called *Poetic Political*, which is actually looking at symbols and the way Vietnamese and also some Cambodians in the exhibition address this issue. And I think that Joseph del Pesco saw this collaboration as a temporary extension of *San Art* in San Francisco.

I think what we can learn is to keep a pragmatic approach of case-by-case basis and that each of these case's outcomes different, and that we have to pay attention to how we place the work and exhibition but also in an institution, in relation to a larger context, in relation to a political context. And I think that's what the artist Walid Raad told in his last exhibition, which Sarah mentioned yesterday, and he says that if the words are misplaced, I think that's me, it's my interpretation, if the words are misplaced, then they might shrink. And this is a model that you might have seen in *Documenta*, which is a model of what Walid Raad talked about it in those terms in Beirut, and he says: 'Between 1989 and 2004, I worked on a project titled *The Atlas Group*. It consisted of artworks made possible by the Lebanese wars of the past few decades. In 2005, I was asked to exhibit this project for the first time in Lebanon, in Beirut's first-of-its-kind white cube gallery.

For some reason, this offer perturbed me and I refused. In 2006, I was asked again, and I refused again. In 2007, I was asked again and I refused again. In 2008, I was asked again and I agreed. Weeks later, when I went to the gallery to inspect my exhibition before its opening, I was startled to see that all my artworks had shrunk to one hundredth of their original size. I was forced to face the fact that in Beirut in 2008, my art work has shrunk'.

And so having this quote in mind last week, I was working for all the art work that might have modified its scale in relation to the context, and I thought of one example actually in Paris, at the *Centre Pompidou*, which I know Christine is not responsible for, and that work didn't shrink but enlarge. This is a work by Abdel Abdessemed. Thank you.

## Case Study 5: New Dialogues

### Addressing a Permanent Crisis: The Landscape of Contemporary Art in Africa

Good morning, my name is Ivo Mesquita, I am the director of the *Pinacoteca do Estado* in São Paulo and also part of the CIMAM board. This morning I have the pleasure to introduce Koyo Kouoh. Koyo Kouoh is a Cameroonian-born curator and cultural producer, living and working in Dakar, where she founded and is its current Artistic Director of *Raw Material Company*, a center for art, knowledge and society.

As curator, she was part of the curatorial team for the *Documenta 13* by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. Expert in photography, she co-curated *Les Rencontres de la Photographie Africaine* in Bamako in 2001 and 2003. *Hypocrisy, the Site-Specificity of Morality* at the *Museum of Contemporary Art* in Oslo in 2009, and *GEO-Graphics: A Map of African Art, Past and Present*, at *Palais des Beaux-Arts* in Brussels, and *Make Yourself at Home* at *Kunsthall Charlottenborg*, in Copenhagen, both in 2010. Among other shows.

She is currently working on the first survey of seminal Senegalese artist Issa Samb on her show *Chronicle of a Revolt: Photographs of a Season of Protests*, which she curated for *Raw Material Company* and is

coming for a presentation at the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt*. Please welcome Koyo Kouoh.

*Ivo Mesquita*

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*Koyo Kouoh*

*Founder and Artistic Director  
Raw Material Company, Dakar*

*Addressing a Permanent Crisis: The  
Landscape of Contemporary Art in Africa*

I will try to address the permanent crises because I consider the region I talk from, which is Africa. Many people cannot tell the difference between Burkina Faso and Tanzania, for example. This for me is a crisis of at least two hundred years, so when I hear the West complain about crisis, even though I can fully grasp the level of anxiety and drama that this situation can create, I really cannot help but be indifferent. Because crises management has become a nationally available expertise of everyone in Africa, basically, and we are eager to provide consultancy.

So if anyone in the audience has a crisis to solve, I strongly recommend you consult anyone who lives anywhere from Tunis to Cape Town. Crisis has been elevated to a form of living, people draw from the permanent crises to produce knowledge and artworks. In Africa most cultural institutions such as museums, art galleries, archives, and art academies were established either by the colonial state or in the context of postcolonial nation building after the liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s. As a consequence, the cultural field has often been shaped according to national aesthetics and ideological concepts and policies.

Many artists, intellectuals, and activists have repeatedly criticized and distanced themselves from state culture initiatives such as community archives and community art centers or initiatives such as artists' clubs in parts of Africa, in Dakar or Senegal. In the last two decades and increasingly in the last ten years, a series of new spaces and initiatives were created. As art centers in the West are threatened by closure and some are closing due to strained budgets, more than one opens everywhere else in the world. So if things go steady and smoothly in terms of political and social transformation, I am pretty convinced that the world outside of the Western world will produce enough art to give rise to new sophisticated and creative people, who like me, are able to challenge the most advanced artists anywhere from Vienna to San Francisco. So different canons, economies, dialectics, and most importantly, a highly educated audience is emerging. This trend is especially sensible in Africa, where a variety of independent/private art initiatives were established to fill the vacuum left by unfulfilled promises of culture and artistic programs led by the state.

These places set themselves apart from state-affiliated institutions as well as from

commercial art markets, and create alternative models and platforms for negotiating art, history, for colonial archiving, art, and cultural history.

Before I continue, I think it is necessary to re-contextualize what is generally understood as contemporary African art. The definition of contemporary African art has been often been very controversial. Some would claim that it does not exist and some very strong purists would claim that of objects today. Can we define artists based on geography, with the vast African continent, and the significant diaspora, and such a vast territory? These are huge questions and I am very lucky that I do not have to answer them myself because very bright and eloquent people have done the work for me.

In 1999 the exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre*, held at *Centre Pompidou* in Paris, brought together artists from around the world showing a new reality on the global art world. In fact, this exhibition became the mythical starting point of what is now termed global art. It was such a benchmark that in the chronology of African contemporary art one talks about the times before or after *Magiciens*.

This exhibition was not only problematic in its tone and its textures, it also highlighted a crisis in the representation and analysis of artistic production by Africans. Yet, the positive site of this exhibition is that it materialized the creative potential of a curatorial crisis. It is only after that exhibition that institutions such as INIVA became active in the UK in dealing with internationalism; magazines such as *RêveNoir* or *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* were launched in Paris and New York, respectively, to represent and analyze artistic and intellectual productions by Africans.

It is only after *Magiciens* that curators like Simon Njami and Salah M. Hassan could

emerge. They have all been very productive since then and spare me the burden of explaining what is Contemporary Art in Africa. There have been so many exhibitions in the last fifteen years that advocate contemporary African artistic production. All these exhibitions were produced and shown in Europe and the U.S., except for *African Remix*, which made it to Japan. It is a welcomed effort of what I call 'advocacy curatin'.—it created an infrastructural ground on which to root their efforts. The infrastructure is building institutions; this idea resonates very much with Sarah Rifky's discussion about institution building as a curatorial practice, which is I think what I do, also.

Building institutions consolidates an artistic and intellectual environment. I was invited in 2009 by David Adjaye to imagine a project for *Palais des Beaux-Arts* in Brussels to celebrate fifty years of African independence, which many of the countries celebrated in 2010. I am growing more and more weary of making exhibitions, I must say, and I was not interested in doing another show of lining up the list of usual suspects that have been seen everywhere in the last ten years or so. So I started thinking more about what it is that fifty years after independence is really determining in the African societies. So that's when I started thinking about institutions and about art institutions. I actually had been thinking about this already for a couple years before that. But that's when I really wanted to materialize it, so instead of inviting artists to do a show I invited institutions so the art institutions became the artworks.

I invited seven art institutions to present their strategies and the ideals that they are producing work on. And at the forefront of this brand work is the *Centre of Contemporary Art* based in Douala, called *Doual'art* in Cameroon. This is not nationalism because I

come from Cameroon myself, it is really because *Doual'art* is one of the first and for me, really, a blueprint in terms of artistic production and within difficult environments in crises and in transition, that uses art and intellectualism to transform society. So at the forefront of that is *Doual'art*, set up in 1992 by Princess Marilyn Douala Manga Bell and her husband, Didier Schaub.

The core activity of *Doual'art* is to regenerate the public space of Douala through artistic intervention. Over the last twenty years they have produced over fifty works in the public space. Their modus operandi is based on community dialogue, proximity, social research, collaboration, design, and production.

A work by Moroccan artist Younis Vermund, was produced in Douala in the mangrove of Douala. Douala is a water city and has a huge forest of mangrove. How *Doual'art* operates is they invite an artist, an international artist or a local one, to come and live in Douala for a short period of time, a week or two weeks, and engage with different neighborhoods and communities and imagine a project that really resonates with the need and that also has a real daily use for the people in the vicinity.

So when Younis came to Douala in 2009 he imagined this space for meditation because mangrove reminded him of a peaceful place, of retreat, and also the mangrove is inhabited by a big Nigerian fishing community and his idea was a kind of a retreat, also play, in the sense of exhaling yourself from your surroundings for meditation.

So this is just one of the many examples of the kind of works that *Doual'art* produces. There is currently a retrospective of *Doual'art* production and they also run a triennial of art in the public space—of which I have been associate curator in 2010—called SUD,



*Salon Urbain de Douala*. It takes place every three years in December; the next one is December 2013.

The next example I would like to talk about is *L'appartement 22*, which is I think known to many of you. *L'appartement 22* was set up by Abdellah Karroum in Rabat, Morocco in 2002. When asked in an interview by the online magazine *Universes in Universe*: 'In which cultural context and in which art scene in Rabat and elsewhere in Morocco does *L'appartement 22* operate'. and 'What made you decide to initiate such a project'. Karroum said, 'Because I could'. Morocco has experienced significant cultural changes over the last few years. The rapid development of new information technologies, especially the internet, allows for an extensive access to culture in other countries around the world. Just to say, as a result of various structural factors, Morocco is still more of a consumer than a producer of culture. There is also a great lack of exhibiting and distributing possibilities for young artists. The few nonprofit galleries are state grown and their programs are not confined to serious art politics. In fact, the people in charge of the programs at these places are not art professionals but rather members of the ministry of culture.<sup>4</sup> Doesn't that sound familiar to you? The undertone of this statement basically says that the government is important and cannot be trusted when it comes to organizing artistic production. *L'appartement 22* is the result of this situation and ultimately of a coincidence.

Originally the flat was meant to be Karroum's own private home. After he finished studying in Europe, he planned to work at universities and art schools in Morocco. He had some ideas of how cultural activities in the context of Morocco could be developed.

4 [http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2005/l\\_appartement\\_22](http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2005/l_appartement_22)

He came to Rabat to assist in setting up an art department at the *Moroccan University*, to work with artists and to spend the rest of his time writing, so you can imagine.

In the end, he decided to use his apartment as an alternative to the lack of interest shown by the institutional spaces in the kinds of artistic forms that he was interested in. With that, *L'appartement 22* became a space of freedom for both the artists and himself. The world of the motivation may vary but one of the common grounds for the establishment of these spaces is the need to address an artistic and critical voice. They respond to urgencies to create platforms of criticality and production; some of these initiatives aim to establish non-hegemonic and experimental fields and orders of knowledge. Others deliberately question institutions established by the postcolonial nation state. Still others attempt that feeling where public institutions are undermined. In many cases, colors, culture practitioners, curators, and artists, as well as activists join to collaborate in these spaces. Forms of *South-South* cooperation and transcontinental networking, including diasporic communities, are developed.

And especially Raw Materials Company, which shared its diaspora, is very dear to us—not only is Egypt part of Africa, but also Brazil, Cuba, and the U.S. The spaces question how hegemonic weapons, canons, and narratives of art develop and manifest, and they question approaches of knowledge production and state institutionalization.

Why develop strategies and tactics that go beyond the consensus and the existing established structures? They allow for in-between spaces in flocks that connect theoretical, visual, practical, and local knowledge combined with an international outlook. They thus represent potentialities and conceptions of the world beyond the mere dynamics of economic globalization.

It appears that despite the inevitable variations of specific cultural settings and sociopolitical parameters, the core urgencies and necessities are the same and are not bound by geographical definitions. The impotency of the government and public bodies and the corporate world does not stop in Cairo or Rabat; it goes beyond the desert, to reach Dakar, Lagos, Nairobi, and so on.

Even though Dakar can boast of a related dynamism in terms of artistic action and intellectual production—if one measures dynamism by the number of exhibitions or by, for instance, having a biennial, which we have—it is very difficult to consider such a mythical place as Dakar to not have had one single independent space that addresses theoretical ideas around contemporary artistic production.

So it was no longer acceptable for me to complain about the inefficiency of the *Dakar Biennial* and the fact that nothing happens in between. It was no more sustainable to be apologetic, almost shameful sometimes, to international visitors about the lack of resources and facilities even though I did not want to open a space, I literally had to do it, I had no choice.

This is the façade of *Raw Material Company* and it is out of all this energy and out of this situation that *Raw Material Company* was born in 2011. The necessity, the idea, the basic motivation of the establishment of *Raw Material Company* was to create the space for knowledge sharing. The core motivation was to establish a space for alternative education and learning. It would be a place that would provide access to contemporary artistic theory, on the one hand, and also return to these core ideas and practices with an emphasis on African-related matters primarily, but also to a broader range of origins and intellectual schools.

I started by donating my own private library. *Raw Material Company* got its name from the idea that for ages Africa has been the main provider of raw materials for the development of international industry. And at the same time, we consider art, intellectualism, and thought as necessary raw materials for human development.

*Raw Material Company* sets us very clearly in a culture of entrepreneurship but

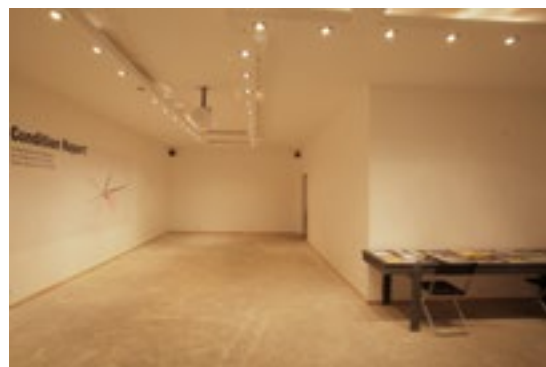


Figure 25. Andrew Esiebo, digital print, 2012, Raw Material Company exhibition space, courtesy Raw Material Company.

also in the idea of togetherness and collaboration. We use different modes. We run an exhibition space but one of our core programs is really knowledge sharing—knowledge production—so we do a lot of talks, in the exhibition space or in the library, depending on how many people attend, and symposiums. The inaugural symposium we did in January looked at institution building in Africa. We only invited really high-profile speakers to this symposium, for example Anton Vidokle and Vasif Kortun. This inaugural symposium especially looked at over twenty organizations from the entire continent that were present in Dakar; we discussed issues like private partnership and international collaborations. Sessions were held on the meaning and role of former colonial powers such as the Goethe Institute Français, in many African countries.

We also run an extensive exhibition program in our very modest, 100-square-meter exhibition space. The inaugural show was work by Nigerian photographer George Osodi, who has done an amazing work on the Nigerian delta and the human and ecological catastrophe that is happening there.

And we also run a residency program where we host different kinds of professionals: artists, curators, architects, writers. You would come and introduce work in Dakar in relation to our programs or research. Our exhibition program is thematic and is oriented around wealth, energy, migration, and revolt. And our work is very much focused on photography and video.

One of the core ideas in setting up *Raw Material Company* was also to be able to develop a sort of independence, as much as we could, to sustain ourselves, because it is not always very easy or pleasant to walk around constantly looking for grants, and sometimes it is not always pleasant to write reports, either.

So we run a restaurant where we do slow food, local pan-African cuisine. We think that cuisine is one of the primal artistic disciplines accessible to everyone. We also run a bar, where sometimes we have guests from all over the world.

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### Questions and Answers

*Sandra Terdjman and Koyo Kouoh*

Ívo Mesquita: Thank you Koyo, thank you so much. I'd like to invite Sandra to come back here for some questions. Actually, only four questions because we are running very late.

Koyo Kouoh: May I start? I don't have a question to myself but—if there are no questions, I can continue speaking. So, I just wanted to say that I brought some material,

I just didn't know really where to put them out, but anyone who's interested, because we also publish quite a bit—I mean we've been operating only eighteen months and I think that we have done quite a good job in introducing and re-mapping the landscape, and actually I had the idea to do a performance and invite my colleague in the audience, Gabi Ngcobo, is here and she's also part of that energy in creating spaces of freedom and of thought, and she opened a center of historical reenactments in Johannesburg two years ago which, since she's more of an artist than a curator it's a project that is ending, so maybe she will want to talk about it. And I also know that we have a visitor here from *Regard Bénin*, which actually, currently, just opened and continued last week and is curated by Abdellah Karroum.

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Question: I was wondering about the show that you did in Brussels, the symbolic thought as, if you invite, the existence in Belgium of this micro-political experience of institutions as mapping Africa today. I am trying to read through on your own way to show how, maybe, I don't want to generalize the whole continent but great part of the continent as a creator of governmental institutions, I live in Latin American so that's what relates to that figure of the institutions of the state. Could there possibly? This macropolitical experience of culture being a possibility of institution, could it resonate in Paris? I think that maybe *Kadist* also operates micro-politically, in a very nationalized production of culture because there is actually a very strong institution of the state but culture is produced in a national agenda, and somehow you create this micro-political institution to take this internationalism but is not shown, or it's not illustrated.

Koyo Kouoh: Well, yes, it's correct to a large extent of many countries, especially those with a French colonial past so, in a sense, many of those countries at the time of the independences have literally adopted the French system of education, of politics, of dealing with things which is very much about controlling and hence hinder of the arts and culture, so this is one of the analyzes that I make. The other one is also that, I think that the first two decades after the independences Africa was really on the rise, I mean in the 1960s and the 1970s, having periods of an amazing economic boom and cultural visibility and dynamism. And then came a turning point of a total rundown and of structure programs and an international monetary organization, and that really destroyed culture, education, and health sector in damages that are absolutely not imaginable if you don't have the experience of living in these countries. So, I think that these things combined necessarily brought a clear bankruptcy of the state which is not, for me, a blame as such but it's just a fact that you have to deal with and you have to address if you are professional and we are all addressing it in our own manners, with taking into account the local history and the local contingencies.

Sandra Terdjman: I'll try to be. I don't have the answer to your question but to go back to the molecular spaces that Vasif talks about, I think that that they can start as an alternative but when I think of micropolitics I think more of complementarity and that doesn't mean that it cannot include contradictions, contradicting what exists already. But it's a strategy that includes both, and that can happen anywhere.

Ivo Mesquita: Thank you. I think we should stop here, thank you so much.

## Case Study 7: New Contingencies

Good morning my name is K. C. Kwok; I'm on the board of CIMAM. I'm here to introduce the next speaker, Cosmin Costinas, who has endorsed my pronunciation in Romanian since I have pronounced his name correctly. On this side of the river, which is Europe as you know, his experience extends to Vienna, to Utrecht—as well as having a novel published in Dublin.

He is going to talk about the other side of the river today: he is in charge of a contemporary art space in Hong Kong known as *Para/Site*. This place has existed since 1996: that predates the return of Hong Kong to China.

That space itself has an institutional history of its own and that transcends contemporary art practices, in many ways, in Asia, as well as having implications in the rest of the world. If we recall Bassam this morning, speaking about institutionalized antagonism, in fact in 2000 the *Japan Foundation* published a directory of alternative spaces in Asia and *Para/Site* of course is an important example in that book. Koyo reminded us earlier today that the term 'contemporary art' itself must be examined: if we treat contemporary art from the perspective of advocacy curating, it is not taking it at a very local as well as global perspective. Cosmin's discussion is actually a lot more optimistic with contemporary art and believes that in sharing that with CIMAM it does become a global culture that we can look forward to.

However, to do that, it is not enough for us to just greet each other and to have the usual courtesy in meetings like this; we have to do a lot more. Cosmin.

*Kian Chow Kwok*

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*Cosmin Costinas*  
*Executive Director*  
*Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong*

It is difficult for me not to reflect on this animal that we call the crisis and its relation with the system of contemporary art. I have recently relocated from the Netherlands, a country that has become emblematic of the crises of the social democratic country on contemporary art, to Hong Kong. Hong Kong has become equally emblematic, if not for the megalomaniac boom in contemporary art as in China, at least for the spirit of executive optimism and positive thinking that it is so central to the growth-based economic and social model of our times. In some ways this boom is the perfect antonym of the crisis. Equally important, it has become emblematic of the shift in the gravity of contemporary art cloud toward non-Western art centers.

However, if the economic crisis appeared to be the final, accelerating push of Western power toward demise in a world where the emerging economies were in a state of relentless growth, it eventually encompassed emerging economies in what appears to be a more complex phenomenon, affecting regions, groups, and classes differently and with outcomes that are still uncertain.

We are yet to fully comprehend the impact of the crisis in contemporary art as well as the distribution of winners and losers across the globe and within the different local ecologies and equations of representation and funding. It also remains to be seen

whether we are indeed talking about the same crises.

How looking at the history of *Para/Site*, the institution I have been running for over a year in Hong Kong, newer discussion can emerge on how the system of contemporary art has evolved over the past two decades in its geographical and institutional parameters, about the nature and quality of our global encounters and the roles, hierarchies, and translation issues.

In my talk I will try to visit these points through the development of *Para/Site*, arriving at the current phase of the evolution of the system and the institutional strategies. And toward the end of the presentation I will briefly introduce a project that took place at *Para/Site*, which I think might be relevant for this discussion.

The beginnings of *Para/Site* are set in another time in the history of contemporary art. It was founded in 1996 as an artist-run space. One of the reasons behind its creation seems to have been specific to Hong Kong: the lack of contemporary art institutions at the time. But more about this later. This lack was made even more obvious by the earlier opening of the *Hong Kong Museum of Art*, a museum that lacked satisfactory contemporary art programming.

The other important and perhaps more catalyzing reason for creating *Para/Site* was the impending handover of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997. That had been a looming deadline for over a decade and had perhaps a stronger effect on the city in that decade than the first years of Chinese rule, at least until the crises of 2003 and its main consequence: the firm integration of Hong Kong in the Chinese shopping polity.

So in the time of great uncertainty, a sense of heightened political awareness of the need for self-organization emerged in the

city's public sphere. Different groups, organizations, and structures appeared in this effervescence and *Para/Site* as an artist-run space with a noticeable political agenda, I would say, was only one of them.

But in spite of this historical specificity, the institution was in many ways the symptom of a global phenomenon. The lack of contemporary art institutions was, of course, something that was not only specific to Hong Kong, but an intoxicating mantra of a powerful driven force of expansion of the system of contemporary art that was accelerated in the middle of the 1990s throughout the world. Following great forces of economic expansion contemporary art throughout the world reproduced institutions, practices, and vocabularies.

The lack of contemporary art institutions started to be recognized for the first time as such in many different parts of the world, not just by the funders of *Para/Site* in Hong Kong. And it is important to know that the geography of expansion toward the margins did not only follow the old colonial routes of explorations. As margins within the central realms have been important pieces of this process, what occurred in Hong Kong, Singapore, and countless other places was analogous, at least in its main points, to what occurred in Glasgow, Scandinavia, and other parts of Europe.

However, the discussion on this phenomenon in non-Western currencies was often embedded in a postcolonial debate, even as the expansion has soon lost its direction from a Western center to its peripheries and became internalized and defining for a particular class in its locale.

In the same way, enormous malls and reality TV became more defining for the Manila middle classes than for its European counterparts. What encouraged this expansion was the opening, one after the

other, of nationally run economies with the institutions and class structures that supported either the socialist economies or the various forms of import substitution economies, such as Turkey.

While emerging and entering in a global market, the uniformizing of their consumer classes put a reformist pressure on the real and symbolic institutions that reflected the new status of their patrons. Contemporary art, of course, proved to be an ideal embodiment for these aspirations.

The methods of implementing the system relied on different agents, from biennials to residency programs, from newly established magazines to artists, curators, and gatekeepers. These were perhaps the most available formats that required minimal resources and benefited the pioneering ethos of the time of the artist-run space.

During that phase of expansion, the anchor institutions—and *Para/Site* was one of them in Hong Kong—were ambassadors, promoting the system and projecting production from their international surroundings, often toward the center, then circulated further within the system. Promotion, cultural exchange, and increased visibility became the institutional strategies around the world.

I am trying to argue that every context switch their time zone to something that we can call a universal time. This resetting of the clocks in the international art world and the broad synchronicity that this highly unified system and the common language of contemporary art that was brought about in the early 90s have not been imperfect phenomena when judged from the perspective of the entire cultural production of a time and region.

Many threads became only partially connected and some narratives are still untranslated in the vastly different realities of

production that were otherwise amalgamated by art. Nonetheless, when viewed from the perspective of contemporary art, the expansion appears much more successful and that is because of art's constitutive belief in its capacity for universal translation. And indeed, contemporary art has managed to impose a unified voice, common tools, mutually recognizable institutions, and a common language that has become available around the world.

But the question is, available for what exactly? What is the relevancy and power of these common institutions to negotiate the remaining and mutating differences I mentioned? Does contemporary art have the power to reconcile deep conflicts and frictions within cultural contexts? And if does, which might be the case; what do we actually gain from their salience? We have at our disposal this arrogant machinery that fails to tell the whole story. And its audiences are a growing middle class, the most homogenous, compact, and horizontal class in human history.

After almost two decades of successful expansion, which took place more in Hong Kong than anywhere else, we believe at *Para/Site* that the time has come to encourage this ambassadorial function and pioneering work of furthering the global institutional construction. But we also believe in accepting contemporary art as a place for approaching our reality, for creating new forms of solidarity, and perhaps even for approaching those specificities that exist alongside art throughout the world.

Now, we don't really know whether or not this premise is naively ambitious, as many other previous attempts to create vehicles for internationalism could take one toward a strategic mistake or a dead end. So in this regard, I would like to briefly introduce an exhibition that we realized at *Para/Site*, a

project that was based on aspirational premises as originally formulated with Mal Ancon. It was done together with curator Dorian Chong and the curatorial platform he initiated: *A Future Museum for China*. Dorian has been researching the artists in the exhibition and the connections between them for a while.

The exhibition is titled *Taiping Tianguo: A History of Possible Encounters*. It included Ai Weiwei, Frog King Kwok, Tehching Hsieh and Martin Wong in New York. *Taiping Tianguo*, the *Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peach—or Eternal Peace*, in some translations—was the name of the domain in southern China established by what we call the *Taiping Rebellion* in the mid-nineteenth century or the late *Qing Dynasty* period. The rebellion was one of the bloodiest in history and one of the most ideologically confusing movements of modern time. One mystic believed himself to be the brother of Jesus Christ and aimed to liberate China from the humiliating relationship of the *Qing Dynasty* with the Western colonial powers and establish a brotherhood between the Chinese and the West under his own brand of Christianity.

The *Taiping Rebellion* became for the Nationalists and Communists in China a historic precedent of revolution against the corrupt regime and of nationalist resistance against the subjugation by Western colonial powers. *Taiping Tianguo*, however, had also become a metonym for China in many Chinese diasporic communities in the 1960s, disconnected in space and time from what China was then, or perhaps at any time. And this metonymic value of *Taiping Tianguo* as a space of identification with a projected past was employed in a painting by Martin Wong. Referring perhaps to the San Francisco Chinatown of his childhood and perhaps also to the history of his gay community before the

AIDS crisis, it was used as the title of his posthumous exhibition, as well as our exhibition, borrowed as a metaphor for New York in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The time-space which was crucial for the lives and works of the artists in this exhibition is particularly important for us because the 1980s was the last decade before the onset of the globalized system, and the final stretch of an era where the art system was centered around New York and the international capitals of the art world. And the 1980s was also the first decade of contemporary art in China, a mythical time during which none of the four artists in our exhibition was even living in China, nor were any actively engaging in the emulation that was happening there.

In recent years, the four artists in the exhibition have come to prominence in different ways. While all of them are Chinese, they hail from different places, contexts, and lineages and are situated in wildly divergent art historical narratives and discursive matrices. Ai Weiwei is from mainland China, Tehching Hsieh from Taiwan, Frog King Kwok from Hong Kong, and Martin Wong from San Francisco. They all arrived in New York in the late 1970s to the early 1980s and lived there until the early 1990s. And Ai, Kwok, and Wong all returned to their hometowns in the early 1990s, while Hsieh is the only one who lives in New York and Martin Wong passed away in 1999.

Certain connections are known among these four artists. Some are anecdotal; some are highly relevant and on many intimate levels for their work and their lives. But what we tried to do in the exhibition was to propose an alternative narrative for each of the existing individual ones. Each of these artists made a plea for a non-national specific perspective and we like the overall way the different contexts are knitted together in the



exhibition. But the exhibition was also a plea for a particular mode of historiography through exhibition making.

We also looked at the artist in an effort to demonstrate that while their times in New York were powerful formative experiences for them, their artistic personalities had already been forming in their early years. Each of these artists followed his own path to New York. Each had his own aspirations toward the city, his representation of it, and in some cases, his departure from New York. Each of these cases is relevant not just for the individual biographies but for how they appear together. This is, I think, an interesting mark of the times.

Ai Weiwei, the youngest of them, arrived in New York as a student in 1983. He was an unknown figure but had nonetheless been connected, although quite marginally, with what we can safely call the founding moment of Chinese contemporary art, the *Qingqing*, or *Stars* group exhibition. The second exhibition was in 1980 at the China Art Gallery in Beijing, where he displayed a number of rather conventional watercolors, which can and should be read in the context of the *Stars* group exhibition as a strong political gesture.

As the artists in the group considered the sentimental appropriations of various styles of Western paintings, some of them were comments on Postimpressionism, some of them were abstract in various ways, but they considered these appropriations to be an expression of artistic subjectivity and individualism, which they, of course, regarded as political stances in a context that was just emerging from the *Cultural Revolution*.

But in any case, after being connected to this moment very early on, Ai moved to New York in a rather conventional story of moving to New York, an artist going to that center with all the ambitions and curiosity of one who wants to make it.

It is interesting here that from this perspective of his career his move was less successful, and after ten years in New York he did not really manage to make a name for himself, so he returned to Beijing only to emerge as who he was a few years after.

However, what is still to be recognized as the Ai Weiwei of our time was his incredible historical savvy and his ability to really capture the most emblematic moments in the history of New York in those ten years. An example is a photo Ai Weiwei took of Bill Clinton during his presidential campaign. Or Ai Weiwei with Allen Ginsberg, and at various protests that were rocking New York in the 1980s.

Frog King Kwok had already been established as a rather contrarian figure, almost like a punk avant la lettre in Hong Kong. He had been one of the four founders of conceptual art in Hong Kong in the late 1960s and early 70s and, by an uncontested claim, he was the author of the first piece of performance art in mainland China in 1979 in Tiananmen Square and at the Great Wall of China—only a few months away from the first *Stars* group exhibition. The association of these moments is something that had not been done before and was rarely discussed in the mainland-centered narrative of Chinese contemporary art.

Frog King's move to New York was less of a life-changing decision than in the case of the other artists. Pragmatically, for financial and visa reasons, as he was a British subject, a Hong Kong citizen, whereas both Ai Weiwei and Tehching Hsieh were illegal for most of their stay in New York.

In the 1990s Frog King went back to Hong Kong, also without furthering his career very much in New York. In Hong Kong he started to be recognized as one of the historical figures of a new phenomenon that was writing a history for itself—it was also part of the same development that I mentioned earlier.

Hsieh Tehching, the legendary Taiwanese performance artist, moved legally to New York, and I think the decision of his move was much more of a logical step in his art life. He moved after abandoning painting in Taiwan and after doing his only performance there, which was, basically, jumping from the second floor of a building. And then the next logical step was to move to New York to start his legendary year-long performances, like the one where he lived in a cage for one year, or living outdoors in New York for one full year. He remained in New York and that is consistent with the skepticism about being included in different narratives of Taiwanese or Asian art.

And lastly, of course, was Martin, a Chinese American from California, who passed away in 1999 of AIDS. He was associated with the *Coquettes*; with the 'radical cur' movement group; with *Angels of Light*, the more radical spinoff of the *Coquettes*. He was a painter of Chinatown and its obsessions, a painter of the Puerto Rican community, and a painter who very much explored his fetish for New York firemen and policemen.

I would like to take a moment and look more closely at one painting that Martin did in 1998. It is one of his last works, called *Essex Street*, which is a street in the Lower East Side in New York. And it is in many ways a declaration of love to the city he aspired to, where he lived the meaningful moments of his life, where he got sick. It was a city that he had not seen for three years at the time he painted this, having moved to die in his mother's house in California. New York was a city that he would never see again. The heavy, brick-brown, enormous sky has it all there, the melancholy of the aspirations past, the hopeful projections, and the mournful remembrance.

But if we choose to tell our story through this painting and we chose to take New York for one last time as a metonym for contemporary art, we see the aspirations invested in it as well as a looming overwhelming crisis. We can't tell for sure though, like in this painting, whether what is fading away are the aspirations or the city itself, under the crises.

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### *Questions and Answers*

*Cosmin Costinas and Chin-Tao Wu*

Question: Chin-tao, I wanted to ask you what kind of conclusions can we draw from your study of this fashion museums or fashion institutions? I suppose there's two questions. One is—have you looked at more traditional sorts of museums which would be related to a public sphere more directly—whether there's a difference in the experience of the uses of those spaces between the fashion palaces if you like, and the existing museums as we know them more familiarly now. And also, are you suggesting, in a way, that those public sphere institutions are becoming redundant in this process? In other words, that this is the replacement version of cultural consumption. Do you see what I mean? What is the relationship between these institutions that you're talking about and institutions which are, to a large extent, represented in CIMAM? Can you talk to that?

Chin-Tao Wu: I think most of these institutions—fashion houses, which have galleries or exhibition spaces, are actually not very popular for the general audience in their own location. So you go to Seoul's *Maison Hermès* and there is very small audience; there won't be more than three or four people each time I went there, or even in Tokyo. It's a really nice space; it's a pity but going to this shop is

already very intimidating. If you are a student, which is most of our audience—students or middle class—you don't normally go to this kind of shop so it is actually quite intimidating to get in there. As a result they have very low attendance generally. Of course, if they have an opening or something, the local audience will go there, but most of the time they are not functioning. I don't know about the Hermès film studio; how many people go there. I think they serve a kind of function, more as a kind of image-making rather than normal art museums. But what we cannot say from the conclusion is that because *Louis Vuitton Foundation for Creation* (has a building) and the *Prada Foundation* they will be more like museums rather than these scary spaces within the shop. I think there are still different audiences implied in these two different kinds of spaces. Have I answered your question?

Follow-up question: Not quite.

Kian Chow Kwok: —Could it be that it is intended; that they are supposed to be elitist and have a very small audience? But even that is changing; with Louis Vuitton in Paris they are actually intending to be a museum so, is there a change now?

Chin-Tao Wu: I am not sure about what Louis Vuitton will be doing in their new museum because among all the brands there are different approaches to what they do with regards to contemporary art. Louis Vuitton is one of the companies who have put their commercial agenda on top of everything. They hire Murakami to design their bags, which cost thousands of dollars. So Louis Vuitton is actually slightly different from Hermès. Hermès is a bit more modest and much more quiet in the way they approach contemporary art.

Cosmin Costinas: I think that this kind of shop actually has a very direct influence on our institutions and museums. The way in which the experience is being designed in these spaces becomes the experience that is being expected from museums. I think there's a very direct connection there. There is a level of expectation that comes from the whole engine of the media and our culture and how these experiences are being colluded. It can also come from the architects themselves. They spend so much time doing this kind of building that when they are commissioned a museum they just revamp the same kind of aesthetic, so it probably comes from there. The influence is there I think, and it is very pervasive.

Kian Chow Kwok: Indeed we are all familiar with the names, and I don't mean Hermès and Vuitton but the artists and the architects. We still have five minutes. Next question, please.

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Question: Cosmin, you kept putting the 'lack' in quotation marks. Could you expand on that a little bit?

Cosmin Costinas: Those institutions were obviously not there—the institutions that are now—but the fact that their absence was recognized as an absence—it's the lack of contemporary art institutions. Many of these contexts had institutions of art; had modern art museums or museums or art—it is almost like there is an ontological difference between institutions that were there, and might have even dealt with artists who were living and who were not so remote in time from what was the category of contemporary art. I guess the point I tried to make was that contemporary art was regarded as a separate category; as an autonomous ontological

category which had to come with its own new institutions. And when the need for this new category was recognized, then also the fact that these institutions weren't there was mentioned as such. But I wasn't necessarily critical of it, and definitely not to the founders of *Para/Site* and to many people that built in this context. I worked with institutions that appeared as responses to this situation but it is something that nonetheless shaped very much the moment, I think.

Follow-up question: Because when you put it in quotation marks I thought also perhaps you were talking about a particular kind of absence or lack that also inscribes a particular kind of institutional practice to move into that gap or absence, which would then satisfy the lack or the absence, which is already premeditated by the 'general institution'. For me, particularly *Para/Site* and Asia Art Archive don't particularly look like institutions that actually satisfy that deficit that is projected.

Cosmin Costinas: Yes, but that is something that was inherent in the point that I tried to make because, indeed, it is not about dismissing this phenomenon. Many of these people who wanted to build institutions were very much aware of the paradox and the ambivalence that was there: that you can say there was a process of being agents of reproducing a system. But also the point I try to make and my ambivalence toward contemporary art and toward this system in general, is neither to dismiss it nor to fully embrace it uncritically because it comes with and ambivalence. You do reproduce models that are there; that have expanded because of a particular economic model that came there, but once we are in this together we should take it as a premise and work with it.

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Question: Next year there will be a lot of new changes in contemporary art in Hong Kong: the *Kowloon Art Centre*, and there is also the art fair—*Art Basel Hong Kong*—which will come to Hong Kong, so that will massively influence the city. I was wondering how you will position your space, which is a very old space and has a big influence on the experimental art in Hong Kong.

Cosmin Costinas: These are two different things. There is the museum and the art fair and of course, they are substantially different projects and we are looking forward to the opening of the museum. From the perspective of the government of Hong Kong, even more than from the curatorial perspective of the museum, I think that it's quite remarkable, and quite unique in the emerging world, that they went for the more sophisticated and more difficult path of not importing a Guggenheim but of building something from Hong Kong and something that is actually the result of a process of thinking what would be relevant for Hong Kong and for the region. And the art fair is something that has its own logics. It comes and goes. It's something that obviously has a huge impact on the context.

What I mentioned at the beginning – that Hong Kong is emblematic for this sense of optimism and positive thinking, is definitely a consequence of the fair and that large boom that is going on in Hong Kong as a direct consequence of that. Because I remember the first time I went to Hong Kong, seven years ago, the institutional landscape was pretty much the same. There was a general lament of 'there's nothing around; we're somehow caught in between the different booms that are going on in the region'. That was really at the height of the Chinese boom and the

Korean boom, and everybody was ignoring Hong Kong. Not many things have actually changed; what changed automatically was the psychology: there is now this enhanced sense of optimism.

Wednesday  
14 November  
2012

## Keynote 3: On a False Democracy of Contemporary Art

Good morning everyone, and welcome to the third and final session of the 2012 CIMAM conference, it is my pleasure now to introduce you to Ketí Chukhrov, who holds a PhD in comparative literature and is an associate professor at the *Russian State University*. We have seen, we have read many of her contributions to numerous art magazines where she writes widely on philosophy and art theory. It is my pleasure to welcome Ketí Chukhrov and invite her to take the floor. Thank you.

*Bartomeu Mari*

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*Ketí Chukhrov*  
*Philosopher, Berlin / Moscow*

*On a False Democracy of Contemporary Art*

i

Historically there have been two methodologies of resisting the complacency of cultural industry and the reliance of bourgeois society on the judgment of taste. One was the modernist stance: it required extreme estrangement and abstaining from the alienated capitalist reality; it turned the art work into a piece, blocking perception, pleasure, or taste judgment, so that such work would rather exist in extra-social conditions than be perceived by a society that can never evade capitalist economy and cultural industry. This was the standpoint of Theodor Adorno.

Another position—the avant-garde one—resisted the bourgeois culture and its traditions of connoisseurship via dissolving art within life and making the life a matter of political and social transformation. Both stances reached their utmost in the 1960s and 1970s. Contemporary art embraced both of them. But today these legacies—albeit continually reenacted, reinstated, and revisited—nevertheless lose their social and aesthetic viability.

Such decline has reasons: the modernist reductionism and rigidity long ago turned into successful abstract art production. The formalist or abstract tendencies had not been able to further revolutionize their methodologies in their striving to detach the piece from perceptive pleasure. On the contrary, formalism's once-extreme negative rigidity is compelled to fit into a regime of a Kantian object of beauty producing judgment of taste.

But what happened to the avant-garde's rhetoric is even more inconsistent. The historical avant-garde's openness toward life and politics happened to become the mainstream of critical but still institutionally commissioned art activity that resisted frameworks. That was motivated, to a certain extent, by the fact that the institutions themselves became self-critical, flexible, and often creative subjects of production—sometimes along with the artist or even instead of an artist.

The reason we have to still keep referring to avant-garde is because contemporary art continues to reproduce the belief in art's emancipatory and democratizing impact

on social infrastructures. Meanwhile, according to Adorno or even Peter Burger, if art's strategies of dissolution in life do not coincide with the radical social transformation, then art's claim about its political engagement is not valid. Dissolving art within life in the conditions of capitalist production and economy is different from doing the same in the framework of non-capitalist economy. Convergence with the life forms without reinventing these forms in a really expanded social sphere means either creating autonomous communities (we know of many such since the 1960s), or expanding into the living forms of capitalist production. In other words, applying avant-garde's rhetoric without expanded social change and the reconstruction of the economy machine (private property logic) just flattens and absorbs what John Roberts calls 'art's infinite ideation'.<sup>5</sup> Art thus claims that at this expense it expands

5 John Roberts, 'The Curator as Producer: Aesthetic Reason, Nonaesthetic Reason, and Infinite Ideation', in *Manifesta Journal* 10 (2010), pp. 51–57: 'Now cognitively and epistemologically, this is true: artists have no special native attributes that distinguish their skills from non-artistic skills. Artists are not the possessors of inherent powers of creativity. . . . And this, indeed, is the great liberatory thrust of the twentieth-century avant-garde and modernism, to which Benjamin's writing on the author as producer contributed. Art's possible meaning, function, and aesthetic value, is necessarily bound up with its democratic distribution. But if these conditions of production and distribution have altered the intellectual landscape of art, this does not mean that what artists do is no different from what non-artists do. Artists may imitate and borrow from the skills and attributes of non-artists, but what artists might make of these skills and attributes is necessarily very different from non-artistic practices. For, if art is above all sets what opens itself up to infinite ideation (Friedrich Schlegel), artistic practices necessarily set out from a place very different from non-artistic reasons', p. 55.

into the sphere of social transformation and genuine democracy. Yet paradoxically, art's ambition for direct social engagement and its self-abandonment loops back to the very territory of contemporary art, its archive machine, and its self-referential rhetoric of historicizing. Hence the question is the following: Do we really witness the anti-capitalist transformation that excuses art's self-sublation and its dissolution in the newly transformed life? This was the case with the Russian avant-garde and its almost eschatological attitude to reality. On the other hand, when observing the endless propagation of contemporary art pieces pretending to be challenging in their play with forms and contexts, one might well understand the decision to abandon such modes of art production in favor of social issues.

While claiming the extreme social openness and political commitment of avant-garde's impact on the society, contemporary art—de facto, in its economic disposition—happens to be part and parcel of post-fordist alienated production. So it claims democratic and resisting values in narratives but happens to be a non-socialized, non-democratic, quasi-modernist realm in its means of production and sense. Resisting attitudes and constructed situations are often used in art as externalized, abstract, and formalized actualities rather than necessities stemming from the material and immanent bond with the political constellations.

Hito Steyerl approaches this condition from the other end. Considering the mutation that the avant-garde's aspirations of fusing with life underwent in recent times, she observes the opposite effect of such goal—



life being occupied by art.<sup>6</sup> However, it is that very art that pretends to be dissolved in life, but de facto absorbs life into its all expanding but still self-referential territory.

The system of art believes in its social, micro-revolutionary, democratic engagement. But since the social and economic infrastructure is privatized and not at all commonwealth, the social-democratic values happen to be declared or represented, while the ethics with which contemporary art has to deal with the social space is based on the canons of modernism's negativity, which internalizes, absorbs, and neutralizes the outer reality and its confusions, even though all this might be done quite involuntarily. We all believe that contemporary art's new geographies and extended public impact make the art venues the public space. Nominally it is definitely so. But while showing its openness and acceptability on the level of cultural event-making, the logic of inscribing into contemporary art's archive and history is far from being public and requires knowledge of the rules and regulations of such inscription. It doesn't mean that somebody is concealing such logic from social space, but that the art functions in the above-mentioned two regimes: (1) open publicity and (2) the

rigid rules of art's self-historicizing, dating back to modernism.

One of the important symptoms of such a contradictory condition of contemporary art at present was the *Berlin Biennale 2012*. Its claim was that if political and social ambitions of art happen to be socially futile then the art territory, the art institution should be occupied by efficient social practices not generated by art production. If the political claim of the artist is social change and the artistic production is not able to accomplish it, then the decision is to find those groups that are more efficient in social work and let them occupy the institution, thus maybe attempting the collapse of the art institution in favor of its becoming the socially efficient tool. This was the standpoint of A. Žmievsky.

However, even in this case, the resisting procedures happened to be contained within the institution. And in the end, maybe involuntarily, such a strategy of Žmievsky seems to be another strong gesture of classical modernist iconoclasm and reductionism rather than social expansion—iconoclasm not of an image or an art piece, but of an institution, internalized by that very institution (as it happened with the modernist picture, which internalized the collapse of the image and its depth).

This gesture is 'anti-art'. in terms of modernism's negativism, not the anti-art in the terms of the avant-garde's productivism. Why? Because such gesture is a revenge on contemporary art as an institution and practice, for being impotent in its transformative social potentialities and therefore like an anarchist Dadaist act. At the same time, Žmievsky's view—which discloses the inefficient references of contemporary art to its avant-garde heritage—might be more honest than the optimistic and positivist belief in educational, political, or social efficiency of contemporary art at present. The ambition for

6 Hito Steyerl, "Art as Occupation: Claims for an *Autonomy of Life*", in H. Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen* (Sternberg Press, e-flux journal, 2012), p. 110. 'Nowadays, the invasion of life by art is not the exception, but the rule. Artistic autonomy was meant to separate art from the zone of daily routine—from mundane life, intentionality, utility, production, and instrumental reason—in order to distance it from rules of efficiency and social coercion. But this incompletely segregated area then incorporated all that it broke from in the first place, recasting the old order within its own aesthetic paradigms. The incorporation of art within life was once a political project, but the incorporation of life within art is now an aesthetic project'.

social change definitely confirms the progressive and democratic reputation of art institutions, but the question is whether this ambition can be correlated with the effectuation of any considerable social change. Thus, maybe even against his will, Žmievsky emphasized the thesis of Adorno, according to which art's behaving as democracy is hypocritical in the conditions of privatized economy. But he also tried to show that such democracy happens to unfold in a hermetic, self-referential realm—self-referential, because such is the logic according to which contemporary art history is being recorded.

So the life-constructing, or even utilitarian, act on art's behalf preserves its political and artistic impact only in the conditions of the politics of the radically expanded commonwealth. In any other situation to demand from the artist or an art institution to influence directly social conditions compels one to conform to mainstream policies of liberal democracy and its social design. As an example, I could mention that the recent urban projects of pro-Kremlin image-makers such as Vladislav Surkov call for the utilitarian practices of historical avant-garde, which have to foster art's social efficiency and its participatory potentialities and unite the artists, architects, sociologists, and philosophers in the interdisciplinary project of constructing the new urban and social networks. This is quite an eloquent case of appropriation of public and participatory art by the government, of depoliticizing it and turning it into applied design.

## ii

Another tendency, going counter to the one discussed above, is claiming the apology of aesthetics, and it is critical to art's sublation in favor of social and activist goals. The discussion on reviving the dimension of

aesthetics and the aesthetic judgment in contemporary art had been initiated by Rancière's *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*<sup>7</sup> and has been since then an issue in doubting contemporary art's claims for the direct participation and social or political efficiency. Thus we are pressed between false openness of democracy and re-establishing the outdated notion of aesthetics. The question is whether the category of aesthetics can be applied in reference to modern and contemporary practices that were not conceived as aesthetic experience at all.

The principal incoherence here lies in the fact that aesthetics in Kant's third critique applies to the notion of the beautiful—albeit universal, transcendental, disinterested, and shared by society's *sensus communis*, but still the beautiful—the dimension residing in sensitivity and not compatible with the cognitive, with the noumena, the conceptual.

As early as in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, the regime of aesthetic contemplation and the judgment of taste, as well as the dimension of aesthetics altogether, had to desert the artwork and the modes of its production and reflection on it. The incompatible aesthetic judgments would be with the contemporary art languages, inherited from avant-garde practices. Why? Because even in Kant's critique, the Beautiful is in counterpoint with the Sublime and already in early Romanticism had been superseded by it: the Sublime is the dimension that goes beyond the aesthetic contemplation—toward the extra-sensitive and cognitive search for the idea, for the unknown, ineffable, unimaginable, driven by death drive, not perceivable, etc. Adorno's argument in *Aesthetic Theory* is that the Kantian cluster consisting of disinterested

7 Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

pleasure, the Beautiful, and the judgment of taste does not stand for the *Universality of the Artistic*.

It is exactly for associating modernist and avant-garde practices with the sublime, for suspending the regime of the aesthetic, that Rancière rebukes Lyotard, Badiou, and Adorno.<sup>8</sup> One might argue here whether the horizontal, life-constructing social practices of the avant-garde could be associated at all with the category of the sublime. The sublime is often taken metaphorically as a synonym for metaphysics in art or as a Wagnerian kind of sublimity so fiercely criticized in works by Adorno, Nancy, and Lacoue-Labarthe. But in fact, the sublime in Kant's logic is the knowledge about infinity—or about the borderline between knowledge and the infinity—haunting a thinker and an artist. But also the sublime is what Lacan meant by the Real and Deleuze meant by Event. It is something that is happening in its irreversibility, and the artistic repetition then deals with clearing up what that very incomprehensible thing was that happened.

While following Kant's critique, the sublime should be understood here as a logical category, presupposing the cognitive, extra-sensitive capacity of mind and its power to envision its own limit in reference to the incomprehensible. The Russian avant-garde, being guided by the idea of a new world and presupposing revolutionary movements as the medium of its achievement, was definitely closer to the logical category of the sublime than to the aesthetic one. But it is also important that the Russian avant-garde was the satellite of revolution and therefore its goals were not confined to art's dissolution in the social field but were aimed at re-invention

of the new social dispositions in accordance with what happened in the realm of real politics.

In this connection I would mention that when referring today to the political efficacy of the Russian avant-garde's practices, many interpretations overlook the eschatological dimension in the works and activity of avant-garde artists. It is generally considered that there were some esoteric themes developed predominantly by Malevich, but all other artists—such as Sergey Tretyakov or the LEF and Proletkult members—simply went public. Nevertheless, this is probably a simplistic attitude to the Russian avant-garde's social activism. Because even for such figures from the productivist circle as Alexander Gastev or Boris Arvatov, the artist's goal—while it might have been converging with life or even shifting art production toward utilitarian values—had to merge with such kind of life that in itself would be a new, non-utilitarian life. This demand is often forgotten when art's sublation by activist creative practices is discussed. The art of the Russian avant-garde aspired to reject itself for social experience, but the social experience itself had to be aimed at something in some sense sublime—sublime, because political aspiration for the new socialist order made life quite non-utilitarian.

But let's return to the issues of aesthetics in the conditions of contemporary post-aesthetic production. Why is Rancière so optimistic about aesthetics if the contemporary art production is often so remote from aesthetic values? Rancière, relying on Kant, makes a convincing effort to prove that Kant's analysis of the extra-aesthetic of the sublime is not nevertheless detached from the realm of the aesthetic and the taste judgment. That's why he disagrees with Lyotard, for whom the sublime object is something that could not be grasped by the mind: hence the

8 Ibid., see the section '*Antinomies of Modernism*', pp. 61–107.

ungraspability of the idea, of the sublime that can only be transposed into art via extremely negative, transgressive experiences.<sup>9</sup>

But according to Rancière, Kant's argument with respect to the sublime is the following: in the case of confronting the sublime, the inability of imagination to represent for the mind, what the mind with its aspiration for the sublimity requires from imagination, only confirms the power of the mind. It means that unlike imagination, the mind is still able to envision and even incorporate the unimaginable and unthinkable, i.e., the sublime as its limit, as the mind's limit. For Kant, such a mind still keeps itself as the supreme moral background for the development of the imagination, no matter how limited that imagination happens to be. So the mind that knows about the negative and the unimaginable intersects with the sensitive experience and compels the imagination to expand itself. This for Rancière means that no matter what the divergences from aesthetics were in the history of contemporary artistic production, aesthetic judgment still is the most politically viable tool to govern art and to account for art's universality.<sup>10</sup> The proximity of the unknown or unimaginable does not annul the aesthetic dimension. In *The Aesthetic Unconscious* Rancière extends this argument, insisting that Freud's interpretation of the unconscious did not presuppose any entropy of Nietzschean type or any nihilist void 'irreducible to logos'. On the contrary, Freud's unconscious preserves the capacity of differentiating the 'figured beneath the figurative and visual beneath the repre-

sented'.<sup>11</sup> It keeps the repository for the work of fantasy. Rancière quotes Freud's statement from his 'The Moses of Michelangelo',<sup>12</sup> where Freud refuses to ascribe the power of art to the sublime: 'Possibly indeed, some writer on aesthetics has discovered that this state of intellectual bewilderment is a necessary condition when a great work of art is to achieve its greatest effects. It would only be with the greatest reluctance that I could bring myself to believe in any such necessity'.

Thus for Rancière, art remains in the grip of the experience of the sensitive difference—no matter how strong the influences of idea, of the ethical, the ideological, the unconscious, the catastrophic can be on it. In the *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* he fiercely argues with the standpoint of Badiou's 'Inaesthetic', where Badiou posits art as the truth procedure, which unfolds as the transmitting of the infinite into the finite, and where the goal is the infinite, the idea, the eventual. (Badiou's inaesthetics happens to be counter-aesthetics, not in the name of abandoning art but in favor of bringing it to further intensity and precision.)

An important point that Rancière emphasizes in his pro-aesthetic argument is the Schillerian free play, characterizing a work of art that can only be perceived via immanence of an art piece. It is precisely such immanence of free play that constructs the dimension of the transcendental connecting the empirical and the transcendent. The transcendentalism of aesthetics is universal because it is shared by the community via taste judgment. By this argument Rancière definitely does justice to Kant when proving that Kant's mind (the in-aesthetic category)

9 Ibid., see the chapter 'Lyotard and the Aesthetics of the Sublime: A Counter-reading of Kant', pp. 88–107, 93–94.

10 As was mentioned above, Adorno rejects such standpoint for art's universality.

11 Jacques Rancière, *The Aesthetic Unconscious* (Polity Press, 2009), p. 62.

12 Ibid., p. 84, quoted from Sigmund Freud, 'The Moses of Michelangelo', Standard Edition, 13: 211–12.

rather draws the incomprehensible and the sublime to the territory of the sensitive, places it on the imaginary 'pictur'. contemplated, so that the sublime happens to be comprised in the frame of what is meant by *Aussicht*.

But while extrapolating this Kantian disposition on contemporary art, Rancière abandons Adorno's pessimistic standpoint, which being apologetic about the immanence of form in art, is nevertheless separating the art piece from the aesthetic dimension. Adorno calls Kant's disinterested pleasure 'the castrated hedonism'.<sup>13</sup> For Adorno the art work's immanence is the extremity of artistic methodology that distills into form. But the form's immanence in Adorno's interpretation means the same as the spirit would mean for Hegel. Adorno's form is a reified idea—the idea that the capitalist society dialectically sublates itself in favor of an artistic form or methodology that becomes its own idea. This happens to alienate the alienation and it is this impasse precisely that brings art to autonomy.

It is definitely true that Kant's aesthetics do not make an incommensurable split between the aesthetic and the sublime. But what is clear is that art since then, and especially since modernism, had to question and doubt a *sensus communis* of the society (the claim of aesthetics and of taste judgment for the common and universal) that was neither ethically nor economically common. And it was precisely the social alienation that brought about the inability to claim the notion of aesthetics valid as the dimension of the common and the general. Whether alienation was aestheticized and brought to the extreme as in modernism, or being resisted via tools of de-alienation as in avant-garde, the dimension of aesthetics (which Kant stated as being

neither cognition nor desire) had been historically redundant for the art of modernity in comparison to so many features constructing what the sublime could stand for—the idea, the uncanny, the transgressive, the subversive, the conceptual, etc.

So what art has lost in the long run of its modernist, postmodern, and contemporary stages is not at all the aesthetics. Nor is it the direct force of transformation. Such force belonged to political avant-garde, i.e., to revolution, for which the artistic avant-garde could only be a satellite. Moreover, it is a delusion that aesthetics had ever been art's chief value and can now 'sav'. the practices deprived of aesthetic specificity. If we look back at art history, this self-rejection of aesthetics in favor of open eventualities and contingent intensities was always there.

If anyone were to ask Adorno whether the classical Viennese music school was aesthetically more valid than the new Viennese music, he would never define pre-modernist music as more aesthetically viable. That is because any art work for Adorno was rather seen as a dialectic struggle with the matter and the idea by the subject, whereas aesthetic dimension would rather be manifested in perception of art or even its digestion, rather than conceiving and production. And if we refer back to aesthetics, we should have in mind that aesthetics is a discipline about perception, it does not unravel the genesis and genealogy of art production and the intentionalities of a creative process.

It was probably Nietzsche who most articulately showed the correlation between the realm of the sublime (the tragic) and the artistic (aesthetic). And in this case the sublime is not at all something elevated or pathetic, but rather the limit of human rational comprehensibility, of emotional endurance and social protection.

13 Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 11.

It is interesting in this connection the dimension that Nietzsche in his *Birth of Tragedy* gives to the notion of 'aesthetic play', which he borrows from Goethe but which initially comes from Schiller. Here aesthetic play meant a counteraction to the catharsis criticized by Nietzsche for its being just a physiological satisfaction for the audience. But for Nietzsche the aesthetic play is quite far from the Kantian understanding of aesthetics. It is a very specific category, probably not fully articulated by Nietzsche himself. In his case, aesthetic play does not mean a universal, transcendental contemplation of beauty, or a judgment, but an act of playful and artistic exceeding of the tragic event.

Aesthetic play is a tragic event's performative paradox. In this case, aesthetic play is not epistemologically different from the sublime, but is rather the paradoxical reaction to the tragic event's sublimity. It is literally an artistic and maybe an absurd play being unexpectedly unfolded in the proximity of the tragic event. And that is actually what tragedy is—playing when playing would be most out of place or absurd, quite similar to the performative speech of Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*, when Socrates eloquently philosophizes with his disciples despite his inability to speak since half of his body is already paralyzed by poison. (Maybe among the few artists who have dealt with these issues recently would be Rabih Mroue in art or Lars von Trier in film.)

### iii

If the avant-gardist sublation of art was in the name of something more important than art—something that therefore art should aspire to—today this tradition got transformed into a loosening of art in the name of its fusion with middle-class creative activity—democratic,

available, accessible, circulated. Art is as permissive as ever in its all-inclusive set of observations, comments, documents, experiences, forms of activism, and creativity. In this case, democracy becomes synonymous with reducing the artistic dimension to the flow of mundane needs, as if those who happen to be detached from culture would not be able to have the capacity of experiencing the dimension of the non-mundane or non-utilitarian, or to grasp the dimension of the general, the category which is as artistic as it is ethical and political. But strangely, while contemporary art practices tend to simplify or flatten many experiences that constitute the conditions of the existential (which does not at all mean dissolved in the existence and identified with it empirically), the ethical, or the eventual, the contemporary art as institute becomes very complex, refined, and selective in terms of contextual, technological, and discursive packaging. In allowing to provide any piece of practice, activity, or experience as an art work, contemporary art demonstrates utter democracy, but in its demands of packaging this material—without which it would be impossible to get into contemporary art's archive—it happens to be surprisingly undemocratic and exclusive.

Contemporary art's impact becomes contradictory when it simultaneously self-re-signs and goes for educating the public. This kind of education often deals with demonstrating the tools of criticality in the open social sphere, which is a noble goal unless such activity is, in the end, still framed as artistic per se and included into exhibiting practice as an artwork. The problem of many art activist practices is that they claim two standpoints at a time—social work and this social work being art, teaching public to be critical and identifying it with teaching public the art. The logic here is the following: I do not do art in favor of social activity, but since

social activity is more important than just artistic work, we should not care whether what we do is art. But since I am an artist, what I do, even though it is not art, goes into an art archive that sublated itself in the name of social work and then commemorated such sublation in an art institution as an art piece. And the society takes this non-art as the art's being socially active and democratic.

Such an approach resides on the premise that the majority of people who do not do art would be more up for some sort of loose quasi-creative practices, and hence for them, art should not demonstrate complexity and intensities that they are not able to grasp.

Complex art is considered to be bourgeois. It needs skills, connoisseurship, and culture that can only belong to the socially privileged. Therefore, when dealing with the zones of the socially unprivileged, art should reject its artistic features (complexities, paradoxes, involvement). But here is where the argument lies. If art is about refined aesthetic difference and taste, if it is reduced to skills needed for its perception, or skills acquired by long-term education to produce it, then such argument has reasons. But if art is seen via existential, eventual, and ethical dimensions, then it is not coincident with education, nor dependent on social advantages or taste. Then the art's complexity turns out to be about those issues that are embedded in anyone's personal or social life, in acting in it or reflecting on it.

So when participatory or socially engaged projects denigrate art in the name of non-art—yet looked upon as democratic art practice—they often ignore the fact that those whom they integrate into education or participation might be able to think and act in terms of ethical, artistic, and general dimensions no less than any artist or thinker. Not heeding this point, they underestimate so many capacities in human life that are not reduced to skills and education.

Thus, those who reject art for its artistic procedure reduce art to aesthetic edification and skills. Hence the paradox: the more democratic art tends to be, the less it is open for those who constitute the demos.

It is interesting to compare this situation with the Russian productivists' going public when they collaborated and communicated with the workers and peasants at the factories and collective farms. Sergey Tretyakov, who visited numerous collective farms for the reportages, would rather get educated himself, from workers, to learn what labor in new social conditions was. He would partake of the proletarian culture rather than teach the workers or document their being deprived of certain merits—cultural or political—since the proletarians were considered to be the subject of history, its eventual site. Therefore the life and labor of proletarians could be associated with the revolution (the sublime?) and become the field of study and desire at the same time. Strangely, the disposition was the same with the Russian critical realism of nineteenth-century social democracy—to learn existential and ethical lessons from the socially unprivileged, rather than teach them or label them into the panopticon of social precariousness.

Today the problem facing many contemporary art practices—also due to their close proximity to institutions and commissioned frameworks of production—is that they fell out of constructed aesthetics, as well as what stood for non- or post-aesthetic extremities (the sphere of the sublime). They fell out of modernism's canon of innovative rigidity as well as out of the avant-garde's utopian horizon. But they failed to return to the practices of pre-modernist realisms, because contemporary art languages cannot help but reduce the dimension of the event and consider the anthropology of the event as the outdated, almost anachronistic rudiment of art.

Meanwhile, what became so important in the highly institutionalized poetics of contemporary art are the languages of self-installing, self-instituting, and self-historicizing in the frame of what constructs the contemporary art as territory. The context in this case is not historical, aesthetical, artistic, or even political, but rather is institutional. So the subject of art is neither so much the artist, nor the artistic methodology of any kind, nor the matter out of reality, but the very momentum of institutional affiliation with the contemporary art's progressive geopolitics.

This brings us to a strange condition. Today art is predominantly an institute and contemporary art is the embodiment of this condition of hyper-institutionalization, in which art practice itself is subsequent to the institution, while some time ago the art practice was anticipating in its contingency the institutional tools of recording it. I say institute and not institution, because it is no more the question of bureaucracy governing creative practice, but the creative practice itself. Or it is an art piece not possible without internalizing contemporary art as institute, implicitly posited as its principal and primary motivation for production.

To put it in a simple and a bit pathetic way—art exhausts if it doesn't take interest beyond the limits of art—this 'beyond'. can be the sublime, the real, the existence, the signified—once denounced in so many modernist or postmodernist practices. But paradoxically, to deal with the non-artistic realms—with the reality and existence—art needs extra-existential, specifically artistic means not identified with aesthetics at all. Yet the paradigmatic condition of today is that art's *Real* or its *Other* and *Sublime* is the contemporary art institute itself.

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### Questions and Answers

*Keti Chukhrov*

Bartomeu Mari: Thank you, thank you very much Keti for your inspiring words and I had for 85 percent of your lecture a question that you have answered in the remaining time so if are there other questions for Keti Chukhrov?

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Question: Good morning and thanks Keti Chukhrov for your talk. It was quite inspiring and I have some questions, actually I have two questions. First, why do you take the sublime out of aesthetics? Because in Kant it is part of aesthetics, it's different from beauty but it's part of aesthetics. That's one point; and the second point is, you said that you want to think, you first listed a number of notions that you mentioned that need to be reconfigured or rethought and you liked democracy and the aesthetics and of course you were in a way pointing to Rancière, but I want to remember Hannah Arendt because I think for Hannah Arendt these two words, democracy and aesthetics, are really important, and the way she reads Kant to rethink them.

Keti Chukhrov: Definitely. *Sensus communis* as well.

Follow-up question: Yes, *sensus communis* as well, and what I think is interesting is the way that for Hannah Arendt to link democracy and aesthetics is in a way to criticize the notion of political efficiency and this is something that when you criticize you want to think political efficiency and if you want to rethink aesthetics and democracy I think you need to criticize the idea of political efficiency, and well, in the aim of plurality.



Keti Chukhrov: I completely understood your stand point and position, thanks for your question. Well I think that of course I definitely agree that in Kant the sublime is part and parcel of aesthetics and moreover Kant is even saying that it's nice to sit in your room and ruminate about these dangers and unimaginable catastrophes that are still far from you but that are somehow inspiring you as the otherness, as your otherness but I mean the social history proved that these two notions had to be divided, these two notions happened to be divided, why? Because, I try to mention it, probably I was not, I was not doing it detailed enough, the question is that as soon as you have a division of labor, as soon as you have the non-common space, the aesthetic judgment is experiencing the closure, and the *sensus communis* is experiencing the crisis.

Therefore, already if you take early Romanticism, it is far from Kant's complacency about this harmonic coexistence of the beauty and the sublime—why? Because the society sucks, you know? Because you cannot share anything from the society, you cannot go into *sensus communis* with the society, so with whom will you produce this universal aesthetic judgment, you don't want the others to share the aesthetic judgment with you just because you claim they're not worth it, they don't deserve to produce this aesthetic judgment and this post-revolutionary subject was regarding the new bourgeois society as such society that did not deserve to do art with that romantic subject, you know? This is something that is there in literature of late Romanticism, and further goes into the modernist tradition. The modernist tradition is very negative; it is very iconoclastic, and it has no complacent optimism about harmonic coexistence of subjects within a social sphere where they can share their aesthetic judgments, so aesthetic judgment is a critical

category that got blocked with modernism, definitely this happened—this happened, but, this is the reason why Kantian critique cannot be revisited because historically it had been undermined.

As for Hannah Arendt probably I cannot answer you directly because this was actually a comment on your belief rather than a question, because well, Hannah Arendt believes that the universal fear is constructed within the civil society, by means of the civil society, by some kind of agglomeration or, I don't know, collection and gathering of civil individuals, citizens. And this brings us to the universal political realm where something can be performed, something positive and something emancipatory can be performed. But there is also another tradition where the universal is not just the gathering of individuals but universal notions and values had to be experienced by each individual—yes, this is a completely different tradition that is claimed by Badiou and probably this is the reason why when he claims an aesthetics categories he's not claiming in aesthetics in favor of sublation art but in favor of excluding art. Art is not belonging to the social sphere, it is extraordinary, and only this capacity for each individual to be universal and extra-social makes then understand the non-individuality. Only the capacity to understand the non-individual values, the sublime values can make you understand something beyond your individual needs; this is the stand point of Badiou and probably this is a bigger argument to make the counterpoint a bit from these two positions.

Bartomeu Marí: Thank you. I have been told that we have time for another question, a last question for Keti.

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Question: It's funny it seems like everybody has two questions at the CIMAM conference. I also have two—one about how you began your talk and one how you ended it. You began it by offering a certain narrative of loss of coherence, a rise of contradictions, and I was trying to trace throughout your talk to which extent that particular framing was necessary—at times it became clear at other times—. One was because the standards have been declining since Adam and Eve, and the narrative of loss is something which has a certain comfort quality to it whereas for example when you were talking about the sublime you made clear that we are prevented to certain contradictions and limitations which are inherent to the conversations on art and are not something, you know, new but particular intrinsic quality or an intrinsic paradox which we should get use to and indeed may be it is even part of the enticing contradictions of what we have come to see as art. Does that make sense? That first question?

Keti Chukhrov: Yes, yes I more or less understand it.

Follow-up question: The other question has to do the way you ended, and I was wondering if you could be a little, a tiny bit more precise and polemical because it was formulated in a way that it would be, also because of its density, that it would be hard to disagree with, so if you could, what you've said carries a lot of pathos; I'd love to know just a little more precisely what you are pointing out with your final statement.

Keti Chukhrov: My final claim was that, contemporary art is paradoxically dealing with itself all the time, although it refers the

open zones of social reality it tries to expand into social reality but there was something that was very important in avant-garde practices when avant-garde tried to deal with something more than art, something exceeding art, and only when art is dealing with something more than art, other than art, it can ethically prove its function. So it has to be self-forgetful in a way and this self-forgetfulness got lost in modernist tradition, it was somehow extended and forced in avant-garde tradition but it was very strong in pre-modern realist traditions, so what I was referring to was perhaps getting back to this drama between the subject and the real, getting back to this drama of eventual connection, eventual tie, liaison, between the subjectivity and the reality which is somehow flattened or shifted or neutralized in this self-referential institutionalizing and framing that contemporary art is initiating may be involuntary all the time.

Bartomeu Marí: Thank you very much Keti and I think Vasif Kortun should introduce the next.

## *Understanding Local Context 5*

### *Panel Discussion*

Next is *Understanding Local Context 5*, with three programs, institutions, or initiatives from İstanbul. The last two days, Monday and Tuesday, we went to many glamorous and beautiful institutions and looked at the Bosphorus from a nice distance; it was really great, but this is really where it happens at. This panel looks at colleagues, this is where the contemporary art of İstanbul has been happening for a long time, before larger institutions, and probably after larger institutions as well. And Özge Ersoy, my colleague, is going to moderate the panel. Thank you.  
*Vasif Kortun*

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*Volkan Aslan, Co-Founder Director of 5533*  
*Banu Cennetoglu, Artist, Founder, BAS*  
*Didem Özbek, Director of PİST*  
*Moderated by Özge Ersoy*

Özge Ersoy: Good morning everyone. Thank you Vasif for your introduction and thank you CIMAM and SALT for having us.

I'm very happy to be with three artists I admire a lot; Didem, Banu, and Volkan, thanks a lot for being here. By way of introduction I thought I could briefly speak about the climate where these artist-run spaces have been functioning and how they connect to each other, and also what we are expecting from this panel. In İstanbul we operate in a cultural environment that is undergoing major transformations. If I were to characterize it, I would say that this transformation is characterized by the opening to the international scene, a

growing art market, as well as a rising demand for newer institutions. In 2010 the city was branded as a 'Cultural Capital'. and I still don't know what that means exactly, but I can say that the infrastructure for contemporary art has been developing forward over the last decade. However, we still have to admit that the space offered for contemporary arts has been almost nonexistent and the energy and the resources of the private sector have often been used to establish large-scale institutions and museums, or mostly and most recently museums. For me it's quite important to have this conference at SALT actually, because SALT is the organization that does not collect artworks for a collection but it rather builds archives, which pave the way for exhibitions and public programming. This very position of SALT makes me think about the most urgent types of art institutions and at this point it's quite pertinent to speak about self-organization in the art world and hence, of artist-run spaces. Clearly these artist-run spaces are experiments in institutional change and, to say the least, they resist privatization and cultural conservatism.

The number of artist-run spaces in İstanbul has fluctuated over the last decade but meanwhile they kept talking to each other, they kept meeting, they kept sharing their experiences and problems. You might remember that in 2007, curator Hou Hanru invited a number of artist-run spaces to contribute to the *İstanbul Biennial* but we know that at the end of the day that type of visibility cannot really sustain audiences or income models. We saw in the last decade that many of the artist-run spaces died; they

had to shut down their spaces; they had to stop their programming, mostly because of the little support they receive.

Perhaps the first commonality between BAS and 5533 is that they have maintained a sustainable model for production. PIST and BAS opened in 2006 and 5533 in 2008. They also have close collaboration with artists, a flexible programming, a local embedding, as well as an international orientation and they distinguish themselves on how they operate and how they behave. I will stop in a bit, but before I stop I also add one final point: Talking about this conference, we realized that most of the talks that are under the 'Understanding the Local Context' frame are were one-off presentations and this is the only instance where have a conversation and we want to take advantage of it. We would like to use this opportunity to discuss and speak about how these artist-run spaces have evolved and changed in time and how they envision the future of the art scene, not only that of their own spaces. Perhaps I could start off with a simple—or maybe not-so-simple—question: I'm curious about your initial personal involvement, your urgency to open the space. Was it a response to the lack of support structures for artists in İstanbul? Or would you say that it is more about rising personal presence in the scene?

Banu Cennetoglu: Well, it's both and more. In my case it is quite peculiar because I lived eleven years outside of İstanbul, in three different cities, so when I came back in 2005, I was not really knowledgeable about the local context because I left immediately after the graduation, and my graduation was also not coming from an art education. In a way I was quite ignorant about the whole situation. BAS is the result of a series of very personal urgencies, I would say. This urgency was definitely not back then, at least not consciously, related to the local need.

Eventually I realized the lack of what I'm doing or what I could propose, but when I came back in 2005, it was more like a very instinctive situation. Also, the İstanbul art scene was, and is still, very fragmented and almost cliquey. So it's scary to come back after eleven years and try to understand and also to have to position yourself. In a way, maybe I chose, ironically enough, working with bookwork. Bookwork and book space are quite hermetic spaces. In a way, I thought that if I could provide the display of what I collected over the years—it was a very small personal collection of artist books that I collected over the years from France—I needed a table as a studio, I needed to try to create a platform to encourage people to explore book space more, while also being on my own. So it was a very personal urgency, not trying to be juxtaposed with any kind of community but being an escape into the book space. If I can summarize the urgencies back then, this is it. Of course you also start it as a temporary attempt—it's an experiment—you have no idea how you are going to sustain this idea or how will things develop, and you have no idea who is going to be the audience, and especially since, again locally, there was no history in terms of book works here as a discipline. Right now I was talking about 'this is a piece' [pointing at book] and people would be like; 'what do you mean'. When I say 'people' the range was quite wide. Because the first place of BAS was a storefront, it was a 25 square meters in a pre-gentrified area not far from here, we could host people who were just passing by.

They would come saying 'What are you doing here? Are you photocopying? Is this an architecture office'. It looked like some books and me, and a table. And actually it was even more interesting because the way I was just sitting, my body was facing the door, I could see people could dare to get in. If I would

have been just a little bit more in my own concentration people wouldn't have dared. Over the years I learned actually, what the real audience is. In my case I can have an easy interaction with 'the street'—in quotation marks. Shall I stop?

Özge Ersoy: Sure. Can you press the button?

Didem Özbek: Knowing that we are maybe the only speakers from the local art scene, we have to push the button, we are not allowed to talk at the same time so as to avoid fighting [laughs]. How we started was—we had been thinking for a couple of years—Osman and I especially, and with other colleagues—to start a space, but if I remember my personal history, I remember attending many of the events at Platform Garanti, and we always considered many of the local artists as students there. I find we are lucky, for example, to have SALT in İstanbul right now. As artists, we really needed ourselves a space to experiment, for example, both for emerging and established artists. When you imagine 2006, which is not too long ago, there were not as many galleries as today, especially not for contemporary art. There was maybe only *İstanbul Modern* and many private or public galleries supported by the banks. For the type of art we wanted to do, or develop, there were not too many spaces. We thought that by starting PiST we would allow not only ourselves but also other art professionals to use the space. Collaboration is really important for us. This was the main intention when we started the space and with the time we developed collaborations both locally and internationally.

Volkan Aslan: It's funny how we are talking about when we opened the spaces. It sounds like twenty years ago but we are actually only talking about four or five years ago. When we

decided to open 5533, it was 2008, when Hou Hanru curated the *İstanbul Biennial*. He located *Work Factory* as a project as a project space and exhibition space and at that time we decided to make only one project which was called '*Big Family Business*'. because our location belongs to a big family business company. We invited one curator and suddenly everyone liked the idea and the location and that space and then we decided to continue. The beginning was actually only for the project but then we decided to continue. As an artist in İstanbul, five years ago, there were only galleries and then Platform, so we decided to make a project space, and then workshops, and then talks and suddenly we became 'established'.

Özge Ersoy: So as I said earlier, many of the artist spaces or artist-run spaces in İstanbul have had a very short lifespan. I think it is your flexibility that allowed you to go on for a number of years. I'm also curious about the flip side of this flexibility, because this is precisely what makes your spaces vulnerable and perhaps precarious at the same time.

Didem Özbek: Other than producing art, Osman and I consider PiST as an art project in itself. Outside of PiST, we are not a duo and in our artistic practice; we don't produce together but we always feed each other's projects. The same goes for the other art professionals that we engage with at PiST. So as part of this art project, for example, one of the things we did was an artists' information project and it acted as a subversion of tourist information offices. Pushed by, need we initiated an art map which, at that time, was really needed for the art scene.

When the conditions for starting an art project, such as that one, take place but don't sustain as you plan; when it doesn't work—because our goal was really to make a good

art map for İstanbul rather than making business out of it—we remember that we are artists. In such conditions, in crises for example, remembering that we are artists is our main strength, and then we go back to our art production either as PIST or as individual artists. I just mentioned this as an example of the fragile condition—of the vulnerability—of being located in a very crowded city with a large population where the art scene is still small and where we know each other. This is what I can say.

Volkan Aslan: Flexibility is really important for 5533. We don't have a future and that makes us happy as a space. Each year, for example, we invite a guest director because 5533 was founded by two artists, but then it is not our business to run the space because we don't have the experience. This is also why, from another perspective, we invited a guest director and curators each year for the program. And that's why we don't know what's going to be next. We don't know who will be coming and what kind of projects there are going to be at 5533. That's why I think flexibility is a good opportunity for the space because we don't have a concern for the future. We have a concern for next year's program but not five years ahead. When we won't have ideas, we will just close the space and wait for the next one.

Banu Cennetoglu: I agree and I think that gives you, not a fear of expiration, but the feeling that you can really disappear, reinvent, not invent anymore. Complete disappearance is always there and I think it creates a tension that is interesting. In BAS's model it is quite different from 5533 and PIST, because we don't have an agenda for exhibitions so there is a kind of permanent developing collection; a constantly-growing collection of artist books which are on display permanently whenever the space is open.

There is this constant care, on one side, and on the other, we publish. We publish regularly and when we do so it is not flexible at all. It is very rigid; we are control freaks. We edit in close collaboration with the artist. So it is very opposite to what Volkan was saying. It's all about us together on that moment, on that particular collaboration. But once it is done, there is now worrying, timewise. This is the nature of book work, it has its own time; it has its own life when it's out.

Then we can really close the space. And also one very important thing is that when I started, because there is always this situation with artist-run spaces where you give space, you cater to, you collaborate with other artists, but also, in a way, it makes you visible as an artist and it can sometimes create wanted or unwanted paradigms on your own practice—we kept this principle: we're not going to use BAS's infrastructure for our own works. Not to blame the other models, but this was, in a way, our departure point and right now, we still don't do it but eventually I've learned that as a multistranded practice that I have, all these roles are completely on top of each other, feed each other and sometimes they subtract from each other. This constant awareness can be very exhausting and somehow links to vulnerability, but at the same time, that's our strength.

Özge Ersoy: I have a follow-up question about the concerns for the future. Because one of the reasons why you have this flexibility is that you are closely connected with the art space. You are deeply invested in your art spaces as artists. In other words, your space depends on you in the first place. For instance you can decide that your space could sleep for a while, hibernate for a while or, to be a bit more dramatic, you can kill it because it is not the end of the world when you think about it. You can then have a fresh start and just go on as an artist with your practice. I'm curious

about how personalized your spaces are and do you envision having your space beyond you or after you? Who wants to go first for my dramatic question?

Volkan Aslan: The killing of the space is a good idea because you have to let people do fresh things. I'm not going to be—I'm talking now as 5533—here in Istanbul forever, I know that. Many spaces open and close and then they leave and the someplace just moved, and then some other change. This is really good because I wouldn't want also to let other people continue with 5533 because they should do another fresh project or another space. When we'll be done with 5533, it's done. It's not killing, it's just letting. It's not dramatic at all.

Banu Cennetoglu: The space is super personal and that's sometimes very problematic. I'm trying to think different models now; what would be other possibilities. I might donate the collection to SALT! No, but it's very personal and also I'm on my own and besides long- or short-term collaborations, at the end of the day it's really, again a different situation: it is not a collective, it is not a duo, it is a quite lonesome situation.

Didem Özbek: I just want to make a comment about Apartment Project. Recently they started a new project space in Berlin and hopefully they will restart in Istanbul so that shows that in our practices we all decide what to do. In PIST's case for instance, as a part of the collaborations we developed, this year for example of the artists we invited from abroad asked us to give him the keys of PIST and especially asked us, me and Osman, not to be there. He wanted the space but not us!

As artists we want to continue our practice but when you run a space it is a full responsibility. When we take care of other

artists' we have no time for our practice. These are all conditions that Osman and I discuss. For instance, we would want to have an advisory board and in the future do like *Para/Site* space, which used to be an artist-run space but now Cosmin is taking care of it. In our case we would need to develop a financial situation that would enable us to hire someone else to take care of the space if we were to continue toward a more professional model.

Right now, it is not easy for us to do it but we are really thinking of it. Like an Apple computer—this is another thing that Osman and I decided—after three years, it dies because they want you to buy a new one (maybe they put a timer inside, I don't know). For sure we will find other ways, but meanwhile the space really gave us lots of experiences and for that I'm happy to have started PIST.

Özge Ersoy: Didem, following up with what you were saying about the working model, maybe we can speak a little bit more about your hybrid characters. To give examples, Banu, you sell books although it is not a sustainable income model I would say; Volkan, the other day you were saying that you don't receive money, that you don't sell anything; I think you only get money for special international projects; no operating cost (are covered); and Didem, you go to art fairs and you sell certain artworks and that confuses so many people. Maybe we can talk about this hybrid models. Basically the way this art spaces function is really not similar to the conventional nonprofit models that we are familiar with from the United States and Europe especially.

Banu Cennetoglu: Because you are an artist, then you work with other artists or you run a space as an artist. The other day I was talking

about building a space as a curator in an institution and we are not institutions, but suddenly we learn things that you wouldn't even think of learning. And because of your own practice also, the way you deal with the other artists and artistic productions, compared to how many institutions deal with it—in my experience, we are definitely more generous, we definitely have more empathy, and we definitely protect and prioritize the artist, the work, and the whole artistic process, rather than the agenda, rather than the programming and even rather than the funding. Personally speaking, I really believe in the work primarily and then the money somehow comes. You meet people with the same stomach issues that you have and you just make them believe because you are very clear about what you want to do, rather than all these scripted collaborations that we've been receiving for years because of the hotness of the region.

That can be a working model for others but the reason why I think BAS can still exist, is because the content is still the priority. In my model you need a very faithful local supporter so you can pay the rent; you need a very faithful international foundation that can support unconditionally and not project-based; you need international interns with their own scholarships; you need local interns coming from the university as their curriculum requires (so they have to); and you need a lot of volunteers work, including yourself. There's a crazy amount of work that you do. But again, the only condition is you have to believe, not in the space or the visibility, but really in the work. And this is possible.

Didem Özbek: I can say that we are not sustainable yet. We wish we could be but, comparing to BAS and 5533, through the residency, since last year we have two international partners which are the main art

funding bodies in their own countries. When you partner with them, your country believes that these bodies support you but we are not supported as space; we develop this partnership to take care of the artistic production of the artists to be possible in Istanbul. We provide this service.

You gave the example of selling work, for us the priority is really to produce work, selling it is not the priority of PİST but as soon as the work is produced, because we are all professionals, and we do it in a professional way, we want the artists to know the value of their work. Therefore, if a work—any work—is exhibited at PİST, we ask the artists the value of their work and whether they want it to be for sale. Then, about the art fairs, we are always invited; we never apply. This year it will be the first time after five years that we will attend Contemporary İstanbul. We are careful about attending art fairs but we also gain experience.

And one last comment, I just want to say to Banu that we also don't have a regular exhibition calendar. We exhibit as soon as a work is produced but we never exhibit ready-made shows. When a work is produced we discuss with the artists and then eventually we exhibit it. Otherwise it is more like research and production.

Volkan Aslan: I go back to flexibility again because it makes us stronger and then that's how we can produce the artworks and that's how we can support artists. If we don't have money we don't do that, for instance. I mean we share everything with the artists. Or, when we invite guest directors and curators, as I said before, we carefully invite rich curators and directors so they can bring money [laughs]. There's a donation book outside maybe you can put your name on it.



Özge Ersoy: Private contemporary art museums are spreading because of the result of growing economies not only in Turkey but also in the larger region of the so-called Middle East. I'm curious about your first reaction to these museums. Do you see them merely as symbolic capital? In what ways do you think that they can respond to the changing needs of artist spaces and artist-run spaces?

Banu Cennetoglu: I think it's important to talk a bit about the audience issue because I would like to link it. In terms of local attention and local audience we have a huge problem. We host people from different geographies, classes, universities and patrons. Artists who just come to the city and look for these little niche places. Five minutes away from BAS there is the Art Academy and I have to drag them.

I don't want to make a list of expectations that I have, I think it's also people's responsibility to look at what's going on, be curious about it and genuinely get interested. For me, the same thing goes for these new institutions. As I mentioned at the beginning, I think there is a big problem in the local context because of the fragmented character of Istanbul's art scene. I think that with the new pseudo-boom, this fragmentation is accelerated; more emphasized. I don't want to make a kind of sociological analysis, but I think it is very simple: It is just the lack of visibility for all these years (that translates into the fact that) there is a kind of hunger for the power. In a way, everyone wants to be on the stage and alone.

That's a problem. We have to somehow, not be educative—I don't believe you can educate people—but (building) a genuine curiosity and coexistence desire. I think this is really in our constitution in this country. We really have a big difficulty to stand next to

each other for different causes as well, so we don't know how to do this. So this kind of events, I think it's important that they can frame a more open, a larger, programming rather than dividing. And I'm not saying this in a kind of naïve way. Because at the end of the day, I become cynical: 'I don't need anything from you; I can be on my own; I don't need you'. This is probably me getting older but I'm interested in a way to coexist even if we don't like each other. Can we do that? Shall we?

Didem Özbek: I think one of the good sides of this conference is that we had the chance to meet in advance for a couple of times and in the past we use to do it more. This conference reminded us that we should come together more, as we did before. Especially to talk about what we are doing professionally, because we see each other, we know each other but maybe we no longer have the time we used to have to talk about what we do or need.

Many people call PiST a 'small' space. It is for sure small compared to many large institutions but, what is small and what is big? After six years, as soon as we receive a budget we always want to give a speaker fee or an artist fee, very symbolically. I also talking from the perspective of production, we really want to behave to those people that we host in our space as we would like others to host us. It is really nice to have new institutions of their own styles let's say, I don't know if I will be their audience or not because, like other people, I'm also selective, but there should be a professional standard rather than only building nice spaces with famous architects. I believe that in Istanbul we really have a strong art scene.

Banu Cennetoglu: So let's show it! There is a kind of tendency to show off and it's very unfortunate because in a context where there

is a problem with the history of contemporary art practice and with all this new money coming, and all these industrial families, pharmaceutical families—all this corporate money that is coming. And suddenly it seems that if you do a big event, or a big dinner party it's done. And then you talk about an artist fee and they say, 'What are you talking about'. It is incredibly misplaced from what the intention and the practice are. It's not a hobby!

Volkan Aslan: Didem and Banu already talked about what I wanted to say but I also think that we should come together more than what we do right now. Last year we never met, actually. And CIMAM should come more [laughs]. I think that the dialogue between those institutions and smaller spaces and galleries is really important for the future or for the next step. And then the institutions, I think some of them, have really a huge artist phobia. They talk about works, celebrate works, they buy, they sell, they move, they bring, but they don't talk with artists. I think they have phobias.

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### *Questions and Answers*

Özge Ersoy: On that note, we'd like to open it to the floor. Any questions for our speakers?

Question: Thank you all of you for your interesting presentations and for giving up some information about what happens in İstanbul outside of the museum and the commercial world. İstanbul is a big city, but Turkey is also a big country: Are there centers or places like you in other cities in Turkey? And are you connected to them? Can you talk a little bit about what's happening in Turkey? Thank you.

Didem Özbek: When we started in 2006 one of the questions we asked ourselves is whether PiST would be in Turkey or in İstanbul. You can ask this question to contemporary art production but also to any profession. The majority of professionals usually prefers to be based in İstanbul or usually go further west, which means abroad to Europe or any other western country. Of course there is production around the country, in İzmir, Ankara, and for example in Hatay, Antakya, and in many other cities. We try to be connected as much as possible. For them to find us is sometimes easier than for us going there. We should go more and communicate. From PiST, what we really want to do, as a part of the residency, is to be able to host artists from within Turkey and to provide them with work and production space, next to the foreign artists that we host. This would really provide them with an opportunity even before they go abroad. In comparison to how it used to be, the conditions are much better but I think we should come closer to each other.

Banu Cennetoglu: Here we are talking about the difficulties of sustainability. You can imagine that the situation becomes even more difficult when you get out of the big city, at economic, social, and political levels. Many people really aim at the big city, unfortunately. I don't want to go the book rhetoric again, but in a way, but because of the nature of bookwork it is easier sometimes for BAS to share practices: you can send it, it's just a package. But I think that in general we have a problem of organization and self-organization, also politically and artistically. Eventually, some people really team up for certain needs but as soon as someone follows another kind of development, immediately the collective collapses. Maybe it is interesting to think about the need for a collective and why

it would be needed. Is it just a step because it is too scary to be alone? Or do we actually believe in being together?

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Question: I would like to ask Banu: when you were answering the first question, you spoke about the readiness to work with, or to deal with, 'the street'. You spoke about people coming directly from the street into your space and you were addressing your readiness for that. In a way, you now moved in a place that is a little bit off the street rather than really opened to any random visitor. At the same time you are working with publishing and the publications I have seen that BAS publishes very interesting intellectual publications but they are also easy for the street man to use and to read through. Can you elaborate a bit on this relationship?

And also, you being an artist and working on keeping the space opened as if it is a library, which is a common place for people from the street to go into and navigate books. Can you explain a little bit more the relationship between you and the people for whom you are producing all of this?

Banu Cennetoglu: Actually, moving from the storefront was not a choice. It was just a condition as a consequence of the gentrification. I started on Sishane which is on top of the hill, slowly coming down on Karaköy, and BAS is now located five minutes away from here but probably very soon I will also have to be out of there. Somehow gentrification follows me. Even as a joke I was saying that maybe I can get a boat on the Bosphorus, in a kind of floating situation. What I mentioned in terms of experience with the street—yes, a lot of people walked in, but in a way it was a very personalized small space. Right now if you see BAS, it looks like a proper library. Small,

but it still invites people to spend time. Back then, there were just two shelves and if there were five people inside it was full. At the same time it was my studio and a meeting place, so it looked already occupied for many passersby. We stayed there from 2005 to 2008—almost three years—and over the years I really like the experience that whoever wants to come and see, comes. Of course it is very unfortunate to miss some great encounters from the street, but people still come if they want to. I don't think that if we were at a street level we would have a huge interaction. Being at the street level doesn't mean that the street will come to us, and it didn't. Right now, if we had stayed in the same area, bars and restaurants and stores would have surrounded us. It would be weird to have us there. I wouldn't like it to be honest.

Why I make it more difficult now? Not purposefully of course, but it is true that there is not even of a proper sign. Maybe it is, in an arrogant way, selecting your audience. You really want the motivated ones! [laughs]. But whoever comes in, there is a kind of sincere interest.

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Question: I'm glad to hear you guys. I was talking yesterday about the contemporary art scene here in Istanbul, and about the need to talk about these projects. In the case of Latin America we have a lot of peripheral projects that act like a liquid institution: they can transform, they can mutate. So when you talked about the need to kill the space as a kind of suicidal space, it relates to the need of the permanent transformation of art projects. I think this is a very rich discussion. On the other hand we have an obsession with big budgets and that can decrease a bit the political project of contemporary art sometimes. I would like you to talk a little bit

more about the dialogue—the communication—that you have with projects like SALT or ARTER.

Didem Özbek: I think that starting very early also, we can call each other established artists. I think we both [points at Banu] are lucky we can reach SALT and Arter very easily. If there's any subject related to our space or to our art practice, we can communicate about it, I believe. However, with the new institutions I don't know how it will be.

Özge Ersoy: Do you think it's more difficult for younger artists?

Banu Cennetoglu: I don't want to repeat myself but there is definitely a mapping situation here. A few years ago there was a whole discussion between the Karaköy area and the Beyoğlu area. There are hundreds of artist and practitioners who see our spaces. Also, just to make sure: our spaces are not really alternative spaces. I don't see BAS as an alternative space. We are the center of the map so there are other really alternative spaces, for example on the other side, on the Asian side. They really disappear, reappear in different forms. I think we collaborate with the big institutions if it makes sense for all of us. I don't think there is a regular collaboration and there's no need for regular collaboration. However, as Didem said, we are able to approach them easily and this is a privileged situation. Although this is not the same for many people at all. So that's why I'm saying that there isn't this kind of 'let's all be together'.

Didem Özbek: But we are their audience. Myself, especially for SALT or Arter, I'm their audience.

Banu Cennetoglu: But are they really our audiences? Personally, maybe Vasif has a personal interest and might walk into BAS, or into PİST or into 5533, or he might like a particular project, but in general, I don't know if anybody from İstanbul Modern, for example, has ever walked into BAS. This is why I was talking about 'fragmented cliqueness'. I go to you [points at Didem] if I like you; it's completely independent from what you do!

Özge Ersoy: Last question?

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Question: Following up on that, I would like to ask you how do you really feel about museums? The three keynote speakers in this conference were going from talking about contemporary art as an asset class, to institutionalization as self-referentiality. You know that a lot of this really takes place in museums. So, as an activist and artist, how do you really feel about museums?

Banu Cennetoglu: Individually, I like museums. I like their architecture in general, not all of them. But in terms of an artist practice, the artist sometimes has to deal with museum policies and bureaucracy. And there are a lot of issues to think. I think today—like the last three days—there are new models and thinking. But as I said before, let's show, let's show off and give more priority to the artist. No more artist phobia because there's no art really without artists. We had a huge crisis here, almost a year ago with İstanbul Modern and it was very interesting in terms of opening certain discussions but now they've gone. Nobody talks about them anymore. I really think that museums and institutions should be more interested in artistic practice; more than their kind of contemporary institutionalized practices. But museums are great!

Didem Özbek: I can say also, in relation to museums in Turkey, they must also have audience phobia, because to each museum you get in, as audience, you are a terrorist. I can give a few examples: First your bag has to go through X-rays, even to take a leaflet. And then, this week Banu and I went to *Pera Museum* with our children who are the same age, to an exhibition called *Golden Children* that showed children's portraits from the sixteenth century. Portraits of kids of their same age with different dress codes.

Banu Cennetoglu: Aristocrats!

Didem Özbek: Yes, aristocrats. In each floor, the security guards were horrified by our kids trying to draw on their sketchbooks. I mean, this is so normal at the British Museum maybe, but here they were so afraid of them ruining the artwork. They are so into protecting the artwork that the audience seems not allowed to even look at it. And as parents, we also felt like 'what are we doing here'. I think they should be happier and more opened to have future audiences. After *Pera Museum* we were walking and my son said: 'Mummy, let's get into SALT'. He is really into getting there. I personally also experience that the security guards there are more trained. If you have a question, you can really go ask the guard. Maybe I'm a high-scale audience but I really check the security guards in that sense: how friendly they are or not.

Volkan Aslan: I agree with the museum things because I also had many problems; I still have problems. I don't know why. I think we also talked with Vasif last year about this security staff, and how museums should be or can be. In Istanbul the museums are horrible in terms of security. The guards are following you all the time. Five of them can be following me

while I look around. As a result I don't really want to go there as a visitor because I don't feel comfortable. It is a really big issue as Didem said. And then on the other hand, because of their architecture, of their collection, or of how they explain themselves, many places call themselves museums but they are not a museums. I don't think so.

Banu Cennetoglu: Maybe more transparency is important. More access is important; a kind of healthy, normal access. Here especially again, because of the lack of a certain past, there is a tendency to create a sort of popular visual language, in terms of display structures for example, so they can easily impress a certain level of audience. Maybe that's very understandable for a fundraiser or for certain program-makers: in big museums you have to have large scale blockbuster exhibitions. But you should also have the others. You cannot exclusively have your agenda and you identity based on that. And this is really important.

Özge Ersoy: Maybe the last comment from my side. I think that one of the most important questions that we tried to deal with is: What makes the museum public in a country where there is absolutely no state support? So the question was: Is it more about opening the doors of the institution to the public? Or is it about transparency, as Banu was saying, toward the artist and toward the general public? Or is it more about us, being practitioners, demanding certain things from the institution? I leave it as an open end.

## Case Study 8: New Collaborations for a Global Heritage

Welcome back, I am Natalia Majluf, I am the director of the *Museo de Arte de Lima* and I am also a board member of CIMAM. I am very happy to introduce today Miguel López who is a close collaborator of our museum. He has been an active member since 2007 of the *Southern Conceptualisms Network*; known as *Red Conceptualismos del Sur*, an international platform for joint production and reflection about experiences of art and politics in Latin America since the 1960s. He had a scholarship at MACBA's Independent Study Program and has also participated in BAC's program. He has published work in *The Exhibitionist*, *Afterall*, *Ramona*, *Manifesta Journal*, *Art in America* and *Tercer Texto*, among others. He has co-curated exhibitions such as *Perder la forma humana: Una imagen sísmica de los años ochenta en América Latina*, which is currently at *Reina Sofía* in Madrid, and he had previously curated *Subversive Practices: Art Under Conditions Of Political Repression 60s–80s / South America / Europe*, in Stuttgart in 2009. He is currently curator at *Lugar a Dudas*, an artist space in Cali, Colombia.

Natalia Majluf

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Miguel A. López  
Independent Curator, Lima  
*Southern Conceptualisms Network: Political  
Microhistories and Experimental Archival  
Projects*

What I'm about to share with you isn't properly mine: many of the ideas, dilemmas, and doubts recounted here are the products of collective work and the affective, intellectual, and political interaction generated within the *Red Conceptualismos del Sur* (or *Southern Conceptualisms Network*), addressing the possibilities for reactivating our local, critical memories. So please take the personal tone of this text as the echo of a plural voice (fig. 26).



Figure 26. Conceptualismos do Sul/Sur (Southern Conceptualisms Network), First International Symposium, São Paulo, Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo, April 2008.

The aim of this paper is to share an overview of the problems and preoccupations that drove us to join together and to collaborate in a network, and also of the challenges and limitations that we currently have as a group. In the first place, I will try to contextualize the situation regarding the archives of critical art in Latin America, and how the Network has

approached this situation. Secondly, I will present a few projects developed by the Network that can introduce our work dynamic.

### *Margins of critical memory*

The *Red Conceptualismos del Sur* began in 2007, when a core group of Latin American researchers decided to establish a platform for thought, discussion, and position-taking. At the time our work and research had sought to map and recoup a dispersed constellation of artistic practices developed across Latin America, between the 1960s and the 1980s, during times of conflict, dictatorial regimes, or under conditions of political repression. Those political configurations led to complex intersections between politics and aesthetics, where multiple responses were given to specific situations in an attempt to evade and denounce oppression, civil rights violations, prohibitions of political activity, and cultural and social censorship in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia, among other places. It is not surprising, then, that many of these critical experiences have been omitted and isolated, if not directly erased by the effects of trauma and terror.

El deseo nace del derrumbe  
**Roberto Jacoby**  
 acciones, conceptos, escritos



Figure 27. El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: acciones, conceptos, escritos (Desire rises from collapse Roberto Jacoby: actions, concepts and writings), edited by Ana Longoni (Buenos Aires and Madrid, Ediciones Adriana Hidalgo, La Central, MNCARS and Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011.)

Our network was born with the intention of contributing to the reactivation of these artistic and political microhistories and to assist in the generation of new conditions for the discussion and preservation of these materials and documents in our own contexts. We insisted upon the importance of their sensitive presence in our public life. Rather than treat them as mere sources of the history of art, we envisioned them as living antagonistic forces, capable of intervening in our local memories, our academic apparatuses, and our public debates. Beyond the orthodox notions of center and periphery, and the traditional nationalist claims, we intended to invoke a new *South-South* dialogue, learning from previous micro-political networks such as the Mail Art Network of the 1960s and '70s, or events like the *Havana Biennials* in the '80s.

We use our name, *Red Conceptualismos del Sur*, in a tactical sense. In recent years,

terms like conceptualism or conceptual practices have been exhorted in the historiographic, theoretical, and political de-hierarchization and decentralization of the canonical narrative of art history, understanding conceptualisms not as a limited artistic movement but as a different way of practicing art and of conceiving its social function.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, rather than claiming a unique geographical cultural identity, the term southern calls for furthering knowledge processes from subordinated places, bodies, and aesthetics—historically in unequal standing vis-à-vis a Western imperial worldview. Without plural cognitive equality, global social justice is impossible. As cultural mediators, we face the challenge of imagining and proposing more equitable forms of producing and sharing knowledge on a transnational level. In asking ourselves about the situation of historically marginal archives and subaltern artistic heritages, we are also trying to figure out how to dismantle the self-affirming universalist epistemologies that had constructed unequal dynamics of production and distribution of knowledge in the first place, by introducing other points of origin

capable of enabling more democratic futures.<sup>15</sup>

Key to our endeavor is our decision to remain independent. Our network is an autonomous entity consisting of about fifty-five researchers, artists, curators, psychoanalysts, art historians, sociologists, and activists from Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Colombia, the United Kingdom, and Spain. The network collaborates with institutions from different areas. Being independent, we can define our own agenda of political action, regardless of the current demands of the academy or the market. The downside is that we have to spend so much time searching for economic funding for our initiatives. However, since 2008 we have been able to organize editorial projects, research groups, and public seminars in São Paulo (April 2008), Rosario (October 2008), Madrid (March 2009 and November 2010), Santiago de Chile (July 2009), Lima (July 2012), and Buenos Aires (October 2012).

14 *Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 'Institutional Declaration'*, in *Sur, Sur, Sur, Sur / South, South, South, South, South*, ed. Cuauhtémoc Medina (Mexico City: Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo, 2010), pp. 249–54. The re-evaluation of the very term conceptual art from a political perspective follows, in some way, the cultural effects of the exhibition *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s 1980s* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999). The historical framework of the show was the global set of social transformations that have taken place since 1950, and the emergence of new forms of political action that formed the backdrop to a renewed repertoire of visual language not only defined by the more traditional Conceptualist 'aesthetics of immateriality', but instead by their capacity for intervention.

15 Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality', *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2–3 (2007), pp. 155–67.





Figure 28. Poster of the public seminar *Poner el cuerpo. Formas del Activismo Artístico en América Latina* (To put the body in action. Forms of Artistic Activism in Latin America), at the Spanish Cultural Centre in Lima (24–27 July 2011), as part of an ongoing research project about the 1980s.

We have also organized exhibitions, guest edited some international journals, and published books such as *Conceitualismos do Sul/Sur* (2009) edited by Ana Longoni and Cristina Freire; *El deseo nace del derrumbe*, Roberto Jacoby; *Acciones, Conceptos, Escritos*, edited by Ana Longoni in 2011 (fig. 28); and the forthcoming book *Desinventario*, a publication that returns critically to the exhibition project *Inventario 1965–1975*.



Figure 29. Installation views: *Inventario 1965–1975*. Archivo Graciela Carnevale (Inventory 1965–1975. The Archive of Graciela Carnevale), Centro Cultural Parque de España, Rosario, 2008. Installation view. Courtesy: Archive of Graciela Carnevale.

We organized *Archivo Graciela Carnevale* (curated by Fernando Davis, Ana Longoni, Ana Wazdik, and Graciela Carnevale) in Rosario in October 2008; this was a reflection about the intersections of art and politics in Argentina in the 1960s from the *Carnevale* archive.<sup>16</sup> More recently we curated the exhibition *Losing the Human Form: A Seismic Image of the 80s in Latin America* at the *Reina Sofía Museum*, an exhibition that gives an overview of the 1980s, establishing a counterpoint between the effects of violence on bodies and the radical experiments that challenged the repressive order.

Our aim was to offer a new panorama by retrieving experiments that suggested forms of resistance through fragile supports, focusing in three areas: the first is the visual creativity of social movements like the *Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina and *Mujeres por la Vida* (Women for Life) in Chile; the second is sexual disobedience's performances, transvestism, and corporalities

16 *The Archive of Graciela Carnevale* (also known as the *Tucumán Arde Archive*) is one of the most comprehensive archives of the politicized art practices and radical experiments in Argentina in the 1960s. The archive comprises a large number of photographs, posters, catalogues, writings, and manifestos of the various avant-garde events in Argentina, alongside graphic work, pictures, agitprop materials, and other documents of experiences that connected art and politics in other contexts (from silkscreen prints by *Taller 4 Rojo* in Colombia to posters of the *Brigadas Ramona Parra* made before or during Salvador Allende's socialist government in Chile, and others of the *Meetings of Latin American Artists* in Havana, Cuba). See *Inventario 1965–1975: Archivo Graciela Carnevale*, exh. cat., Rosario, *Centro Cultural Parque de España*, 2008. See also Miguel A. López, 'How do We Know What Latin American Conceptualism Looks Like?'. *Afterall* 23 (Spring 2010), pp. 5–21.

that defy the traditional construction of gender; the last is the underground scene, which intersects anarchism, punk music, party, and the do-it-yourself ethic to construct microcommunities and make it possible to re-establish the social ties broken by terror

This last project has also allowed us to consolidate our collaboration with the *Reina Sofía Museum* (begun in early 2008), which aims to question traditional museum policies and challenge the predominant circuits of cultural production, from south to north, and replace them with horizontal itineraries, including *South-South* movements among archives, museums, researchers, artists, and institutions.

#### *Archives and the market*

Since the beginning, many of us felt that reactivating the force of those artistic practices meant not only fighting the censorship they had endured in the past, but also confronting our current situation, in which large institutions and private collections are disputing the scarce documentation of these practices. Over the last twenty years, Latin America's symbolic capital has become quite appetizing to the global art market. During the 1980s, the notions of marginality and native exoticism served to present the art of the periphery through condescending international exhibitions. From the 1990s onward, the accelerated globalization changed the idea of internationalism in art and progressively transformed the metropolitan demands, which now seek to duly include in their collections those works from other geographic areas, which were previ-

ously unaccounted for.<sup>17</sup> These new market demands for international art circulation, which exist in unequal economic and geopolitical conditions, mark the contradictions that we face today as mediators of cultural production between the South and the North.

Take, for instance, how some archives of Latin American artists have become the new spoils of war on the international art market, coveted by private collectors and art dealers. This is a very delicate situation in countries where state support for the arts is small or practically nonexistent, and where the artistic community distrusts the existing governmental institutions.<sup>18</sup> Some important Latin American archives have been sold and displaced to institutions in Europe and the United States, obviously offering many more economic and infrastructural resources than Latin America.

These movements trace a paradoxical juncture: the international acquisition of archives preserves the material but at the cost of moving them away from their country of origin. Neo-colonial logic becomes thus enforced and extended, widening the North-South divide, and, once again, legitimizing the North American and European sites of knowledge production. Such a situation demands a collective strategic response not only from local artistic communities, but from all those responsible for the care of material patrimony: from common citizens to the various states and private institutions involved.

17 Joaquín Barriendos, 'Museographic Imaginaries: Geopolitics of Global Art in the Era of the Expanded Internationalism', *International Journal of the Inclusive Museum* 2, no. 1 (2009), pp. 189-202.

18 *Red Conceptualismos del Sur*, 'State of Alert: The Art Archives in Latin America', trans. Felipe Ehrenberg, October 23, 2009. Circulated mainly on internet. See <http://eipcp.net/policies/rcsur/en/>. Reprinted in its original Spanish version in: *Ramona* 96 (Buenos Aires, November 2009); *Asterisco* 9 (Bogotá, 2010), among others.

I would like to comment briefly on some projects we are currently developing in Latin America. The first is a summary of the research project *Cartographies*, developed in 2007 and 2009. The second is two models of archival projects we are currently putting in motion: on one hand, the preservation of at-risk archives, which we do with the support of various institutions on the continent, and on the other, creating what we call 'in-use archives', which allow examining materials and documentation through a virtual interface.

### *Mapping the archives*

The *Cartographies* project, run by our Network during 2007 and 2009, constitutes a collective work of research regarding the state of the archives and documentation of 'critical art' dating from 1950 in South America. This project was composed of diverse cartographies that have been mapped out by researchers in seven countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru.<sup>19</sup> Each of these cartographies was structured in two distinct parts. The first part takes account of the existing archives and those currently being created, whether institutional or of a particular individual, public or private. In each case, we determined where the archive is located, its

origin, its interlocutors, what material is being gathered, why it is relevant, how it is stored, policies regarding its public consultation and opening of the archives, etc. The second part was a chronology of key events in critical art in each country from 1950 onward. This chronology recorded the dates of each event, information on who has researched it, and what bibliographic materials are available. For many of these critical episodes, of course, no such documentation was being found, nor research existed, but it is precisely this exercise that made it possible to highlight the gaps and create new diagrams for intervention.

This project, supported in its first phase by the MACBA (2007) and in its second by SEACEX and *Reina Sofía Museum* (2009), had allowed for the creation of seven cartographies, some still incomplete. The project had located 90 archives in Colombia, 35 in Ecuador, 31 in Peru, 26 in Argentina, 21 in Paraguay, 17 in Chile, and 12 in Brazil (in addition to a number of small collections of documentation). There were few established archives and there are many more archives currently being compiled, the existence of which was unknown at the beginning of this work. There were few archives that are well preserved and many at risk. The resources on which these archives rely tend to be insufficient, and the depositories, in some cases, foresee donations to local initiatives or institutionalization of the archive.

Another important aspect to consider is the effect of naming certain groups of documents 'archives'. This is also a call to attention: the same exercise of researching and charting (the act of contacting, interviewing, taking interest) ends up instituting the organic idea of the archive, labeling it as being of clear public interest. These effects do not only operate through the subjectivity of the depositories of these materials, but also

19 The reports were organized and prepared by Fernando Davis and Ana Longoni (La Plata y Buenos Aires, Argentina), Taller Historia Crítica del Arte (Bogotá, Colombia), Cristina Freire (São Paulo, Brasil), Miguel A. López and Emilio Tarazona (Lima, Peru), Paulina Varas (Valparaíso, Chile), Fernanda Cartagena (Quito, Ecuador), and Lía Colombino (Asunción, Paraguay). See Ana Longoni and Miguel A. López, 'Cartografías. Un itinerario de riesgo en América del Sur', *Carta*, Spring–Summer 2010, pp. 5–6.

on their status and economic value. In light of the risk that this project could encourage new processes of economic speculation, since 2008 our network has initiated dialogues and alliances between some of the agents involved, whether individuals or local institutions, to guarantee the accessibility and public conservation of some archives, which I'll discuss in a moment.

The *Cartographies* project has helped us not only to define priority archives for network support but also to elaborate the sharpest lines of microresearch and trace a map of decentralized actions. The results affect various other projects that have been in development since 2008: for example, they introduced new coordinates to our *Critical Writings* project, a large-scale revision of writings produced between the 1950s and 1980s in Latin America<sup>20</sup>, and to our *Alternative Artistic Networks: Visual Poetry and Mail Art Editions* project on the collaborative groups that used visual poetry and mail art as a tactic for denouncing the dictatorships.

20 See the first book of our *Critical Writings* collection: Roberto Jacoby; *El Deseo nace del derrumbe*, Ana Longoni ed., exh. cat., MNCARS, 2011. We are currently working on the publication of the writings of Brazilian art critic Walter Zanini, edited by the art historian Cristina Freire

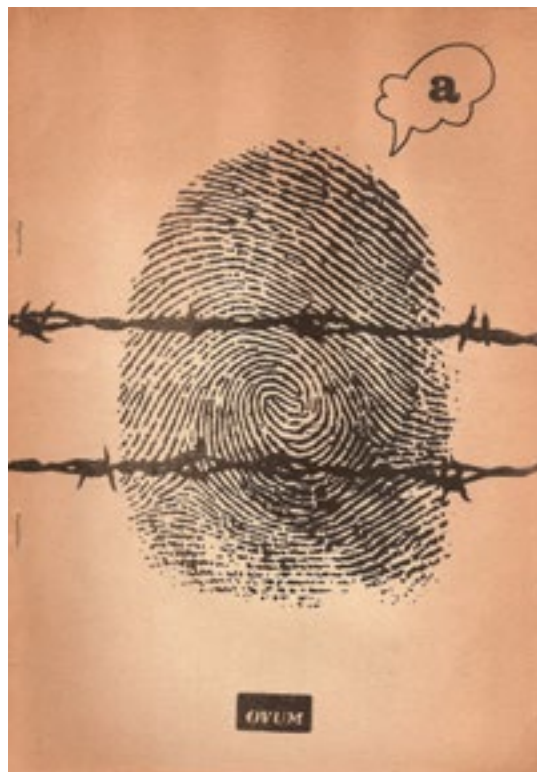


Fig 30. Clemente Padín, OVUM, vol. 2, n. 1, Uruguay, 1973. Courtesy Clemente Padín Archive. Fig 24. El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby acci.

### *Archive preservation*

We began our attempts to generate a new politics of preservation and public access in 2008 with the Uruguayan poet and artist Clemente Padín (fig. 30). We worked to convert his archive into a public *Centre of Documentation* in Montevideo City, Uruguay. The project was born out of the artist's recurring offers from private collectors to acquire his personal archive of experimental poetry and publications from the 1960s and 1980s. During those decades, Padín had been one of the main promoters of various editorial initiatives that built networks between Latin America, the United States, and Central and Eastern Europe, at a time of harsh political repression. In 1977 Padín was detained by the Uruguayan dictatorship and his archive was impounded. In the process he lost many books, magazines, and works, which were never returned.

The arrest prompted an extensive, international protest campaign organized by the *Mail Art Network* that demanded freedom for Padín and his colleague Jorge Caraballo, summarized in the slogan 'Free Padín, Free Caraballo'.<sup>21</sup> After being freed in 1979, the artist began to re-establish contact with the *Mail Art Network* and to reconstruct his archive.<sup>22</sup>

In 2009, with the funding of SEACEX and the *Reina Sofía Museum*, the art historian Fernando Davis and the Brazilian curator Cristina Freire, founding member of our network, completed a general diagnostic of his archive. Then we began conversations about the archive's custody with the *General Archive* of the *Universidad de la República*, in Montevideo, to guarantee a safe place for it and adequate cataloguing criteria that would assure its proper conservation and use. During this process, collaborating with the *Reina Sofía Museum* became a precedent for conservation policies that were different from those of a conventional private acquisition in which the material is usually displaced from its original country. What our network seeks instead is to empower local institutions.

This first experience allowed us to implement similar projects in other cities. Last year, we started working with the archive of Chilean activist art collective CADA, whose work was developed during the years of Pinochet's dictatorship. The situation with this archive—consisting of photographs, documents, and remnants of artworks—was very particular because the initial intention of its custodians was to sell it to an institution

outside Chile, given their distrust of governmental institutions. In this situation, our job was to open a dialogue to imagine ways to keep the archive in Chile, and to incorporate it into an institution, ensuring public access. After a difficult start, and with the collaboration of artists Diamela Eltit and Lotty Rosenfeld, the financial support from the *Foundation for Arts Initiatives*, and the institutional support from the *Reina Sofía Museum* in Madrid, some members of our Network came to an agreement with a local institution, the *Museum of Memory and Human Rights* in Santiago, Chile. Thus, after a long first diagnosis and inventory of materials conducted by Jaime Vindel, Fernanda Carvajal, Isabel García, and Paulina Varas, the archive is about to move on loan to this museum's documentation center, and in five years it will be moved to the *National Museum of Fine Arts*.

We've begun an even more ambitious project with the archive of the Argentine artist Juan Carlos Romero, who maintains one of the largest collections of political prints and graphic production by art collectives, organizations, and social movements in Latin America, but also whose profuse work since the 1960s is one of the most important critical testimonies of the continent. Some other members of our network are beginning the negotiations with the *3 de Febrero University* in Buenos Aires to preserve and organize the Romero archive in its facilities. We are in preliminary conversations with artists and institutions to prepare a similar project with the archive of the Peruvian-Swiss artist Francisco Mariotti and Peruvian artist Maria Luy, two of the most important figures of the critical art and collective experiences in Peru during 1970s and '80s. This material has been in Switzerland since 1982, following their departure. Our intention is for the archive to return to Lima next year and stay

21 Fernanda Nogueira and Fernando Davis, 'Gestionar la precariedad. Potencias poético-políticas de la red de arte correo', *Artecontexto* 24(2009), pp. 37–39.

22 Fernando Davis, 'El archivo Padín y la Experiencia Radical de la Nueva Poesía', *Carta*, Spring–Summer 2010, pp. 7–8.

on long-term loan at the *Museo de Arte de Lima (Lima Art Museum—MALÍ)*, a museum that is doing remarkable work in the consolidation of the art scene, bringing together an important collection of twentieth-century Peruvian art.

### *In-use archives*

As a second modality, we've promoted the experimental socialization of artist's archives through a virtual platform that enables viewing these digitized materials on any computer with the installed software. Unlike the preservation and organization of archives in institutions for the reference of researchers and the general public, the creation of these 'in-use archive' attempts to imagine a mobile workspace that allows access to documentary collections through a simple design, which merely requires curiosity instead of specialized knowledge. The first of these virtual platforms was that of the archive of Argentine artist Roberto Jacoby, an active participant of the 1960s avant-garde, whose diverse creative production of five decades spans social research, songwriting, network creation, literature, and art. This first in-use archive was prepared for the exhibition *El Deseo nace del Derrumbe (Desire is born of Collapse)*, curated by Ana Longoni, held at the MNCARS between February and July 2011.

But we're not talking about merely digitizing an archive previously organized and kept by the artist. Quite the contrary: these in-use archives are actually the result of research processes that involve systematizing and thinking of the 'chaotic and scattered universe of papers, publications, recordings, and film' in the homes of an artist and his or her friends. As Ana Longoni recognizes: 'The work entailed gathering the parts, filling in the

blanks, and imagining different ways of granting them legibility and meaning'.<sup>23</sup> By this we mean that research itself usually generates archives. The software consists of a digital interface where you can examine Jacoby's writings, projects, photographs, videos, and audio files using key concepts that allow one to navigate the material. You can also use a timeline, a list of collaborators, and a list of incidents and historical events.

Recently we finished two new in-use archives: the archive of the Chilean collective CADA, already mentioned, and an archive compiling photos and documents of *Creative Practices of the Human Rights Movement in Argentina*, since the last dictatorship.<sup>24</sup> At this moment, these two archives can be accessed at the documentation tables of the exhibition *Losing the Human Form* in Madrid. We intend to freely offer these digital interfaces so that they can be installed for public reference in various libraries, documentation centers, museums, universities, and institutions.

### *Conclusion*

What I've presented is just a glimpse of the kind of interdisciplinary work dynamics we foster within our Network, in spite of many economic difficulties. Whatever the format,

23 Ana Longoni, 'Políticas de Archivo desde la Red Conceptualismos del Sur: la experiencia del Archivo en uso de Roberto Jacoby', unpublished conference paper delivered at 'Polítiques d'Arxiu' symposium, Girona, University of Girona, December 2011.

24 The in-use archives project of the *Creative Practices of the Human Rights Movement in Argentina* were organized and conducted by Cora Gamarnik, Fernanda Carvajal, Jaime Vindel, Marcelo Expósito, and Ana Longoni. The design and virtual platform was developed by Eric Londaits.

our interventions have the common aim of putting into play different possibilities for history, the archive, and the transmission of knowledge. We don't know where this work will take us, but we're conscious of the urgency of intervening to prevent the latent danger of dispossession and material deterioration of our cultural memory. Our call is to act collectively. Without regional initiatives and new local politics—or, even worse, without archives—it will be very difficult to commit ourselves to the agenda of democratic reconstitution in our countries, which must be the seminal horizon of any cultural project that intends to be truly critical.

## Case Study 9: New Collaborations for a Global Heritage

*Róza El Hassan, artist, Zaytoon, Syria/Cairo*  
*Shadi Alshhadeh, activist, writer, artist and*  
*cyber-activist, Syria/Cairo*

### *Revolution / Catharsis of Loss*

Syrian Voices is an open platform for art theory, art initiatives, and social discourse. It was initiated by Shadi Alshhadeh, a human-rights activist, blogger, publicist, and cultural worker in the field of education and development of Syrian youth organizing community events, and Róza El-Hassan, Syrian-Hungarian artist and theoretician. One of her fields of research is social design and innovative practices in society through art. The main characteristic of *Syrian Voices* is that it travels; it has no permanent home until the regime in Damascus is gone. *Some Syrian Voices projects are Drawings and Stories (2012), QR Codes for Syria (ongoing), and People Want the Fall of the Regime (June 2012).*

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*Róza El-Hassan*  
*Syrian Voices*

In March 2011 some children in Syria expressed their thoughts on their school's wall: some graffiti, some drawings, and some slogans. Right after that, the Syrian security forces arrested the children. Their families tried every possible way to get the children

out, but nothing worked with such a regime until people decided to go out on the streets protesting and creating performances, actions, and making object collages for demonstration places. The people used all the tools of contemporary art that we've known since the early avant-garde, and later from 1970s artists like Joseph Beuys: activism, movement, situationism, internationalism, *Fluxus*, and social sculpture. They used these ideas about social sculpture, all these forms of social interaction, and visual tools to express the desire for freedom and social justice. And this happens everywhere in Syria. It is not just used by elitist art circles, or students, but by all, as the most natural form of expression for freedom on the streets. And they used all the accessible tools of the new-media activism: *Facebook* pages, *Twitter*, and all kinds of social media. Syrians risk their lives every day to document what is happening in their country, to send it via satellite modems to the *World Wide Web*, because they believe in the most basic theory of political and documentary art: that showing a picture of a crime is a real tool to stop the crime and raise the world's awareness of the struggle of Syrian people. Very often, all the houses are bombed, and the inhabitants do a collective art action. Imagine such a situation!

Still, after twenty months of protesting for social change, every day we see new forms of performance and new videos made by Syrian artist and activists. The change of discourse through the Syrian revolution would deserve a series of theoretical lectures for



each topic. But is this the time for any distant observation of pictures of people dying day by day? For any Brechtian *Entfremdungseffekt*, the bitter laughter of subversion? To particularize through feminism and its critique of modernism? I usually find all this very important. Instead of all those possibilities I see my role as an artist as a mediator.

I would like to ask you to refer to the following three conference keynotes: to the lecture of İsmail Ertürk showing us the profanation of banking system and creating the aesthetics and knowledge of transfers as a sharp ethical statement, then to Ketī Chukrov's lecture about the avant-garde's legacy and its role in social change, which stands in contradiction to its intellectual space of ultimate freedom, which is difficult to access and often not understandable to a broad public. Finally, please refer in the following discussion to Bassam el Baroni's statement on the stationary state and his question on the antagonism between professional and amateur art within the imagined safety and fragility of the institutional system, where matters of perception became a norm—where the audience and all art folks are in the space of edification.

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### *Shadi Alshhadeh* *Syrian Artists*

I would like to introduce you to short biographies of some artists who have suffered during the Syrian revolution. This is a short selection that I assembled for this lecture to show the repression of the regime and how much the artists have suffered. Many great artists are not mentioned in this study.

Akram Raslan, cartoonist: Born in 1974 in Soran, 18 kilometers from Hama. He worked for several Arab and Syrian newspapers. He was arrested on October 2 when Syrian authorities seized him from his office at the official newspaper, *Al Fidaa*. Raslan criticized the Syrian regime with his caricatures.

Jalal Altawil, actor: Born in Damascus, he announced he was joining the public revolution in Syria at the beginning. He was the first among the artists to state that he was against the violent acts committed by the regime against his people. Altawil left Syria by the beginning of November 2012.

Orwa Nyrabia and Diana Eljeiroudi, independent documentary filmmakers: Decades ago they founded *ProAction Film* company, working with TV channels like *Arte*, creating video installations for exhibitions (*Some Stories, Kunstmuseum Vienna*). They are independent documentary film producers, directors, actors, writers, and the founder of a reality cinema festival for documentary films. On August 23, 2012, Orwa was arrested by the Syrian security air forces in Damascus International Airport as he was leaving Syria on his way to Cairo. He was released several weeks later.

Bassel Shehadeh, filmmaker: Born in 1984, Shehadeh is a movie director, computer engineer, and one of most remarkable activists in the Syrian revolution. He was one of the first organizers of the peaceful demonstrations in Damascus and was arrested during a protest of 'the Syrian intellectua'. in the Midan area of Damascus. Bassel left his studies in the U.S. to return to Homs to lead workshops to teach others how to create video and documentary.

Shehadeh was a very important documenter of the intense shelling on Homs. He was killed by the shelling of the Safsafah neighborhood in Homs. Shehadeh was awarded the prize of the *Arab Camera Martyr*

*Festival* in Rotterdam on December 2, 2011, for his video *Saturday Morning Gift*.

Tamer al-Awam, film director: The thirty-four-year-old Syrian was killed by the Syrian regime's forces in Aleppo, north Syria, while filming a documentary about the *Free Syrian Army* in Aleppo. Al-Awam has filmed many documentaries about the Syrian revolution; the last one was about what happened in the Syrian city of Idlib.

Fadwa Suliman, performance artist: A memorable name in the minds of every person in Homs, Suliman led many demonstrations in the Khalidiya neighborhood of Homs, which was since then completely destroyed by shelling. Suleiman said that she did not belong to any denomination, only to the Syrian community.

Róza El-Hassan, conceptual artist, object artist, theoretician: A Syrian Hungarian artist, she didn't suffer personally from repression during the regime, but her solo show in Damascus was censored and cancelled. Her work *Stretched Chair*, which is a conceptual artwork about philosophical contradictions and abstraction of power (the work had nothing to do with Syrian politics), was interpreted by the Syrian regime as the chair of Al Assad, so the entire show was cancelled in 2010. This story shows how the feeling of guilt (and lack of legitimacy of the Syrian regime) was blocking free intellectual exchange between Syria and the rest of the world.

The Malas twins, writers, actors and producers: Born in Damascus, July 27, 1983. They protested against the Syrian regime since the beginning of the revolution. They currently reside in Egypt because of the life-threatening risk of living in Syria for those who come out against the regime. The Malas produce dozens of short films for Syria by a phone camera every few days.

Malek Jandali, musician: Born in 1972, Jandali is a Syrian composer and pianist who lives in the U.S. He is an international musician who composed the first symphony for the Syrian revolution, the Qashoush Symphony, which is one of his most remarkable works since the beginning of the uprising. Malek's parents' home in Syria was attacked and his father and mother were beaten by the security forces and thugs in reaction to his symphony.

May Skaff, actress: Born April 13, 1969. During the Syrian revolution Skaff, a well-known actress and performer in the Arab world, announced her rejection of the Assad regime. She was arrested along with a number of intellectuals while they were demonstrating peacefully in Almidan neighborhood. Although arrested several times, she returns again and again to Syria, at great personal risk. Thanks to the pressure of the international community, she was released.

Wael Kastoun, sculptor: These are some of the words of sculptor Wael Kastoun.

*Do not cry over my grave . It is Empty.  
My body is clay to be sculpted and my  
soul is a wind.  
I love you until sculpting.*

Wael used to focus his work on the woman and the goodness of her soul, as he used to say. But on July 23, 2012, he was murdered inside one of the Syrian security departments after having been under arrest for a while. The security force took him from his workshop, where he created objects from wood, to put him in a box made of wood. The smell of wood should be now around all Marmarita, his hometown in Homs, as the smell of bombs pervades all the other places

in Syria. He loved wood because, as he explained, it grows, lives, dies, and it needs a careful care—just like a woman. But Wael also worked with stone and marble, because for him it was a challenge to see who was stronger—he or the marble. He could create a beautiful sculpture out of these hard substances. He always considered himself and his body to be tougher and stronger than the stones, but he never knew that his body would not be stronger than the torture machine that killed him there underground. Whereas Wael used to sculpt love, his captor sculpted death.

Wael worked in the most peaceful and immediate tradition of modernism, and like many Syrian painters and sculptors, his work was imbued with the traditional Mediterranean perception of the female body, which has its roots in sculptures of ancient Greek goddesses, Picasso, and Amedeo Modigliani, who is very popular in the Damascene school. Since he believed in universal values of art, one can show his works around the globe—in Damascus, Budapest, Istanbul, New York—in any art space. His values would be familiar and need no explanation.

I wonder if Assad and his forces would deny Wael's blood as they denied his knowledge of the singer Ibrahim Qashoush, who sang what has become today the most popular song not only in Syria but around the Arabic world. Or would Assad deny the blood of Bassel Shehadeh, this young, creative filmmaker who had no weapon except his camera? Today the Syrian regime is sculpting a new Syria with bombs, explosions, blood, and death. We all will remember that Syrians and Wael are sculpting it with love and hope, as Wael once said, 'I love you from the stem that comes from the earth through to the most beautiful blossom of the tree'. Art until death is a painful issue following Syrian artists

these days, as it has been also for the past four decades. Born in Homs suburb of Marmarita in 1966, Wael participated in many art galleries in Homs. Most of his sculpture focused on themes relating to the freedom of women. Wael left his widow, Eva Lattouf, and two daughters, seven and twelve years old, Nawar and Rita. His last exhibition was in 2011.

*I fall down as my head  
falling between my legs  
found the god cries  
I died  
he carried me with his both hands and  
smiled  
he did knead me very softly  
inflate my bones to announce my rebirth*

These are some words Wael uttered a bit before he died, although he didn't know that his day was coming—a day that made him as Jesus when he sacrificed to give a life for others.

Since we are at the end of these conference presentations, I would like to make an appeal to you. There's an artist and politician who give me courage for this speech. He is Antanas Mockus, who was mayor of Bogotá, Columbia, and he used contemporary art, actions, and performance to improve living conditions in his city and decrease violence; he saved many people's lives and developed the city of Bogotá.

I always deeply trusted the space of art as a space of humanity, a space of freedom, and an autonomous space where separation on ethnic, religious, or ideological division is not present or present very little.

Therefore I would like to ask you to use the special knowledge based on art and art research—the knowledge of sociology, psychiatry, and other fields—to make peace. I would like to ask you to use your power, to use the spaces you have.

I still trust this special space of freedom and humanity created by art and its art institutions and their power to make change. Therefore I ask you to do something for Syria. I ask you to show some Syrian artists' works, videos, paintings, sculptures, and screen some documentaries to give some Syrians a chance to raise up their voices in your spaces. Arrange a conference, or just some lectures, about the *Arab Spring* to take action for Syria. There are hundreds of ways that you can be part of ending the suffering of millions of Syrians. And we can help you in all those ways.

## Workshops Conclusions

Good afternoon, good afternoon. We are going to try to summarize in a very synthetic way the results of the workshops that took place this afternoon. Each of the reporters has the endless time of two minutes to try to make sense out of these meetings; I announce also that the workshop number 7 on exchange will be reported by two members of the group not by the chairman who happens to be me, so I propose that we start from the first one.

*Bartomeu Marí*

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### *Leader Workshop 1: Zdenka Badovinac*

My workshop was titled 'New Histories'. Of course the first question was: what does the new histories mean? So it is something that is not 'Old History' of course, 'Old History', so now we are talking in plural before we were talking in singular form, so when I say 'Old History' it means of course the canonical history so the need for the 'New Histories' or history sizing come from the new geopolitical situation from the fact and awareness that there are many unrepresented histories doesn't matter from which region, from which geopolitical situation and there is also the need to historicize the agents of the history making. It means the institutions but also other types of agents that we try to define and it is also important to think parallel to the new art histories about the new social histories and to try to do it, to change the situation, not just the content.

We are all aware now that we need to map the new artists especially from the 'New regions' that we need to redefine the histories so not just the content is important, more and more we are aware that the new methodology

is important and for the new methodology we need new tools of translation so that was one of the conclusions and besides the professional history makers, it means museum people, curators, and so on—we have many new competitors, so there are many other new agents of the history making artists for example, new technologies make possible also new parallel history sizing and also oral histories are becoming more and more important. So all these new things required a redefinition of our profession and together with the redefinition of the profession, a definition of the museum. I think these are two minutes.

Bartomeu Marí: Perfect, excellent.

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### *Leader Workshop 2: Christine Van Assche*

Good afternoon. So I was leading workshop number 2, based on the topic: 'Private / public' as it is a large topic to talk about in one hour and I am not sure we will find a conclusion to this topic but I think it was more important in this workshop to give the opportunity to everybody, to introduce themselves and to give their opinion about this topic or even about CIMAM itself. So we are the group of directors, curators from Africa, India, Balkans, Europe and from different kinds of institutions, the range from really private like there was even a private commercial gallery up to the most public institution was in this workshop group. So we didn't propose one conclusion about this duality but I am only going to give you some remarks. Everybody, every institution has to find a right ethical model inside their own

context; private spaces should offer public services, open their space for free to the public and hire scientific professional staff to legally stabilize their collection. That's it.

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*Leader Workshop 3: Tirdad Zolghadr*

Our group, which was group 3 spent time talking about 'Conflict regions' and I think I can summarize the conversation by way of three questions. One was how to act as a museum in a conflict? Another was, what is the difference between an artist and an activist? The third being what can CIMAM do, or what should CIMAM do in a situation of conflict? This first, how to act as a museum in a conflict is obviously much easier to define what not to do. It seems to me that consensus was that the best a museum can do is document the conflict or transcribe it and the Cairo setting was quoted as a positive example there of where someone referred to as a discursive situation where the energy was mainly invested in trying to make sure that things were not lost in the sound and the fury but were transcribed for history. When it came to the difference between an artist and an activist it was pointed out, that it's a question of efficiency but also that it's not fair to demand one role or the other from artists. It should be a matter of choice and this was immediately questioned and whether you do have a choice, whether the political setting decides for you, whether you are an activist or not. One example quoted was Nigeria, where artists are at the forefront of all manners of movements and initiatives but are not seen as activists no matter what they do—or was it the other way around? We will come back to this.

The point was that it wasn't up to them. The conversation moved to Ai Weiwei hogging the limelight and the question of other artists who are not visible in the international arena who are just as persecuted and this prompt to the important observation that the artist has a different relationship to the institution and the artist becomes visible through the institution in a way that is not provocative of the activist. But the third question is maybe the most poignant for this setting. Someone proposed that quoting a present from this morning: what would happen if CIMAM pushed for an artwork being placed in the hallway of every museum; an artwork that was, that reflected the Syrians, the conflict in Syria in some way?

An artwork by an artist within the context of the conflict that would spark that particular conversation and the question was immediately raised whether it had to be an artist, an object, or whether it could be a research project—but ultimately the conversation revolved around the fact that CIMAM was probably not kind of arena that carries these kinds of conversations; it was compared to the UN, which can protect the peace but not create it and it was also, the question was raised whether there was a certain agency to this because maybe for the generations down the line this urgency that some of us do share around political priorities urgencies would disappear and that if CIMAM were a body that could formalize, institutionalize certain priorities then at least this would be both set down as a historical record and they could be used as leverage of vis-à-vis local bodies like city councils, city governments, and so on.

*Leader Workshop 4: Elizabeth Ann Macgregor*

I was chairing the group that was taking as a starting point the way in which the recent political crises and upheavals have used social media to reach people, in particular young people, and whether museums can learn any lessons or otherwise from that. The first conclusion we came to was that it is indeed possible for museums to mobilize support groups, they have to be careful doing that particularly if they are run by politicians. But in most cases social media was seen in a good way, obviously, to reach different groups and mobilize them.

Secondly, can institutions meet the expectations that are put out? People very quickly see through the kind of posturing that goes on by institutions trying to adopt the language of social media in ways that are completely false and not really delivering what it is expected and there was an interesting debate about whether Facebook and so on, actually did drive people to attend events, there was a diversity of views on this, some people thought that the event on Facebook, the announcement became the event itself and therefore wasn't actually performing a marketing function and the biggest debate I think was really about the use of language, the institutional language versus the informal, marketing speak as opposed to some kind of more language that really does come from the voice of people who you are trying to reach whether is young people or people from different backgrounds. A whole range of issues I think in common with everybody is that the importance of the workshop was that we did hear an immense diversity of voices that are from around the world and people have different stages in their development of social media and I think everybody found that it was a very valuable experience.

*Leader Workshop 5: Lawrence Rinder*

I was not the leader but I was drafted by my team, group 5: 'Art / Versus Creative Industries'. Creative industries, an emerging sector of economic and social forces that are being advanced by cities and government to typically promote local and national economies. Interestingly several people in the group said that their regions or cities have recently, specifically identified themselves to rebrand themselves as places that were centers of creative industries. We also realized that the definition of creative industries extended beyond simply their sort of arts and crafts stratum: visual art and fashion to include popular culture and music popular film and so on.

We determined it was a double-edged sword. It can be positive, there can actually be positive economic outcome for things like Bilbao, the development in Lyon, France for example but typically not without additional support for the social sector on top of that and also that there was a positive dimension in supporting the integration of the arts which have actually being integrated all along but facilitated that integration and the negative side, the imperative for creating industries is based on a economic rather than a culture idea and it made alienate or harm working class communities in the service of gentrification and global competitiveness.

As a marketing or branding approach it can overlook fundamental conditions that support integrative creative arts and industries such as low rent, social space, and access to tools; and it's fundamentally not organic, it's a top-down bureaucratic imperative and ignores the importance of creative ideas and processes flowing from the creative people themselves.

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*Leader Workshop 6: Ivo Mesquita*

I was in the group number 6: 'Latin America as a New Region' and we didn't come as Latin Americans, we didn't come to any conclusion but we would like to say that it is clear for us that Latin America is not a 'new region' and considering that there is a presence of many Latin Americans today, historical Latin Americans, historical avant-garde Latin American art, it's present and represented in dominant institutions today, so the recommendation would be more in terms of observing what is now emerging out of this predominant discourse of Western history, what is local that it is being produced and that could be taken as something out of this dominant perspective—also acknowledging that there is a level of institutionalization in the Latin American countries for art but at the same time there are still a lot of marginalized or little-known areas of artistic and cultural practices.

Bartomeu Marí: I would like to ask to Sarah Rifky and Maria Lind to come to explain the conclusion of the workshop number 7 on 'Exchange'.

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*Leader Workshop 7: Maria Lind*

So, our topic in group number 7 was: 'Share, collaborate, not compete' and we had a very interesting discussion and three points are what we would like to offer you. One has to do with terminology around the word 'collaborate', and other one is trust, and the third is size, and specifically a publication called *Size Matters*. So if I begin with the terminology of collaboration we started out by thinking around what collaboration actually is and in

neoliberal times where we are often demanded to collaborate it's extra important to be precise in defining what kind of collaboration we are involved with: how do they begin? How are they shaped? What are the outcomes? Partnerships, outsourcing, networking or downright collaboration.

Sara Rifky: Also not to presume that all institutions share the same values before we move on to underlining the important question of trust, to also like imagine trust that exists through common interests and an aligning of objectives and to be able to acknowledge mutual opportunism sometimes when it comes to collaboration. To pose a simple question, if the Tate comes knocking at my door to do a project that's of course one thing but if I go knocking on the Tate's door I am not so sure that the collaboration going to be made with the same amount of trust depending on the size of the organization. And one last thing in relation to that is also responding to the title of the workshop is, we are also not just competing for resources but often we are also competing for relevance and that leads us to the very last point.

Maria Lind: And the very last point is to do with size, size matters. We had an interesting case of a successful collaboration between a very big institution and a very small one in San Petersburg *The Pro Arte* foundation and the Hermitage—a thirteen-year-long collaboration that apparently has been very fruitful for both parties, otherwise we discussed a lot what it means to be big and small and how big and small could or even should do things together. And it was suggested that it's worthwhile taking a look at a report that exist on line called *Size Matters* that was published by a little lobby group in London called '*Common Practice*' consisting of small visual art organizations such as *The Showroom*, *Gasworks*,



*Chisenhale*, and it is extremely interesting in terms of what kind of values small institutions produce today and how this value can be capitalized on.

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*Leader Workshop 8: Natalia Majluf*

Hello, the group I am representing discussed the issue of 'the public'. And one thing that we did was question the abstract notion of 'the public' as a single fixed entity and we discussed the dangers associated with catering to what is often an idealized notion that each of us invents according to our personal fantasies. I think a lot of us discussed the idea of thinking about communities in the plural again, which is something that other groups have thought of, even there was discussion about how to involve communities in the institution, and even in the design of programs and there was a lot of discussion when this challenge is viable or practical and that is an open question that remains to be explored, I think, as something that we can work with.

We also explored the notion that each institution really creates its own context, its own audiences. They just don't exist out there, readymade for us; we are an active part in building those publics and in that regard, there was also a discussion about the danger of identity politics and playing with notions of identity and at the same time a concern for issues of a formative action—again a recurrent theme that probably has to do with creating the cultural industry is whether a public sphere can be built through the commercial mass media or the usual marketing tools of advertising and if we can use those tools in a creative way without betraying our purpose and our mission and finally the notion of public, was tied to the

idea of accountability and questions of who we are accountable to and again this also tended to get mixed with the notion of the public and the private, the state versus the independent organizations etc. There was a very rich discussion and I can only point to some of the routes that we took.

Bartomeu Marí: Thank you, thank you very much. I guess these are the conclusions of the workshop as you see those attending other meetings, the conclusions leave out a lot of the temperature and the components of the discussion which are the most interesting and for what was our case we would have continued longer but this is what we get I guess.

Question—Róza el Hassan: I am very thankful that what you bring up this question of politics and the activism. Actually I planned to make a statement I need two minutes for this and then I wanted to express my deep trust in the art space and also in the art institution space. For me it has been one of the most autonomous spaces in the world, it is defined as the most autonomous space without ideological, or religious, or ethnic divisions already. The main concept of contemporary art spaces since Alfred Barr, it's a freedom of thought and therefore I would like to remind you of Antanas Mockus, who was mayor of Bogota in Colombia. I don't know if you know him but his practice encourages me to make this statement, he applied arts and the performance and the art actions as a political tool and within two or three years when he was mayor of Bogota he could effectively save lives of so many people because of criminality and threat became really smaller in Colombia, which is not an easy place, either.

So I would like to appeal to all who are here to consider the possibility of creative politics we have the notion of creative

industry which is very well known but I think here there is also a possibility of creative politics within art institutions. And this is an appeal to everybody who sits here to use the access to publicity to power and to use the special knowledge of art in the field of sociology and psychology and mediation and yes maybe to do something for Syria.

Zdenka Badovinac: Thank you very much for all your reports. Now we are about to start the General Assembly so it is obligatory just for the members, for all the members. Ok, so thank you very much.

## Conference Closing Remarks and General Assembly

Zdenka Badovinac: Ok, I think we can start. I would like to thank again the organizers especially Vasif and all the staff of SALT who helped organize this very important CIMAM conference and also I would like to thank Jenny Gil Schmitz and Inés Jover for their excellent work. It has been really hard work, it was not easy to prepare this conference, each conference takes a lot of time also from us volunteers, so Bartomeu thank you very much as well. So, I would like to make some conclusions maybe very individual, very personal and we all invite you at the end to comment on the conference as well, because each observation can be only really individual. So, as I see CIMAM and the CIMAM mission I think is just not about professional discussion—that is of course its first place—but at the same time we need to ask ourselves what our profession is. Is it still the same as it was, let's say twenty, thirty, years ago? So, as I see the last actual conference that we just finished, the advantage of it is that it gave a voice to, as I call it, horizontal cultural productions—it means many small places, it means many individuals, it means artists and in the new situation in a global world this horizontal culture production is becoming extremely important. And it influences very strongly the vertical cultural production—the museums as we know them. So it also helps us to redefine our work.

So hopefully after this conference there will be time, before all of us go back to work, to our daily routine, so we can take a moment to reflect on it. To think about what all these different voices informed us about. I am very happy that we gave the voice to the local community. It's never enough, in two days it's

always impossible to hear different voices so we always are critical, we heard just this side, but at least I hope we got an impression of what the situation is in Istanbul but also in Turkey in general. So my personal impression is that non crisis is not necessarily the advantage so we saw also many good works but also maybe some problematic points that are the results maybe of this, maybe progress, or let's say different elements that define the situation of non-crisis.

I am extremely happy that CIMAM conference gave the voice to the conflict situation here in the vicinity. And I really was touched with the last presentation about the Syrian case. It is really not just about, you know our openness toward these different voices but it is about our future. I think we all profit from the knowledge that we get from all these individuals and spaces that are not necessarily the museum spaces. But we are preparing already the 2013 conference that as you know is taking place in Rio de Janeiro in August next year and it would be at the same time as the ICOM conference.

So the board of CIMAM is preparing some new tools, some new ideas, new comments, how to improve the communication with the members. How we make possible that you also contribute, your ideas of course we are going to talk today, there will be probably comments questions after Bartomeu gives his report, and there we have some hours left, but there will be many possibilities and I hope we can create a permanent platform for the communication with all of you, with all the members, also with those who couldn't attend the conference.

So there are already also the proposals for the other venues after Rio, so for example there is a proposal that one of the future conferences would take place in Singapore, Sidney and India. So it's not necessarily that this three proposals are the only proposals all of you, you can also propose the future venues, the future concepts, ideas and speakers. CIMAM should be a democratic platform I think we all agree on it.

I would like to ask Bartomeu to make a short report on real things.

Bartomeu Marí: Thank you Zdenka.

All the information that is going to be displayed here will be also on the net and I am not going to comment each and every single of these pages, I think it is the information that every year we would like to see how the CIMAM is evolving, how our organization is growing and in which way.

I think the different aspects of the life of this organization are, on the one hand and the everyday life ensured by Jenny Gil and Inés Jover in the permanent office and our yearly conference that brings together those who can attend. I think these numbers certify that CIMAM continues growing as an organization; we have more members of all kinds of membership is growing and also the number of countries from which these members come has also grown in 2012 as you can see.

This is the division of the type of membership between individual, institutional, with reduced version for both institutional and membership that compose our association. This is, in a graphic, what we showed earlier just in numbers starting from 2008 and 2008–10 to 2012. As I said, I am going to make it very short in order to keep as much space as possible for the discussion later on and remember that all this information will be posted on our webpage.

The membership of CIMAM seen also graphically in the world map; membership in Africa is the less intense but it's quite extended globally as you can see. We have also welcomed new patrons, which is a very important source for the sustainability of our organization. I think CIMAM has a very soft overhead cost and organizes its main event, which is this conference every year. The membership and sponsorship should cover these basic everyday costs. Also the type of patronage is evolving.

We are diversifying and simplifying the types of patronage that can support CIMAM and these new categories try to facilitate the diversification of patrons; we like to have more patrons in the future of this organization.

Here comes the score, for the music and some comments from this budget, the first comment is that it is very easy for me who knows nearly nothing about numbers to do this because Jenny and Inés have been taking care of this on a daily basis with total clarity.

CIMAM in 2012 went through very important changes when the former director Pilar Cortada ceased to be with us and Jenny Gil took over the responsibility of the organization together with Inés as the program coordinator. In this first year there are some important income increases in the registrations, going nearly above the 12,000 euros in relationship to 2011 and that in relation to 2013 also it is expected to be maintained. Remember that CIMAM receives the payment of membership every three years so the first year of this triennial goes up very easily and then the other years it decreases.

This year the membership has increased. Also I think we are increasing as well, even if we lost some patrons, we got some new ones which compensate for this change and I think it is very relevant to see the increase in the in-kind support, you don't see much because

it is at the level of the table, behind the table. But the in-kind has increased very much so thank you to all the local organizations who have made it possible to do it this. In the expenses there are also a couple of data that I'll like to mention. We have reduce the expenses related to the work of lawyers that have been helping us during 2011, in different legal questions and documents especially related to our relationship with ICOM. 2012 has not seen this expense.

For the organization cost I think there is also a very important reduction of expenses, which is savings if you want to say it in that way. Aside from the 6,000 euros that reflects the participation of Turkish Airlines' very generous support. We can not thank them enough. Another important element is the increase of publications, in the publications posts, online because in 2012 we are paying expenses related to 2010 and 2011 and if you see the expenses seen for 2013 that nearly doubles that of 2012, it's because on 2013 we will be undertaking expenses from 2012 and 2013 together.

The last element in the expenses part is a 10,000 euros expense that is about at the high of the table which means that we need to refurbish, remake our website. Our webpage has become obsolete, technologies become obsolete very quickly and to maintain our webpage it's very expensive, to change a coma it's a torture we need much more flexible instrument to, not only to communicate worldwide but to communicate also among us, members, and board and different executive direction, so it is really important to do this little investment and make more flexible and efficient this very important instrument of communication.

The last part, as a conclusion, the conclusion is only the conclusion at the end of the year, and at the end of the year means that we have closed the fiscal exercise for the

conference, which is the moment where we spent more money and also we manage more money but the result is very positive, because we end up with a positive balance again, until the end of the year we can't say anything and in the column of the middle you see this 4,400 and some euros is what we expect to end the year with and in bold characters under that numbers it what our balance in the bank shows. We are an association with a certain, with a financial health, and we are sustainable so far. So again my congratulations for the everyday managing—Jenny and Inés in Barcelona and especially also to the organization of this conference all together in Istanbul.

In the budget we have not reflected an expense that we should take on, which is the collection of the oral history of CIMAM that should be done through interviews to presidents and board members or relevant board members of past CIMAM triennials. In 2013 we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of CIMAM's bylaws, which means we celebrate the adult life of a legal organization. Ivo Mesquita mentioned this morning that in fact we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of CIMAM in 2012 since CIMAM was created in 1962, I think it is very necessary to collect while it is still possible the oral memory, the minutes of the meetings and so on exist, but they are really boring, and I think it's very important to collect the oral history and speak, or allow those who have been doing these things that we do now in other moments in order to see also how the world has changed through our organization.

Very quickly, the usual, at the end of every conference until now there was, we distributed a page where we asked the members to offer feedback to the organization from this year onwards we do this through our webpage this is to facilitate to everyone, you can do it whenever you want,

you can send it whenever you want the sooner the better but, the feedback, reactions, comments, criticism of any kind are very welcome, and we appreciate it for the sake of future improvements. Some figures about the current conference, we are a lot, this is very positive, and remember that in 2013 the conference will take place in Rio de Janeiro coinciding with also the meeting of the board of ICOM. One more little data to finish, fruit of collaboration with the city council of Barcelona, CIMAM has offices within the complex of the *Fabra i Coats* factory in Sant Andreu, the city council of Barcelona, I haven't check but should have its logo somewhere as our supporter. They give free office space, we don't pay rent, we pay for cleaning and the electricity and I don't know if there is heating because there was not heating when it started, I hope we do not have very cold winter unless we will have to invest in pullovers for Jenny and Inés.

*Contemporary Art Museums Watch* is something that we encourage also all the members of the organization to follow. It's an instrument by which CIMAM has become aware of let's say violations or breaks in the codes, deontological codes, good practices for management for museums, it is also something to be continued and I have heard from several colleagues cases we have discussed at length as well the case of the dismissal of the chief curator at Los Angeles MOCA, there have been other cases of this kind. I think CIMAM plays a role as an international voice, as a collective voice that speaks not only to the museum world but beyond. And with this we are very much open to questions about what we said about what we didn't say with gratitude to the organization and to all of you for your patience and I return the word to Zdenka.

Zdenka Badovinac: We are going to publish the publication, the printed version, not just on internet, but with the help of the *Cambridge Scholar Press*, so that's also good news. So I think we explained many things so already we probably we forgot something, it is important also to have at least at the end also this open communication, so we would like to invite you to comment, to ask, to propose.

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Question: Actually it is a question about last year's conference, Gabriela Rangel's presentation on the Venezuelan museums and the state they are in. I remember there was a huge outcry last year but I was wondering if anything happened. If CIMAM has had ideas or proposed anything.

Zdenka Badovinac: Not really.

Follow-up question: Shouldn't CIMAM be doing something?

Zdenka Badovinac: Yes of course, I think we had not formulated that problem really clearly at that time and so it's also now the possibility of correcting something that hasn't been done as it should have.

Bartomeu Marí: I think this as in other cases there is the activity of those who are closer to the problem and the activity of the organization as such, and in this case, and after calling the attention to the problem at the past conference, to my knowledge CIMAM has not proceeded.

Zdenka Badovinac: You know, the museum watch it's very important program between the two conferences and we have been inviting members to send us proposals

because you know we are not in the localities so it is also possible that there are proposals and nobody really work on them so it's very important also to propose for example, I think we are taking about the who betrayed at that time you know, so I can say, because I don't know the situation, so it's very that one who proposes the problem also try to propose the one who betrayed about it so that's how we work also with this museum watch mission let's say and if there is anything we can correct please let us know, it's very important, I think it's becoming more and more important activities of CIMAM.

There were some examples that we were informed and then we were looking for the people who would report not just this case but from the global different situations and that was very difficult to get the writers and you know it's also a little bit difficult to invite people to write as we can't pay the fee, so it's always about the volunteers.

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Question: What is the museum watch?

Zdenka Badovinac: We actually started after or before our post-tour in Sarajevo with a petition of Sarajevo museums, you remember there was a very strong and important petition, then we got three hundred signatures, unfortunately the situation there is not better after we did the petition, it's even worse; just recently they have closed all the institutions there. So, we are going to repeat the problematic very soon in the museum watch so it's actually the newsletter with a text about the problems, and the petitions and you know all kind of similar activities. So there is another initiative, for example, related to Sarajevo, a very recent problematic initiated by the artist Azra Aksamija that we are going to publish, so there was a Hungarian case,

then there was a Dutch case that we gave the space, and then the situation from North Africa, we were also looking for the writers to publish something about it, so whenever there is, and then Japan, when there was a earthquake and many different urgencies all around the globe also related to the museum problematics to the accession problematic too, I don't remember all these different cases but it always, it's in the newsletter actually.

Bartomeu Marí: I think that it's very important that any of you that know about a case that should be exposed in such a way informs us because sometimes these things get into the public knowledge or into the knowledge of the art world very late. The idea of the museum watch is that, whenever there is a problematic situation of any kind then this information is reported and we distributed within our organization and outside of it.

Zdenka Badovinac: I will also use this opportunity thank you for the question it's really important, I would like to invite all the members to contribute the text, you know I also wrote a text for this museum watch I was provoked with the situation with Ai Weiwei and all these things, if you remember that was my text and then we also invited Pascal Gielen to write about that situation which I think it was also very deep it was not just an information, it was really an analysis on the case. So I know it takes time and it's not paid but that's CIMAM. It's important really if the members collaborate also in this way.

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Question: In relation to this year's conference rather than last year's, well thank you first of all for the fantastic hospitality and organization which were amazing and I just have

two comments, one was in relation to the case studies which I think it's a good format but it would be nice to have more variety, because it seemed to me that although there was very good geographical variety it was not enough typological variety and maybe we could have had more small and big and how do the small relates to the big and I supposed given the title of our association, and the title of the conference it would have been good to have the museum addressed in relation to the artist space or organization and I suppose in relation to the slot: 'The local context' again I thought that was a great idea but we probably needed more background and it would have been good for us as foreigners to understand more about the relationship between the private and the public especially in this tumble and how that can relate or be understood in very different ways according to where you come from with or you are more of the public or the private and I think Istanbul has a fantastically and interesting situation, this wealth of private patronage it would be good to hear in what extend that is helpful or not helpful and how it, it's part of the ecology.

Zdenka Badovinac: Thank you. Is there any other comment, question, proposal, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth Ann MacGregor: I would just like to say that I was very staggered by the last session, it was an artist that did it and I think we should say a very big thank you to Roza for introducing such as an extraordinary piece into the session and I think a minute silence was what we were calling for afterwards but really puts into the frame what it's like dealing with these extraordinary situations that 90 percent of us don't deal with. So I just want to acknowledge her contribution and the fact that she gave up her opportunity to promote her own work in order to do that. Thank you.

Zdenka Badovinac: Ok if there is no other, or there is...

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Question: There is just one. I would like to say that I agree with Penelope, I think that for next time it would be very interesting for us to discuss some museum issues and I would have liked to hear some of my colleagues from different museums, not only from independent structures because we are in a time where we are defining how CIMAM congress as a congress about the crisis of the museum and I think there is one and this crisis has a big impact on, not only our future but also on our daily life and also and also on our definition and it's very good to hear some people from outside the museum talking about what can be very positive answered to the needs of the society and all, but I would have liked to hear from the answers or perhaps just the questions of the main questions now in the museum so perhaps for the next time if we could come back to some museum issues some as collections, as display of the collection, some as exhibitions, some as problem of the blockbuster or not blockbuster also the structure and governance of the museums and of course the part of the private sense and how it affects as a museums and not only its life but its definition. All these subjects I think are more important today than ever.

Zdenka Badovinac: There was at least one very important museum case here that was *New Museum* presentation from Eungie so it was about the education, which I think it's extremely important activity in today's museums. So thank you for your comments and proposal so if we are more focused on the education in this conference and there was also another case on *Tehran Museum* which is, of course, not the museum that we



think we can maybe learn a lot but at the same time maybe we are wrong, maybe we can learn also from a museum that seems really in deep crises a lot but yes, I think we should together also find the other very important topics that relate to the museums for the next conference. Thank you.

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Question: To speak to what Catherine said, I was lucky enough to attend the *American Association of Museum Curators Conference* recently in Boston which was almost exclusively devoted to museum issues, issues of museum expansion for example, collections management, integration of the contemporary with modern collections and historical collections, so I feel very privileged to have attended now because it was hardly complementary to that and I found your presentation fascinating and for me I am completely fulfilled with what I have had here because I had that other experience so perhaps you could look at what was presented there for next time too.

Zdenka Badovinac: Thank you

Bartomeu Marí: Thank you

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Question: I just want to thank you very much for this great organization in this maleram I was asking myself if the CIMAM congress is next year in Rio, and it's three hundred people, I think, I was just wondering how it is practical to, because I think it's so important to have this close relation to the institution like we have in the galleries; I am just thinking about how is it possible to organize the conference with so many people next year.

Zdenka Badovinac: We will need to ask Jenny.

Difficult.

Bartomeu Marí: It is possible with a good local partner. We are working very strongly already with the museum in Rio and as Zdenka said, with the great team at CIMAM and on the local context. So we hope that we do not go backward in our organizational skills and that next year it's even more successful event conference as this year if it is possible.

Zdenka Badovinac: Yes, Ok. Thank you very much for the questions and comments, we are going to take them very seriously, and there will be, I hope, many improvements next year and also celebration of 30th anniversary of CIMAM. We recognize that we don't know much about the CIMAM history so it will be also the opportunity for self-reflection so I think next conference should give space to the CIMAM history but from the today's point of view, so we'll have opportunity to learn from our own history; how to go on with such an important organization. Thank you very much.

## CIMAM

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and Collections of Modern Art

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