The upsurge in interest around late 60s conceptual art and its correlate the ‘dematerialization’ of the art object offers the chance to make potentially radical conjunctions with layers of history that have not been fully played out. This renewed interest, demonstrated by large attendances at the ‘Live In Your Head’ show held at the Whitechapel earlier this year, seems to be indicative of an attempt to re-inject some social combative force into an art world that is full to surfet with people willing to act as the “high priests of show business.”

What is revealed by a glance at this history is that beyond homogenised categories and stylish mimery there are practices that are always already heterogeneous. We discover that the ‘dematerialization’ of the art object was variously concerned with a rejection of morphology and aesthetic scopism, with the rise of a text-based practice and an accent on process rather than product. The submerged legacy of conceptualism is one which encourages a rejection of art’s ideological role in society.

Through an examination of language, perception and the entrapment of desire in representation, the more radical proponents of conceptualism were part of an avant-garde trajectory that submitted the institutions of art to a critique. As with their predecessors they were led towards actively pursuing their practice in the dynamics of a social field. That such a ‘dematerialization’ of the artist is now only a submerged legacy is, in part, a measure of how far the art institution has been engaged in a retro-projection that only benefits the econometrics of the ‘yba’.

Historical associations have been seperated and ransacked under the pressure to produce. There has been a recentering of the spectator upon the art object which, injected with a knowing style, has re-strengthened the divide between artists and spectators and had the effect of re-prioritising the means of expression. There has been the activity of ‘nomination’ wherein the artist’s agency is only minimally drawn towards the definition of his/her own role. There has been a submission to the ‘popular’ rather than a testing of the possibilities of what could be accepted as ‘popular’.

Those artists who have unequivocally acceded to their delegated role as the vanguard of an hyper-real image culture—and as such always eminently exchangeable—have only been talked up as the inheritors of the cowl of conceptualism, but have bemusedly become as popular as advertisements. What follows is a critical tracking of the intentions of artists engaging in the practice of ‘nomination’ as a more apt basis for a socially engaged artistic endeavour, events spanning micro-moments and cosmological durations that, it was hoped, could be commissioned as spurs to action and participation rather than as objects of self-referential contemplation.

If the art object was coming to be dematerialized, similarly the concept of ‘artist’ was to be overturned and redefined and Latham eventually worked-up the term ‘incidental person’ as a description of the intentions of artists engaging in the social field.

This can be seen as relating to one of conceptualism’s ‘advances’ in terms of the artists’ own ‘individuation’ becoming the subject of art. But rather than produce a static subjectivity where the artist’s person, commodified, becomes an institutional currency, the hope for the incidental person it seems, was that the performative aspect of work within industry and government departments would not be seen through the prism of the art institution. The conceptual activity of the incidental person, in being immersed in the unfurling dynamics of the workplace, in maintaining a fluid position of independence and ‘affectivity’, would come to “generate maximum public involvement and maximum enthusiasm” so as to “release the impulse to act.”

This impulse to act, which raises desire but leaves it unexpressed, could have become an area of concern and dissension within the APG, in that:

The Art of the Artist Placement Group 1966-1989

Howard Slater

The APG were working around areas of dissolving the ‘divide’ between the artist and the public and moving further towards ‘dematerialization’. The problems, much vaunted at the time, as to who or what constitutes the ‘spectator’ of conceptual art, could, with an APG practice that involved itself with submerged social dynamics, come to materialise desire and work-relations as the conceptual objects of group participation and person-
al responsibility that unfurls over time, rather than as the contemplative still-lives of an institutionalised spectator, that unfalsifiably repeats the limits of its own confines.

A release of the "impulse to act", the materialisation of desire in the social field as a rhythm between constraint and possibility, is, so the APG thesis implies, no longer a matter of spectators being grouped by an institution but more a matter of bringing into rhythm the differential speeds of spectatorhip, contemplation, self-expression and production, and pursuing the resultant activities without seeking their artistic legitimisation.

Whether this is an idealistic projection onto the APG's industrial placements is maybe the point. If we take into account the strike wave of creativity of the working class of this period or the potential of the various 'incidental persons' and the outcomes of an APG placement will always pale.

However, as a concerted response to a still activated neurosis of artists to feel 'alienated' or 'outside' the norm as the target of art, the APG was one of those situations that made the outcomes of an APG placement relevant. As an event, as a means of registering desire, can come to mean something.

In providing a space in which the "incidental persons" were encouraged to take action to define time in a space-time continuum, then, perhaps Latham's error, with half an eye turned towards eternity, was to show duration closely confined than that of Debord's open-ended dematerialisation. The compromised nature of the APG's social field, in contrast to the objective-based aestheticism of the art institution, comes across as increasingly naive when it is a matter of articulating what it is that the APG sought to change.

In providing a space in which the 'incidental persons' could operate independently of government directives the APG was actively encouraging "context" which would in many circumstances be the autonomous province of the 'incidental persons' themselves. In this way much of APG's activity would rest with the personal testimony of the various 'incidental persons' and the people with whom they worked. In the absence of such information, where it seems that the 'micro-event', as a means of registering desire, can come into focus as a subject of discussion as to APG's efficacy on a smaller, intimate scale, we are left, in this piece, with the retrospective views of Latham and Stevens and with the visibility of APG's move towards Governmental Departmental Placements after 1975. This demarcation point, coming roughly at a time of growing working class militancy, would have the respective advantages of worker-participants by their trade union representatives is, perhaps, illustrative of the artist-as-professional and hints that, underlying the open-ended application of an incidental person's transversal and intuitive knowledge, there is, in the case of the artist of the APG, a mindset that seeks legitimation for an art practice not from the art institutions themselves but from industrial and government professionals.

Time-based theories

Latham's keenness to reference Rauschenberg's blank canvas as a 'turning point' in the shift from an object-based art brings forth two other works of the 70s that were similarly intended to make art reflect upon its social purpose: John Cage's 4′33″ and Guy Debord's Howling in Favour of Sade. These two precursors of 'dematerialization' highlight potential areas of radical conjunction for conceptual art: music as eminently 'dematerialised', communicating in a "counter-literal" way, and after Debord's filmic experiments, revolutionary politics as the very process of combined work in the social field to effect wide-reaching change. Both these pieces raise the notion of duration.

In contradistinction to Cage and Debord, Latham's 'time-based' theories, whilst functioning to illustrate the dematerialization of the art object and leading to the "micro-event of desire and the 'impulse to act'", come, perhaps, to be satisfied with finding a new status for art as that which, when the theories are extended to a cosmological level, forms the basis of a Grand Universal Theory or a 'meaning of the world'. Latham's time-based theories, being content with the fixity of a specific turning point, a conjunction between art and physics through the Einsteinian auspices of 'all matter being at a dimensionless point', falls quite considerably when we sense that what is being removed from the 'time-based' approach is the notion of history as the social continuum we are actually living.

Whilst such an approach may allow for the effects of an APG placement to be seen over a longer duration of time than is normally allotted an artist-in-residence, whilst it admits to process and reflexive reassessment, it does not appear to take account of what occurs prior to the placement, quite the reverse, Latham's error, with half an eye raised towards eternity, was to show duration and attempt to fill it with an overarching theory that may have functioned as a 'brief' to which the incidental persons were encouraged to adhere.

When it is a matter of groups seeking common objectives and directions for action, it is perhaps such overarching theories, with their underwork of disciple-inducing didacticism, that have the negative effect of one group member waiting for others to get up to 'speed'. Furthermore, to what extent do such theories, in their channelling of multiform desires in the direction of the theorist as 'expert', give rise to a situation in which the "impulse to action" is fettered by conceptions of 'correct adherence'? Such problems could be seen to have been operable not only with the APG but with Debord and his Situationist comrades. This hum of contradictions is probably the fate which would befall anyone who attempted to sell a 'situation' to the government. Indeed, in terms of those situationalists ideas disseminated in the early 60s by Project Sigma, Latham's time-based move towards what he calls 'event structure' is synonymous but fundamentally divergent from the Situationist International's notion of 'creating situations'. However, it is just such a concept that "Rolf Sachsse informs us that the APG deliberately adopted and adapted' the lack of a contract between incidental persons and the host agency, the de-materialised nature of the work with social relations and the impassioning of the participants towards a "release of their own activity" could all combine to bring about a situation.

In some ways then there is an APG alignment with one extrapolation of 'creating situations' which Guy Debord made in 1957: "If we take for example the simple gathering of a group of individuals for a given time, it would be desirable, while taking into account the knowledge and material means we have at our disposal, to study what organisation of the place, what selection of participants and what provocations of events produce the desired ambiance."

On inspection, the APG's "situation" is more closely confined than that of Debord's open-ended description. If we bring in Debord's later comparison of a constructed situation as a means of making our own history, our own times, then the APG construct a situation whose ambiance is professional. Bringing together people from various disciplines (civil servants, industrialists, architects etc.) whilst still orbiting such terms as 'contract' and 'art-object' did not amount to an active pursuit of de-specialisation but brought forth the 'incidental person' as a specialist in his/her own right.

For Debord the ultimate situation would be a revolution, an insurrectionary event. For such 'situations' to come about means that its participants must be passionate enough to desire a change of social structure. A passion which becomes an "impulse to act" precisely because it is de-specialised and seeks not to be allotted a professional role but the polymath role of remaking a society.

The starting point for Debord was that participation is essentially open to the degree that it becomes creativity in the social field regardless of its being defined as an 'art' activity. What remains unrecorded is how the ramifications of this latter speed of endeavour, the releasing of passions and their inevitable confrontation with authority, were overlooked or strategically omitted from the overall approach of the APG.

"Independent interest"

On record as a renouncing a "Frankfurt School orthodoxy of apartness between artists and government", Latham's disgruntlement with what appears to be a continual criticism of the APG's tack is worthy of sympathy to the extent that 'leftist purity', in refusing the testing practice of contradiction, can often remain at a level of ineffectual idealism akin to the ghetos it lambasts.

Latham, speaking before the time-based theorists took a firmer grip on him, referred to knowledge as being for experts and as that which renders things unnecessary. If the APG endeavours to encompass the success and failure of the APG endeavour in that he was prepared to uproot himself, almost make himself blind, and enter a situa-
tion knowing nothing about it at all. As a blue-print for the incidental person it may not have been realistic but it was a means of charging a situation with the aura of iniquitousness. “They certainly had no wish to listen to my questions, but it was precisely because I asked these questions that they had no wish to drive me away.”

By the early 1980s the incidental bureaucrats of a Governmental Department could, by means of an APG placement come to gain some ‘outside’ knowledge about their operations and the social relations therein fostered with managing. An APG placement was not one-sided: just as the danger of bringing about the release of a “latent public impulse”20 can be steered back on course by a combination of ‘specialists’, a wilful ignorance can not only be welcomed as a surface to project upon, but can be exploited.

The APG intended to “promote a public interest that keeps alive the interests of the parties involved.”15 The blank space necessary for such an engagement makes the competing definitions of what constitutes the public interest too simple. Within an APG placement the participations of a ‘specialist’ the incidental person becomes, once again, the transcendentalist artist rising above politics. Paying next to no attention to the historical make-up of the State as that body which seeks to maintain sectional class interest as the public interest, is as idealistic as the leftist purity that recoils from the often invaginating contamination of contradiction. When married to other ex post facto assertions such as the claim made that art should be a work complementary to rather than as opposed to that of governing bodies... the source of a new equilibrium,16 it is tantamount to seriously underestimating the connection between capitalism and governments and making such linkage invisible.

Such an operation, then, reveals that the APG was not seeking to change society but society’s idea of art:

“Artistic placement was intended to serve...assuming that art does have a contribution to make to society at the centre.”21

Serving art as if to serve some article of faith and assuming, perhaps through wilful ignorance, that power lies at the ‘centre’ in the offices of government is to re-collapse the advances made by the ‘dematerialization’ of the art object in the direction of a work in the social field and is to deny the power of a government’s subjects to change their situation. As such it touches upon the problems of the APG approach in that the incidental person strategy is not a choice to be made, but is the result of the continued awareness of a state-controlled culture, extensively documented through correspondence by Latham and Steveni. This ‘spoof work’ began in the unprecedented situation of an art initiative, that of the APG, being brought to fruition in the governmental placements without the financial assistance or political backing of the Arts Council.

By the early 1980s the term of the governmental placements had ended, the APG doggedly persisted in seeking representations to the Arts Council and other government departments to continue the work. The Arts Council continually rebuffed their approaches, cutting not only their access to funds but cutting the APG out of the historical record, refusing the existence of correspondence that might undermine the APG’s possession and becoming increasingly obstructive to the APG’s appeal for funds from other bodies. This situation led Latham and Steveni to appeal and reappeal against decisions, to consult their MP and eventually to meet with the Shadow Arts Minister. At all turns their dogged persistence, after some ministerial support, met with a brick wall. In Report Of A Surveyor, Latham paraphrases a letter from Sir Roy Shaw, to the then shadow Arts Minister in which the APG is misrepresented and maltreated to the point where Latham’s time-based theories work at their most efficaciously. As he says: “perhaps we have to consider that all action is potentially, if not directly linked to what happens on the subsequent enactment.”22

For subsequent enactments to keep occurring there needs to be a variety of follow-throughs which would include the testimony of the incidentals and others and APG members through to an embracing of the political potential of desire as a material force in the examination of social relations. Such a desiring people of who neither identify as revolutionary initiates or artist-professionals, is crucial in widening the scope of “subsequent enactment” if such enactment is to escape from refining its experience in predetermined categories such as ‘art’ or ‘government’ and, as a result, limiting the range even of its own gestures. Such a ‘revolutionizing’ of daily life, a process much concerned with making social relations visible, needs the continuing uprooting of the ‘experts’ rather than their continuing attempts at lead-weight coherence, an uprooting that enables those who feel they have access to the means of expression to give encouragement to those who are coming-to-expression. An improvisatory element, in which all begin from ‘zero’, could be one ramification of a conceptual art practice as could be the lent-momentum made possible through those ‘dematerialized’ forms that carry along with them the ‘rejection of any a priori identity of the artwork’.22

Spoof work

Given this compatibility between the APG and the left-liberal strands of Government Departments, it is long-winded negotiations and the legitimating assurances of the “civil service memorandum”, it took Steveni and Latham years to get the placements up and running. Prepared to sacrifice their own careers, they put themselves through the machinations of a capitalist democracy intent on keeping control over cultural activities through the auspices of the Arts Council. They were witness to having their projects filched and their input erased from the historical record. The overtoned echo of the APG is such that its most socially effective work seems to be submerged either in the de-specialisation of artists, has, nonetheless continued to keep open a concern to effect social institutions other than art institutions. Their escape from the self-effecntuality of art may have been successful in terms of a refutation of the art object, but it has been won at the expense of reconvening the art object as governmental reports which, in the case of Ian Breakwell’s placement for the DHSS in the area of mental health, has been and perhaps still is, subject to the official secrets act.

This tangible outcome of Breakwell’s placement as a ‘textual work’, in perhaps revealing the ultimate sanction that a Governmental Department could wield over a placement in order to make sure desire didn’t break out in the social field in unmanageable proportions, does not therefore undermine the slow seepage of effect that the placement had for those who participated in it and, who knows, led to a growing distrust of those institutions where social control and governance is practised like an art.

Such an exposure is the APG’s legacy and this is where Latham’s time-based theories work at their most efficaciously. As he says: “perhaps we have to consider that all action is potentially, if not directly linked to what happens on the subsequent enactment.”22

For subsequent enactments to keep occurring there needs to be a variety of follow-throughs which would include the testimony of the incidentals and others and APG members through to an embracing of the political potential of desire as a material force in the examination of social relations. Such a desiring people of who neither identify as revolutionary initiates or artist-professionals, is crucial in widening the scope of “subsequent enactment” if such enactment is to escape from refining its experience in predetermined categories such as ‘art’ or ‘government’ and, as a result, limiting the range even of its own gestures. Such a ‘revolutionizing’ of daily life, a process much concerned with making social relations visible, needs the continuing uprooting of the ‘experts’ rather than their continuing attempts at lead-weight coherence, an uprooting that enables those who feel they have access to the means of expression to give encouragement to those who are coming-to-expression. An improvisatory element, in which all begin from ‘zero’, could be one ramification of a conceptual art practice as could be the lent-momentum made possible through those ‘dematerialized’ forms that carry along with them the ‘rejection of any a priori identity of the artwork’.22

With no prescriptions in place, that activity could escape the purview of any and all institutions and in immersing itself in a social-historical continuum in which desire can come to be ‘materially’ visible as ‘radiant energy’ is perhaps where dematerialized artists meet with imaginative revolutionaries’ desires outstrip their institutional limits and build their own practice. The APG becomes invisible but ever-present.
Notes
5. ibid, p19.
6. ibid:
7. Rolf Sachsse reports that a great deal of dissen-
sion arose within APG members over the issue of adherence to these time-based theories which have been further developed by Latham and Steveni in the late 80s and coincide with the APG’s being renamed O+I. See Sachsse, ibid, p49.
8. For Project Sigma and its dynamo, the ‘novelist’ Alexander Trocchi, see the reprints in Break/Flow No.1 or Andrew Murray Scott (ed), Invisible Insurrection, Polygon, 1992.
11. Latham, ibid, p49.
15. Latham, ibid, p40.
16. Latham, ibid, p35.
17. Steveni, ibid, p18.
18. Latham, ibid, covertext.
19. Latham, ibid, p60.
20. Latham, ibid, p52.
An unedited version of this article will be downloadable from www.infopool.org.uk
The Individual and the Organisation: Artist Placement Group 1966-79

Introduction
Antony Hudek and Alex Sainsbury

The APG Approach

Artist Placement Group, or APG, was instigated in 1965 by Barbara Steveni. It was founded a year later by Steveni and her then partner John Latham, along with Anna Ridley and artists Barry Flanagan, David Hall and Jeffrey Shaw. The Group aimed to find ways for artists to relocate their practices from the studio to the industrial workplace, and in the process to alter the perception of the artist as marginal to the key social issues of the day. APG's proposal to organisations was that they forego the idea of patronage by commissioning works of art, and instead consider benefitting from the artists' insights. In turn, APG would enable artists to benefit from a 'real world' context in which to develop new ways of working, or as APG's axiom put it: 'Context is half the work'.

APG negotiated placements for artists – first in industry and later in government departments – lasting between a few months and several years. The placements would ideally occur in two phases: a feasibility study, lasting one or two months, followed by a longer engagement, which constituted the placement itself. Whether feasibility study or placement, the artist would in most cases write a report on his/her experience, leaving it up to the host organisation to adopt, or not, the proposed ideas. However, few of the placements followed this model. Out of the nineteen associations between artist and organisation documented in this exhibition, ten qualify as full APG placements, three are feasibility studies (in some cases developed over many years) and six fall somewhere between, or outside, these categories.

APG's radical premise – what it called the 'open brief' – was that artists would be paid a wage by the host organisation regardless of the material output of their placement. Both the host organisation and the artist were contractually bound to enter the agreement without precondition (except for a general compliance with the organisation's rules, a controversial caveat). Given the unpredictability outcome of the 'open brief', it is unsurprising that so few organisations were willing to take on placements, relative to the large numbers of letters written and meetings organised by Steveni to try to persuade them. As the chronology at the end of this publication makes clear, APG sustained itself for over two decades by engaging directly with the public through exhibitions and symposia, and by developing networks of sympathetic business people, politicians and financial supporters. APG's lack of formal strategy forced it to continuously reinvent itself.

In the late sixties and early seventies, many regarded as naive the proposition that an artist could meaningfully contribute to commercial or bureaucratic organisations, especially without a developed critique of institutional motives and strategies. By contrast, it has now become commonplace among management consultants to advocate the hiring of creative individuals to enhance an organisation's competitiveness. APG may have been the harbinger of the artist as consultant, harnessed to free market imperatives, but it also promoted artists as agents of wider change, pioneering the shift in art practice from studio and gallery to process-based forms of social engagement. Artists' residencies are ubiquitous today, but few attempt to foster dialogue between artists and industrialists or politicians as APG did. In the face of general indifference and frequent antagonism, APG dared to imagine the (inevitably asymmetrical) intersection of opposing value systems.

The Organisation of APG

APG was neither a collective, agency nor membership organisation. Although a charity and a company limited by guarantee, it operated effectively as a partnership between Steveni, Latham and
a fluctuating constellation of artists which, over the years, included Ian Breakwell, Stuart Brisley, Roger Coward, Hugh Davies, Andrew Dipper, Garth Evans, Barry Flanagan, Bill Furlong, David Hall, Leonard Hessing, George Levantis, Jeffrey Shaw and David Toop, among others. One did not 'apply' to APG; rather one became familiar with its methods and took part in its internal discussions, gradually earning a place in its midst. Many participants in APG's early discussions were associated with Saint Martins School of Art, where Evans, Latham and Steveni were teaching, and Flanagan and Shaw were students. APG's central meeting place in these years was the Latham's house in Portland Road, Notting Hill, where regular 'Think Tanks' (as APG later called them) were held to discuss the role of the artist in society and alternative forms of artistic production.

APG's 1971 exhibition at the Hayward Gallery – variously titled inn7o or Art & Economics – brought many simmering tensions within the Group to a head. A subject of particular contention was APG's lack of organisational transparency: without a manifesto or formalised hierarchy, Steveni and Latham were perceived as exercising a firm yet invisible hold on the Group's activities. This was true to the extent that 'entrance' into APG depended largely on Steveni's and Latham's personal relationship with the artists, a small number of whom (usually two or three) would then be put forward to organisations as candidates for placements. Still, the ultimate decision of which artist was selected for placement rested with the host organisation.

Another area of contention was the authority of Latham's ideas over APG. His 'time-based' theory, according to which space and objects are subsumed under time and events, played a significant role in how APG defined itself. For example, APG argued that host organisations should expect mostly long-term gains from placements, in accordance with Latham's definition of value slowly accruing over time. And although APG had long sought alternatives for the word 'artist', it was only when Latham coined the expression 'the incidental person' in the mid-seventies – to signify both the placed artist's marginal role within the host organisation and his/her ability to produce an incision, or unforeseen incident – that APG could better express its aims. While several APG artists embraced Latham's theory (Coward, Dipper, Levantis and Toop), detractors like Brisley and Gustav Metzger felt that it reinforced APG's apparent detachment from the political and its compliance to industry's demands.

As a result of the critical fallout from the Hayward exhibition, APG restructured itself by doing away with the 'Noit' artists' panel (organised by Latham under one of his theoretical terms) and inviting a union representative to join its board. It also drafted the 'Civil Service' or 'Whitehall' Memorandum, a brief document outlining APG's approach to be distributed within UK government departments. These measures allowed APG to diversify the pool of potential host organisations and decentralise its organisational structure, granting greater freedom to APG artists to pursue their interests through their individual placements.

This Exhibition

Representing APG in an art exhibition is problematic, particularly since, as Ian Breakwell wrote, 'in a placement the "artwork" is not the end product but the whole process'. Even if one could argue that APG arrived at something of an 'aesthetic' – say, through its corporate-seeming graphic identities – it remains difficult to represent curatorially what makes it distinctive, namely its approach. This dynamic aspect can only be suggested by the diversity of APG's output: publications and art objects, but more importantly, quasi-artworks such as collages and appropriated objects, and documentation through photographs, film, video and sound recordings. Indeed, APG was fundamentally a discursive project, and aural production – from interviews to acoustic interventions – constituted a significant part of its activities. Thus besides audio-visual recordings, the exhibition includes all the surviving reports written by artists during and after their placements. Further
evidence of the context of each placement is revealed through the correspondence between artists, Steveni and the enabling protagonists in the host organisations.

To give coherence to the exhibition, we divided APG's history into three sections. The first, relatively brief section in Raven Row's entrance covers the period 1965 – ca. 68 when APG saw its role as one of facilitating artists' access to industrial materials. APG was influenced at the time by two other organisations: Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), founded in New York in 1966 to encourage collaborations between engineers and artists, and Eventstructure Research Group (ERG), founded a year after APG in Amsterdam by Jeffrey Shaw, Theo Botschuiyver and Sean Wellesley-Miller, which produced interactive environments with inflatable PVC structures.

APG's second phase is represented in the galleries on the ground floor. It covers APG's earliest placements – from Evans' at British Steel and Hall's with Scottish Television – to those of the early seventies. Gallery Two focuses on 1971, the momentous year when APG took part in the exhibitions Between 6 at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and inn7o at the Hayward Gallery, London. At both sites, APG experimented with a debate-based exhibition format: the main exhibit was a boardroom table entitled The Sculpture, where APG hosted live discussions between artists, industrialists and government representatives. What also distinguishes this fertile period in APG's history is its association with Studio International, edited by Peter Townsend. The magazine not only featured inserts designed by Latham for APG (which would become the catalogue of the Hayward exhibition), but also vehement attacks on APG by Brisley, among others. The table in Gallery Two acknowledges APG's discursive nature and its curatorial innovation, and will accommodate public discussions throughout the duration of the exhibition.

Upstairs at Raven Row is material relating to the third phase in APG's history, namely the aftermath of the 'Civil Service' or 'Whitehall' Memorandum. The document paved the way for offers from the Department of Health and Social Security (Breakwell et al.), the Department of the Environment (Coward) and the Scottish Office (Latham). Here the production of social benefit artists is easier to recognise than in the more 'observational' placements that preceded them. Whether governmental or not, these placements demonstrate an attention to collective forms of decision-making. The artist becomes a cultural worker bringing communities together, acting as an interface between public and private interests.

APG continued beyond 1979, but placing artists no longer represented its core activity. Instead, Steveni and APG Director and broadcaster Nicholas Tresilian focused the Group's energies on promoting its 'incidental person approach to government' across Europe, organising high-level meetings in Germany, France and the Netherlands. In an ultimate restructuring effort, APG renamed itself O+I in 1989, an acronym standing for either 'Organisation and Individual' (in Steveni's formulation) or 'Nought Plus One' (in Latham's). In 2008, APG/O+I was dissolved.

The exception to this historical layout is the inclusion on the ground floor of Steveni's recent video walks, part of her I Am An Archive project. In these walks, Steveni literally retraces APG's steps, both historical and geographical, from its beginnings at Saint Martins School of Art to its later forays in Germany. I Am An Archive acts as an antidote to the risk of APG becoming a historical marker stored away in institutional and private archives. By recollecting the disparate fragments of APG's often conflicting and conflictual histories, Steveni's videos perform the challenge of any witness, which is to protect a legacy while opening it up to new interpretations.
COPENHAGEN — While many companies across the globe have art collections and some even hold art exhibitions within their public spaces, what is happening at Denmark’s Aquaporin is unique. Since June, the water technology purification company — in collaboration with the Danish artistic, curatorial and research collective Diakron — has hosted Primer, an exhibition space that is within its open-plan factory, laboratory and offices.

Anyone interested in seeing a free exhibition (“Life Without,” the current show by Michala Paludan, is on view until June 3) must first book an appointment. Then they are guided around the high-ceilinged building by a member of Diakron, walking past scientists conducting research, receptionists signing for deliveries and employees holding meetings on the factory floor.

Peter Holme Jensen, the chief executive and a co-founder of Aquaporin, said that the company was interested in using its large space for art but that it did not know how best to go about it.

“We are a very small start-up and we do not have a lot of money to go out and buy, so maybe that was our luck,” he said, adding that the Copenhagen-based art consultant Christina Wilson linked him up with Diakron. “We had no idea what would come out of it other than making daily life a little more fun, and instead of listening to our footsteps we could talk to artists and look at what we do from a different angle.”

Though artist-run spaces and collectives have been around for decades, the growth in the last few years has been instigated by a number of factors — some positive, including the Danish Arts Foundation program started in 2010 called “Opstart af nye udstillingsplatforme” (Start Up of New Exhibition Platform), which funds the running cost of new spaces for up to two years.

Less positive factors are that larger public and private institutions tend to exhibit either international or midcareer Danish artists, successful commercial galleries (including Christian Andersen, Galleri Nils Staerk and Galleri Nicolai Wallner, who have shown at Art Basel Miami) have limited space and capacity to pick up newer artists and very few Danish collectors have focused on the local scene.
Collectors are so important for artists,” said Jens Faurschou, a former gallerist who now runs the Copenhagen and Beijing-based Faurschou Foundation, which will open a space in Brooklyn this year, “because by buying their art, it keeps them going.” Despite these factors, art experts say that the artist-run spaces and collectives have helped create a rich and complex contemporary art tapestry in Copenhagen.

“I think the artist-run scene is extraordinary,” said Janus Hom, an artist, writer and a member of Toves, an artistic collective that is currently (as their last project) selling their brand, copyright and artworks. “There has been big turnaround, things come and go a lot, but it has not been stagnant and it has consistently been a really good artist-run scene.”

Since the postwar period in Denmark, there have been a number of artist-run spaces across the country but particularly in Copenhagen. Mikkel Bogh, the director of the National Gallery of Denmark, said the reason for this had been something of a paradox with young artists, dissatisfied with the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts studio program (which is free), organizing. But he also said that “the very loose nature of the academy program has nurtured a great deal of independence.”

“They run their spaces as professionally as anybody else,” he said, adding that the Danish Art Foundation’s new projects grant had been helpful in that regard. “So if you are a good group of people and you have a good idea for something, you are quite likely to get some funding to run your space for two years.”

Set up seven years ago by the government-run organization, almost 70 artist-run spaces and collectives — including Primer — have received funding. “An artist-driven place creates a form of stable self-exposure; the site’s profile is identity-creating both for those who run the place and for the artists they exhibit,” wrote Ms. Bulow, adding that an exhibition platform is a crucial tool. “This is not the basis for starting a place, but the contributing parties are aware of the mechanism and exploit them.”

There has been recent criticism that institutions like the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art about 18 miles north of Copenhagen, the Danish National Gallery and other well-established collecting institutions are more focused on working with international or big-name Danish artists like Olafur Eliasson and Henrik Olesen, both of whom have made their careers outside Denmark.

“On one hand, the artist-run scene is really good because of a kind of desperation that there isn’t much other fun happening if the artists don’t create it because there aren’t commercial galleries” to take on artists who live in the city, Mr. Hom said. The institutions, he added, have “a very unfortunate provincial attitude in that they want to be international so they do not really include the local scene” to lift up on an institutional level. “So local practicing artists are, to a large degree, left to their own devices, which is a negative, but the fact that there is so much good stuff happening is positive.”
Mr. Bogh of the Danish National Gallery accepted that critique. “Louisiana virtually never shows young local artists, and even in my own museum we tend to focus on midcareer artists,” he wrote, adding that numerous institutions and other smaller venues do offer opportunities for younger artists “But point taken, both big and small institutions could do a great deal more to support. We should work toward that.”

A version of this article appears in print on March 8, 2018 in The International New York Times
Josephine Kaeppelin¹
« j'agis comme une table de ping-pong »

L'analogie du langage et du jeu ne nous apporte-t-elle donc pas quelque lumière ? Nous pouvons très bien imaginer des gens qui s'amusent avec un ballon dans un pré. Ils commencent à jouer à différents jeux existants ; il y en a certains qu'ils ne mènent pas à terme, et dans l'intervalle, ils lancent le ballon en l'air au hasard, et pour s'amuser, ils se pourchassent avec le ballon, s'en servent comme d’un projectile, etc. Après quoi quelqu’un déclare : Ces gens-là jouent sans interruption à un jeu de ballon, et donc, à chaque lancer, ils suivent des règles déterminées. Et n'y a-t-il pas aussi le cas où nous jouons et “make up the rules as we go along” ? Et également celui où nous les modifions – as we go along.²

« Je suis artiste et je suis prestataire de services intellectuels et graphiques. (...) J'endosse ce rôle pour agir dans différents secteurs d'activités. » C'est en ces termes que l'artiste Joséphine Kaeppelin présente sa pratique – termes qui l'inscrivent dans une lignée spécifique mais néanmoins singulière.

Le présent article se concentre sur l'une des modalités de cette « prestation de services » ; celle qui concerne son travail d'audit.

« Moi aussi, je me suis demandé si je ne pouvais pas vendre quelque chose et réussir dans la vie... »³ Animée comme tout.e artiste par la nécessité d’inventer des stratégies propres pour développer sa pratique et la rendre visible tout en assurant sa survie matérielle, Joséphine Kaeppelin a fait sien un lexique emprunté au monde de l'entreprise, écho au créatif freelance aussi ambitieux et (dit-on) prospère - que précaire. Dans la lignée d'un Philippe Thomas qui ouvrit en 1987 l'agence readymades belong to everyone®, Joséphine Kaeppelin prolonge ce déplacement voire cette fiction d'où découlent des formes et des questionnements imprégnant tant la question de l'oeuvre que celle du travail.


« Il n'existe pas de performance permanente sans évaluation infinie, sans le fait d'être constamment jugé par des managers sur nos performances de travail (…). »⁸ En 2008, Martin Le Chevalier réalisait L'audit, processus de consulting, posant à un véritable cabinet de conseil la question suivante : « Est-il pertinent que je poursuive mon activité? »⁹. Joséphine Kaeppelin tourne le projecteur de l'autre côté, vers l'institution qui l'accueille, en impliquant l'ensemble de ses acteurs.

¹ 1985, Lyon (France), vit et travaille à Bruxelles et en France.
³ Marcel Broodthaers, Moi aussi, je me suis demandé si je ne pouvais pas vendre quelque chose et réussir dans la vie..., Galerie Saint Laurent, Bruxelles, 1964.
⁴ Statement de l'artiste in dépliant de l'exposition de Joséphine Kaeppelin à Point Culture, Bruxelles (5/10 – 01/12/2018).
⁵ Sur invitation de Béatrice Josse dans le cadre de son arrivée à la direction du MAGASIN.
⁶ Sur invitation néanmoins d'un centre d'art agissant comme intermédiaire, la Villa du Parc à Annemasse.
⁷ Après un plan social déployé sur plusieurs années, qui concerne une centaine d'employés du site.
Cette démarche fait écho au *project work* développé par l'artiste Andrea Fraser : « Nous avons proposé le terme de « prestation de services » pour décrire la condition économique du *project work* de même que la nature des relations sociales sous lesquelles il se développe »10 ; ce qui permet de questionner la spécificité de la pratique artistique tout comme sa condition économique - mais aussi le travail au sens large.

« A la différence d'un audit classique qui sert à mesurer l'efficacité, la conformité à des normes ou à évaluer les pratiques au travail, mes enquêtes n'ont pas d'objectif à atteindre. Je me donne cependant comme règle de conduite d'interférer dans la routine de travail pour (peut-être) permettre une mise à distance nécessaire afin de réfléchir sur soi-même et sur la structure (socio-professionnelle) dans laquelle on est intégré. »11 Pour ce faire, Josèphine Kaeppelin déploie des outils et des stratégies de nature (apparemment) purement artistiques, ou qui du moins instaurent un décalage vis-à-vis de ce que l'on entend habituellement par audit. L'artiste ne s'engage pas à produire un résultat final, tangible, un objet. Elle propose certes d'aboutir à un « rapport », mais ce terme renvoie autant à une relation engagée qu'à un compte-rendu assorti de préconisations. Par ailleurs, elle utilise le terme « enquête », au sens d'un processus qui se veut empirique, ouvert, collaboratif, « dans la logique qui consiste à trouver à chaque occasion le format de (re)présentation adéquat qui va permettre de faire voir autrement le phénomène dont les matériaux travaillés sont les données »12. En insistant sur le processus même de la rencontre, sur l'introduction d'une pause au cœur d'une routine, Josèphine Kaeppelin met ainsi l'accent sur la dimension immatérielle, relationnelle, processuelle de l'œuvre. Sachant qu'au fond, ce qui prime n'est pas tant le caractère immatériel de l'œuvre d'art que la question de la matérialisation de la vie14.

« Suivre une règle, faire un rapport (…) jouer une partie d'échecs, sont des coutumes (des usages, des institutions) »15. Au cours de ses audis, l'artiste propose de participer à différents « jeux de langage » construits en fonction des situations. Le but de l'audit étant, pour rappel, « de chahuter les esprits. Comme pour toute action entreprise, le résultat n'est pas garanti. Il se peut qu'il soit si mince qu'il en soit inénarrable. »16 Josèphine Kaeppelin procède par rebonds : « quand je travaille, quand je produis une œuvre, j'essaie de faire en sorte qu'elle permette un rebond – non pas un rebond physique (pong), mais un rebond immatériel (ping) ; rebond de la pensée sur une forme, un mot ou une image. Ça ne marche pas toujours mais j'essaie. »17

Venons-en plus spécifiquement aux outils déployés au cours de l'audit de l'entreprise Siegwerk, qui s'est développé en trois temps et trois modalités majeures. Vêtue de sa blouse de travailuse survenue autrement le phénomène dont les matériaux travaillés sont les données12. En insistant sur le processus même de la rencontre, sur l'introduction d'une pause au cœur d'une routine, Josèphine Kaeppelin met ainsi l'accent sur la dimension immatérielle, relationnelle, processuelle de l'œuvre. Sachant qu'au fond, ce qui prime n'est pas tant le caractère immatériel de l'œuvre d'art13 que la question de la matérialisation de la vie14.

Première modalité : le questionnaire *Bonjour* ! l'artiste distribue en main propre ses questionnaires préparés sur logiciel Microsoft Word en format A418, qui rappellent – sous une forme ouverte et ludique – les protocoles d'enquête statistique de Hans Haacke19. Titres *Bonjour* ! et se terminant par *Merci* - la politesse étant un préalable essentiel à toute relation - leur contenu oscille, non sans une

10 Andrea Fraser, *How to provide an artistic service: an introduction*, en lien avec l'exposition “Services: Conditions and Relations of Project Oriented Artistic Practice” organisée par Helmut Draxler et Andrea Fraser, Kunstraum der Universitat Luneburg, 1994.
11 *Statement* de l'artiste.
16 *Statement* de l'artiste, op. cit.
17 Extrait de la première lettre envoyée par JK aux employés du site Siegwerk d'Annemasse, le 6 mars 2018.
teinte d'humour, entre reprise de modèles habituellement soumis par les cabinets d'audit\textsuperscript{20} et formules issues de conversations, anonymisées et décontextualisées. Ainsi de cette liste de propositions à conserver ou barrer au stylo : « Je dois faire mon travail mais je ne peux pas bien le faire. » ; « Je n'hésite pas à dire non. ».

Seconde modalité : le jeu de conversation \textit{La roue de la fortune}. Chaque participant, désigné par la lettre A, B, ou C, doit faire tourner la roue puis piocher, en fonction de la couleur attribuée par l'index de cette même roue, une carte-question à laquelle il doit répondre oralement. Les cartes-questions sont réparties en trois catégories : BLEU = travail (« Que penses-tu de la polycompétence ? »...), JAUNE = société (« Comment ralentir ? »...), ROSE = arts (« Qu’aimes-tu contempler ? »...).

Troisième et dernière modalité : le jeu d’écriture \textit{Que fais-tu dans la vie ?} Le jeu-protocole consiste à proposer à piocher au hasard trois dominos en bois dans un sac et tenter, d'après ceux-ci, de répondre par écrit à la question : « Que fais-tu dans la vie ? ». Le contenu des propositions imprimées sur les dominos ayant résulté d'une collecte mêlant fiches de poste internes à l'entreprise, extraits d'échanges conversationnels issus d'autres contextes\textsuperscript{21}, et descriptions d'actions venant du théâtre, de la danse, du karaté\textsuperscript{22}... Le hasard des formules piochées s'avère faire soudain sens pour chacun, qui y lit sa propre expérience à la manière dont on pourrait tirer les cartes. Ces diverses modalités font émerger un processus de « production conjointe »\textsuperscript{23} où l'intervention artistique existe sous la forme d'une conversation dont la valeur d'échange est, par définition, irréductible à l'une des parties. Et puisque les commanditaires attendent un \textit{résultat - un rapport}, Joséphine Kaeppelin déplace malicieusement les attentes : à Annemasse, elle a soumis la décision sur sa forme à un processus de vote collectif\textsuperscript{24}.

La pratique d'audit de Joséphine Kaeppelin pose question quant à la possibilité d'une critique institutionnelle aujourd'hui. N'est-ce pas ici pour les institutions un moyen de financer un audit qu'elles pourront considérer a posteriori comme « purement de l'art » ? N'est-ce pas une aubaine de s'offrir ce genre de prestation à moindre coût, performée par une personne issue d'un champ où on s'auto-exploite le plus volontiers ? Il n'en reste pas moins que Joséphine Kaeppelin ouvre des perspectives sur la valeur symbolique, subjective, que l'on accorde tant à l'œuvre qu'au travail, qu'il soit ou non de nature artistique.

N'est-ce pas, plus généralement, une bonne chose, que de tenter de réduire « la distance technique et psychique entre (l)a production artistique et les moyens productifs de la société »?\textsuperscript{25} En osant s'aventurer hors des frontières du studio et du centre d'art, l'artiste prend le risque de confronter différents systèmes de production de valeur\textsuperscript{26}, nous rappelant combien le musée est lui aussi, une fabrique : « Dans le musée-comme-fabrique, quelque chose continue à être produit. Des installations, des plannings, des menuiseries, des visualisations, des discussions, de la maintenance, des paris sur des valeurs émergentes, du networking alternent de façon circulaire. Un espace d'art est une fabrique, et en même temps un supermarché – un casino et un espace de culte dans lequel le travail de reproduction est assuré tout autant par des femmes de ménage que par des bloggers avec téléphone portable. »\textsuperscript{27}

A propos de « femmes de ménage » : Joséphine Kaeppelin dit l'importance qu'a eu pour elle la découverte du travail de l'artiste Mierle Laderman Ukeles et son \textit{Manifesto for Maintenance art}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} A Annemasse, l'artiste a eu accès aux questionnaires distribués préalablement à son intervention lors d'un véritable audit : 21 questions insérées dans un tableau Excel.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Comme par exemple au sein de l’entreprise BATA (production de chaussures), France.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Retranscriptions d'un masterclass réalisé avec La Fabrique Autonome des Acteurs à Bataville, France, en 2017.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Arjo Klamer, \textit{Art as a Common Good}, Conférence de l'Association of Cultural Economics, Chicago, 2004.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Les acteurs de l'entreprise ont été invités à voter entre ces 5 propositions : Je veux des TAPIS / Je veux le rapport MURAL / Je veux des AFFICHES / Je ne veux rien / Je veux tout.
\item \textsuperscript{25} « L'artiste le plus important atteint vraiment le succès en liquidant sa position en tant qu'artiste vis-à-vis de la société. » Jack Burnham, \textit{Esthétique des systèmes}, op. cit., p. 61.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Plus précisément, dans le champ artistique : « valeur d'exposition, valeur spéculative, valeur cultuelle » Hito Steyerl, « Is a museum a factory ? », in \textit{e-flux journal} #7, 2009.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Hito Steyerl, « Is a museum a factory ? », op. cit.
\end{itemize}

Florence Cheval, décembre 2018

Légende des images de Joséphine Kaeppelin

01 - Questionnaire Bonjour !, Audit Siegwerk, session 1, Annemasse (FR) 13/02/2018 15:26
02 - La roue de la fortune, Audit Siegwerk, session 2, Annemasse (FR) 20/03/2018 11:57
03 - Que fais-tu dans la vie ?, Audit Siegwerk, session 3, Annemasse (FR) 17/05/2018 15:57
04 - Questionnaire Bonjour !, Audit Siegwerk, session 1, Annemasse (FR) 14/02/2018 13:04
05 - Que fais-tu dans la vie ?, Audit Siegwerk, session 3, Annemasse (FR) 17/05/2018 11:24

INCIDENTAL UNIT

The Incidental Unit was formed after a series of ‘incidental meetings’ was initiated by Barbara Steveni, Neal White, Tina O’Connell, Gareth Bell-Jones and Marsha Bradfield in 2016-17. The aim of these meetings was to informally share information about the Artist Placement Group (1966-89), as well as O+I (1989-2009), whose revolutionary work on ‘the artist placement’ and the idea of being incidental within a societal context remained an urgent concern for all. The meetings have shared just one open agenda item; ‘unfinished business’. The meeting structure evolved in intention and purpose to become the Incidental Unit, with the aim of reconnecting the rigorous approach of APG with wider concerns around the brief given to socially engaged art today. IU have since hosted a wide range of artists, collectives and others who are given a critically supportive space in which to discuss and exchange their ideas without the expectations or evaluative frameworks of an artistic commission, gallery briefing or social project.

The Incidental Unit receives direct support of the APG and O+I in order to continue to develop a rigorous approach to socially engaged art practice today. IU provides critical support space in which to discuss and exchange ideas with artists, curators and ‘incidental persons’ without the expectations or evaluative frameworks of an artistic commission, gallery briefing or social project. To this end, IU draws out key ideas, methods, process and rationale for maintaining the independent and critical work of artists and curators, connecting the historical legacy of APG with the complex nature of social practice now.

INCIDENTAL FUTURES PROGRAMME

Having co-founded the Artist Placement Group (APG) in 1966, Barbara Steveni, with other members of the Incidental Unit, have developed the Incidental Futures Programme to explore the ongoing relevance of APG’s ways of working through six public meetings led by artists at public institutions...
in cities across the UK: Eastside Projects, Birmingham; Spike Island, Bristol; Summerhall, Edinburgh; Bluecoat, Liverpool; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; and Baltic 39, Newcastle. These events will be followed by a large-scale public gathering of 100+ artistic practitioners in London at South London Gallery and with CREAM at University of Westminster. An online resource will disseminate some of the outcomes which are developed. Incidental Futures considers the impact of APG on recent practice while introducing a broader public to the group’s ethos of artist ‘placements’ to explore the role of art in society.

The project is supported by Arts Council England, CREAM at University of Westminster, Flat Time House and University of the Arts, London. The project is managed and coordinated by the pre-IU, a core group that includes Barbara Steveni, Neal White, Gareth Bell-Jones, and Marsha Bradfield.
Top 3 Reasons to Make Organisational Thinking Cool Again in 2019 - Reflections #4

24.04.2019 | OPINION — Victoria Ivanova

Get organized! Victoria Ivanova presents her three top reasons for why the art world presents a fascinating terroir for developing organisational thinking. Plus she also explains why this is a thing to do in 2019.

The call to ‘get organising’ has followed every self-respecting ambition to transform the status quo. At times, it has snowballed into a wide-reaching and uprooting shake up, at other times, it remained a media campaign, the concrete impacts of which were hard to judge, yet at other times, it was suppressed or it simply fizzled out. Whatever the call’s outcome, the very phrase ‘get organising’ is indicative of a generally accepted understanding that for intentions and slogans to become action, some form of logistical effort is required. At the same
time, the latter dimension, the one that speaks to such efforts in the form of organisational structures, protocols, procedures and strategy, rarely receives its due share of air time or attention. While it is a no-brainer that these two dimensions are inherently bound together, organisational thinking could do with some serious development, if only to salvage it from the scope of management textbooks and their limited imperatives.

So here are my top three reasons for why the art world presents a fascinating terroir for developing organisational thinking and why this is a thing to do in 2019:

1: The art world is embroiled in the shifting dynamics that are becoming apparent between the local, regional and the transnational (showing that none of these terms are apt descriptors).

If one is inclined towards a sinister sense of humour, a lot of funny things have happened in the last couple of years. The ‘funniest’ of them all and the persistent favourites of most respected op-ed commentators are the rise of Trump and the rerouting of neoliberal globalisation that the rise symbolises. Some call this a turn towards a more multi-polar world, others emphasise the fact that right-wing factions are now the most avid and successful de-globalisers, but what can’t be ignored is that ‘local context’ is back with a vengeance, a move made ever so more complicated by the yet open project of redefining what ‘local’ actually signifies in the age of digital infrastructure and algorithmic governance.

Where is the art world in all of this? Clearly some of it is in Ivanka Trump’s and Jared Kushner’s 25-million-dollar art collection, but let us not dwell on that. The presence of contemporary art has mushroomed globally over the last 15 odd years and not just in High Net Worth Individuals’ collections and their freeport vaults. While contemporary art has been tarnished for its close allegiance with neoliberalism (starting from its philosophy and ending with its market dynamics), the very fact that contemporary art has been mobilised by a myriad of propagators world-wide is a testament to its morphability and integrability into value-creating chains that span the local, regional and transnational in quite different contexts and configurations. Would a more multipolar world make these capacities run out of steam? Could the forks that these capacities have produced over the last years consolidate in new art formations? What role will the online infrastructure play in the creation of new non-geographical regionalisms? To answer these questions, we need a framework for organisational thinking that grounds geopolitical, economic and cultural trends
2: The art world has no clue what it actually is beyond a handful of commonly circulated tropes and clichés.

The very term ‘art world’ is a shorthand for something that doesn’t have a stable definition. Depending on who calls upon the term, it can have somewhat varying connotations. I’d say that most commonly “art world” is almost a derogatory term, or in the very least an indication that there is a quasi-elite setting in which art is produced, talked about, shown and collected, and that setting plays by certain rules of the game, none of which are entirely agreed upon but which are somehow seen to be unfair, privileging primarily the wrong kind of values, but sometimes it’s ok, especially if we are ‘in’ and serving the right kind of agenda. This is undoubtedly pretty vague.

While there have been more rigorous and systematic efforts to achieve sociological rationalisations of the art field, such efforts have remained marginal, and an enhanced Bourdieu-style inquiry for the present times is yet to be realised. And still, a single overarching theory of the art world might not be enough as it would flatten out the various crooks and crannies that emerge in the interstices between dominant parameters and not immediately evident contingencies. Instead, what we may need is a development of a new perspective, an organisational perspective, and a language that suits its optics.

3: Required change may be much more boring than you think.

At least in the art field, there is currently a gulf between (for example) one hundred page human resourcing manuals that set out hiring procedures in specific institutions and are bound by national legislation, and the rhetoric of change and emancipation. Put another way, there are currently very few organised entities that are capable of achieving the required translation from ideological motto to operational parameter. The reason for that isn’t just a matter of political adversity or historically embedded structural inequality. It’s a question of (not) knowing what levers to pull and in what order, and that on a granular scale that leaves not a single line of organisational small print unexplored. Unfortunately, it is not the same thing as knowing what is right and what is wrong.
SSR&D Introduction
Alessandro Rolandi

The Social Sensibility Research and Development (SSR&D) is a department created for artist Alessandro Rolandi in Bernard Controls, a French company producing actuators for nuclear valves, with its Beijing branch located in a factory near the south 5th ring.

What is the Social Sensibility? After five years working on it, with it and for it, I still don’t know. This term was chosen together with the CEO of Bernard Controls Guillaume Bernard in 2011. We continue to resist specific models and definitions, hoping it will exist as a form of its own in order to stay active and alive.

Art is not the purpose, but a side effect that can influence the sensibility of those who are exposed to it. Social Sensibility attempts to extend this side effect to a broader audience, and to transform the relationship between art and people in creating an active and shared space. This is done by inviting artists to interact with people in working environments on a long-term base and in an informal way. By bringing art practice in direct contact with daily and working life, the aim is to inspire an audience of art users, instead of art viewers, whereas artists are challenged through this firsthand participatory experience. Economically speaking, Social Sensibility proposes the emergence of a parallel model to the existing one, in which artists would be supported financially not for the production of objects, but for their involvement with experimental and daring ideas, in the reality of society and working environments.

Social Sensibility engages with two socially driven forces: a transformative one and one that belongs to the realm of vigilance. The first one employs creativity, communication, critical thinking and art as a vehicle to give birth to a new organic social dynamic. The second one resists alienation, short-circuits hardwired behavior, and supports diversity, mutual respect and collective interaction as premises to awaken the social imagination for a foreseeable change.

The key moment is this physical encounter between artists and people, in which the rules of engagement are invented and negotiated all the time. In a tangible and relational space, this small and humble moment is very fragile but extremely precious, and it possesses unlimited potentialities. From this undisclosed territory of becoming, an intuition emerges and gradually takes the form of a quest into the nature of free will.

社会敏感性研发部是为艺术家李山在伯纳德设备控制有限公司所成立的一个部门,这家专事生产电动阀门执行器的法国公司位于北京南五环外的一座工厂内。

什么是社会敏感性? 经过五年的工作,我仍然无法确定。这个词汇是在 2011 年和伯纳德的总裁伯涛一起选定的。我们不断抵制着特定的模式和定义,希望它能建立起一种独立的存在方式并持续保持活力。

艺术不是目的，而是可影响人们敏感性的一个副作用。社会敏感性试图把这个副作用延伸给更广泛的观众。通过邀请艺术家在工作环境中与人们进行长期的非正式互动来转变艺术与人的关系，并尝试创建一个活跃和共享的空间。艺术实践在此直接地接触日常工作和生活，旨在激发艺术的观看者成为实践者，反之艺术家也将被这第一手的参与性体验所挑战。从经济上讲，社会敏感性提出了与现有条件平行的模式。它不针对艺术品的生产，而是支持艺术家在社会现实和工作环境中去实验、去尝试大胆的想法。
社会敏感性涉及到两股社会性力量：转变性的和警惕性的。第一股力量使用创造性、
沟通力、批判性思维和艺术来生成新的动态的有机社会。第二股力量为抗拒异化，使
僵化的概念短路，支持多样性、相互尊重、集体互动——并在这些前提下为可预知的改
变去唤醒社会的想象力。

关键的时刻是艺术家和人们的相遇，同时参与的规则也在不断商议和变化中。在感知
的关系空间中，这短暂的瞬间很脆弱但极其珍贵，具有无限的潜力。一种直觉从这未知
的转化过程中浮现，并逐渐形成对自由意志的探索。

Alessandro Rolandi
Social Sensibility Scribble - excerpt
Artists at Work: Patrick Bernier and Olive Martin

Audrey Chan

Tags: Artists at Work, Audrey Chan

Artists Patrick Bernier and Olive Martin's ongoing performance project X c/ Préfet de..., Plaidoirie pour une jurisprudence (X and Y v. France: The Case for a Legal Precedent, 2007-ongoing), juxtaposes the legal status of an author versus that of an undocumented immigrant (sans papiers) facing deportation in France. As artists concerned with issues of migration, they recognised an irony in the rapid expansion of copyright and intellectual property law in the digital era, on the one hand, and the diminishing rights of immigrants and freedom of movement under French and EU law, on the other. 'X' is a character invented by the artists, a stand-in for individuals facing deportation orders in French and European courts. In the performance staged by Bernier and Martin, he or she is not only an illegal immigrant but also an author of a site-specific immaterial work, a shift in status that would accord X different rights and possibly allow them to stay in the country. The legal plea to allow X to stay within France is argued by practicing lawyers (Sylvia Preuss-Laussinotte and Sébastien Canevet) to an imaginary judge, in whose place the audience sits. This transposition implicates the audience in the routine process of entry and expulsion that takes place everyday at the borders of today's increasingly migrant societies. The project was originally developed under the title Projet pour une jurisprudence during the artists' residence at Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers in 2007. Since that time, iterations of the project have been presented in different art venues in France, Belgium, and Austria.

Bernier and Martin have worked collaboratively for over a decade, but their separate projects also develop the themes explored in X c/ Préfet de...: Bernier’s work deals with issues of hospitality and hosting, both virtual and real, and his projects have taken the forms of chat rooms, collaborations with storytellers, curatorial interventions, and writing. Martin’s projects in photography, film and installation have dealt with the porosity of identity in the context of Giorgio Agamben’s notion of ‘whatever singularity.’ In July, writer Audrey Chan interviewed Bernier and Martin about their practice at their home in Nantes. The interview was conducted in English.

AUDREY CHAN: What takes place in a performance of Plaidoirie pour une jurisprudence?

OLIVE MARTIN: It's very simple: two lawyers appear before an audience on a bare stage. As people take their seats, the lawyers put on their black robes. They are in the administrative court responsible for cases involving foreigners and deportation. Sylvia Preuss-Laussinotte, a lawyer defending immigrants' rights, begins her plea on behalf of her client, X, addressing the audience as she would a judge in a tribunal. After presenting her case, she introduces Sébastien Canevet, a specialist in authors' rights, and explains to the judge that they consider their client not as a foreigner but as an author. Sébastien and Sylvia proceed to give legal arguments to the audience as to why their client should be allowed to stay in France. So the client X is a model, and in fact, X could be anyone.

AC: When you say a person is an author, the implication is that they have produced a work. So when the lawyers defend the immigrant as an author, does the question arise, 'What is X an author of?'
OM: We made a case where 'X' is the author of an immaterial, site-specific work that cannot exist if this person is sent back to his or her country. We are also making the argument that authors' rights should protect the author and not just the work. So the two lawyers, Sylvia and Sébastien, bring in cases where immaterial works were protected and discussed. They invite the judge - the audience - to make a new legal precedent.

PATRICK BERNIER: When we present the performance outside of France, we address the plea to an imaginary judge of the European court, rather than the French court. So the title of the performance is no longer X v. the Préfet, but X and Y - two co-authors - v. France. And the arguments are based on the 10th article in the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) on the freedom of expression and artistic liberty.

AC: Do the lawyers present their arguments spontaneously or from a script?

OM: Sylvia usually writes her plea, but adapts it to new political situations as they arise. Sébastien never prepares a written text, only the structure of his argument and some notes. Before the performance, we distribute to each audience member a thirty-page document containing all the documents a lawyer typically gives to a judge to follow the case he is defending. You can follow along during the performance as the lawyers will say, 'On page 1…'

PB: We give the plea and the sources of the plea to the audience. It's connected to open source theory.

AC: How did you come to collaborate with Sylvia and Sébastien?

OM: We wanted to work with two specialists to give a professional legal base to our work. In fact, they were both already activists within their own field. But we didn't know they would be as involved as they finally were, as performers. In our first discussion, Sylvia told us that the judge should be a creator. Lawyers bring in the tools for the judge to be creative.

AC: That's interesting because in the US, the term 'activist' is often used to discredit a judge, suggesting that the judge is interpreting the law to serve a personal or political bias. In the process of developing a new legal precedent, a rule or principle is established through a court ruling that can later be applied to subsequent cases with similar facts. In common law systems, such as in the United Kingdom and the United States, the law is made by judges and evolves over time on a case-by-case basis through legal precedent. In contrast, France's civil law system is comprised of codes (e.g. code de la propriété intellectuelle) originating in legislation. In both cases, previous court decisions are the building material for a lawyer's argument. In the French context, a judge can decide whether or not the argument is based on a sound interpretation and application of civil code. If not, a judge on a later case can dismiss the previous ruling. You need to refer to the past in order to move forward.

OM: It's a passionate and complicated question of interpretation. A case can be interpreted and applied in many ways, so you have to be clever and thoughtful enough to match one case with another to make the argument that you want. As in art, when you put two things together, they say something different.

AC: When the lawyers plea to the audience directly, it calls attention to the theatricality of the courtroom and the fact that lawyers have to perform, like actors. It's a kind of performance of persuasion.

OM: We liked the language and the theatricality of the courts, and we knew that this was the form that we wanted to play with. For example, lawyers can speak for their client in the first person. They say, 'I did not kill.' There's a kind of confusion of identities between the lawyer and his or her client. Sylvia and Sébastien were very surprised when we told them, 'Well, we just want you to plea as you do in the court.' They said, 'But is this really art?'

PB: They wanted something more theatrical...

OM: ...with lighting, with a set, something very organised. Whereas we wanted something more documentary and direct.

AC: Do you plan to stage the performance in courthouses too?

OM: Not in courthouses, not yet, or maybe never. Courthouses would be the real site of the work, but it's not our goal. The first goal was to set a legal precedent. While it may not be a realistic goal, we wish that it could happen.

AC: Perhaps establishing the new precedent isn't the immediate goal, but your work projects towards what currently seems impossible. In that way, you're infecting legality with an artist's perspective.

OM: We know that the project can change the way people see laws regarding foreigners, artists and art, as
well as authors' rights. That, as a civilian, you can influence the law, and you can speak and act on behalf of foreigners, who are not simply people who crossed the French border just to eat your bread. They are your neighbours and their kids are playing in the street with yours.

PB: All court decisions against foreigners are taken in the name of the French people. Our wish is that people go to their courthouses to see what happens in their name, that they ask questions and say that they don't agree with the decisions taken.

OM: In the beginning, we had a more activist position. Now we don't give efficiency the same importance as before.

PB: Now we know it takes a long time to affect the mentality of a judge. To change this mentality, we have to make ideas circulate. Our project can serve as a template for action.

AC: What led you to work on this project?

PB: When Olive and I arrived in Nantes in 2001, my work concerned hospitality, freedom of movement and the borders. I began working with a local association called GASPROM [Groupement Accueil Service Promotion du Travailleur Immigré], who agitate on behalf of immigrants. For about three years, I worked there as a volunteer and activist, sorting post and writing official letters for immigrants requesting asylum from the French government. The letter writing was my informal training in foreigners' rights. People told me their causes for leaving their country for France. Little by little, I began to understand how I could combine these two activities, my art practice and my activist practice.

OM: GASPROM was set up in the 1960s to help the first wave of migrant workers in France, who did not have many rights and were not protected under the law. The association helped them to find a place to live and gave them access to health care. In the 70s, during the first economic crisis, France shut its borders and wanted the foreign workers to go back home. But they were already living in France, and wanted their families to join them. Since that time, the face of migration has changed.

AC: How did you arrive at a relationship between authorship and migration?

OM: Through Patrick's work with GASPROM, we learned that there are more and more laws that regulate displacement, travel and borders. And as artists we found that there are also an increasing number of laws that regulate cultural and artistic production.

AC: So you're proposing that just as citizenship can be achieved through the legal process, everyone has the potential to be an author protected before the law. Authors' rights [les droits d'auteur] in French law are typically framed as protecting the creator, but they also limit access to artwork by limiting its redistribution. What application of authors' rights are you referring to within your project?

PB: In the Plaidoirie... we are trying to return to an idea dating from the French Revolution, developed by Abbé Sieyès and [Pierre] Beaumarchais: that an author's rights are meant to protect an author from a producer, such as a theatrical producer or record label. Beaumarchais essentially said, 'Well, we need money to live, we need money to make our work. We need you to recognize intellectual ownership.' Abbé Sieyès was also concerned with making a work available to the public quickly. He proposed that an artwork should be protected for five years, after which time it would become domaine public [public domain]. Now the length of protection is seventy years after the death of an author.

OM: There's a difference between the Anglo-Saxon method of copyright and authors' rights in French law.

AC: In contrast to British and American copyright law, which privileges the publisher or editor of a work, French law recognizes les droits d’auteur [rights of the author]. In fact, in France, a work can only be protected if it is an œuvre de l’esprit [a work of the mind] that has emanated from an author’s intellect.

PB: Both the French and Anglo-American systems limit the circulation of artwork, but the current evolution of these rights in the French context increasingly protects the interests of producers and companies to help them make a profit.

OM: This year in France, President Sarkozy tried to pass the HADOPI law. Besides protecting profits, there is the basic question of 'What is protection, really?' The idea of an artwork is that you share it, and it works if it's heard, seen and shared. For the French borders, it's a similar question. We want to protect, but protect what? At that point, protection just makes you closed off.

Footnotes

1. In *The Coming Community* (1993), Giorgio Agamben defines 'whatever singularity' as that which has an 'inessential
commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence'. His notion of 'whatever' is based upon the original Latin definition of 'being such that it always matters'. See G. Agamben, The Coming Community (trans. Michael Hardt), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

↑ For more information about the project, please visit the website: http://www.plaidoiriepourunejurisprudence.net/spip.php?article12

3. The form of 'precedent' most applicable to Bernier and Martin's project is the 'landmark decision', which establishes an important legal principle or change in the law on a particular issue (e.g. the rights of illegal immigrants).

4. 'HADOPI Law' or 'Creation and Internet Law' is a nickname referring to la loi favorisant la diffusion et la protection de la création sur Internet (law favoring the diffusion and protection of creation on the Internet). HADOPI is an acronym for the French government agency, Haute Autorité pour la Diffusion des Œuvres et la Protection des Droits sur Internet (High Authority of Diffusion of the Art Works and Protection of the (Copy)Rights on Internet) established by the bill. The agency is vested with police power to punish violations of copyright law by Internet users under a 'three strikes' punitive arrangement. After protracted debate and public protest, the bill was first rejected (9 April 2009) and then accepted (12 May 2009) by the French National Assembly and finally the French Senate (13 May 2009). Most recently, the Conseil Constitutionnel (Constitutional Council), France's highest constitutional authority, ruled on 10 June 2009 that the HADOPI law is unconstitutional on the grounds that 'the Internet is a component of the freedom of expression' and only a judge can impose sanctions under the law.
f.eks. ↑  ↓  ↓  ←
Information  Projects
f.eks. is a roaming exhibition platform for contemporary art that seeks to generate critical and speculative dialogues between audiences, artists, and broader publics. f.eks. produces temporary art events that are located in and around the urban spaces of Aalborg – activating architecture, infrastructure, ecological sites, and public spaces through a series of live art engagements. These include performances, talks, workshops, readings, pop-ups, social installations, screenings, and many other forms of interactive and ephemeral art making.

As an independent platform, f.eks focuses on supporting innovative artistic practices that relate to the social, political, aesthetic, and urban contexts of the sites in which the artists and publics interact. Each site is chosen in dialogue with the artists to activate uncommon, underutilized, and underserved locations through artistic practice to engage broader publics. These include a variety of places and contexts such as municipal, private, residential, industrial, commercial, ecological and public sites and spaces.

The f.eks. program is situated in these changing urban locations in which emerging, talented, and innovative Danish and international artists will be invited to make artworks on-site in a variety of contexts. The artists invited have different thematic interests within their individual practices, but also as a common point of departure work with

https://f-x.dk/
Co-organizer
Rikke Ehlers Nilsson

Co-organizer and Founder
Scott William Raby

Artist and organizer who currently lives and works in Aalborg, Denmark. Ehlers Nilsson has previously organized exhibition projects as part of the association COPING in collaboration with the independent platform I:project space in Beijing, China, and is a member the artist-run exhibition space c4 projects in Copenhagen. She graduated from the Master of Fine Arts program at The Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam in 2014 and The Funen Art Academy in Odense, Denmark in 2011. She is a member of the Danish Visual Artists (BKF), Unge Kunstnere og Kunstformidlere (UKK), and Akademiraadet (Kunstnersamfundets billedkunstsektion) unions.

Artist, researcher, organizer, and writer, who currently lives and works in Aalborg, Denmark and is pursuing a Practice Based PhD in the art department at Goldsmiths in London. He graduated from the Master of Fine Art program at of Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles in 2012. He is a member of the Danish Visual Artists (BKF) and Akademiraadet (Kunstnersamfundets billedkunstsektion) unions, and is a supplemental board member for Unge Kunstnere og Kunstformidlere (UKK) artist’s organization.

Sponsored by
Statens Kunstfond
Aalborg Kommune
Aalborg Kommunes Kunstfond

f.eks. office
Organization:
Rikke Ehlers Nilsson
Scott William Raby

Strandgade 6, 3 tv,
9400 Nørresundby

+45 51 43 53 75
f.eks.contact@gmail.com

Instagram
Facebook

Aalborg, Denmark