

Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart

Giving Form to the Impatience of Liberty

CONFERENCE

October 5 + 6, 2013



Kiri Dalena, Erased Slogans, 2008

**Banu Cennetoğlu / Yasemin Özcan, Hans D. Christ / Iris Dressler, Alice Creischer /
Andreas Siekmann, Kiri Dalena, Ekaterina Degot / David Riff, Barbara Ehnes, Pil and
Galia Kollektiv, Boris Ondreička, Pedro G. Romero, Hedwig Saxenhuber / Georg
Schöllhammer, János Sugár, Pelin Tan and others**

Introduction

The politicization of the arts today—in the context of a seemingly omnipotent and omnipresent neoliberalism—is exposed to a series of charges and suspicions that are sometimes more and sometimes less justified. Alongside the opinion that the influence exerted on the world by art is infinitesimally low anyhow, this includes the charge that art does little more than compensate, aestheticize, downplay, or banalize social faults and injustices. Or that art, so long as it remains rooted in its traditional context, is nothing more than political décor. Conversely, art is accused of letting itself be instrumentalized for ideological purposes, and ultimately of not being capable of doing anything but fully embodying the “new specter of capitalism”: that is, not only to embrace total commodification, but also to become complicit with the effectual powers of neoliberalism. Thus in contemporary art a certain ironic distance and detachment vis-à-vis any kind of aesthetic and political utopia can be noted. The parody *as critique* turned into a parody *of critique*.

But how can in contrast a resistive art—reaching beyond a naïve euphoria or worldly-wise distance—evolve? What other knowledge and which other communities can art yield? Which tools and weapons does it have to offer? Or must it depart the field of art entirely in order to become political?

The conference will pick up these questions. In doing so, it focusses on the artistic methodologies of re-reading, reallocating and reenactment—in the sense of an act of re(counter)taking.

Language of the conference

English

Entrance fees:

free

PROGRAM

Saturday, October 5, 2013, 1–9 p.m.

RELEKTÜRE / DÉTOURNEMENT / REENACTMENT

- 1:00 p.m. Welcome + introduction
Iris Dressler, Hans D. Christ
- 1:15 p.m. **Iris Dressler, Hans D. Christ** (Stuttgart)
On Tensions, Blurs, and Conflicts Between the Freedom of Art and Its Political Implications
- 2:00 p.m. **Georg Schöllhammer, Hedwig Saxenhuber** (Vienna)
Unrest of form. Imagining the Political Subject
- 3:00 p.m. **Pil and Galia Kollektiv** (London)
Art in the Age of its Dissolution
About artistic critique and the encroachment of neo-liberal management into the production of subjectivity
- 3:45 p.m. **Ekaterian Degot, David Riff** (Moscow)
Monday Begins with Saturday
Fiction and reenactment as curatorial methodologies
- 4:45 p.m. **Pedro G. Romero** (Seville)
About an artistic reconsideration of Spanish torture chambers and their references to modern avant-gardes
- 6:00 p.m. **Panel: Reenactments**
Artistic forms of re(counter)petition, reallocation and détournement
Alice Creischer, Andreas Siekmann, Barbara Ehnes, Kiri Dalena
- 7:30 p.m. Lecture Performance
Boris Ondreicka (Bratsilava)
ENTOPTIC & TACIT

Sunday, October 6, 2013, 12–3 p.m.

ABOUT THE REPARTIONING OF SPACE // ART + RESISTANCE

- 12:00 p.m. **Banu Cennetoğlu / Yasemin Özcan** (Istanbul)
About their project *What Is It That You Are Worried About?* and questions concerning the treatment of historically problematic connoted sites.
- 12:45 p.m. **Janos Sugar** (Budapest)
Coup d'Etat in Slow Motion
(in a global and local sense with actual Hungarian examples)
- 1:30 p.m. **Pelin Tan** (Istanbul)
Who is the Enemy?: Art in the age of Uprisings
About resistive appropriations of public spaces in Athens, Istanbul, and various Asian cities

Speakers / Abstracts

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2013

1:15 p.m.

Hans D. Christ / Iris Dressler

Directors of Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart

On Tensions, Blurs, and Conflicts Between the Freedom of Art and Its Political Implications

The two great antagonistic politics of aesthetics, as proclaimed by modernism, long since can no longer be joined unabatedly in their absolute nature. The belief in an aesthetic revolution that could change society and lead to a new life—one with which art might merge—was presumably discredited by the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century or dissipated through the aestheticization of commodities and everyday life. And likewise the l'art pour l'art, whose resistance was meant to be reflected by liberation from any and all lifeworld contexts, proved to be untenable. In the eyes of French philosopher Jacques Rancière it is not the suspension of the two great politics of aesthetics that is decisive for art, but actually the inextricable tension *and the confusion* among the two—among the “politics of the becoming life of art” and the “politics of the resistant form,” among political and apolitical, self-determined and other-directed art

2:00 p.m.

Hedwig Saxenhuber, Georg Schöllhammer

Theorists of art, curators and editors of the art magazine *Springerin*, Vienna

Unrest of form. Imagining the Political Subject

In 2013 Georg Schöllhammer and Hedwig Saxenhuber conceptualized together with further curators and in the frame work of the Vienna Festival the exhibition *Unrest of form. Imagining the Political Subject*. It was “conceived as a realm of aesthetic action, made manifest in acts of subjectification and linguistic interventions, and disrupting pre-determined identities, positioning and visibilities (Saxenhuber, Schöllhammer).”

2:00 p.m.

Pil and Galia Kollektiv

Artists, curators, writers, London (<http://www.kollektiv.co.uk>)

Art in the Age of its Dissolution

In our film *Co-Operative Explanatory Capabilities in Organizational Design and Personnel Management*, we explore the horror of post-Fordist production of the self and instrumentalization of creativity. The piece uses an archive of photographs documenting the construction and history of an early computing company. However, while the work represented in the film centers on efficiency management and the operation of bureaucratic systems, the implications of the infiltration of creative self-expression into this environment go beyond this office environment. Many theorists have observed that since the transition from manual to immaterial labor as the dominant form of production in the West, work in late capitalist economies has grown closer to, or even inseparable from, artistic modes of production. Artistic critique has consequently been threatened with redundancy through recuperation. In this paper, we would like to argue that in order to battle this encroachment of neo-liberal management into the production of subjectivity, we have to abandon the humanism that underlies much artistic critique and forge a new understanding of the role of the artist in society that does not rely on externality to labor. In doing so, we hope to interrogate the wage-labor relationship extending beyond the confines of the art world and its practices.

2:45 p.m.

Ekaterina Degot und David Riff

E.D.: Theorists of art, curator, professor at the Rodchenko Moscow School of Photography and Multimedia, Moscow

D.R.: Theorists of art, curator, member of the artist group Chto Delat, professor at the Rodchenko Moscow School of Photography and Multimedia, Moscow

Monday begins on Saturday. About fiction and reenactment as curatorial methodologies

Ekaterina Degot and David Riff recently curated the first Bergen Triennial entitled "Monday Begins on Saturday" after a novel by Soviet sci-fi writers Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. With the aim to critically reflect the potentials and pitfalls of the notion of "artistic research," the project undertakes an oblique contemporary re-writing of this text in the form of a multi-venue exhibition (still on view till October 27, 2013) and a book.

The lecture of Degot and Riff will focus on certain aspects of the curatorial conceptions and narratives of "Monday begins with Saturday": especially in regards to fiction, fantastic literature, reenactment, artistic research, political aesthetics and aesthetic politics.

The Strugatsky Brothers published Monday Begins on Saturday in 1964, at the height of the Cold War Soviet research boom. It tells the story of a programmer who gets sidetracked by hitchhikers while vacationing in the Northern region of Karelia, and winds up working at the Research Institute for Wizardry and Sorcery. The institute's main philosophy is dialectical: positivism and vulgar materialism must be fought off at all costs and opposed with the weapons of magic and the imagination. The first Bergen Triennial attempts to "read" this narrative through a literary and intellectual re-working of the novel for today. A montage of newly commissioned artists' projects and historical material, punctuated with fragments from literature, and quasi-fictional curatorial annotations, the Triennial is conceived as an aggregate or archipelago of fictitious research institutes.

4:45 p.m.

Pedro G. Romero

Artist, Seville (<http://fxysudoble.com>)

About an artistic reconsideration of Spanish torture chambers and their references to modern avant-gardes

During the Spanish Civil War the anarchists established in various convents the so called "checas", that is, prisons that were designed with geometric patterns reminiscent of works by Kandinsky, Klee, Itten etc. The aim was to make the prisoners dizzy: modern art as psycho-technical torture. Spanish artist Antoni Tàpies, who visited many years after the Spanish Civil War one of the "checas" in Barcelona stated: "In some of the cells it surprised me to see on the walls a series of paintings similar to the geometric Kandinskys and Mondriaans ... It seems that at that time the power of suggestion of abstract and geometric painting and op effects was much more notable and serious than in later years, when it was lowered to the decoration of the most banal things." In the context of his long-term project "Archivo F.X.", Pedro G. Romero has reproduced two "checas". A third one has been realized in the framework of "Giving Form to the Impatience of Liberty." Romero's interest in the phenomena of the "checas" is less focused on the horror they might have caused by means of modern art, but on the different propagandist interpretations formulated by the Left and the Right. When the 'checas' "were overexploited by the revisionist propaganda as absolute 'horror' they became something false, an anecdotal fiction. To restore them as the symptom they are, they must be taken to the level of discourse, to rhetorical production, and there, of course, they are no longer an object of propaganda" In reference to Slavoj Žižek, who talks about the „checas“ at the beginning of his book "The Parallax View", Romero furthermore states: "I am interested in ... [the "checas"] ... not as a case of 'memory' but as a historical episode from which to extract brand new consequences. Thus, it is not only about exemplifying the crisis of modernism ... but to locate the 'thing' as an exemplary case of this same crisis."

6:00 p.m.

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PANEL

Alice Creischer / Andreas Siekmann (artists, Berlin), **Barbara Ehnes** (stage designer, Berlin), **Kiri Dalena** (artist, Quezon City, Philippines)

Reenactments. Artistic forms of re(counter)petition, reallocation and détournement

The term reenactment in general refers to the spectacle of a meticulous restaging of mainly violent historical events mostly executed collectively by laymen. At the latest since Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) the term also is used in regards to artistic methodologies. However, in the framework of this panel it is not about the idea of a participatory practice of restaging history. The focus here lies much more on aspects of reallocation, reordering and détournement within the act of repeating or mimicking. The points of departure are various works of the exhibition "Giving form to the Impatience of Liberty".

Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann for example present a video documentation of a reenactment of a press conference, which they realized together with Christian von Borries. At this press conference the three directors of the main German public art collections announced their collaboration in a project that was planned to conceive a universal museum for Dubai. In the context of their reenactment the artists retroactively intervened in this event.

Barbara Ehnes's project is based on a public staging of a real-fictitious editorial conference of the feminist literature magazine *Die Schwarze Botin*, which was published in the 1970s and 1980s. The participants of this conference were former members of the editorial board as well as representatives of a younger generation of feminists, aiming to redefine former and today's feminist discourses. A new magazine as well as an audio-visual installation resulted from this staged meeting.

Kiri Dalena again reworked more than a hundred photographs documenting the mass protests against the Marcos-dictatorship in the Philippines by erasing all the slogans that were visible on banners. Appropriating the role of the censor she cuts out the historical messages to shift them in another context and order of storage. In doing so, she sheds light on the constellations the images show between body and space, mass and individual, resistance and the violence of State power. At the same time she loads the public space paradoxically with both, the potentialities of articulation and silencing.

7:30 p.m.

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Boris Ondrejčka

Artist, Bratislava

ENTOPTIC & TACIT

ENTOPTIC is an image archive created as a general background for readings (similar to VJing at DJ performances), in the tradition of poetry readings (which are many times accompanied by music or image). Each reading, each venue (Karlsruhe, Alexandria, Taipei, Bratislava, Prague...) brings new images and new categories related to a particular subject, thus the image archive permanently grows. Each slide has a particular timing according to the total measure of reading needed. There is a polysemantic oscillation of frequencies made by categories like childhood, kiss, broken piano, blackbird, pamphlet of alternative, resistance, perception / reception, tacit, entoptic, psychoactive, hallucination, rave, peregrination, horror, violence, destruction, basics, melancholy etc., all pictures come from Google images search ... TACIT are those texts read, the spoken word part." (Boris Ondrejčka)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2013

12:00 p.m.

Banu Cennetoğlu, Yasemin Özcan
Artists, Istanbul

About their project What Is It That You Are Worried About? and questions concerning the treatment of historically problematic connoted sites.

In their work *What Is It That You Are Worried About?* Banu Cennetoğlu and Yasemin Özcan make use of a non-artistic discipline to measure the energies circulating in the physical space of Tito's secret bunker Atomic War Command aka ARK. The "object" was put through a "holographic" energy scan by the habitat and human energy rebalancing coach Zeynep Sevil Güven aiming to achieve a deep cleansing. Cennetoğlu and Özcan will present their project to discuss on this basis among other things the treatment of historically problematic connoted sites.

12:45 p.m.

János Sugár

Artist, founding member of the artist group INDIGO (1980-1986) and the Media Research Foundation, Budapest, Professor for Intermedia at MKE Budapest.

***Coup d'Etat in Slow Motion
(in a global and local sense with actual Hungarian examples)***

The Hungarian artist János Sugár will talk about the current relationships between art, politics, capitalism and resistance in Europe and especially in Hungary. "The capitalist system (representative democracy based on a market economy) has become incapable of functioning in its present form. For one thing we have reached the natural limits of growth, and now produce predominantly trash and environmental damage. Furthermore we have developed technological avenues for manipulation that have evolved into a subtle, complex, and convergent system that has the capacity to take economies, finance, and social structures in entirely unrealistic directions. At the same time politicians realize the importance of the creative class, which they wish to control, whereas the critical competence of art is questioned by populists everywhere. Art is the last refuge of free speech, which must be carefully guarded and preserved above all (János Sugár)."

1:30 p.m.

Pelin Tan

Art historian and sociologist based in Istanbul, Assistant-Professor for architecture an the Mardin Artuklu University in Mardin

Who is the Enemy?: Art in the age of Uprisings

When we art producers are positioning ourselves in a political-socially engaged art practices why / how do we define our enemy? The enemy, who supposed to resurrect our desire for emancipation? Pelin Tan will discuss the role and engagement of art in the recent struggles of social justice and economical austerity. Thus also types of collaborations, forms of alternative economies, practice of solidarity and common-ing will be discussed with examples from urban spaces of Istanbul, Athens and various cities from Asia.